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THE NATURE OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE
Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

In his *Notebooks 1914-1916* Ludwig Wittgenstein refers to “the mystery of negation: This is not how things are, and yet we can say *how things are not*.” In my thesis I explore this mystery—its historical roots, the fundamental difficulties it raises, how modern philosophers have treated these difficulties, and how such treatments might be modified to resolve the mystery more effectively. Working within the context of a referential theory of meaning and a correspondence theory of truth I examine the views of a range of the most important relevant thinkers in an attempt to determine just what sort of relation between language and the world best accounts for meaningful negative language, that is, meaningful true negative statements and meaningful false statements, with minimum ontological implications.

Specifically, my thesis divides into three parts. In Part One I explore the ancient Greek historical roots of the issue via critical examination of Parmenides’s foundational statement of the problem in his poem “On Nature” and of Plato’s extended response through a series of dialogues culminating in *Parmenides* and *Sophist*. Ontologically speaking Plato’s treatment of this matter can be read in two ways, and in Part Two I consider both of these readings through surprisingly close (and considerably more developed) analogues found in the late 19th and early 20th-century works of F.H. Bradley and Bertrand Russell. Finally, in Part Three I spell out, critique, and eventually modify the inspired modal approach to this problem proposed by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. When a view of negation as rooted in the relation between the possible and the actual is conjoined with a suitable combinatorial theory of possibility which (quite reasonably) sees what can be as limited to rearrangements of what is, then the end result is an account of negative language dependent upon a world no more populous than that which underlies an account of true positive language. As such, properly understood, negative language need not have ontological implications.
Acknowledgements

In the opening book of Plato's Republic it is suggested that justice involves giving others their due, a simple account which, though it fails to meet Socratic standards, is surely appropriate for present purposes. As such, I here wish to open this work in a just manner by acknowledging two sets of debts, one professional, the other personal.

My philosophical interests have long been dominated by two areas: Plato, and the logical atomism of the early Russell and Wittgenstein; in this project these two historically disparate areas converge via their treatments of a common problem, the problem of the nature of negative language. Over the course of my various studies of this problem I have been fortunate to have had the benefit of feedback and insight from a variety of scholars: Robert Tully, who served on my area committee, and with whom I had many helpful discussions about Russell and Wittgenstein; John Rist, who headed my area committee, and who read and commented extensively on several drafts of Part I of the present work; Lynd Ferguson, who served on my thesis committee and who raised many relevant challenges to my views, especially with regard to Part III; and Brad Inwood, who graciously stepped in upon John Rist's retirement rather late in the process. My sincere thanks to all of them for their help along the way. But far and away, my greatest academic debt is owed to my supervisor, Fred Wilson. Prof. Wilson always read my material promptly, was extremely encouraging and open-minded in discussion, and was generous to a fault with his time. Without his patient assistance my struggle to find a path through the topics contained herein would have been far less successful. I have genuinely enjoyed the countless hours we have spent in philosophical discussion, and I am very grateful for all that he has done.

On the personal side I would like to thank my father Hugh Gorman, his wife Huguette, and my mother Louise Gorman for their support during this long journey. I would also like to thank my wife's parents, Michael and Mary Geraghty, for their longstanding assistance (not least with respect to family logistics). But overwhelmingly my greatest debt is owed to my family, to my wife Jennifer and our son Eric. They have endured this venture with greater patience than I had any right for which to hope, especially when the project's "last few months" turned into a last few years. I will never be able to express the full extent of my appreciation for the support they have given me, but I will try. Jennifer, I am so glad you're my lobster.
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NEGATIVE LANGUAGE, or SAYING WHAT IS NOT

In his *Notebooks 1914-1916* Ludwig Wittgenstein refers to "the mystery of negation: This is not how things are, and yet we can say how things are not." (1979:30) The present work is an exploration of this mystery—its historical roots, the fundamental difficulties it raises, how modern philosophers have treated these difficulties, and how such treatments might be modified to resolve the mystery more effectively. Wittgenstein’s contrast of how things are with what can be said brings to light the underlying context of this exploration, which is the relation between the world and language, between ontology and representation. Given the most widely accepted theory of truth, the correspondence theory, according to which a statement is true if it corresponds to what is, the introduction of negation to language about the world has consequences which raise serious theoretical challenges.

There is nothing mysterious about saying what is. True positive statements say what is true about what is the case. What is it about the world which ontologically grounds the truth of such statements? The answer is fairly obvious—there are facts in the world to which such statements correspond. For example, the statement ‘Toronto is in Ontario’ is a true positive statement, and its truth is ontologically grounded by its correspondence to the fact that Toronto is in Ontario. Consequently, saying what is is (relatively) straightforward and unproblematic. But saying what is not is another matter altogether. There are two sorts of saying what is not, for there are two different ways in which negation can attach to language. On the one hand there are false positive statements, or saying what is not true about what is the case; on the other hand there are true negative statements, or saying what is true about what is not the case. (In what follows these two sorts of saying what is not are often collectively referred to as ‘negative language’.) Consideration of each of these sorts of negative language within the context of the correspondence theory brings to light significant philosophical difficulties.

Consider first false positive statements. False positive statements say what is not true about what is the case. What is it about the world which ontologically grounds the falsehood of such statements? The answer here is not obvious, for there are no facts in the world to which such statements correspond; if there were, they would be true, not false.¹ For example, the statement ‘Montreal is in Ontario’ is a false positive statement; but what is it about the world which ontologically grounds its falsehood? In similar fashion, consider next true negative statements.

¹ That is to say, there are no facts in the world to which such statements correspond directly. As is discussed in Chapter Five below, Bertrand Russell does propose a sort of indirect correspondence to facts as an account of falsehood.
True negative statements say what is true about what is not the case. What is it about the world which ontologically grounds the truth of these statements? The answer here is also not obvious, for it is not clear that there are facts in the world to which such statements correspond, as such facts would involve negation as an intrinsic feature of the world, and it is not evident that such is the case. For example, the statement ‘Montreal is not in Ontario’ is a true negative statement, but what is it about the world which ontologically grounds its truth? It is just these sorts of questions which constitute the basis of the present work. Moreover, these questions in turn raise prior questions, which are also here considered. For example, the question of the ontological ground for negative language is preceded by the question of the semantic ground of negative language: on what basis is negative language even to be considered as meaningful, let alone false or true? As a result, the present work covers a range of territory—ontological, semantic, and veridical.

What follows divides into three parts consisting of a total of seven chapters. Primarily speaking, Part I covers the views of Parmenides and Plato, Part II the views of F.H. Bradley and Bertrand Russell, and Part III the views of Ludwig Wittgenstein; however, a variety of other thinkers appear along the way.

Part I explores the historical roots of the problem of saying what is not by examining ancient expressions of the fundamental difficulties it raises and of proposed resolutions to those difficulties. Chapter One examines the views expressed by Parmenides in his poem “On Nature”. In this work Parmenides’s fundamental position is that being and not-being are inherently and essentially incompatible, with the result that not-being cannot in any way be part of being. However, without a mix of not-being with being there can be neither ontological nor linguistic plurality (for plurality requires that each unit not-be the others), thus resulting in Parmenides’s well-known ontological monism, as well as his lesser-known linguistic monism. Chapter Two examines Plato’s dialogues up to, but excluding, Sophist. In the earlier of these dialogues the difficulty of false positive language receives primary attention; however, as Plato’s insight grows he comes to recognise that this difficulty itself rests on the more broad difficulty of meaningful language in general, and specifically the matter of demonstrating the logical necessity of complexity and pluralism. In his later dialogues Theaetetus and Parmenides Plato lays the logical groundwork needed to establish that being is complex, and hence that, somehow or other, whatever is must also not-be. Chapter Three examines in detail Plato’s great triumph Sophist. In this dialogue Plato sets out from the beginning, first reviewing both Parmenides’s argument concerning not-being and the difficulty of false positive language, next recounting in more fleshed out form the logical advances previously put forth in Parmenides establishing the inevitability of complexity and the nature of not-being as part of being, and finally revealing the nature of complex language (including the essential manner in which

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2 Throughout this work the terms ‘being’ and ‘what is’ are used interchangeably.
it differs from simple language) and demonstrating how such language can be meaningful yet false, as well as negative yet true.

Although it is incontestable that Plato makes enormous progress regarding the difficulties discussed, the details and ontological implications of his view are a matter of some dispute, with the result that different commentators read Plato's solution to the problem of saying what is not in quite different ways. In Part II these different ways of resolving the problem of negative language are picked up in the context of how modern philosophers have treated these difficulties. Specifically, one reading of Plato's *Sophist* solution to negative language builds upon the notion of incompatibility between properties as an inherent feature of the world. In Chapter Four this treatment of negative language is considered in the context of F.H. Bradley. In his work *The Principles of Logic* Bradley expressly adheres to a view very similar to this reading of Plato, for Bradley contends that what grounds negative language is that the situation it describes clashes, or is incompatible, with some fact or facts in the world. Because incompatibility is seen as an inherent feature of the world this incompatibility account of negation carries with it considerable ontological implications with regard to how the world must be expanded to accommodate negation.

Another way of reading Plato's view of negative language builds upon the notion of negative facts as genuine ontological complexes in the world. In Chapter Five this treatment of negative language is considered in the context of Bertrand Russell. In his published lectures "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" Russell sets forth a view of ontology and language such that the world consists of both positive and negative facts which are on an ontological par. As with incompatibility, so too by holding negative facts to be an inherent feature of the world this negative facts account also carries with it considerable ontological implications with regard to how the world must expand to accommodate negation.

In Part III a very different approach to the problem of negative language is considered via examination of the views of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein shifts attention from negation as itself a feature of the world to negation as involving the relation between what is possible and what is actual. In Chapter Six his views are examined in the context of his work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, a challenging and, in places, obscure text which suggests much, even if it does not always fill in the details. Specifically, Wittgenstein ties negation to what is possible but not actual, an approach which in turn shifts attention from the ontological status of negation to the ontological status of possibility. In the final chapter of the present work, Chapter Seven, Wittgenstein's basic views are modified in a manner which builds upon their strengths but concurrently avoids some of their unnecessary and somewhat unsatisfactory consequences. Properly modified, it is this final account of negative language which best resolves the questions here considered both effectively and with a minimum of ontological implications.
In his monograph *Negation and Non-Being* Richard Gale suggests, "every serious attempt to analyze negative propositions is a variation of Plato's famed account of negation in the *Sophist*." (1976:6). In turn commentator David Gallop, noting A.N. Whitehead's famous remark that the development of western philosophy consists in a series of footnotes to Plato, suggests, "In a similar vein, and with hardly more exaggeration, Plato's own writings might be said to have consisted in footnotes to Parmenides" (1984:3). While there is certainly a degree of exaggeration in both of these suggestions, it is nonetheless true both that any thorough post-Platonic treatment of negation must consider Plato's views on the topic and that Plato's views cannot be adequately understood without a prior grasp of Parmenides's position; as such, it is with the latter that the present work begins.
PART I

THE HISTORY OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE:
PARMENIDES AND PLATO ON SAYING WHAT IS NOT
§1.1: Introduction

The earliest known thinker to discuss the problem of negation is Parmenides of Elea, whose views are known primarily through his single extant work, the fifth-century B.C. philosophical poem "On Nature". Modern interpretation of this poem is severely hampered by two factors: first, the work is known only through nineteen fragments of various lengths from various historical sources; and second, the manner of expression contained in those fragments is extremely challenging, a point evidenced by commentator David Gallop's description of Parmenides's syntax as "replete with multiple ambiguities, that are often so teasing as to argue wilful obscurantism, or at least a certain perversity, on their author's part" (1984:4). But despite these limitations, a great deal can be determined with some certainty concerning Parmenides's views, views which, it turns out, offer a bold vision of the nature of the world and of language.

Philosophy as an enterprise concerned with rational account rather than mythological tale was relatively new in Parmenides's time. His predecessors as philosophers, generally considered to begin with Thales of Miletus about a hundred years before, were primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with cosmogony, the giving an account of the nature of the universe. Attempting to make rational sense of the pluralistic world one perceives, each thinker attempted to answer the question 'What is being?'. Starting from empirical observation, Thales came to the conclusion that water is the primary or common element of all that is; others in turn proposed such alternatives as the indefinite (Anaximander of Miletus), air (Anaximenes of Miletus), or fire (Heraclitus of Ephesus). It is thus from a general empirical framework that Parmenides comes forth; however, rather than following his predecessors by beginning with observation and then attempting to fit reason to it, he turns these around by giving primary emphasis to reason and only then attempting to reconcile observation with it. His conclusions in this regard are nothing short of revolutionary: not-being can neither be nor be thought, a position which implies the denial of negation with respect to both ontology and language. Further, carried to its logical conclusion Parmenides's rejection of negation concurrently implies the denial of pluralism, and hence the affirmation of (both ontological and linguistic) monism. As a result, despite what his senses tell him, Parmenides concludes that reality must be radically different from how it appears to be. Like his predecessors Parmenides is interested in the nature of what is, but unlike them he takes his starting points in earnest and accepts their consequences, however paradoxical these consequences might seem.
Due to its extreme denseness, before directly examining Parmenides’s poem it is useful as a preliminary to consider two matters. The first such matter concerns the logical structure of the argument contained within the poem: exactly what line of reasoning is Parmenides presenting in support of his utter rejection of negation? The second such matter concerns the methodological approach underlying Parmenides’s decision to proceed as he does: is he involved simply in conceptual analysis, or is his reasoning based upon an inner examination of his own cognitive acts? These matters are here considered each in turn.

Parmenides’s poem essentially treats two issues: first, (to quote Gallop) “a stark disjunction admitting of no compromise”, that is, a choice between the options “is” and “is not”; and second, the relation of speech and thought to each of these options. In his introduction to his translation of “On Nature” Gallop raises the first of these issues by noting the options put forth in fragment 2 line 3—“The one - that [it] is, and that [it] cannot not be” 1—and line 5—“The other - that [it] is not and that [it] needs must not be”—and then summarising the logical form of the reasoning contained therein as

\[
i/ \text{either 'is' or 'is not' (and not both);}
\]

\[
ii/ \text{not 'is not';}
\]

\[
\text{therefore } iii/ \text{ 'is.' (1984:7)}
\]

However, the bare-bones nature of this argument results in (at least two) fundamental interpretive difficulties: “First, what is the meaning of 'is' and 'is not'? Is 'is' to be read existentially (= 'exists'), or as a copula (= 'is F'), or veridically (= 'is true'), or in some combination of these ways? Second, since the subject of 'is' and its complement (if it is a copula) are left unexpressed in its first appearance at line 2.3 and elsewhere (eg, 8.2), how are they to be understood?”(1984:7)

With regard to the meaning of Parmenides’s “is” and “is not” there is little agreement amongst commentators, for each of the readings noted by Gallop has prominent defenders. Gallop himself, for example, holds the restricted view that Parmenides is concerned with existence and non-existence (1984:7-8) (a view he notes is shared by Jonathan Barnes (Gallop 1984:30n15)). However, some contend that a distinction between simply existing, or being (that is, the existential reading), and being something or other (that is, the copulative reading) is ill-conceived, proposing instead that Parmenides employs a broader, composite meaning of “is” concurrently drawing upon both usages. It is to this end that Montgomery Furth, for example, argues in his paper “Elements of Eleatic Ontology”.

1 All translations from Parmenides are those of David Gallop (see Works Cited for bibliographical details). Quotations from Parmenides are referenced in the form “fragment number:line number(s)”. In this chapter abbreviation of the name of Parmenides’s text is omitted from citations; in subsequent chapters it is included (as “ON”).
the notion of ‘being’ studied by Parmenides and by early Greek philosophy in general, is not ‘confined’ to either of our two distinct concepts, that of existence and that of being something-or-other in the sense of having such-and-such properties (being a man, being green); rather, these notions are impacted or fused in the early Greek concept of being. A result is that a Greek inquiry ti to on, ‘what is being?’, frequently must be interpreted as concerned simultaneously with the concepts of being = existence and of ‘being Φ’ for variable Φ.(1968:243)

In similar fashion, in their survey The Presocratic Philosophers G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield assert, for Parmenides, “to exist is in effect to be something or other”; hence, “Parmenides’ use of estin [that is, “is”] is simultaneously existential and predicative”(1983:246). Still other commentators move one step further. Charles Kahn, who has done extensive work on the ancient Greek usage of the verb ‘to be’,2 claims in his paper “The Greek Verb ‘to be’ and the Concept of Being” that as used within ancient Greek philosophical culture ‘to be’ involves ontological commitment beyond that thus far noted: “for the philosophical usage of the verb, the most fundamental value of einai [that is, “to be”] when used alone (without predicates) is not ‘to exist’ but ‘to be so’, ‘to be the case’, or ‘to be true’.”(1966:250) In his subsequent paper “The Thesis of Parmenides” Kahn moves on explicitly to assert that Parmenides’s usage of the verb ‘to be’ encompasses all three of the readings noted by Gallop:

The “is” which Parmenides proclaims is not primarily existential but veridical: it asserts not only the reality but the determinate being-so of the knowable object, as the ontological “content” or correlate of true statement. Thus his thesis involves the concept of existence at two levels:

a. existence for the subject entity, that which is;
b. existence or reality for the fact or situation which characterizes this entity in a determinate way (in Wittgenstein’s sense of the Bestehen von Sachverhalten, “the existence of states of affairs”).(1969:713)\(^3\)

According to Kahn, then, it is not enough to hold simply that for Parmenides “is” characterises an entity in a determinate way such that “to be” means “to be something or other”, for this situation might be held to be of indeterminate ontological status; rather, for Parmenides, “to be” means “in fact to be something or other”, thus concurrently affirming “existence at two levels”, that is, the existence of both the subject itself and of the situation concerning that subject.

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2 Kahn’s publications in this vein include not only the paper about to be noted, but also his subsequent book-length study, The Verb ‘Be’ in Ancient Greek.

3 Wittgenstein’s views, including his sense of the Bestehen von Sachverhalten, are discussed in Chapter Six below.
As comes out below, of the various readings of "is" here noted, Kahn's accords best with both the text and the general tenor of Parmenides's poem. Specifically, Kahn's veridical reading of "is" essentially collapses ontology, meaning, and truth into one equivalent package, which is precisely what Parmenides seems to be up to. As such, the general interpretation of "On Nature" here presented leans most heavily upon his view.

With regard to the second interpretive difficulty noted by Gallop, what is the subject of Parmenides's "is", the simplest and most straightforward solution is that proposed by John Rist, who considers this matter by first trying to determine the question to which Parmenides's "is" constitutes the answer. Rist suggests, the most likely question Parmenides has in mind is the "naturally pre-Socratic one, "What is there?" . . . In other words, what noun or adjective does Parmenides think can logically be uttered after esti?(1970:223). To this Rist answers, "it would follow—if we give Parmenides the credit of not smuggling in premises—that the only possible 'filler' for esti would be the tautologous to eon ("There is what there is"). We assume, therefore, that his procedure is purely by inspection of the word esti. He asks himself what could there be. And the tautologous subject to eon is the only subject he could legitimately propose."(1970:223)

Rist thus suggests that Parmenides's "is" ought be completed by its own cognate noun—it is being which is, or has being.

Rist's answer has a certain conceptual appeal, but it fails to acknowledge Parmenides's subsequent development of his position, for in several fragments Parmenides, while not providing an explicit subject for his "is", certainly fleshes out its content. In line 3:1 Parmenides asserts, "the same thing is there for thinking and for being", while in line 6:1 he similarly asserts, "It must

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4 Although not everyone thinks so. For example, in his paper "Eleatic Questions" G.E.L. Owen argues against being as the subject of Parmenides's "is", asserting, "But there is a conclusive reason why this subject will not do. The reason is that it turns the estin into a mere tautology and the ouk estin correspondingly into a flat contradiction, whereas Parmenides thinks it necessary to argue for estin and against ouk estin."(1960:55) But to this objection W.K.C. Guthrie offers a convincing reply. Pointing out that thinkers prior to Parmenides had assumed that the world involves change ("becoming hotter or colder, drier or wetter, rarer or denser"), and yet that they would not have denied that what is is, Guthrie continues,

In refuting their contentions, Parmenides is not so much proving the tautology as showing that earlier thinkers, as well as the ordinary run of mankind, had never formulated it explicitly, and so had evaded its implications. It is perhaps the first, but certainly not the last time that a philosopher has thought it necessary to start from a tautology for the same reasons.(1965:16)

As Guthrie further points out, "in the same century Gorgias thought it possible to argue for a logical contradiction: he 'proved' that what is is not (oude on estin). If this could be done, then surely at the same stage of thought, or slightly earlier, it could seem both possible and necessary to argue the tautology."(1965:16-17) Thus, to interpret that the subject of Parmenides's "is" is being is not to suggest that Parmenides foolishly and blindly argues for that which needs no argument.
be that what is there for speaking and thinking of *is*. With this in mind many commentators contend that the subject of Parmenides's "is" is simply what can be talked or thought about; as Gallop puts it, "what exists is 'there' or 'available' to be spoken and thought of and is thus a possible object of speech and thought."(1984:8) However, despite the textual evidence, one might be reluctant to attribute this subject to Parmenides on the grounds that the resulting position seems prima facie plainly incorrect, for it appears "self-evident" that one can, and frequently does, speak or think about what is not. In order to grasp adequately Parmenides's position here, attention must be paid specifically to the subtleties of the ancient Greek philosophical notions involved.

The verb at the root of the words translated by Gallop in lines 3:1 and 6:1 as 'thinking' is *noein*, cognate noun *noos* (sometimes *nous*). In modern times thought is usually conceived in an ontologically neutral manner such that one's thoughts are unencumbered by the limitations of what is the case. However, to understand Parmenides, and ancient Greek philosophy in general, it is of absolute importance to realise that to the ancient Greeks this ontologically neutral side of *noein* is entirely absent. Rather, as Kahn observes,

the sense of *noein* in early Greek is not some vaguely psychological notion of "thinking," not even the pseudo-logical concept of conceiving or imagining consistently . . . but rather one of *noticing, observing, realizing, gaining insight* into the identity of a person, into the facts of a situation and their true implications . . . .

The proper translation for the verb in Parmenides is a term like "cognition" or "knowledge"(1969:703n4).

In similar fashion, in his comprehensive multi-volume survey *A History of Greek Philosophy* W.K.C. Guthrie also reports of "a general Greek belief that human powers of cognition included a faculty of immediate apprehension of the true nature of an object or situation, comparable to, but going deeper than, the immediate apprehension of superficial qualities by the senses."(1965:19)

Nor is this understanding of *noos* limited to the Presocratic period of ancient Greek philosophy:

When rational thought had progressed much further than in Parmenides's time, Aristotle himself, for all his intellectual maturity and acute analysis of mental faculties and activities, felt bound to concede infallibility to *nous*, and to make a sharp distinction between its activity and the processes of discursive reasoning.

In the *Posterior Analytics* he writes: 'Of the thinking states by which we grasp truth, some are unfailingly true, others admit of error--opinion, for instance, and calculation--whereas scientific knowing and *nous* are always true.'(1965:18-19)

The result of this is that in ancient Greek philosophy the very notion of *noein* is ontologically committed such that whatever it is of must be the case. This aspect plays a crucial role in properly grasping what Parmenides argues; with this in mind in the translations that follow wherever Gallop
translates *noein* (in any of its forms) as 'think' the term 'cognize' is here substituted, a rendering intended to reflect such aspects as knowing and perceiving as well as the more basic aspect of conceiving.

If *noos* inherently involves insight into what is, then one might suppose that *noos* would not involve reasoning. However, as Kurt von Fritz points out in his classic study "*Nous, Noein, and Their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy*", although in the central part of his poem Parmenides also depends upon *noos*, he nonetheless "argues, deduces, tries to prove the truth of his statements by logical reasoning." (1945:241) Given this approach by Parmenides, von Fritz asks the obvious next question, "What is the relation of this reasoning to the *noos*?" He answers,

there can be no doubt that [for Parmenides] discursive thinking is part of the function of the *noos*. Yet—and this is just as important—*noein* is not identical with a process of logical deduction pure and simple in the sense of formal logic, a process which through a syllogistic mechanism leads from any set of related premises to conclusions which follow with necessity from those premises, but also a process which in itself is completely unconcerned with, and indifferent to, the truth or untruth of the original premises. It is still the primary function of the *noos* to be in direct touch with ultimate reality. It reaches this ultimate reality not only at the end and as a result of the logical process, but in a way is in touch with it from the very beginning, since, as Parmenides again and again points out, there is no *noos* without the *eon* [that is, what is], in which it unfolds itself. In so far as Parmenides' difficult thought can be explained, the logical process seems to have merely the function of clarifying and confirming what, in a way, has been in the *noos* from the very beginning and of cleansing it of all foreign elements. (1945:241-42)

According to this interpretation, then, although *noos* can involve reasoning, it does so in a very particular manner which inherently guarantees the correctness of that reasoning. An interesting and important consequence of *noos* involving reason is that *noos* can be represented or put into language. However, given the infallibility of *noos* noted above by Guthrie, any such representation of *noos* would necessarily correspond to what is the case, or be true; a seemingly false representation of *noos* would actually not be a genuine representation of *noos* at all.

Cognition is thus essentially tied to what is. In line 6:1 Parmenides associates being not only with what can be thought, or cognized, but also with what can be said, thus extending this essential relation with being beyond cognition and on to speech. Specifically, if speech is considered to be the representation of (the reasoning of) *noos* then there cannot be false speech, and in fact, to the early Greeks this is apparently just how things stand. Rist points out,

11
If knowing is envisaged as a kind of seeing and speaking as a kind of pointing, then it is not hard to see why... we cannot ‘see’ or ‘point to’ what does not exist...

What has puzzled the commentators is [their failure to realise] that ‘thinking a thing’ (accusative) is to be understood as ‘recognizing that it is there’. (1970:223-24n4)

Paul Seligman similarly observes, “being is the only legitimate content of thought and speech. Moreover, it is the ‘direct object’ of thought and speech”(1974:5-6). Indeed, he remarks, “to think and say being”, although “idiomatically strained”, nonetheless “represents aptly” the early Greek relation between language and ontology.(1974:6n2) Given such a reality-based view not only of cognition but also of speech, it follows that one can only say what is, for what is not is not there to be said; consequently, the available subject matter of cognition and of language is the same.

If the above is indeed a correct summation of the main lines of Parmenides’s position, then one more matter remains to be addressed, and that concerns the methodological approach underlying Parmenides’s decision to proceed as he does: is he involved simply in conceptual analysis of the notion of cognition and of its relation to being, or is his reasoning based upon an inner examination of his own cognitive acts? The answer to this question does not alter where he ends up, but it does affect how he fits into the philosophical tradition. Certainly, one way to read Parmenides is to follow Rist’s suggestion and hold “that his procedure is purely by inspection of the word esti”. However, another alternative is to follow G.E.L. Owen’s suggestion that Parmenides’s reasoning is the result of analysis, not of the concepts of speech and cognition, but rather of acts of speech and cognition: Owen proposes, “Parmenides’ argument need assume nothing save that we are thinking and talking of something, and this seems to be guaranteed by our framing or following the argument at all”(1960:60), thus moving Parmenides’s starting point from what there must be for there to be speech and cognition to what there must be given that there is speech and cognition, a move which makes Parmenides’s line read much like most readings of René Descartes’s cogito.5 Unfortunately, despite the historical importance of this question of Parmenides’s methodological starting point, lack of evidence ultimately renders this debate moot, and hence this matter is here not further pursued.

With these preliminaries out of the way, Parmenides’s poem can now be examined. Further, as discussed below, the philosophical position it contains carries sweeping and significant consequences for the areas of ontology, language, meaning, and truth. Drawn to its logical conclusions, Parmenides’s utter rejection of negation, coupled with the above-noted inherent link between cognition and ontology, constitute nothing less than a daring and damning indictment of ordinary language and of ordinary ways of viewing the world.

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5 “Cogito, ergo sum” (“I think, therefore I am”); this position is found in both Descartes’s Discourse on Method and his subsequent Meditations on First Philosophy.
§1.2: “On Nature”

Parthenide's poem opens with a dramatic introduction which establishes the speaker in the subsequent philosophical address as a goddess who offers guidance to the listener. After describing the listener's transcendental voyage to the home of the goddess, the introduction ends with the goddess's promise of divine revelation:

... And it is right that you should learn all things,

Both the steadfast heart of persuasive truth

And the beliefs of mortals, in which there is no true trust. (1:28-30)

In this manner, right from the outset Parmenides (through the goddess) contrasts two sets of views, one of which is true, another (that believed by mortals) which is not true; the former of these has come to be referred to as the “way of truth”, the latter the “way of seeming” (for the beliefs of mortals are based upon what seems to them to be the case). Generally speaking, the philosophical body of Parmenides's poem divides into two distinct sections corresponding to these two “ways”; however, the first of these sections itself consists of two distinct smaller sections. Consequently, in this chapter discussion of “On Nature” is divided into three sections corresponding to the three segments of the work. The first section covers fragments 2 to 7, which contain Parmenides's remarks concerning three options—“is”, “is not”, and both “is and is not”—as well as the relations of cognition and language to these options; these remarks constitute the antecedent argument of his overall position. The second section covers fragment 8, which contains the consequences drawn by Parmenides on the basis of this argument. The third section covers fragment 9 onwards, which contain the expression of the beliefs of mortals in general.

§1.2.1: The “Way of Truth” - Antecedents (Fragments 2-7)

In fragments 2 to 7 Parmenides focuses, not on the nature of what is per se, but rather on the relation of what is to what is not and to cognition and speech. Fragment 2 opens with the lines,

Come, I shall tell you, and do you listen and convey the story,

What routes of inquiry alone there are for cognizing (2:1-2).

The assertion in line 2 here that he is about to discuss what routes of inquiry there are for cognizing further suggests an affinity between Parmenides and Descartes, for in his Meditations on First Philosophy Descartes also explores seemingly potential avenues of thought to see whether or not they are coherent. Also, despite the (above-noted) rather specific, and rather limited, ancient Greek conception of cognition, it is nonetheless striking how right from the very outset Parmenides indicates his intention to consider limits to intellectual activity, hence implying that not all apparent thought necessarily is genuine thought and as a result that unusual theoretical distinctions are on
the way.\(^6\)

In the remaining six lines of fragment 2 Parmenides lays out two options as possible contents of cognition. In the next two lines he describes the first option:

The one - that \(\text{[it] is}\), and that \(\text{[it] cannot not be}\).

Is the path of Persuasion (for it attends upon truth) (2:3-4).

In lines 1:29-30 Parmenides contrasts truth with the beliefs of mortals. Here he describes the option "is" as accompanied by truth, a sign both that "is" is the correct path and that it is not the path chosen by mortals (or at least by most of them). In the last four lines he describes the second option in contrasting fashion:

The other - that \(\text{[it] is not}\) and that \(\text{[it] needs must not be}\).

That I point out to you to be a path wholly unlearnable,

For you could not know what-is-not (for that is not feasible),

Nor could you point it out.(2:5-8)

Parmenides here characterises the option "is not" largely in terms of its inability to be cognized, pointing out that it cannot be grasped, for it is unlearnable and unknowable. That "is not" lacks ontological status is emphasised by Parmenides’s wording here. One cannot know "is not", where for ‘know’ he employs \(\text{gnoiēs}\), a form of the verb \(\text{gignōskō}\), which primarily involves knowledge by acquaintance—but one can only be acquainted with what is. Nor can one point out "is not", where for ‘point out’ he employs \(\text{phrasais}\), a form of the verb \(\text{phrādżō}\), which fundamentally involves indicating or showing—but one can only indicate or show what is. In parallel fashion the one-line fragment 3, considered to fill out the latter portion of line 2:8, follows up lines 2:5-2:8’s assertion that what is not is not cognizable with its converse:

... because the same thing is there for cognizing and for being.(3:1)

Given the meaning of \(\text{noein}\) discussed above, one might be inclined to downplay the significance of this step on Parmenides’s part, and to a certain extent that would be justified. However, given the notoriety accorded Parmenides’s view by his successors, clearly, no matter how straightforward this association of cognition with ontology seems in retrospect, in context it was a philosophical advance of enormous significance. Despite what ordinary language users might already have realized about their notion(s) of cognition (and speech), they surely had not yet thought through what Parmenides is bringing to the surface.

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\(^6\) Striking, too, is how far the concerns of Parmenides may be considered roughly akin to those of Ludwig Wittgenstein some twenty-four hundred years later, for in his monumental work \(\text{Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus}\), itself a study of the relation between ontology and language, Wittgenstein discusses what he thinks constitutes the “limit to thought”(1921:Author’s Preface). Wittgenstein’s views are discussed in Chapter Six of the present work.
Already the logical argument sketched above by Gallop can be seen to be taking shape. The two routes of cognitive inquiry mentioned in the first two lines of fragment 2 constitute a disjunction consisting of the alternatives “is” and “is not”:

Premise 1: “is” or “is not” 2:1-2

In the next two lines the first of these alternatives, “is”, is endorsed as the way which “attends upon truth”, and hence is the preferred alternative:

Premise 2: “is” 2:3-4

The following four lines are a clear rejection of the second alternative, “is not”:

Premise 3: ~“is not” 2:5-8

Parmenides provides little explicit support for the acceptance of these premises, but nor is there need for him to do so. Premise 1 is simply a disjunction of polar opposites, while Premises 2 and 3 follow from the very natures of those opposing alternatives. (Fragment 3, concerning the relation between being and cognition, itself acts as a premise in a further argument; this role is discussed below.)

In the three-plus lines of fragment 4 Parmenides shifts gears slightly, elaborating briefly on the nature of being:

Look upon things which, though far off, are yet firmly present to the mind;
For you shall not cut off what-is from holding fast to what-is,
For it neither disperses itself in every way everywhere in order,
Nor gathers itself together.(4:1-4)

What is, Parmenides asserts, can be neither dispersed nor gathered together, for such requires that it be apart from itself. But what is cannot be apart from itself, for it would require that there be something other than what is to cause it to be apart. As there is nothing other than “is” (“is not” having already been rejected), what is can neither be dispersed nor gathered together nor be in any other state which requires that it be separated from itself.

At this point, in fragment 5, Parmenides refocuses on the matter at hand:

... And it is all one to me

Where I am to begin; for I shall return there again.(5:1-2)

By asserting that it does not matter where he starts (for “it is all one to me / Where I am to begin”) Parmenides acknowledges one of the limitations within which he works: his desire to present his position in an intelligible manner compels him to present his views in a linear form which is actually quite ill-suited for his purposes. As Furth notes, a poem (like any written form) “is one-dimensional, some parts must come before others”(1968:270). However, Parmenides’s position consists of a range of concurrent interdependent principles and consequences such that no particular arrangement of it is primary; on the contrary, “other orderings are possible, none pre-eminent”. As Furth rightly sums matters up, “Basically the entire (ostensible) ontology is best thought of
as examined simultaneously—in one instant stripped of negations, stripped of falsehoods, impacted together in a single ‘it is’ and handed back (large or small according to his lights) to the respondent.”(1968:270) It is only when Parmenides’s position is considered from this holistic simultaneous God’s-eye perspective that it can truly be seen aright, and its thorough unity fully appreciated.

From here Parmenides returns in the first lines of fragment 6 to his earlier focus, the relation of being, not-being, and cognition:

It must be that what is there for speaking and cognizing is; for [it] is there to be,
Whereas nothing is not; that is what I bid you consider,
For <I restrain> you from that first route of inquiry (6:1-3).

Parmenides again associates cognition, now supplemented by speech, with being, for being is there to be a subject of cognition and speech, whereas not-being, now explicitly described as ‘nothing’ (mêden), is not there to be such a subject (6:1-2). For these reasons he bids his hearer not to pursue “that first route”, the path of not-being. As a result, lines 6:2-3 serve as reinforcement for Premise 3:

Premise 3: ~“is not” 2:5-8, 6:2-3
(Line 6:1 expands upon and reinforces line 3:1; as such, its role also is discussed below.)

At this point Parmenides broadens his scope by raising for the first time a third option, the road of both “is and is not”. Such an association of the two might be considered to be some other side of being, but according to Parmenides this is not the case, and so he restrains the listener

And then also from this one, on which mortals knowing nothing
Wander, two-headed; for helplessness in their
Breasts guides their distracted mind; and they are carried
Deaf and blind alike, dazed, uncritical tribes,
By whom being and not-being have been thought both the same
And not the same; and the path of all is backward-turning.(6:4-9)

The option that “is” and “is not” are related in some manner, and hence in some way are “the same / And not the same”, is followed by those who do not know but rather wander aimlessly, a description befitting mortals in general; such a description clearly reveals Parmenides’s disapproval of such a view. What exactly such mortals think he lays out in the way of seeming described in the latter portion of his poem (fragment 9 onwards); his concern here is not to spell out such a view, but rather to reject it decisively:

For never shall this prevail, that things that are not are (7:1).

Line 7:1 explicitly spells out that being and not-being cannot associate, for if they did then not-being would have some degree of being, and this cannot be the case. This point is the lynchpin
of Parmenides's position; indeed, that this is so is emphasised by the fact that in his dialogue Sophist, wherein is contained his most developed treatment of Parmenides's views, Plato quotes line 7:1 (and the line following it) not once but twice (Sophist 237a8-9, 258d2-3).

Line 7:1 thus enters Parmenides's overall argument as a new premise specifically rejecting the option of reading the disjuncts "is" and "is not" as both being the case:

Premise 4: ~"is and is not" 7:1

Such an "option" might be deemed already to have been rejected by implication from Premise 2, for, logically speaking, one cannot have "is and is not" if one already has ~"is not". Nonetheless, Parmenides apparently regards this point to be sufficiently important that he puts it forward explicitly as a separate assertion, a further express rejection of the self-contradictory uncritical views of ordinary misguided mortals.

Having thus propounded the complete dissociation of being and not-being, Parmenides next continues to instruct mortals not to follow the path of both "is and is not", not to give in to their fallible sense perceptions:

But do you restrain your thought from this route of inquiry,
Nor let habit force you, along this route of much-experience.
To ply an aimless eye and ringing ear
And tongue (7:2-5).

Rather, one is to consider these matters rationally, to use one's rationality (logôi) in pursuit of truth:

... but judge by reasoning the very contentious disproof
That has been uttered by me.(7:5-6)

It is only by reason that the genuine nature of being can be determined. Parmenides recognises that what he is saying does not cohere with ordinary views on these matters, hence making his position a "very contentious" one, but he is confident that given adequate consideration the truth of his position becomes evident. The significance of Parmenides's move in this passage cannot be overstated. As Guthrie appreciatively observes, "Here for the first time sense and reason are contrasted, and we are told that the senses deceive and that reason alone is to be trusted. It is a decisive moment in the history of European philosophy, which can never be the same again." (1965:25) In this way, many years before Plato, Parmenides asserts that being belongs, not to the realm of the sensible, but rather to the realm of the intelligible.

There is a rather significant point which deserves to be raised here. As discussed in §1.1, noos qua noos is infallible; why, then, does Parmenides think it necessary to direct the listener as to how one ought to think, to instruct the hearer to use reason rather than perception? If indeed noos cannot err, then how can one go wrong? As von Fritz observes, Parmenides certainly appears to be suggesting that noos can be wrong as well as right:
Right in the introduction, when the goddess says *alla su tēsd’ apō’ hodou didzēsios eirge noêma* (“but you keep away your noêma from this way of inquiry”), the implication clearly seems to be that the noêma can err but that it can also find the truth. It is in perfect agreement with this conclusion that in a great many passages7 noein seems to lead to the truth, while in some others8 we find a noos which is obviously in error. (1945:237)

As von Fritz goes on to point out, it is a real difficulty to reconcile this with “the fact that in some instances Parmenides seems to assert that noos and noein are always and necessarily connected with einai and eon and therefore with the truth, which seems to imply that the noos cannot err.” (1945:237)

von Fritz’s proposed resolution of this difficulty draws not only on a particular interpretation of noos but also on a particular interpretation of the views of ordinary mortals, or doxa. After again affirming, “Parmenides undoubtedly does say that there can be no noein without the eon and that both are inextricably connected, even identical” (1945:238-39), von Fritz suggests that the constitution of a mortal is such that human noos is to be understood as inherently flawed in the sense that it is limited and hence unable to grasp eon, or what is, in all its completeness. According to this view

we are mistaken when we see dark here and light there and feel the warmth at one time and cold at another; for the world is not really split into these contrasts. It is all one everywhere and at any time: the eon. If this explanation is correct, it follows that even the plagktos [wandering] noos of the mortals cannot fail to be linked up inextricably with the eon. It could no more exist without the eon than the noos which sees the full truth. But it wanders and errs in splitting the one eon up into the many contrasting qualities, finding one here and the other there. In this it is all wrong and falls prey to doxa. (1945:239)

Human noos can err, but this does not imply that its focus is something other than the eon. Rather, human noos errs to the extent that it cognizes the eon in limited, piecemeal fashion, but proceeds to interpret these cognitions as complete and true. In turn, one may thus take Parmenides’s doxa to be the acceptance of partial truths about being as if they were themselves independent (whole) truths; so understood doxa does reflect what is, but only incompletely and hence imperfectly, and it is in this vein that doxa falls short of noos. Such an interpretation of matters reconciles doxa with noos in a manner which allows Parmenides to contrast the two without concurrently contradicting himself. A similar result follows with respect to the language by means of which one’s doxa is

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7 In his text von Fritz footnotes 2.1, 5.1, 6.1, 8.34ff., and 8.50.

8 In similar fashion von Fritz footnotes 6.5f. and 8.17, as well as fragment 16, which is not here discussed.
expressed. Understood one way such language is meaningful and true, for it refers to (parts of) the *eon*; however, understood in another equally important way such language is meaningless, for it fails to refer to the *eon* in its completeness. In turn, Parmenides's emphasis on the role of reason suggests that through a critique of the natures of being and of cognition mortals can overcome this shortcoming of their *noos*. Careful examination and reflection, it is suggested, will allow one to pass beyond one's normal limitations and attain a level of insight into being not immediately given. Clearly, Parmenides thinks that few of his time attempt to strive for such higher-level awareness, but his emphasis on the importance of the effort suggests that he does think that it is attainable, at least for some.

In summary, in fragments 2 to 7 Parmenides presents what may be read as a structured logical argument leading to the conclusion that only being is:

- Premise 1: "is" or "is not" 2:1-2
- Premise 2: "is" 2:3-4
- Premise 3: ~"is not" 2:5-8, 6:2-3
- Premise 4: ~"is and is not" 7:1
- Conclusion 1: "is" P2, P1-P4

This argument is of a rather odd sort, for its "conclusion" not only follows from a disjunctive syllogism but also stands as a separate premise on its own; however, the bottom line is that this conclusion, "is", or being, is all that remains available, for in the course of his expression Parmenides clearly affirms being, and denies both not-being *simpliciter* and any sort of association of not-being and being.

As well, Parmenides asserts that only being can be said or cognized, a point which has significant implications of its own when combined with the argument just noted. Specifically, a line of reasoning is available which translates into a structured intellectual/representational argument leading to the conclusion that one cannot say or cognize not-being. First of all, lines 3:1 and 6:1 generate the following premise:

- Premise 5: one can only say or cognize "is" 3:1, 6:1

However, as noted, line 7:1 indicates the complete dissociation of "is not" from "is":

- Premise 4: ~"is and is not" 7:1

Combining these two premises in turn leads to a new conclusion:

- Conclusion 2: one cannot say or cognize "is not" P4-P5

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9 Although he himself does not raise the connection, von Fritz's proposed reconciliation here of the plurality of appearance with the unity of reality in Parmenides is in many ways extremely similar to the treatment of virtually this same issue proposed by F.H. Bradley in his work *Appearance and Reality* and in subsequent supporting papers. Bradley's views on this and other issues are considered in detail in Chapter Four below.
As is discussed below, it is this second conclusion which is perhaps the more philosophically significant; however, as it plays the lesser role in the development of Parmenides's stated position, its implications are not thoroughly examined at this time.

Parmenides's rejection of "is not" is essentially analytic. It is part of its very nature that not-being, or at least not-being simpliciter, is not, and hence Parmenides's rejection of the road of not-being is sound, for not-being (as he construes it) is nothing, and one cannot say or cognize nothing. An absolute lack of content implies an absolute lack of the corresponding act.

However, Parmenides's rejection of the option "is and is not" taken together is contentious, to say the least. It is one thing to deny the being of absolute nothingness, but it is quite another to deny that what is has negative aspects. Surely, some may counter, in some sense whatever anything is concurrently involves what it is not; at root, for instance, being surely is not not-being. But this can neither be nor be said, according to Parmenides, for this requires attribution to being of a degree of not-being, however slight, and this cannot be done. In his view the two are polar opposites, and hence simply cannot interrelate. His reasoning regarding this complete dissociation of not-being from being is not revealed in fragments 2 to 7; indeed, if he does take them to be polar opposites then the separation of not-being from being is as analytic as the rejection of not-being on its own. Nonetheless, something resembling an explanation is found later, in a pair of lines from fragment 8 discussing the nature of being. Parmenides there claims,

Wherefore it is not right for what-is to be incomplete;

For [it] is not lacking; but if [it] were, [it] is would lack everything.(8:32-33)

It appears to be Parmenides's view that were being to associate in any way with not-being then being would be lacking, and that such lacking would be without limit (that is, that being "would lack everything"). Thus Parmenides apparently sees only all and nothing; either being or not-being but not anything in between, because for being to admit of not-being to any degree would be for being to be conquered by not-being, and in the end to become it. This is why not-being cannot join with being—because in the end only one of the two would remain.

In his poem Parmenides asserts that not-being can neither be said nor cognized. To modern readers such an association may perhaps seem strange, for while it is one thing to claim that one can only know or perceive what is the case, it is seemingly quite another to suggest that one can only say or think what is the case. Surely, one might argue, it is self-evident that one can say or think what is not the case. But if one can say or cognize only what is, then Parmenides's premise that what is not is not in any way part of what is leads to the conclusion that one cannot in any way say or cognize what is not. It is with this in mind that Kahn talks about Parmenides being saddled "with the strange view that it is impossible to tell a lie or to mention a fictitious entity—or the even stranger view that it is impossible to utter the words ouk esti!"(1969:713n18). Yet, as comes out clearly in §1.1.
contextually understood such a view is not strange at all. Given a view which takes not only
cognition but also speech and thought inherently to involve ontological commitment, it does indeed
follow that one cannot tell a lie, mention a fictitious entity, or utter the words *ouk esti*. That is to say,
however, that one cannot do these things meaningfully. One can still make the sounds ordinarily
associated with doing these things, but negation in language is not genuinely part of language but
rather only seems to be part of it. Given the utter dissociation of being from not-being it follows
that one cannot say what is not.

It is worth noting that this inability to say what is not even extends to the realm of
the possible, for given the position that Parmenides has staked out, if what is possible is thinkable,
then what is possible also is. It is in this vein that in his paper “Parmenides on Possibility and
Thought” Owen Goldin concludes, “Parmenides explicitly denies that there are unreal but possible
things or states of affairs, on the grounds that possible beings can be understood only as beings and
hence as real. Since any object of thought or speech is a possible thing or state of affairs, any object
of thought or speech is.” (1993:19) Now on the one hand Goldin is surely overstating his case here,
for Parmenides nowhere even discusses “unreal but possible things or states of affairs”, let alone
“explicitly denies” them. However, on the other hand Goldin’s conclusion regarding what
Parmenides would be obliged to accept in order to remain consistent is correct; any object of
(*meaningful*) thought or speech is a possible object, and hence must be.

At this point an objection ought be noted. Surely, one may suggest, Parmenides’s argument
that one cannot meaningfully say what is not implies that his own argument is meaningless and
therefore self-refuting. Thus Raphael Demos, for example, protests,

for Parmenides, not-being is inexpressible and unthinkable. Now, we do refer to
not-being in the very act of refuting it. To be consistent, we should say that
Parmenides, in refuting not-being, has been talking nonsense; therefore, he has not
refuted it... Were it absolutely unthinkable, not-being would not be even an object
of denial. (1939:151-52)

Furth touches on this same point, noting, in his poem “Parmenides makes constant use of
expressions that on his own principles are meaningless—‘is not,’ ‘nothing,’ etc.—in which fact
some observers think to discern a difficulty”; this leads Furth to ask, “Must Parmenides assume that
these nonsensical expressions have sense in order to prove that they do not?” (both 1968:269)

Furth’s reasonable answer is that Parmenides uses “empty names” such as “nothing
“without illusions, or supposing them meaningful, as a practical expedient in giving [the listener]
his drift.” (1968:270) As Furth observes, “Ideally, Parmenides should say nothing at all, but instead
should administer some simple negative reinforcement—e.g. hitting [one] over the head—each time
[one] ‘says what is not’; and [one] being assumed an apt pupil, [one] might be hoped in sufficient
time to get the idea.” (1968:269) However, as Furth also observes, “there are drawbacks to this in practice”, such as that one might yet not understand why one is being hit over the head, the practice might take a very long time, and such a procedure reaches only one person at a time, whereas through his poem Parmenides can reach everyone at once. Parmenides’s use of the very phrases he condemns as meaningless thus may charitably be seen as a practical heuristic device, a dialectical tool employed to draw his listeners where it is necessary for them to go. Presumably, once the journey is complete not only does one recognize that nothing can be said, there is no longer even a desire to try. Demos is right that Parmenides is literally talking nonsense, but this does not mean that Parmenides fails to accomplish his goal by doing so.10

In his poem Parmenides brings out the essential relation between ontology, cognition, and language embedded in the central notions of early Greek philosophy, laying firm hold of his starting point (be it the concept of cognition or an act thereof) and then following where it leads. While his conclusions are hardly conventional, neither does he stand alone: as Nicholas Denyer notes in his study Language, Thought and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy, “many found the very idea of speaking or thinking what is not intolerably paradoxical, so intolerable that they could feel forced to the most outrageous alternatives rather than admit that what is not can in any way be spoken or thought of.” (1993:25) Parmenides is not the voice of the masses, but neither is he a solitary figure shouting into the wind.

§1.2.2: The “Way of Truth” - Consequences (Fragment 8)

In fragment 8 Parmenides sets out on a new tack. He takes his initial thesis, that only being is, to have been established, and hence opens the fragment with the lines,

... A single story of a route still

Is left: that [it] is (8:1–2).

Despite this having so been established, however, he continues to argue for it, returning again and again to the dominant themes of the previous six fragments:

10 In this respect also Parmenides’s poem resembles Wittgenstein’s Tractatus, for in that work Wittgenstein too manages to say a great deal about topics which he claims cannot be put into words; as such, it may well appear to a reader that he too refutes himself through his own method. Wittgenstein’s response to this is found in the penultimate proposition of his work; he there remarks,

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) (1921:6.54)

In effect, then, as with Parmenides, so too Wittgenstein’s method is a dialectical ploy to draw the reader to where Wittgenstein wishes to lead. It does not matter that his statements are actually nonsense, so long as they seem to have meaning long enough to be of help.
... for it is not to be said or cognized

That [it] is not. (8:8-9)

Is [it] or is [it] not? but it has been decided, as is necessary.
To let go the one as uncognizable, unnameable (for it is no true Route), but to allow the other, so that it is, and is true. (8:16-18)
The same thing is for cognizing and [is] that there is thought;
For not without what-is, on which [it] depends, having been declared, Will you find cognizing; for nothing else <either> is or will be
Besides what-is (8:34-37).

Nonetheless, Parmenides is now also ready to move forward, for having determined that being is what is, he is now ready to discuss its true nature.

As noted in §1.1, for Parmenides to be is to be something or other; hence, his next task is to flesh out the nature of being by determining what somethings or other being is. He is able to do this because on the road “is” are “signs / Very numerous” (8:2-3) of the attributes of being. Although he does not explain just what it is about the road “is” which reveals these attributes, it is evident that Parmenides is in fact working out some of the implications of the tautology “being is, not-being is not”, for each of the attributes he derives stems from the rejection of some particular application of not-being. Perhaps the most significant attributes he derives concern the necessity for being to be simple rather than complex, a necessity which is spelled out through the following unstated but nonetheless underlying argument, the premises of which involve nothing more than examination of the concepts contained therein. Specifically, first of all, complexity inherently involves pluralism of some sort, for by definition a complex consists of a multiplicity of elements:

Premise 6: complexity → pluralism definition

Second, pluralism in turn inherently involves that the members of that plurality differ from each other, for if they did not they would not constitute a genuine plurality:

Premise 7: pluralism → difference definition

Third, for members of a plurality genuinely to differ from each other it is necessary for each to “not be” the other:

Premise 8: difference → not-being definition

However, as Parmenides has made so very clear, not-being is not:

Premise 3: ~"is not" (= ~not-being) 2:5-8, 6:2-3

But this in turn causes a series of modus tollens reversals leading to the impossibility of complexity:

Conclusion 3: ~difference P3+P8
Conclusion 4: ~pluralism P7+C3
Conclusion 5: ~complexity P6+C4

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It must be on the basis of some such reasoning that in fragment 8 Parmenides deems himself warranted in identifying attributes of being which tie in with its absolute simplicity: being is "one"(8:6), "whole"(8:4,38), "uniform"(8:4), "complete"(8:4,11,33,42), "continuous"(8:6,25), and "indivisible"(8:22). As well, Parmenides identifies a further range of attributes which ride on the simplicity of being, for being is also "ungenerated"(8:3,13,21,27-28), "imperishable"(8:3,14,21,27-28), and "changeless"(8:26,38).

Because these "various" attributes all stem from the same root, being's absolute separation from not-being, although it seems that Parmenides is saying that being is many things besides itself, what he is really saying is that it is not anything besides itself. As such, these "further" characterisations of being do not add new content, but rather serve only to clarify further the existing content. This in turn means that all ordinary perception of a changing world is wrong, must be wrong, for his argument has revealed the genuine nature of being and it is very different indeed from what it seems to be. Being appears to be many, but is actually just one. In this way Parmenides embraces the ontological monism for which he is famous.

As noted above, Parmenides also embraces the position that one cannot say not-being, that is, one cannot say what is not. However, the ontologically monistic position developed in fragment 8 brings out just how strong this position really is. According to Parmenides being is just one thing; but if that is so, then there can only be one genuine linguistic representation of that one being. Let what is be genuinely represented by 'is'. Any other alleged representation does one of two things: either it fails to refer to being, in which case it is meaningless, or it refers to being, in which case it is synonymous with 'is'. Either way there are no genuine linguistic representations, no genuine words, distinct from 'is'. Thus Parmenides is committed, if not explicitly then implicitly, to linguistic as well as ontological monism.

A consequence of this is that when in fragment 8 Parmenides sets down that being is one, complete, continuous, indivisible, uncreated, indestructible, unalterable, uniform, and whole, he is not only not describing a variety of contents but rather just one, although he seems to be saying a variety of things he actually is not. If being genuinely is one, then being and oneness are the same; but then so too are the words 'being' and 'oneness'. If being genuinely is complete, then being and completeness are the same; but then so too are the words 'being' and 'completeness'. If being genuinely is continuous, then being and continuity are the same; but then so too are words 'being' and 'continuity'. The same result applies to each of the other characteristics as well. There is only being, and hence there is only the word 'is'.
§1.2.3: The “Way of Seeming” (Fragment 9 Onwards)

Near the end of fragment 8 Parmenides's goddess ceases her divine revelations, proclaiming, henceforth

I stop my trustworthy speech and thought to you
About truth.(8:50-51)

Thereafter follows the section of Parmenides’s poem in which the goddess provides the best available, though nonetheless faulty, account of being commonly held by mortals. In the subsequent “way of seeming” she discusses being in terms of such more traditional cosmological pairs as light and dark or male and female. Two sorts of questions arise concerning the relation between this described world of seeming and the world of being which is the subject of the earlier section of the poem. The first question is ontological: What is the relation between the spurious phenomenal world of seeming and the genuine intelligible world of being? The second question is methodological: Given his stress on the importance of his account of the “way of truth”, what does Parmenides attempt to achieve by providing a “way of seeming” at all?

On the ontological question Parmenides is silent, but forgivably so; given his enormous contribution simply in identifying this heretofore unrecognised distinction, he can hardly be faulted for subsequently failing to attempt to reconcile it. Nor have commentators succeeded in moving much beyond this silence, for modern attempts to tackle the problem on Parmenides’s behalf offer little more than speculation. Perhaps as good as any is Guthrie’s guess, “The phenomenal world is of the nature of a hallucination or dream”(1965:75); but, as he himself observes, this in turn only raises the further questions, if the world of seeming “is not”, “why do we imagine it and what is the difference between illusion and blank nothingness?”(1965:75-76).

The methodological question Parmenides does address, for his goddess specifically states that she provides this best, but faulty, account in order that no mortal explanation shall ever seem more plausible.(8:60-61) However, while at first glance such an explanation might seem satisfactory, further reflection raises doubts. In her paper “Deception and Belief in Parmenides’ Doxa” Patricia Curd reasonably queries, “if the cosmology of the Doxa is false but ‘the best possible account’ of the appearances that can be given, what does ‘best’ mean here? How can one false cosmology be better than another false cosmology?”(1992:112) She then continues.

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11 This assumes that Parmenides did not attempt to reconcile the distinction. Given that most of “On Nature” is no longer extant, it may be that he did indeed attempt to reconcile the phenomenal and intelligible worlds, but that the portion of his poem containing this attempt has been lost; this is however, perhaps unlikely, for one might expect such an important aspect of his work to have been quoted by subsequent commentators and hence preserved.
To suggest that this is possible is either to concede some modicum of truth to the *Doxa* or to claim that there are criteria for judging included in the account. . . .

But where are these criteria formulated? On the view that the *Doxa* is entirely false, the only genuine criteria given in the poem are those for what-is, given *Alētheia*; and on this view nothing in the *Doxa* is acceptable by those criteria. (1992:112-13)

But if nothing in the goddess’s *Doxa* account is acceptable, then of what value is that account?

Curd’s own speculative but reasonable answer in this regard is that while the *Doxa* account provided by the goddess is indeed entirely false, in principle such accounts need not be wrong, and that the criteria spelled out in fragment 8, the “signs / Very numerous” of the attributes of being, are the key to judging such accounts. In fragment 7 the listener is advised to use reason in judging the matters being discussed. Curd suggests that such reason should be applied in comparing the criteria spelled out in fragment 8 to the “way of seeming” provided in fragment 9 onwards; the result, she contends, will be the discovery of what it is that is wrong with the goddess’s account of seeming, and of how to judge whether some other account avoids such error. (While this answer hardly serves to fill in the details on what an acceptable account would be like, it does at least point out a direction which further consideration of this difficult issue might pursue.)

§1.3: Conclusion: Parmenides on Negative Language

As discussed in the Introduction to the present work, generally speaking the problem of saying what is not is of two sorts, the problem of saying what is true about what is not the case, that is, the problem of true negative statements, and the problem of saying what is not true about what is the case, that is, the problem of false statements. No such distinction is present in “On Nature”. Rather, for Parmenides there is only the single overall matter of the relation between negation and ontology/cognition, or rather, their non-relation. Given his assumed inherent link between what is and what can be cognized or said, it follows that there is no problem of accounting for negative language, for there is no genuine negative language for which an account is needed. (Indeed, as discussed above, according to Parmenides one can only say or cognize one thing, the name of being, or ‘is’. But a language which contains only one word is, for all practical purposes, no language at all. Consequently, for this reason Parmenides’s argument constitutes a case, not only against negative language, but against language in general.)

In his book *Parmenides, Plato, and the Semantics of Not-Being* Francis Pelletier raises the reasonable and important issue of just what Parmenides’s general argument presupposes as premises. Among the premises Pelletier identifies are the pair “2a. The meaning of a sentence is the fact to which it refers. / b. The meaning of a singular term (or a predicate) is the object(s) to which it refers” (1990:14); in other words, Pelletier here points out that Parmenides adheres to a referential theory of meaning both for sentences and for words. Given such a theory of meaning
it is easy to see that meaningful language cannot be false, for meaningful language necessarily refers to some fact or object, and language which corresponds to what is is true, not false. But this results in the convergence of what is the case, what can be meaningfully stated about what is the case, and what can be truthfully stated about what is the case; in other words, ontology, meaning, and truth collapse into one equivalent package.

More than any other single factor, it is his desire to prove that one can indeed speak meaningfully yet falsely which leads Plato in the course of his dialogues to examine, to challenge, and ultimately to overthrow the devastating line of reasoning present in Parmenides's poem. As the next chapters reveal, this proves to be a task which calls upon every ounce of insight and ingenuity possessed by one who is arguably history's most insightful and ingenious philosopher.
Part I
Chapter Two

PLATO, AND PLURALISM

§2.1: Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, in his poem “On Nature” Parmenides spells out what he considers to be the implications of his conception of the interrelation between between what is and what can (meaningfully) be said. Key to all of the conclusions he draws is his assertion, “For never shall this prevail, that things that are not are” (“ON” 7:1), an assertion which affirms that being and not-being are utterly distinct, and hence translates into the premise,

Premise 4: \( \sim \text{"is and is not"} \) \hspace{1cm} 7:1

This premise is central not only to his initial conclusion that only being is,

Conclusion 1: \( \text{“is” (= being)} \) \hspace{1cm} P2, P1-P4

but also to his subsequent conclusion that there is no complexity and hence that being is one:

Conclusion 5: \( \sim \text{complexity (= being is one)} \) \hspace{1cm} P6+C4

Moreover, this premise also plays a key role in the development of Parmenides’s position concerning the relation between language and ontology. Equally key in this vein is his assertion, “It must be that what is there for speaking and cognizing \text{‘is’}” (“ON” 6:1), an assertion which translates into the premise,

Premise 5: \( \text{one can only say or cognize \text{‘is’}} \) \hspace{1cm} 3:1, 6:1

One implication of this direct association of language with being is that all genuine language necessarily refers to or corresponds to what is; as such, all genuine language is both meaningful and true. This holds irrespective of whether the language in question is simple, for example, words, or complex, for example, statements, for Parmenides does not distinguish between simple and complex language. The need for just such a distinction constitutes one of the emerging themes of Plato’s treatment of the problem of saying what is not.

The combination of Premise 5, that one can only say or cognize being, with Premise 4, that being and not-being are utterly distinct, in turn leads to the flip side of Parmenides’s position concerning the relation between language and ontology:

Conclusion 2: \( \text{one cannot say or cognize \text{‘is not’}} \) \hspace{1cm} P4-P5

This conclusion can be held in either of two ways. The weaker reading of this conclusion holds that one cannot (meaningfully) say what is not, but nonetheless accepts linguistic pluralism such that one can say what is in a variety of ways. The stronger reading imports Parmenides’s monism by denying that there genuinely is a variety of ways in which one can say what is; rather, just as there is only one thing, being, there is only one genuine word, the name of being. Both of these readings
rely heavily upon the premise that being and not-being are polar opposites and hence utterly cannot interrelate in any way. However, as discussed in Chapter One, Parmenides also accepts the view that to be is to be something or other; as Plato eventually brings out, this combination involves an inherent tension which cannot be reconciled.

As discussed in the Introduction to the present work, the problem of saying what is not actually covers two distinct (although related) sorts of problems: the problem of true negative language, or how one can say what is true about what is not the case, and the problem of false language, or how one can say what is not true about what is the case. While Parmenides does not distinguish between these problems, Plato does, for his concern is (at least initially) specifically with false language, with how it is that one can speak meaningfully yet falsely. Thus far understood, all meaningful language refers to being and all true language corresponds to being; his task, then, is to determine how a unit of language can be meaningful and yet not be true, refer to being and yet not correspond to being. It is not until late in Theaetetus that Plato begins to make significant progress on this matter, for it is there that he first tackles in a serious way Parmenides's rejection of complexity, the move at the very heart of Parmenides's ontological, and hence linguistic, monism. Plato comes to recognize the significance of this, to recognize that the difficulties of negative language are offshoots of the more broad difficulty of language in general; as a result, he realises that he cannot satisfactorily treat the problem of false language without concurrently refuting the stronger reading of Conclusion 2. In the end, it is Plato's insights into the relation between simplicity and complexity, between one and many, which underlie his resolution of the problem of negative language. Properly understood, simples and complexes each have their own distinct but nonetheless interdependent natures, and as such, so too do simple and complex language. But this in turn reveals that words and statements are not as similar as Parmenides had thought, a realisation which allows for a new distinction between meaning and truth, between reference and correspondence. Simple words can refer to (parts of) being, and hence have meaning, and yet also be combined into complex statements in a manner such that they fail to correspond to (parts of) being, and hence lack truth.

However, Plato's discovery of all of this is no easy task, for Parmenides's arguments grow out of conceptions which Plato himself also shows a strong inclination to accept. Moreover, Plato in particular finds Parmenides's position especially challenging because, like Parmenides, he too affirms the primacy of reason over empirical experience, partly due to his agreement that empirical experience does not directly reveal the nature of genuine being. However, unlike Parmenides, Plato does not consequently simply reject experience in favour of reason; rather, he looks to reconcile the two by developing a rational account of experience which explains it via reference to genuine being. Indeed, it is empirical experience that stimulates one's coming to know (or re-know) genuine being;
thus, while such experience does not directly reveal the nature of being, Plato believes that it does nonetheless do so indirectly. He believes that ontological and linguistic negation and plurality are not mere illusions, but rather are genuine; his task, then, is to explain in a coherent and conceptually acceptable fashion how this can be so. Many of Plato’s advances in this regard come, not from drawing distinctions absent in Parmenides, but from investigating the concepts employed by Parmenides to their bitter logical conclusions, so as to draw out the inconsistency buried in his overall position. By exploring fully the implications of the view that to be is to be something or other Plato is able to expose the underlying complexity and interdependence of being, a complexity which Parmenides, in his progressive yet ultimately crude manner, overlooks.

Appreciation of the importance of Plato’s progress on these matters is heightened when one considers how the historical context within which Plato worked differed from that of Parmenides. Society had changed radically between Parmenides’s time and Plato’s, for the intervening period saw the rise of the sophistic movement, the growing presence of self-proclaimed wise men who considered and taught a wide variety of topics, including “grammar, linguistic theory, moral and political doctrines, doctrines about the gods and the nature and origin of man, literary analysis and criticism, mathematics, and at least in some cases the elements of physical theory about the universe.” (Kerferd 1981:174) Despite this diversity, sophists were most famous for, and Plato was most concerned with, their teaching various social and political skills for profit; most prominent in this vein was the skill of speaking influentially in public, both through rhetoric, the art of persuasive speech, and eristic, the art of disputation. His concern was especially heightened by the manner in which some sophists latched onto the weaker reading of Conclusion 2 and held that it is impossible for one to speak (meaningfully yet) falsely, and hence that all speech is true, for if one cannot speak falsely then whatever one says is right must be right, leading to relativism of various degenerate sorts. Hence, Plato’s reasons for tackling the challenging dilemma bequeathed him by Parmenides were more than just theoretical. This practical concern on Plato’s part is reflected in several of his early dialogues: in Protagoras Socrates debates the famous relativist on the nature of virtue; in Gorgias Socrates challenges the notable teacher of rhetoric (and two of his students) on the nature and application of their craft; in Euthydemus Socrates urges two fraternal masters of eristic to demonstrate the philosophical value of their skill.\(^1\) Plato was concerned to refute the great Parmenides both for philosophical reasons and to halt the sophistic abuse of Parmenides’s sincere intellectual enterprise.

\(^1\) Indeed, commentator G.B. Kerferd goes so far as to suggest, “virtually every point in Plato’s thought has its starting point in his reflection upon problems raised by the sophists, virtually every dialogue in one way or another has one or more sophists either visibly present at or covertly influencing its discussions.” (1981:173) While his claim that this is the case in “virtually every dialogue” is an overstatement, Kerferd’s assertion is probably closer to the truth than one might at first realize.
In his dialogues Plato’s treatments of Parmenidean matters fall into four main stages, the first three of which are the focus of this chapter, the fourth of which is considered in the next chapter. The first stage concerns the linguistic side of Parmenides’s views, and in particular the rejection of genuine yet false language. In the earliest dialogues in which these matters are raised, *Euthydemus* and *Cratylus*, the sophistic context is most clearly present, as Parmenides’s rejection of negative language is asserted and defended by Socratic interlocutors. These interlocutors offer what, at least initially, constitutes a consistently baffling argument against the possibility of meaningful false speech:

| Premise 9: | to speak falsely = to say what is not |
| Premise 10: | to say what is not = to say nothing |
| Premise 11: | to say nothing = not to speak meaningfully at all |
| Conclusion 6: | to speak falsely = not to speak meaningfully at all |

In both dialogues the result of this argument is denied, either by Socrates himself or by an associate, but no faulty reasoning of the interlocutors is identified to justify such denial. In the second stage the sophistic context is less pronounced, but the subject matter, Parmenides’s linguistic views, remains the same; in the dialogues discussing these matters, *Republic* and *Theaetetus* (i),2 outright rejection of the association of speaking falsely with saying nothing at all is declared, but the theoretical scaffolding provided to support such rejection is minimal. In the third stage Plato shifts his focus from the sophists to Parmenides, and concurrently from language to logic. Recognising that Parmenides’s linguistic views have their roots in logical relations, and specifically in the relation between simplicity and complexity, in *Theaetetus* (ii) and *Parmenides* Plato launches his first serious considerations of this topic. These preliminaries establish the groundwork necessary for Plato to offer finally, in *Sophist*, a thorough, rigorous treatment which refutes both Parmenides and the sophists and establishes the genuine role of negation in both ontology and language, thus demonstrating that it is indeed reasonable and coherent to hold not only that one can say what is, but

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2 As it is discussed below *Theaetetus* is divided into two sections (indicated as ‘*Theaetetus* (i)’ and ‘*Theaetetus* (ii)’). for Plato’s treatments therein of the matters at issue in the present work play very different roles.
also that one can say what is not.3

§2.2: First Stage - Euthydemus, Cratylus

The problem of false language first appears in Plato's work in Euthydemus, a dialogue in which Socrates and some young companions serve as foils for two eristics, the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. This problem is further discussed in the somewhat later dialogue Cratylus, in which Socrates converses with two men, Hermogenes and Cratylus, concerning the correctness of names.4 In neither dialogue is any significant progress made towards a resolution of the problem; rather, in both cases those promoting the possibility of meaningful yet false language are ultimately left defenceless against their sophistic opponents.

From the outset of each dialogue it is clear that Socrates accepts, contra Parmenides, the common view that it is possible to speak genuinely yet falsely. In the opening section of Euthydemus, a combination of narration by Socrates and intermittent direct conversation between Socrates and his friend Crito, Socrates remarks to Crito how the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus have become "so clever at verbal fighting and always confuting what is being said, in like manner if it should be false or if it should be true"(Eu 272a7-b1).5 That speech can be either true or false is not further discussed at this point, for no one is yet present who would challenge such an "obvious" claim. Similarly, early in Cratylus Socrates implies acceptance of

3 It ought be admitted that the dialogue order given here, while in accordance with the development of Plato's treatment of the problem of not-being, does not square with the traditional chronological ordering of the composition of his dialogues. Specifically, Parmenides is often thought to have preceded rather than followed Theaetetus; if this is correct then to a certain extent Plato first presents the key to the solution to the problem (in Parmenides) and then backtracks somewhat (in Theaetetus) before finally proceeding to the problem's resolution (in Sophist). (For the traditional chronological ordering of the dialogues see, for example, W.K.C. Guthrie 1975:41ff., or, for a more modern treatment, Leonard Brandwood's The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues (Cambridge University Press, 1990:251.).) However, it should also be noted that some Platonic scholars have no trouble accepting Parmenides as later than Theaetetus.

A related, but broader question ought also be addressed: Does the gradual development of Plato's treatment within his dialogues of the problem of not-being reflect a parallel gradually developed awareness of the nature and solution of the problem, or is this gradual development simply a pedagogical move intended to spur thought in his readers? No definitive answer is possible; hence the development of Plato's treatment of the problem can be examined but his reason(s) for so treating it can only be speculated.

4 It is helpful to keep in mind that the term 'name' is to be taken broadly, for, as Guthrie points out, its references here (that is, the references of the Greek term onoma) "include proper names, nouns, adjectives and even adverbs" (1978:5n3).

5 All translations from Plato are my own, and are based on the Greek texts as they appear in the Oxford Classical Texts series. Quotations from Plato are referenced in the traditional manner, via their Stephanus page number / passage letter /line number.

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the common belief that false speech is possible by asking Hermogenes: "Is there something which you call speaking truly and falsely? / I do. / Therefore there would be true speech, and some false? / Certainly." *(Cr 385b2-6)* While not himself explicitly affirming this dichotomy of speech into true and false, Socrates's leading role in drawing this distinction may reasonably be taken to indicate his agreement.

### §2.2.1: Euthydemus

In *Euthydemus* the argument against the possibility of genuine yet false language arises when, with the aid of considerable verbal gymnastics, the eristic Dionysodorus manages to make it appear that the youth Ctesippus wishes that his fellow youth Cleinias was dead. *(Eu 283b4-d8)* Ctesippus responds to Dionysodorus's remarks by claiming that Dionysodorus has spoken falsely, a claim which prompts Dionysodorus's brother Euthydemus to ask Ctesippus, "does it really seem to you that it is possible to speak falsely?" *(Eu 283e7-8).* When Ctesippus emphatically answers in the affirmative, Euthydemus sets out to prove him wrong. He first gets Ctesippus to affirm explicitly the (Parmenidean) association of saying with being:

> Therefore one saying that [which one says] says what is? / Yes. *(Eu 284a4-5)*

Ctesippus's ready agreement to this point corresponds with the ancient Greek conception of speech discussed in Chapter One, and hence with Premise 5 of Parmenides's arguments; Ctesippus does not object that only some saying is saying what is, but rather willingly concurs without qualification that to say simply is to say what is. In similar fashion, Ctesippus next affirms Euthydemus's step that to say what is is to say what is true:

> Yet indeed one saying what is and what are speaks the truth *(Eu 284a5-6).*

From here Euthydemus's conclusion follows without difficulty:

> . . . so that Dionysodorus, if he says what are, speaks the truth and does not speak falsely against you. *(Eu 284a6-8)*

Faced with what is for him the ordinary meaning of his language, Ctesippus does not challenge Euthydemus's line of reasoning; nonetheless, in accordance with ordinary practical usage of his language, Ctesippus is still sure that Euthydemus's conclusion is incorrect, protesting, "but one saying these things, Euthydemus, does not say what are." *(Eu 284b1-2)* Against this response Euthydemus raises Premise 4 of Parmenides's arguments, the absolute separation of what is from what is not, again a move to which Ctesippus unhesitatingly agrees:

> Are what are not anything other than are not? / They are not. / Then at any rate what are not are nowhere something that are? / Nowhere. *(Eu 284b3-5)*

From here Euthydemus builds a second argument against the possibility of saying what is not. One cannot make be what is nowhere *(Eu 284b5-8)*; but to speak is to make *(Eu 284c1-2), and, as noted,
what is not is nowhere (Eu 284b4-5). Consequently, asserts Euthydemus,

no one speaks what are not; for forthwith one would make something; but you have
agreed that what is not is not of such a kind as to be made at all (Eu 284c2-4),
leaving him free to conclude once more, "no one speaks falsely, but if Dionysodorus speaks,
he speaks the truth and what are."(Eu 284c5-6) (While this second line of reasoning introduces
non-Parmenidean premises, clearly key to such reasoning is the Parmenidean absolute dissociation
of what is not from what is.) The end result is pure Parmenides: if Dionysodorus (genuinely) speaks,
then he speaks (meaningfully and) the truth and what are; no one speaks falsely, for to do so would
be to say what are not, which would be to say nothing (meaningful), which would be not to speak
(genuinely) at all.

A corollary of the position that one cannot say what is not is that people cannot genuinely
speak in contradiction, for if people can only say what is, can only speak truly, then if two speakers
apparently speak in contradiction either one of them does not genuinely speak (meaningfully) at all
or else the two both speak, but not about the same thing; hence, it cannot be that both of them
genuinely speak about the same thing and yet contradict each other. In Euthydemus the brothers
further emphasise their commitment to the rejection of negative language by also asserting this
corollary. Ctesippus tells Socrates that he is not mad at Dionysodorus, but rather simply is
contradicting him, a claim to which Dionysodorus responds by retorting that there is no such thing
as speaking in contradiction. When Ctesippus voices his obvious and understandable doubt about
this response, Dionysodorus lays out his argument:

Why then? There are accounts of each of what are? / Certainly. /
Then as each is or as it is not? / As it is. /
For if you remember, Ctesippus, we also showed just now no one speaks [of a thing]
as it is not. For it was made apparent that no one says what is not. / What then of this?
Do you and I any less speak in contradiction? /
Well then, could you and I speak in contradiction, both speaking the account of
the same matter, or doing so doubtless we would say the same things? / (He agreed.) /
But whenever neither of us should speak the account of the matter, how could we
speak in contradiction at that time? Or doing so neither of us would be mentioning
the matter at all? / (And he agreed with this.) /
But then, whenever I speak the account of the matter, but you another [account] of
some other [matter] do we speak in contradiction at that time? Or do I speak
the matter, but you do not speak it at all? In what way could one not saying what are
contradict?(Eu 285e9-286b6)
Just as parts of being cannot be incompatible, so too parts of genuine language, which mirror parts of being, cannot be incompatible, or contradict each other; consequently, speakers can never speak in contradiction to each other. To this line of reasoning Ctesippus has no response, for while he certainly disagrees with Dionysodorus's conclusion he can find no fault with his premises. Ctesippus is sure that both false speech and contradictory speech are possible, but being unable to provide argument in support of this he is reduced to aporia.6

In a coda to these arguments Socrates himself gets Dionysodorus to reiterate the main conclusions once more, obtaining confirmation that it is not possible to speak falsely, but rather that one either speaks truly or does not speak at all. (Eu 286c6-8) In this way the Parmenidean dichotomy of language into the true meaningful and the meaningless, with no place for the false meaningful, is reaffirmed. Moreover, this result is not specific to speech, for in similar fashion neither is it possible to opine falsely; one either opines truly or not at all. (Eu 286d1-5)

6 Lest one question Plato's attribution of the rejection of contradictory speech to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, it is worth noting that there were in Plato's time historical thinkers who held just that. One such philosopher was Prodicus of Cos, whose life bridged the gap between Parmenides and Plato. According to a scrap of papyrus containing fragments of a commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes,

Some strange opinion is attributed to Prodicus that it is not possible to speak in contradiction. How does he say this? It is against the judgment and opinion of all; for all conversing speak in contradiction both in ordinary life and in intellectual matters. [Prodicus] says resolutely that it is not possible [for speakers] to speak in contradiction; for if they speak in contradiction, they both speak; but it is impossible that they both speak about the same matter. For he says that only the one speaking the truth and reporting matters as they hold speaks about the things. But the one opposing with respect to this does not speak about the matters . . . .

Thus Prodicus clearly held the very position regarding contradiction Plato here attributes to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. (This translation is based on the Greek text (2nd and 3rd paragraphs) as found on page 453 of Von Gerhard Binder and Leo Liesenborgh's paper "Eine Zuweisung der Sentenz ouk estin antilegein An Prodkos Von Keos", in Wege der Forschung (vol. CLXXXVII): Sophistik, edited by Carl Joachim Classen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976). In similar fashion Aristotle reports that Antisthenes of Athens, a contemporary of Plato's (and a fellow follower of Socrates), also held that speakers cannot genuinely contradict each other. According to Aristotle,

Antisthenes simplmindedly thought nothing is said worthily except a [thing's] befiting account, one [property] to one [thing]. From which it follows that it is not possible to speak in contradiction, and nearly impossible to speak falsely. (Metaphysics 1024b32-34)

At Topics 104b20-21 Aristotle repeats the gist of this claim, citing Antisthenes's position that it is impossible to speak in contradiction as an example of a philosophical thesis. Thus Plato's consideration of the legitimacy of the rejection of genuine contradictory speech has a sound historical basis.
§2.2.2: Cratylus

In Cratylus Parmenidean views are defended by the title character. Socrates and Cratylus agree that the correctness of a name consists in the name's displaying the nature of that which is named (Cr 428e1-2); however, Cratylus does not agree with Socrates that this correctness of names admits of degrees, a view which leads Cratylus to espouse a Parmenidean position concerning what counts as meaningful. After denying that some names are set down better and others worse (Cr 429b7-9), Cratylus responds to Socrates's question, “Then are all names set down rightly?” by replying, “At any rate as many as [genuinely] are names.”(Cr 429b10-11) Cratylus clarifies his position by asserting that if Hermogenes (whose name literally means ‘descended from Hermes’) does not have something of the race of Hermes in him then it is not the case that Hermogenes’s name has been set down to him wrongly, but rather that it only seems to have been set down to him, whereas in actuality it cannot have been set down to him (since it does not genuinely describe him); at best, ‘Hermogenes’ can only be the name of someone else whom it truly describes, while at worst it is nothing.(Cr 429b12-c5) Simply put, a name can only be set upon its rightful bearer; if the bearer is not the right one, then the name cannot genuinely be set down to that person at all.

Picking up on this line that a name cannot genuinely yet mistakenly be applied to someone, Socrates next makes explicit Cratylus’s rejection of falsity in names, asking,

Then is one not speaking falsely, whenever someone should say that he is Hermogenes? Or is this in turn not possible, to say that this is Hermogenes, if he is not?(Cr 429c6-8)

From here Socrates expands the scope of the inquiry to encompass falsity of language in general, asking Cratylus,

That speaking falsely is not [possible] at all, is it this your account denotes? For there are many saying such, dear Cratylus, both now and in the past.(Cr 429d1-3)

To this pointed question Cratylus offers a reply which clearly indicates his rejection of genuine yet false language by relating it to saying what is not:

For in what way, Socrates, could someone saying this which one says say what is not?

Or is this not speaking falsely, saying what are not?(Cr 429d4-6)

In this reply Cratylus brings forth a number of associations. By mentioning “someone saying this which one says” he brings to mind the point made at Eu 284a4 that by saying what one says one says something that is. But this immediately rules out that by saying what one says, that is, by genuinely saying something, one says what is not. By then associating saying what is not with
speaking falsely Cratylus thus rules out the possibility of speaking falsely.7

Not content to let the matter drop, Socrates returns discussion to the level of names. Sketching a scenario wherein someone was to greet Cratylus by calling him ‘Hermogenes’, Socrates asks whether this greeting would in fact be addressed to Hermogenes rather than to Cratylus, or perhaps even to no one at all. (Cr 429e3-7) To this Cratylus replies, “It seems to me, Socrates, that this person would utter these things incorrectly.” (Cr 429e8-9) Socrates immediately jumps upon Cratylus’s characterisation of the person’s greeting as a (presumably genuine) utterance and attempts to get Cratylus to concede to the incorrect but apparently meaningful utterance a truth value, any truth value, for such a concession would reveal a crack (indeed, a crevice) in Cratylus’s position that names must name correctly or cease to be names:

But even this is pleasing. For would one uttering these things utter them truly or falsely? Or is something of them true, and something false? For even this would be enough. (Cr 430a1-3)

But Cratylus refuses to take the bait. Although the verb ‘to utter’ (phtheggomai) need not be taken as implying meaningful sound in the first place, rather than debate his choice of words Cratylus steps back from the whole realm of meaningful language with respect to the erroneous greeting:

I would say such a person makes a noise, moving in vain, just as if someone were striking a copper pot. (Cr 439a4-5)

In this way Cratylus reaffirms his original position: one cannot speak falsely by greeting another incorrectly, for one cannot speak falsely. An attempt to speak falsely is an attempt to apply a name to what is not there to be named, and this cannot be done. Cratylus thus adheres to a generally Parmenidean conception of language. Unlike Ctesippus, who is unwilling to admit the consequences of his views, Cratylus faces up to just what his view of language entails—that language which fails to name is not genuinely language at all, but rather is simply empty sound.

While critical analysis is thus far absent, his inclusion of these episodes in his dialogues clearly demonstrates that Plato considers the position Parmenides proffers in his poem to be of philosophical importance. When Euthydemus and Dionysodorus or Cratylus defend their view that false speech is impossible, they are not simply dismissed as foolish babblers; on the contrary, what they have to say is taken in deadly earnest, indicating awareness that the position underlying their remarks is no joke, but rather one of significant depth and power. The desire to reject Conclusion 6, that to speak falsely = not to speak meaningfully at all, is evident, but the grounds for doing so, identification of the weakness in Parmenides’s arguments, is thus far lacking.

7 Interestingly, when Cratylus asks Socrates, “Or is this not speaking falsely, saying what are not?”, Socrates replies neither by agreeing nor by disagreeing, but rather by deflecting the issue, responding, “Your account is too clever for me and my age, friend.” (Cr 429d7-8)
§2.3: Second Stage - Republic, Theaetetus(i)

In the second stage dialogues, Republic and Theaetetus(i), Plato begins to discover, or at least to propose, new directions in which to tackle the difficult challenge he is facing. Where Parmenides, seemingly quite reasonably, utterly distinguishes between being and not-being, Plato now offers the first tentative suggestions that this dichotomy might not be as extreme as it appears. Despite Parmenides’s admonition to the contrary, perhaps the third road, the way of both being and not-being, holds some potential after all.

§2.3.1: Republic

In Republic Plato takes his first steps towards finding middle territory between “is” and “is not”. The manner in which he does so is somewhat tangential to his attempt to solve the problem of false language, for in Republic his primary concern is not with true and false language but with establishing grounds for distinguishing between knowledge and opinion. Nonetheless, Plato does take some preliminary steps which eventually lead to progress regarding this difficulty; moreover, his willingness to venture along a path dismissed, even denounced, by Parmenides is in itself a crucial step forward in terms of the independent thinking needed for significant advancement.

In book E of Republic, Socrates, receiving at each step ready agreement from his interlocutor Glaucon, draws several ontological and epistemological distinctions important for present purposes. Presupposed within the Platonic ontology are forms, universals (of sorts) which account for the presence of properties in phenomenal individuals. In his effort to differentiate genuine philosophers from those who are merely lovers of sights and sounds, Socrates begins by distinguishing forms themselves—“concerning just and unjust and good and bad and all of the forms . . . each itself is one”—from their phenomenal manifestations—“but due to intercourse with doings and bodies and each other, showing themselves everywhere each appears [to be] many.” (R 476a4-7) He then suggests that genuine philosophers, who apprehend genuine being, the forms, are truly awake, while lovers of sights and sounds, who mistakenly hold that the phenomenal manifestations of forms are what is, think that they are awake but are actually akin to dreamers. (R 476a9-d4) Socrates next proposes,

Then could we not rightly say that the thought of [the genuine philosopher], who knows, is knowledge, but [the thought] of the [lover of sights and sounds], who [merely] opines, is opinion? / By all means.(R 476d5-7)

Having drawn this distinction between knowledge and opinion, he goes on to offer some important remarks concerning the nature of what is known and what is opined. He begins by drawing out a Parmenidean something-or-nothing dichotomy regarding the objects of intellectual activity:
Does one knowing know something or nothing? You then answer me on behalf of that person. / I will answer (he said) that one knows something. /

Whether [something] that is or [something] that is not? / [Something] That is.

For how could one know something that is not? (R 476e7-477a1)

In this regard, then, knowledge is parallel to speech and cognition: in accordance with Parmenides’s Premise 5 and Conclusion 2, one can only know what is, one cannot know what is not.

Having thus determined that genuine intellectual activity needs a genuine object, Socrates next sets out the extreme limits of ontology:

We hold this as sufficiently sure, then, even if we could consider it more often, that the thing completely being is completely known, but [the thing] in no way being is in every way unknown? / Most sufficiently. (R 477a2-5)

Socrates’s something-or-nothing dichotomy is now stated in a manner unlike that seen previously. No longer are the ontological options simply “being” (on) and “not-being” (mé on)—now they are “completely being” (pantelós on) and “in no way being” (mé on médamê). By putting them forth in this way Socrates (and hence Plato) opens up the possibility of some third option which falls, not at neither extreme, but somewhere in between:

Good; and if, then, something holds so as both to be and not to be, would it not in turn lie between the absolutely being and the in no way being? / Between. /

Therefore, since knowledge was over being and ignorance from necessity over not being, over this between [being and not being] one must also seek after something between ignorance and knowledge, if there happens to be something of such a kind. / By all means. (R 477a6-b2)

This third option, something “both being and not being”, clearly runs afoul of Parmenides’s Premise 4 asserting the absolute dissociation of these options, but such an observation is not raised at this time. Rather, Socrates continues by pointing out that if there is something between being and not-being, then so, too, there must be something between knowledge and ignorance.

At this point Socrates pursues the relation between various faculties and their objects. He begins by proposing that opinion (doxa) differs from knowledge (epistêmê) and that each extends over a different realm of objects. (R 477b3-9) He then stops and clarifies his view regarding faculties: “Of a faculty I look only to that, what it is over and what it fulfils, and due to this I call each of them a faculty, and the one extending over the same [objects] and fulfilling the same [function] I call the same [faculty], and the one [extending] over another and fulfilling another [I call] a different [faculty].” (R 477c9-d5) Having clarified this, Socrates now returns to his main line of argument. Both knowledge and opinion are faculties. (R 477d7-e3) Moreover, the two are not identical; nor could one reasonably think them to be, for as Glaucon points out, “How could
anyone intelligent ever set down the infallible as the same as the not infallible?" (R 477e6-7). Although this remark is offered by Glaucon rather than Socrates it is not without significance, for Glaucon here brings out explicitly that knowledge, like cognition, cannot be false, whereas opinion can. Clearly there must be some fundamental difference between knowledge and opinion such that they can differ in such an important respect.

Given that different faculties extend over different objects and that knowledge and opinion are different faculties, it follows that opinion cannot extend over the same objects as does knowledge. But then over what does opinion extend?

Therefore if what is is known, something other than what is would be opined? / Other. / Then does one opine what is not? Or is it also impossible to opine what is not? Reflect. Does not one opining bear one’s opinion over something? Or is it in turn such that [it is possible for one] to opine, but to opine nothing? / [This is] Impossible. / Then rather one opining opines some one thing? / Yes. / But indeed one could not rightly address what is not as some one thing, but rather as nothing. / By all means. (R 478b3-c2)

One opining must opine something rather than what in no way is, or nothing; thus opinion cannot be identical to ignorance. But neither can one opine what completely is, or unqualified being; thus opinion cannot be identical to knowledge. Opinion must lie somewhere in between, and hence so too its object must lie somewhere or other “between what absolutely is and what entirely is not”. (R 478c3-d12) In this way the something-or-nothing dichotomy is shown to be inadequate, for the “something” side cannot stand unqualified; rather, there are various levels of “something”.

The remaining task is to determine what it is that, partakes of both being and not-being, for whatever does so will be the object of opinion. To this end Socrates returns to the realm, not of the forms themselves, but of their phenomenal manifestations:

Is there anything of the many beautiful things which will not [also] appear ugly? And of the just, which [will] not [also appear] unjust? And of the sacred, which [will] not [also appear] profane? / No, but necessarily (he said) these things in a way appear to be both beautiful and ugly, and to the same extent for the other things of which you ask. (R 479a6-b2)

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8 A point similar to that offered here is offered by Socrates in the earlier dialogue *Phaedo*, wherein Socrates asks his interlocutor, “Consider also the following. Do not equal stones and pieces of wood, though being the same, sometimes seem to be equal in some respect, and sometimes not?” (74b7-9)
After citing further examples (for example, things double and half, great and small, light and heavy) Socrates asks rhetorically, "Then is each of the many [phenomenal] things more this which someone says it to be than it is not?" (R 479b9-10). The answer is clear—each phenomenal thing both is and is not a possessor of its various characters. But since this is so, there is surely no better place to assign such entities than "between what is and what is not" (R 479c7); Glaucon readily agrees, the many manifestations of the forms "are rolled about between what is not and what absolutely is." (R 479d4-5) It is just these things which are the objects of opinion.

In this way Plato commits himself to the position that the same object can both be and not be. Where Parmenides asserts, "For never shall this prevail, that things that are not are" ("ON" 7:1), for the first time Plato openly advocates the linkage of being and not-being, a move which directly challenges Premise 4, which is key to Parmenides's overall position. Moreover, Plato does not argue that some phenomenal thing is beautiful at one time and ugly at another, sacred at one time and profane at another, or more generally that it is that phenomenal things change which underlies that they both are and are not, a position of limited application given that forms are eternally changeless. Instead, Plato indicates that things both are and are not when in different contexts the same things both are and are not exemplars of some specific character. Although he certainly does not pursue this line with respect to forms in Republic, this reasoning is very close to that which ultimately underlies his solution in Sophist to the problem of not-being, both with respect to forms and with respect to phenomenal particulars. Thus, while in Republic Plato does an effective job of completely isolating the forms from their phenomenal manifestations, he there concurrently sows the seed by means of which the problem of not-being, a problem ultimately facing both types of entities, may be resolved.

Key to Plato's progress here, however, is a move which remains without logical foundation. Socrates and Glaucon have determined that since opinion can be false and knowledge cannot they must have different objects, thus leading to the claim that the objects of opinion both are and are not. However, that opinion can be false is one of the things Parmenides denies, and whereas

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9 It is worth noticing, however, that this commitment involves acceptance of the notion that knowledge and opinion differ with respect to their objects, a point which stands out not least because in dialogues both before and after Republic Plato implies just the opposite. Before Republic, in Meno Socrates explicitly asserts that what distinguishes knowledge from right opinion is its bond to one's mind, for so long as right opinion is not properly bonded by working out the reason it might yet escape (Meno 97a9-98a9); but this view makes no sense if knowledge and opinion have entirely different objects. After Republic, in Theaetetus Socrates expressly indicates that knowledge requires both reason and right opinion (Th 202d6-7); but again this makes no sense if knowledge and opinion have entirely different objects. Consequently, while the position that knowledge and opinion differ with respect to their objects certainly coheres with Plato's concerns in Republic, it differs significantly from his approach elsewhere.

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Parmenides seemingly has a logical argument in favour of his claim, Socrates / Plato has nothing more than common opinion in favour of his. Refutation of Parmenides’s arguments requires a much stronger foundation than has thus far been supplied.

§2.3.2: Theaetetus(i)

Two sections of Theaetetus are directly relevant to Plato’s treatment of the Parmenidean problems discussed in the present work. In the earlier section Plato returns again to the problem of false opinion, and, just as in Republic, he argues for the possibility of false opinion without providing logical grounds in its favour. (In the later section he finally turns his sights to logical matters, raising questions which, although not resolved until subsequent dialogues, set the stage for significant and genuine progress on the problem of saying what is not.10) The Theaetetus discussion of false opinion occurs in an extended passage beginning at 187d1. Socrates is troubled as to how false opinion can ever occur. After inconclusively considering false opinion in terms of confusing what is known and what is not known (Th 187e5-188c8), he next proposes an alternative approach: they must consider false opinion, “not proceeding according to knowing and not knowing, but according to being and not [being]”(Th 188c9-d1), thus shifting the problem from the epistemological to the ontological realm.

As discussed in §2.1 above, the argument against meaningful false language running through the middle dialogues can be spelled out roughly as follows:

Premise 9: to speak falsely = to say what is not
Premise 10: to say what is not = to say nothing
Premise 11: to say nothing = not to speak meaningfully at all
Conclusion 6: to speak falsely = not to speak meaningfully at all \[P9-11\]

In Theaetetus Socrates follows this argument quite closely, but this time to a different end. He first reiterates Premise 9 by reintroducing the equivalence between “opining / thinking / speaking falsely” and “opining / thinking / saying what is not” familiar from previous dialogues, proposing that to opine what is not just is to opine falsely (Th 188d3-4), and then suggesting that this relation constitutes the appropriate response to a now-familiar question:

What shall we say, Theaetetus, if someone should inquire of us, ‘is what is being said possible at all, and can someone opine what is not, either concerning what are or itself by itself’? And we then, as it seems, shall say regarding these things, ‘Whenever one thinking thinks what is not true’; or how shall we answer? / In this way.

(Th 188d7-e2)

10 Interestingly, while in Theaetetus Plato does not tie his discussions of these matters to Parmenides, he does go out of his way to mention Parmenides in a respectful manner, referring to him as ‘‘venerable’ and yet ‘fearful’ . . . altogether deeply noble’’(Th 183e5-184a1).
However, this direct association of opining what is not with opining falsely faces a familiar difficulty, that of how these differ from failing to opine at all. After establishing that in the cases of seeing, hearing, and touching one perceives only something that is (Th 188e7-189a5), Socrates and Theaetetus engage in a further exchange which again trades on the something-or-nothing dichotomy, and in the process affirms the other two premises noted:

Then does not one opining opine some one thing? / Necessarily. / And does not one opining some one thing [opine] something that is? / I agree. / Then one opining [what] is not [something] opines nothing. / It appears not. / But indeed one opining nothing altogether does not opine [at all]. / Clearly, as it seems. /

Then it is such that it is impossible to opine what is not, either concerning what are or itself by itself. / It appears not [to be possible].(Th 189a6-b3)

By asserting, first, "one opining [what] is not [something] opines nothing", and then next, "one opining nothing altogether does not opine [at all]", Socrates embraces both Premise 10 and Premise 11 of the argument above. Having thus put forward all three premises of that argument, Socrates is committed to the conclusion that speaking falsely is equivalent to not speaking at all.

Socrates's subsequent assertion, "it is impossible to opine what is not", thus seems to demand in parallel fashion that he conclude that it is impossible to opine falsely, exactly what has been alleged in the first stage dialogues. However, it is at this point that Socrates rebels. On the one hand, false opining does seem to occur; on the other hand, if false opining is equivalent to opining what is not then false opining is impossible. Faced with this dilemma, Socrates chooses to retain the former view and reject the latter—false opining cannot be equivalent to opining what is not after all:

Then opining falsely is something other than opining what are not. / It seems [to be] other.(Th 189b4-6)

As with the Republic passage discussed above, so too here in Theaetetus no proof that one can opine falsely is provided; rather, that one can do so is simply assumed, and the consequences of this assumption are then brought out. Socrates makes this move despite the fact that he still lacks an account of the nature of false opinion to support distinguishing it from opining what is not, for in Theaetetus subsequent attempts to determine how it is that one opines falsely are unsuccessful. Nonetheless, the very rejection of the equivalence of the two is in itself a large step forward, for false representations are now taken to belong, not to the realm of what is not, but to the realm of what is. In this way the problem of saying what is not, now distinguished as the problem of saying what is not true (as opposed to the problem of saying what is not at all) is finally placed on firmer footing: despite appearances to the contrary, saying what is not is in fact a special branch of saying what is.
Clearly, many pieces of the puzzle remain to be put in place, but equally clearly, an outline of the direction in which the eventual solution lies is starting to take shape.

By asserting that one can opine meaningfully yet falsely, Plato effectively asserts for the first time the presence of a distinction between meaning and truth. As noted, such a distinction presents certain difficulties, for the two concepts have similar grounds: language has meaning if it refers to what is, and language is true if it corresponds to what is. It is just this similarity of ground which has up until this point led to the amalgamation of meaning and truth. For Plato to justify distinguishing the two he must establish that these grounds, though indeed similar, nonetheless differ in some important respect. The seed of such difference is planted in the second section of Theaetetus, a section with implications not only for the problem of saying what is not, but also for the second of Parmenides’s problems, that of saying what is.

§2.4: Third Stage - Theaetetus(ii), Parmenides

At Th 188c9-d1 Socrates suggests that false opinion be considered according to being and not-being, and this remark foreshadows what is to come, for beginning with the last section of Theaetetus Plato pays significant attention to matters of ontology and logic, and specifically to the problem of simplicity and complexity, the problem of the one and the many. As discussed in Chapter One (and, briefly, in the Introduction to this chapter), Parmenides’s rejection of not-being in turn implies a rejection of pluralism and complexity:

Premise 6: complexity → pluralism
Premise 7: pluralism → difference
Premise 8: difference → not-being
Premise 3: ~“is not” (= ~not-being)
Conclusion 3: ~difference
Conclusion 4: ~pluralism
Conclusion 5: ~complexity (= being is one)

Consequently, if Plato can provide a logical argument demonstrating the necessity of complexity, he will concurrently have demonstrated the necessity of not-being. In the two dialogues discussed in this section of this chapter he works towards just such a goal. However, before considering his remarks in Theaetetus (and Parmenides) on this topic it is worth returning briefly to his earlier works, for while they lack a developed treatment of this issue, they do contain significant hints of what is to come.

In an interesting postscript to the Euthydemus exchanges of §2.2.1, despite his inability to find fault with the arguments presented, Ctesippus refuses to give in entirely, maintaining, “in some manner [Dionysodorus] says what are, however not as they are.”(Eu 284c7-8)
By wording matters in this way Ctesippus suggests that Dionysodorus has laid hold of being, for he does say what are, but he has somehow managed to alter some aspect of this being, for he says what are, ‘but not as they are’(ou mentoi hōs ge ekhei). This suggestion is echoed in Cratylus, for there Socrates and Hermogenes, having agreed that speech can be either true or false, continue, ‘Then this which would say what are as they are, is true; but [this] which [would say what are] as they are not, is false? / Yes.’(Cr 385b7-9) In both cases it is hinted that false speech lays hold of parts of being, but fails to put them together correctly, and hence fails to say what are as they are.11

In Cratylus Plato continues in a manner which suggests an early stage of awareness that negation is related to complexity, for the beginnings of an explanation of just how it is that one can say what are but not as they are occurs during Socrates’s partially successful subsequent attempt to dislodge Cratylus from his Parmenidean position that all genuine names, and hence all language, name only what is. Socrates eventually gets Cratylus to agree to a comparison between names and paintings, to admit that one can assign likenesses incorrectly, and, in the end, to concede that names also can be assigned incorrectly.(Cr 430b3-431a6) (The sincerity of this last concession is questionable, however, given that later (for example, at Cr 433c8-10) Cratylus continues to assert his dissatisfaction with the view that a name can be set down badly and still be a genuine name.) From there Socrates builds in suggestive fashion:

But if matters hold in this way, and names are not distributed rightly nor are given to things befitting of each [name], but sometimes [are given] to things unbefitting, this same thing could also be done to verbs. And if it holds so for verbs and names, [then] necessarily also for statements; for surely statements, I think, are the putting together of these.(Cr 431b2-c1)

With this swift expansion of scope Socrates succeeds in drawing language in general into the realm of representations which can fail to represent accurately. Just how much weight is to be placed on Socrates’s distinction here between kinds of statement parts, names (onomata) and verbs (rhēmata), is unclear, and his failure to pursue the topic further prevents additional light being shed on it, but it certainly seems to be clear that in critiquing Cratylus’s rejection of negative language Plato is beginning to focus on the issue of linguistic complexity.

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11 The Greek word hōs can mean ‘that’ as well as ‘as’, so that some might read Socrates here as asserting that one speaks falsely by saying (of) what are that they are not, which is rather a different point. The reading of hōs assumed here, of hōs as concerned with how things are, not simply that they are, follows that of Nicholas Denyer in his book Language, Thought and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy. Denyer, for example, similarly translates Cratylus 385b7-9 as “So that which speaks of things that are, as they are, would be true speech? And that which speaks of them as they are not, would be false speech? / Yes.”(1993:71)
Attention to complexity is also broached—though not yet fully explored—in another passage of *Cratylus*, one which involves the relation between wholes and parts. In *Cratylus* Socrates raises a line of reasoning similar to one developed in the latter stages of *Theaetetus*, that wholes and parts must be symmetrical with respect to their attributes. In *Cratylus* Socrates leads Hermogenes to the view that if some speech as a whole is true, then its elements must also be true:

But is the true speech true as a whole, but the parts of it not true? / No, rather also the parts. /

And are the large parts true, but the small [parts] not [true]; or [are] all [of the parts true]? / All, I think.(Cr 385c1-6)

Later in *Cratylus*, however, this assumed symmetry between wholes and parts is called into question. In his discussion with Hermogenes Socrates raises the notion of some names being complex, since they can be analysed in terms of smaller components which are also names. Socrates then notes, the point at which one must stop searching for such smaller components is “when one comes to those names which are as elements of the other names and accounts. For doubtless, should it hold in this way, it is no longer right to say that these [elements] are composed from other names.”(Cr 422a2-5) Again the matter is not pursued further, but the notion of there being analysable complexes composed of simple unanalysable primary elements (*stoikheia*) subsequently comes to be of great import in *Theaetetus*. While in *Cratylus* Plato thus fails to posit a consistent position concerning the relation between wholes and parts, it is at least clear that the nature of such a relation is on his mind.

Moreover, in *Theaetetus* prior to the last section the importance of the role of complexity is again implied. In the *Theaetetus* discussion of false belief Socrates comes to the conclusion that, unlike with perception, one can indeed opine falsely. But as Nicholas Denyer points out in his book *Language, Thought and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, in Plato’s refutation of the view that all opinions are true this association is “given a new feature”, for he there “had hinted that a judgment is something with a more complex structure to it than any mere perceptual stimulation. For even if a judgment was itself about perceptible objects, there were further elements to the judgment, such as its use of the concepts of ‘is’ and ‘is not’, that went beyond the mere perceptions of those objects (185 c 3-6).”(1993:110) Moreover, after Socrates’s reference to ‘is’ and ‘is not’, *Theaetetus* adds further concepts which operate over, rather than on a par with, perceptible objects: likeness and unlikeness, same and different, one and any other number, and odd and even. (*Th* 185c9-d4) It is surely no accident that it is precisely these concepts which come to the fore in Plato’s subsequent treatment of complexity as the key to unlocking Parmenides’s problems.
§2.4.1: Theaetetus(ii)

In the last section of Theaetetus the discussion takes a highly theoretical turn. The dialogue as a whole is primarily concerned with the question ‘what is knowledge?’. After considering and rejecting Theaetetus’s first two answers, that knowledge is perception (Th 151d7-186e12) and that knowledge is true opinion (Th 187b4-201c7), in the final section of the dialogue Socrates considers Theaetetus’s third answer, that knowledge is “true opinion with an account” (meta logou alêthê doxan). Theaetetus offers this last answer in a rather vague manner, claiming, “I had forgotten having heard someone saying this, Socrates, but now I remember it. He said that knowledge is true opinion with an account, but that [true opinion] without an account is outside of knowledge. And those [things] of which there is not an account are not knowable, even calling [them] that, but those [things] which have [an account], [are] knowable.” (Th 201c8-d3) Socrates responds to this answer by asking Theaetetus how this person distinguished between what are knowable and what are not, which is to say, how this person distinguished between what do and what do not have accounts, but Theaetetus is unable to say. Socrates then offers his own dream in exchange for Theaetetus’s dream-like proposal:

I also seemed to hear from some people that the primary elements, from which we and all other things are composed, are such that they do not have an account. For each itself by itself can only be named, but no other address [of it] is possible, either that it is, or that it is not; for already being or not being is being set to it, but it is necessary to apply nothing if someone is to speak that itself alone. One must add neither ‘itself’ nor ‘that’ nor ‘each’ nor ‘only’ nor ‘this’ nor many other such things; for these things running around being applied to all are other than those to which they are added, but it is necessary, if indeed it were possible to be stated itself and it had its own suitable account, to state it without all of the others. But now it is impossible to express any of the primaries by means of an account; for there is nothing with respect to it other than only to be named—for it only has a name—but the things already composed from these, just as the things themselves have been woven together, in this way also the names of them having been woven together come to be an account; for a weaving together of names is the essence of an account. In this way then the elements are unaccountable and unknowable, but [they are] perceivable; but the things composed are knowable and expressible and opinable by means of true opinion. (Th 201d8-202b7)

Socrates subsequently supplements this initial description of his “dream” theory with a summary in which he adds further shadings and details:
Do you remember then, friend, that a little earlier, supposing it to be well stated, we accepted that there could not be an account of the primary things from which the other things are composed, because each itself by itself would be simple, and one could rightly apply to it in speech neither 'be' nor 'this', as saying other and foreign things, and this cause itself makes it unaccountable and unknowable? / I remember. / Then is there some other cause than this itself, that it is uniform and without parts? / For I do not see another. / Indeed it does not appear so.\(^{(Th} 205c4-d3)\)

The theory here described is rather odd, not least because, as Myles Burnyeat points out in his commentary *The Theaetetus of Plato*, “The more you think about the theory, the more questions you discover that it leaves unanswered, the more explanations you feel the want of. It is a thoroughly indeterminate theory”\(^{(1990:128)}\). Most crucial in this regard is just what it is to be an account, and in fact the last pages of the dialogue \(\text{\textit{Th}} 206c2-210a9\) cover three (unsuccessful) attempts by Socrates and Theaetetus to determine what might constitute an account. But without knowing what an account is, the theory cannot properly be evaluated; it is for this reason that Burnyeat rightly observes, “the question ‘What is the theory we are discussing?’ has no complete and final answer” \((1990:129)\), and then adds, given the need to flesh the theory out prior to its evaluation the question what theory is being discussed might alternately be answered, “Make it and see”.\(^{(1990:136)}\)

Whatever vagueness imubes the dream theory, one point which is clear is that it involves an interesting mixture of pairs, for while on the one hand it involves a striking symmetry between ontology and language, on the other hand it also offers an equally striking asymmetry between simples and complexes. The fundamental ontological units of the dream theory are its “primary elements” \(\text{\textit{prôta stoikheia}}\), which are simple perceptible entities. These simple elements are contrasted with ontological compounds, complexes (such as “we and all other things”) which come to be by the simple elements “hav[ing] been woven together”.\(^{12}\) In parallel fashion, the fundamental linguistic elements of the theory are simple names \(\text{\textit{onomata}}\), which are contrasted with linguistic compounds, complex accounts \(\text{\textit{logoi}}\) which come to be by names having been woven together, “for a weaving together of names is the essence of an account” \(\text{\textit{onomatōn gar sumplokēn einai logou ousian}}\). The dream theory proposes that the manners of weaving together of the elements and of the names are comparable, for Socrates specifically asserts, “just as the things

\(^{12}\) Socrates’s description that the primary elements “have been woven together” \(\text{\textit{peplektai}}, \text{from the root verb} \text{\textit{plekō}}, \text{which means ‘to twine, twist, weave’})\) to produce complexes is highly suggestive, for weaving involves more than simply combining or mixing \textit{per se}, it involves combining or mixing in a manner employing pattern or structure or form. As such, it is tempting to read into Socrates’s description here a formal or relational aspect in the move from simples to complexes, tempting especially since such an aspect is recognized by modern philosophers. Just how much it is appropriate to read into Socrates’s terminology here is discussed below.
themselves have been woven together, in this way also the names of them having been woven together come to be an account") (emphases added) (hósper... houtō kai... ), thus revealing that the linguistic account of an ontological complex in some sense mirrors that complex itself. These fundamental units can be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>simples:</th>
<th>complexes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ontological: elements</td>
<td>compounds (= elements woven together)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linguistic: names</td>
<td>accounts (= names woven together)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given as a proposed definition that knowledge is true opinion with an account, it is now easy to see that ontological compounds would be knowable but elements would not, for compounds, being complexes, have accounts but elements do not.

For both ontological and linguistic reasons the dream theory’s distinction between simple elements and simple names on the one hand, and complex compounds and complex accounts on the other, is of considerable importance. Ontologically, Socrates’s descriptions of the dream theory’s primary elements reveals that they are to be understood as single-property monads, for he says, each element “itself by itself” (auto kath' auto) is “simple” (asuntheton), “uniform” (monoeides), and “without parts” (ameriston). The importance of the dream theory for the issues considered in this work is heightened when this aspect of the elements is considered, for in this respect the dream theory’s simples resemble both Parmenides’s and Plato’s basic ontological units; as such, Socrates’s impending critique of the dream theory carries considerable implications for the views of both these thinkers.

The similarity of the dream theory to Parmenides’s position is tempered by Parmenides’s view that what is consists, not of a plurality of single-predicate monads, but rather only of a single monad, the one being. The characteristics he attributes to this one being, that it is one, complete, continuous, indivisible, uncreated, indestructible, unalterable, uniform, and whole (“ON” 8: various lines), imply that his one being, like the dream theory’s primary elements, is simple and uniform, but in Parmenides’s case there is only one such entity and hence there are no complexes composed of multiple entities of such a sort. Also, as with the dream theory’s primary elements Parmenides’s one being can be named, although whereas in the dream theory there is a plurality of names of a plurality of elements, in Parmenides’s view the name of the one being is the only genuine name. Nonetheless, Parmenides’s one being is very like the primary elements in essentially being conceived as a single-predicate monad; hence, an attack on the coherence of the dream theory’s primary elements is concurrently an attack on the coherence of Parmenides’s one being.

The primary elements of the dream theory also resemble, perhaps even to a greater degree, the forms of Plato’s own theory in his classic “middle-period”, that is, circa *Phaedo* and *Symposium*. In *Phaedo*, which contains some of the most detailed discussion of the middle-period
forms, it is explicitly asserted that each absolute essence, or form, "itself by itself is uniform" 
\(\text{(monoeides on auto kath' hauto)}\)\(\text{(Ph 78d5-6)}\) as well as "simple" \(\text{(asunitheia)}\)\(\text{(Ph 78c7)}\), while in \text{Symposium} the form of beauty is similarly described as "always being itself by itself uniform with itself" \(\text{(auto kath' hauto meth' hauto monoeides aei on)}\)\(\text{(Sym 211b1-2)}\), thus revealing significant similarities between the dream theory's fundamental ontological units and those of Plato. Given this, just as an attack on the coherence of the dream theory's primary elements is concurrently an attack on the coherence of Parmenides's one being, so too such an attack is concurrently an attack on the coherence of Plato's middle-period forms.

Linguistically, as discussed above, the Parmenidean view treats all meaningful language as picking out corresponding ontological units without regard for whether the entities named are simple or complex. While Plato has heretofore clearly been alive to some of the consequences of this view, he has yet to mount a serious challenge against it. But this is just what the dream theory does, for the theory's explicit distinction between simples and complexes (in a manner which denies them parallel linguistic natures) stands in obvious contrast to this conception of how language works. Socrates's subsequent examination of the adequacy of the dream theory's epistemological view immediately focuses on the relation between simples and complexes, between parts and wholes, thus drawing into the spotlight the exact matter which is so important for the issues of central concern to the present work.

Socrates's critique of the dream theory begins with reference to the theory's claim of epistemological asymmetry between elements and compounds; indeed, he calls the assertion that the simple elements are unknowable but the complex compounds composed of those elements are knowable the "most clever" aspect of the dream theory.\(\text{(Th 202d10)}\) However, despite the cleverness of this distinction, just as in \text{Cratylus} Socrates suggests that if speech as a whole is true then so too in symmetrical fashion its parts, that is, the words themselves, must also be true \(\text{(Cr 385c1-6)}\), here too he disagrees that a whole can be knowable but in asymmetrical fashion its parts be unknowable. Because of his concerns in the dialogue, Socrates's critique of the dream theory is a means to an end, the end of disproving its claim of asymmetry with respect to knowledge. In the present work this epistemological aspect is far less important, and as such this aspect of Socrates's critique receives little attention. Rather, what is of primary concern here is Socrates's discussion of the relation between parts and wholes, between simples and complexes, for this aspect is indeed central to the concerns of this work.

Using as examples of simples and complexes letters and syllables, Socrates asks Theaetetus, "Well then, shall we say that the syllable is both of the letters, and if there should be more than two, all [of the letters], or is it some one idea come to be from them being put together?" \(\text{(Th 203c4-6)}\),
a dilemma whose horns may be formalized in the following manner.\textsuperscript{13} Either

(I) A syllable / compound is (the same as) its several constituent letters / elements,

or

(II) A syllable / compound is not (the same as) its several constituent letters / elements, being a single form resulting from their combination.

In this way Socrates sets up a dilemma which he presents as fatal to the dream theory: either a compound just is the same as its simple elements, or it is itself some further simple. If a compound just is the same as its simple elements then the compound cannot be knowable unless its elements are also, in which case the dream theory is wrong. On the other hand, if a compound is itself some further simple then it is no more knowable than are other simples, and hence again the dream theory is wrong. It is clear that Socrates treats these options as exhaustive; and it is for this reason that this dilemma leads Socrates and Theaetetus ultimately to agree, “This then we should not accept, should someone say that the syllable is knowable and statable, but the letter is the opposite. / No certainly, if we are persuaded by the argument.”(\textit{Th} 205e6-8) In the dialogue Theaetetus is dialectically convinced by Socrates’s line of reasoning; however, as commentators have universally agreed, the reader must proceed with great caution, for matters are not so straightforward as Socrates’s discussion of them suggests.

According to the first horn of the dilemma a compound just is the same as its component elements. Therefore, according to the dream theory, the account of a compound would just be the names of those component elements. However, it does not take a great deal of effort to reveal that such a conception of an account is inadequate, and given the structural parallelism between accounts and compounds it follows that a compound cannot just be its component elements.

A useful tool for bringing out the inadequacy of this first horn is a linguistic system employed by Denyer in \textit{Language, Thought and Falsehood}. He there introduces what he calls “Elemental” language, which is a dream theory sort of language consisting of the names of elements in combination, such that “The \textit{logoi} of Elemental will be formed from names by placing those names on a line from left to right.”(1993:119) He then distinguishes three dialects of this language: Agglomerative, Orthographic, and Sentential. Of these dialects Agglomerative corresponds to the first horn of the dilemma, for just as a complex is there considered to be merely the sum of its parts, so too “Agglomerative Elemental is so called because in it a \textit{logos} is a mere agglomeration of names. In this dialect it does not matter how the names in a \textit{logos} are arranged. All that matters is what names are in the \textit{logos}. Thus in agglomerative:

\textsuperscript{13} This formalization is a paraphrase of Burnyeat’s (1990:191).
is just a single *logos* written out twice." (1993:119-20) Now clearly, except for the most atypical cases the order of the elements of an account makes a significant difference to the overall adequacy of the account, for an account is not just a pile of names whose organization is irrelevant any more than a compound just is a pile of elements whose organization is irrelevant. (In *Theaetetus* this exact point is explicitly drawn out by Socrates and Theaetetus, for at 206e4-208b12 they specifically consider and reject an enumeration of elements as constituting an adequate account of a compound.) Agglomerative Elemental clearly fails to capture what it is to be an account; but in that case, the view that a whole just is its parts, that is, the first horn of the dilemma, is to be rejected.

The second horn of the dilemma can be read in more than one way, and the way that Socrates reads it, or misreads it, as it turns out, reveals much about in what direction progress on these matters is to be found. In the dialogue, after having rejected the option that a whole just is the sum of its parts, Socrates then continues, "Let it hold then as we are now saying, that the syllable is one idea which comes from the uniting of each of the letters, in like fashion in writing and in all other matters." (Th 204a1-3) From here Socrates asserts,

Therefore there must not be parts of it. / Why then? /

Of whatever has parts, the whole necessarily is all the parts. Or do you say that the whole coming from the parts is some one form other than all of the parts?

(Th 204a5-9)

In other words, Socrates asks, can a whole be some one thing other than its parts and yet still have those parts as parts? To this Theaetetus boldly answers in the affirmative. However, Socrates hammers away at this response, ultimately drawing Theaetetus from his position by a line of reasoning which is dubious at best. The two discuss whether there is a distinction between the all (*to pan*), which is just the sum of its parts, and the whole (*to holon*), which is somehow something more than just the sum of its parts, with Theaetetus asserting that there is such a distinction. After a period of inconclusive debate in this regard, Socrates finally convinces Theaetetus by arguing,

But whenever nothing is missing, is this itself not the all? / Necessarily. /

And will a whole not be this same thing, [that] from which nothing in any way is removed? And would [that] from which something is removed, either whole or all, at the same time become the same from the same [cause]? / Whole and all now seem to me not to differ. (Th 205a1-7)

Clearly Socrates's argument is unsound, for the fact that both a whole and an all cease to be what they are if something is removed does not prove that they are the same if nothing is removed. Nonetheless, at this point Theaetetus chooses to give up his opposition and accepts that a whole is
without parts. Consequently, a syllable is now held to be simply a new single simple unit, and hence on a par with the letters with respect to their knowability (or lack thereof). As a result, Socrates is free to conclude,

If then the syllable is many letters and some whole, and these [letters] are parts of it, [then] in the same way syllables and letters are knowable and expressible, if as was said all the parts are the same as the whole. / Very much so. /

But if one and without parts, in the same way as a syllable, so too a letter is unaccountable and unknowable; for the same cause will make these things be such.

(Th 205d7-e4)

Faced with Socrates's verbal gymnastics, Theaetetus opts for surrender: “I cannot speak otherwise.”(Th 205e5)

Theaetetus’s concession here is far from warranted, for Socrates’s treatment of the second horn is exceedingly unfair. According to the second horn a whole is one idea which comes from the uniting of each of its parts; but in his handling of this option Socrates suggests that once parts combine to form a whole they cease to function at all as parts, indeed they cease even to be parts. Rather, the whole come to be from the parts somehow mysteriously transforms into a whole which is now as simple as previously were its parts. But surely to treat a whole of parts only as a whole and ignore its parts is to fail to appreciate the depth of its nature.

The subtleties of Socrates’s (mis)treatment of the second horn of the dilemma can more fully be appreciated by returning to Denyer’s Elemental dialects. As noted, Denyer’s second dialect is Orthographic: “In Orthographic, it matters not only what names are in a logos, but also what order they come in. Thus:

POUND ASTERISK EXCLAMATION

is a different logos from:

EXCLAMATION POUND ASTERISK.["](1993:121)

As Denyer continues on to explain, “the logos:

EXCLAMATION POUND ASTERISK

mentions a certain complex object, gives its components, and also indicates how those components compose that complex; the complex object is of course composed of the exclamation mark, the pound sign and the asterisk, in that order from left to right.”(1993:121-22) Orthographic Elemental is clearly a vast improvement over Agglomerative Elemental, for Orthographic does, where Agglomerative does not, place importance on order within an account, and hence within a compound as well. However, where Orthographic falls short is in how it treats those parts within the context of the whole. In Orthographic an account of a compound either stands or falls as a whole, such that this “account” in fact functions as itself a name, one which is, at least nominally,
complex. In reality, in Orthographic the *logos*

POUND ASTERISK EXCLAMATION

actually functions as if it is of the form

POUNDASTERISKEXCLAMATION,

which is to say that what start out as its parts unite in a manner which causes them to lose their individual identities.

This latter form corresponds to how Socrates treats the wholes of the second horn of the dream theory dilemma. The complex compound is interpreted as uniting its simple elements in such a way that it itself ceases to be a complex at all, instead becoming a “simple compound”, as it were, one which Socrates treats as compound in name only, but in deed merely as simple. But just as an account is more than just an unstructured jumble of names, so too it is more than structured but fused names. Such fused names fit the Parmenidean something-or-nothing dichotomy, for either they name some corresponding ontological entity or they do not, but they do not accommodate the hints at complexity revealed in *Euthydemus* and *Cratylus*. Fused names cannot say what are but not as they are, for, being fused, they no longer (individually) say what are; they now only say what are collectively, but in that case they either say what as they are or they say nothing.

The bottom line is that Socrates treats both horns of the dream theory dilemma as involving something akin to Parmenidean monads. Not only are the dream theory’s simple elements monads, so too, according to him, the dream theory’s compounds turn into monads as well, with all of the corresponding implications, epistemological and otherwise. But clearly, to treat complexes in this manner is to miss out on what makes them complex, and it is in this respect that Socrates’s treatment of the dream theory dilemma leads to the theory’s rejection in an unjust and overly facile manner. What is needed is some third approach, one which treats a complex as a whole of parts in a way which respects both that it is a whole and that it has parts. What is needed is some sort of a conception of a compound which corresponds to Denyer’s third Elemental dialect, Sentential: “In this dialect, when we put one name to the left of another we thereby say that the object named by the first name stands to the left of the object named by the other. For example, by writing:

ASTERISK QUERY

we say that the asterisk is to the left of the query.”(1993:123) This sort of an account does what is needed, for it treats the parts of the whole as distinct parts which can say what are without the whole composed of those parts necessarily saying what are as they are. Whereas Orthographic treats a whole of parts as a single complex object in a manner which neglects the role of those parts, Sentential treats a whole of parts as a complex of objects, thus highlighting the importance of both sides of the equation. It is in this respect that Socrates’s interpretation of the dream theory dilemma
fails, for he ought, but does not, consider a Sentential interpretation of the second horn of the dilemma which respects a complex's status as both a unity and a sum of parts. Indeed, Socrates reveals no hint of awareness of this dual nature so central to this crucial topic.

Explicitly, then, in Theaetetus Plato fails to deliver the whole goods on the nature of the relation between simples and complexes. But what about implicitly? What is needed is something akin to Sentential; despite Socrates's treatment of the dream theory, does Plato nonetheless deliver something akin to Sentential in Theaetetus? Some commentators have argued that he does. For example, in his 1939 paper "Plato's Parmenides" Gilbert Ryle appends remarks on Theaetetus, which include the following assessment of Plato's interests:

it is unquestionable that Plato is in this dialogue alive to the following matters. What I know or truly believe or falsely believe is some sort of a complex of elements, and one the verbal statement of which requires not a name only, nor even a conjunction of names, but a complex expression of which the special form of unity is that of a sentence. What constitutes a complex, like a syllable, a unity is some feature of it other than any one or the mere lot of its elements, such as letters.

That is, Plato is now considering the places and rôles of 'terms' in truths and falsehoods, with his eye on the underlying question of what are the principles of organisation which govern the combination of such 'terms'.(1939:140)

Ryle continues on to assert, in Theaetetus "[Plato] knows that names are not true or false, that sentences are not names, that sentences are not just assemblages of names or composite names resoluble without residue into several component names; and he knows that nothing less than sentences will express what we know or truly or falsely believe."(1939:140) In other words, Ryle attributes to Plato a grasp of Sentential Elemental and of the key role it plays in sorting out the issues now at the fore. But while it is evident that in the dialogue Plato is on his way to the sorts of distinctions Ryle attributes to him, it is equally evident that Plato does not provide sufficient discussion to demonstrate that he has such distinctions clear before him in the coherent and detailed manner Ryle suggests. Despite his good intentions on Plato's behalf, Ryle, it seems, ascribes to an overly generous assessment of Plato's progress as revealed in Theaetetus.

But if some commentators read too much into the dialogue, others do not read enough. For his part Denyer observes, "It would be pleasant to think that the Sentential dialect is what the dream has in mind when it talks of logoi as interweavings of names. For if the dream had reached such an understanding of logos, our investigations into falsehood could soon come to their close."(1993:125) However, Denyer contends, no matter how pleasant this would be, this is not what Plato is there conveying. Denyer's reason for concluding this has to do with the distinction noted above between Orthographic's complex objects and Sentential's complexes of objects:
According to the dream, it is ‘we and other things’ that are the complexes that can be expressed in logoi (201 e 2; compare 202 b 2-5). And this is no mere slip of Plato’s pen. Whenever he subsequently mentions a complex that might be expressed in logoi, Plato mentions a complex object . . . . Complex objects could well be expressed in logoi of the sort that we have in the Agglomerative and Orthographic dialects. But complex objects are not what the logoi of Sentential express; for it is the true logoi of Sentential that express complexes, and the complexes which true logoi express are not complex objects, but facts. Thus the dream never develops its suggestions about the difference between names and logoi in a way that would solve our problem of falsehood.(1993:126-27)

Denyer’s criticism of Plato here rides on his assumption that the distinction between complex objects and complexes of objects, or facts, is unbridgeable. But is this really so? Denyer is surely correct that complex objects, conceived as Socrates discusses them, are irreducibly different from facts; but this does not imply that complex objects, so conceived as not to lose sight of either their complexity or their unity, would also differ significantly from facts. As a result, if Plato’s focus in Theaetetus is the nature of complex objects, but not necessarily in terms of the limited options considered by Socrates, then he is perhaps not so far from the answer as Denyer contends.

What is without question is that in Theaetetus Plato is working towards an adequate understanding of what it is to be a whole consisting of parts formed in a particular manner. As Socrates’s critique of the dream theory reveals, without such an understanding one remains within the iron grip of Parmenidean monism. Thus far, ontologically all that there can be are partless wholes; correspondingly, linguistically all that there can be are partless names. Plato has yet to demonstrate the coherence of genuine compounds which are not mere agglomerations of elements, or of genuine statements which are not mere agglomerations of names. This, then, is the task which stands before him.

However, despite the somewhat limited progress on these matters explicit in Theaetetus, there is evidence that Plato perhaps sees farther than he says. This evidence lies in Socrates’s description of the dream theory’s primary elements. On the one hand Socrates’s description of the elements clearly indicates that they are indeed to be understood as single-propertied monads, for he says, not only are they “simple” and “uniform”, but also, “each itself by itself can only be named”, for “no other address [of it] is possible”, where its name is to stand for its nature. However, in his discussion of this point Socrates makes it clear, not that the primary elements each have only one property absolutely, but rather that while each has only one property which is unique to it alone, each also has a number of other properties, properties which are in some sense foreign to it and hence not part of its unique essence. Consider again the following sections of Socrates’s statements

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of the dream theory:

each [primary element] itself by itself can only be named, but no other address
[of it] is possible, either that it is, or that it is not; for already being or not being is
being set to it, but it is necessary to apply nothing if someone is to speak that itself
alone. One must add neither “itself” nor ‘that’ nor ‘each’ nor ‘only’ nor ‘this’ nor
many other such things; for these things running around being applied to all are
other than those to which they are added, but it is necessary, if indeed it were possible
to be stated itself and it had its own suitable account, to state it without all of the
others.(Th 201e2-202a8)

. . . we accepted that there could not be an account of the primary things from which
the other things are composed, because each itself by itself would be simple, and one
could rightly apply to it in speech neither ‘be’ nor ‘this’, as saying other and
foreign things (Th 205c6-9).

In specifying that one must not apply to the primary element such words as ‘itself’ or ‘this’ or
‘that’, or even describe it as being, Socrates does not argue that these words (and their
corresponding concepts) do not apply to the primary elements, but rather only that they are “other
and foreign” (hetera kai allotria), and hence ought not be mentioned in a genuine linguistic
representation of any particular element on the ground that they are not unique to that element.
By describing matters in this way Socrates seems to be implying a distinction between what a thing is
essentially or uniquely, what it is itself by itself, and what a thing is in common with other things
through mixing with “other and foreign” elements, what it is with regard to others.

This implication can in turn be taken one step further. As noted above, in important respects
the dream theory’s primary elements closely resemble both Parmenides’s one being and Plato’s
own forms. But if one point being raised here is that any seemingly simple ontological entity has
not only its own essential internal property but also other, “secondary” or externally generated
properties, then the coherence of Parmenides’s and Plato’s fundamental ontological units as pure
single-propertied unities is concurrently being called into question. Moreover, a single entity which
essentially embodies both one internal property and a plurality of external properties stands as
an example of the very sort of complex object which has been the subject of attention through this
section. What is needed at this point is a thorough, developed treatment of the nature of the relation
between simples and complexes, of the relation between parts and wholes, which settles once and for
all whether this relation deconstructs in the manner Socrates suggests in his handling of the second
half of the dream theory dilemma. That is to say, it must be determined if it is possible for
a complex object to be both a one and a many, and if it is, then just how can this be.

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Given a modern context it is understandable that commentators are anxious to read into Theaetetus a developed insight on Plato's part into the position that a complex object is a whole whose parts are formed in a particular manner. But while this is understandable, it is also a case of putting the cart before the horse: before Plato can tackle the importance of how the parts of a whole are arranged and of what sorts they are, he must first resolve the prior issue, perhaps too simple to warrant attention from modern generations but seemingly perplexing to his own, of how it is that a whole can have parts at all. The role of form must wait until Sophist; first must come the possibility of complexity within unity, of many within one, the topic at the very heart of Parmenides.

§2.4.2: Parmenides

Plato's resolution of the problem of saying what is not is generally considered to lie in Sophist; whatever significance is granted to Parmenides is generally shunted aside when it comes to considering the problems of not-being and negative language. However, as comes out below, Parmenides lays much of the groundwork for what follows in Sophist by bringing out some of its key points in a different context, points which expose the necessary relation to being of both complexity and negation. The fact that these points are made in the midst of a flurry of logical deductions perhaps accounts for, but certainly does not justify, their generally being ignored.

As previously noted, central to Parmenides's overall position is the "complexity → not-being, therefore ~(not-being) → ~complexity" argument. It is thus clear that complexity and not-being either stand or fall together, for the affirmation of complexity implies the affirmation of not-being, while the denial of not-being implies the denial of complexity. In "On Nature" Parmenides builds upon his rejection of not-being to conclude that complexity must be denied and that being is one. In Parmenides Plato homes in on the notion of a one-being, following through with single-minded determination until the inherent complexity of the notion is revealed for all to see. It is as a result of his establishment in Parmenides of this unavoidability of complexity that he is free in Sophist to follow through and prove, contra Parmenides, that not-being must be.

Parmenides divides into two clearly distinguished sections, an opening eleven pages of reported dialogue and a subsequent twenty-nine pages of virtual monologue. The general focus of the first section involves attempts by a relatively young Socrates to explain to a quite elderly

14 To cite just two recent examples in this regard, in Language, Thought and Falsehood Denyer includes chapters on Plato's Republic, Cratylus, Theaetetus, and Sophist but not on Parmenides, while in his 1990 text Parmenides, Plato, and the Semantics of Not-Being Francis Pelletier focuses exclusively on Sophist, mentioning Parmenides in only one paragraph out of the whole work.
Parmenides\textsuperscript{15} the nature of the relation between forms themselves by themselves and the particulars which participate in them. It is important to note that Parmenides does not challenge Socrates's view that there are forms. On the contrary, Parmenides is well aware that it is of the utmost importance for the forms to be: despite the difficulties he raises in the dialogue concerning the relation between forms and particulars, he himself asserts the key role of forms, for he declares, if someone does not admit some single unchanging form of each of what are, such a person "will destroy altogether the power of discourse"(P 135b5-c2), thus suggesting that forms are a necessary condition of meaningful language.

However, while Parmenides thus grants that forms of some sort are necessary, it is not at all clear what sort of forms, or even of what ontological status, he has in mind. In particular, while he accepts forms in principle, in the dialogue he questions the absolute unity and unrelatedness of forms, aspects which Socrates contends forms necessarily possess.\textsuperscript{16} Socrates argues that on the one hand it is nothing strange if one should demonstrate that all material things are one by virtue of participation in the (form of) one and that the same things are also many by virtue of participation in the (form of) many (P 129b4-6) (a position which, given the difficulties raised in Socrates's discussion of the dream theory and considered in the last section, already warrants further attention). But on the other hand, Socrates continues,

if someone will show that what is one itself is many and also the many [are] one, forthwith this will astonish me. And in like manner concerning all of the other [forms]; if one could show that the kinds and forms themselves in themselves are affected by these opposite conditions, this is worthy of wonder.(P 129b6-c3)

This point Socrates subsequently emphasises again and again:

But if someone first should divide apart the forms themselves by themselves of which I was talking just now, such as likeness and unlikeness and multiplicity and unity and stillness and motion and all such things, and next should show that these things in themselves are capable of being mixed together and being separated, I would be wonderfully amazed . . . . However, I would be much more amazed, as I say, if someone could also show that the same difficulty itself [of being both one and

\textsuperscript{15} Unless otherwise noted, within discussion of the dialogue Parmenides the name 'Parmenides' refers to Plato's dramatic character, not to the historical figure.

\textsuperscript{16} Socrates's insistence on this point identifies the theory of forms which he is here discussing as that of the Phaedo / Symposium period rather than that of the Republic period, for whereas in the former dialogues the forms are indicated to be fully independent, in Republic Plato does discuss the relation of all forms to the form of the good. However, he does not there discuss the interrelations of forms in general, and it is this latter matter which is of concern at this point; consequently, the discussion in Parmenides involves breaking important new ground.
many] is woven in all kinds of ways in the forms themselves laid hold of in reasoning, just as [it is] in the visible things (P 129d6-130a2).

(Of the three pairs of forms Socrates specifically lists at 129d8-e1 two of them, likeness and unlikeness and stillness and motion, are among those discussed as the greatest kinds in Sophist, while the last pair, multiplicity and unity, is the focus of the second section of Parmenides.) Essentially what Socrates shows concern with here is how any form can possibly involve more than its own particular quality: surely the form of likeness involves likeness and nothing else, the form of stillness stillness and nothing else, and so forth.

The meaning and purpose of the second section of the dialogue, a veritable tour de force dialectical exhibition by Parmenides, is a matter of considerable debate; indeed, as Constance Meinwald observes, “understanding the second part of the dialogue has been the single most intractable task in interpreting the Parmenides, if not in Plato scholarship as a whole.” (1991:4) There are three main approaches to how one ought interpret the second section, each of which has had its philosophical proponents. The first approach, held by (among others) the Platonic scholars John Burnet and A.E. Taylor, is to “declare the dialogue, or the dialectical part of it, to be a joke. Plato’s object was to ridicule certain philosophers or philosophasters by parody. None of its arguments are [sic] valid or thought by Plato to be so. And its pretended problem or set of problems is a sham one.” (Ryle 1939:97) The second, philosophically preferable approach, is to consider the second section of general philosophical importance, although not directly relating to the problem set out in the first section. Hence Ryle, for example, proposes, “Old Parmenides tells the youthful Socrates that, to become a philosopher, he needs training in the Zenonian exercises, of which he then deploys a protracted exemplar. He does not say that these exercises carry a philosophical moral more relevant to the Theory of Forms than to any other philosophical theory.” (1939:145) The third, philosophically best approach, recently defended by Meinwald and followed here, is to consider the second section of the dialogue as of direct philosophical relevance to the problem outlined by Socrates in the first part—and thus to the focus of the present work.

As discussed in Chapter One, the historical Parmenides argues for the unity of being as a necessary consequence of the nature of being and its incompatibility with not-being. Early in Parmenides Socrates listens to Zeno of Elea, a disciple of Parmenides, argue against the multiplicity of being by demonstrating that if what are are many then the same things must be both like and unlike; but this is impossible, and consequently it is impossible for what are to be many. (P 127d6-128a3) Zeno thus attempts to prove Parmenides’s position by demonstrating that the opposing position leads to contradiction. In responding to Socrates’s challenge, what the dramatic Parmenides asserts in Plato’s dialogue is that it is not enough to demonstrate the contradictory consequences of any single hypothesis taken in some single way; rather, “one ought to consider the consequences of
the hypothesis not only if each [hypothesis] being hypothesised is [true], but also if this same [hypothesis] itself being hypothesised is not [true]". *(P 135e8-136a2)*  When Socrates does not understand Parmenides elaborates,

Such as, if you wish, concerning this hypothesis which was hypothesised by Zeno, if there is a many, what must result with respect to the many themselves both regarding themselves and regarding the one and with respect to the one both regarding itself and regarding the many; and also if there is not a many, consider again, what will result both with respect to the one and to the many both regarding themselves and regarding each other. And in turn also if you should hypothesise if there is likeness and if there is not, what will result from each hypothesis both with respect to the hypotheses themselves and to each other both regarding themselves and regarding each other. And the same reckoning concerning unlikeness and concerning motion and stillness and concerning genesis and destruction, both concerning it that it is and that it is not. And in a word, concerning whatever, you should always hypothesise as that it is and as that it is not, and when it is affected by another condition it is necessary to consider the results regarding itself and regarding each one of the others, whatever you should advance, both regarding most and regarding all in like manner. And also the others both regarding themselves and regarding others, whatever you should bring forward at any time, you should hypothesise what is hypothesised as that it is, and as that it is not, if you intend to be trained completely to discern the truth authoritatively. *(P 136a4-c5)*

Although he does not at this point directly indicate the possible outcome of the described process, Parmenides here opens up for the first time the path by which it can be the case that each of a hypothesis and its negation leads to contradictory consequences, resulting in a logical antinomy which casts a new light not on either the hypothesis or its negation separately, but rather on both together. For his demonstration of such training Parmenides chooses "my hypothesis concerning the one, whether one is or one is not, what must result [in each case]". *(P 137b3-4)*

Such a choice is particularly suitable for present concerns, for, as discussed above, as conceived in his middle-period Plato’s forms are themselves considered to be one-beings or unities, and hence the results of this particular hypothesis will automatically apply to such forms. Specifically, if Parmenides can show that the notion of an absolute one-being is incoherent, that whatever is must be both one and

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17 Of course, this is not exactly historically correct. While the historical Parmenides does hold that being is one, his primary hypothesis is that being is, not that one is. *(See Chapter One.)*

Exactly what the dramatic Parmenides takes as his starting hypotheses is sometimes a matter of dispute; for a good discussion of the options and why "one is or one is not" is the best choice see Meinwald 1991:39-45.
many, then he will have both met Socrates's challenge and revealed a logical insight with profound consequences for the matters here at issue. He will have demonstrated that ontology necessarily involves complexity, which the historical Parmenides denies.

After settling that young Aristoteles will answer his questions,\textsuperscript{18} Parmenides begins examining his hypothesis in much the same manner as in \textit{Theaetetus} Socrates examines the primary elements of the dream theory. Socrates there argues that a single syllable can neither be a whole nor have parts: a whole just is all of the parts (\textit{Th} 204a5-8), for a whole just is that of which no part is missing (\textit{Th} 205a4-5), but in that case a syllable, having parts, would be a many rather than a one. So too in \textit{Parmenides} Parmenides opens up his dialectical demonstration by asserting,

Well then, if one is, could it be other than that the one is not many? / How could it? / Then it is necessary that neither are there parts of it nor is it a whole. / Why then? / Doubtless the part is a part of a whole. / Yes. / And what is the whole? Would a whole not be that of which no part is absent? / Certainly. / Then in both cases the one would be from parts, being a whole and having parts. / Necessarily. / Then in both cases in this way the one would be many, but not one. / True. / But it is necessary that it itself is not many but one. / It is necessary. / Then neither will it be a whole nor will it have parts, if the one will be one. / No. (P 137c4-d3)

The parallel nature of the two arguments is striking; however, whereas in \textit{Theaetetus} Socrates accepts this as the end of the matter and a refutation of the view that a syllable can be a one in a different way than an element, in \textit{Parmenides} Parmenides continues on to show that there is much more involved.

From this beginning Parmenides goes on to demonstrate that the one is neither straight nor round (P 137d4-138a1), is not anywhere, neither in itself nor in another (P 138a2-b6), is neither in motion nor at rest (P 138b7-139b3), is neither other than nor the same as itself or another (P 139b4-e6), is neither like nor unlike either itself or another (P 139e7-140b5), is neither equal to, greater than, nor less than itself or another (P 140b6-d8), has nothing to do with time and does not exist in time (P 140e1-141d6), and ultimately neither is nor is one and can neither be named nor described nor thought nor known. (P 141d7-142a6) However, the first part of this last result, that is, that the one is not, contradicts the hypothesis, which is that one is. Hence, Parmenides shifts into reverse, beginning with the relation between the one and being:

\textsuperscript{18} Not the famous philosopher, but rather "the one who eventually became one of the thirty [tyrants]"(P 127d2-3).
If one is, is it such that it itself is, but does not partake of being? / It is not such. / 
Therefore the being of the one would be, but would not be the same as the one; 
for that would not be the being of [the one], nor would that, the one, partake of 
that [being], but it would be alike to say that one is and that one is one. But now 
the hypothesis is not this, if one is one, what must result, but if one is; is it not so? / 
Certainly then. / 
Accordingly because the 'is' signifies something other than the 'one'? / Necessarily. / 
Then is it other than that the one partakes of being, this would be what is being said, 
whenever someone should say in short that 'one is'? / Certainly. (P 142b5-c7) 
In this passage Plato, through Parmenides, reaches the crux of the problem of the one and the many. 
That one is inherently involves that one partakes both of unity and of being; hence, that one is 
inherently involves a multiplicity. Consequently, the form of unity, which is one of the things that is, 
is not a one-being. But this applies to all forms, not just unity; for example, that likeness is 
inherently involves that likeness partakes both of likeness and of being, and hence that likeness is 
inherently involves a multiplicity; consequently the form of likeness is also not a one-being. There 
can be no one-beings, for one and being together already are two. Nor is Plato content to stop here; 
he further has Parmenides observe, 

Then if being is one thing and one is another, neither is one other than being due to 
its unity nor is being other than one due to its being, but rather they are other than 
each other due to their otherness and difference. . . . So that otherness is not 
the same either as one or as being. (P 143b3-7) 
In this way otherness, or difference, is identified as a third feature of any form. Thus it is revealed 
that forms necessarily are complex; while the precise nature of this complexity is not yet apparent, 
it certainly involves the interrelation of forms, for any form necessarily relates to at least three forms: 
being (for the form is), otherness (for it is other than being), and itself. Hence, long before Plato's 
discussion in Sophist about the all-pervasive nature of the greatest kinds he makes much the same 
points, with a great deal less fanfare, in Parmenides. 

With these points secured, contradictories of the previous results are shown to follow: the one 
has some shape (P 144e8-145b5), is both in itself and in others (P 145b6-e6), is both in motion and 
at rest (P 145e7-146a8), is both other than and the same as itself and others (P 146a9-147b8), 
is both like and unlike itself (P 147c1-148d4), both touches and does not touch itself and others 
(P 148d5-149d7), is equal to, greater than, and less than itself and others (P 149d8-151e2), partakes 
of the past, present, and future (P 151e3-155d3), and is nameable and describable and opinable and 
knowable (P 155d3-e3).
What is brought out here is that the hypothesis that one is leads to a multiplicity of (apparently) contradictory results: one both has and does not have shape, both is and is not in itself and others, both is and is not in motion and at rest, and so forth for all of the consequences deduced. Nor is such deduction of contradictory results limited just to one with respect to itself; similar results are deduced with respect to others if one is \((P \ 157b6-160b4)\). In parallel fashion contradictory consequences are deduced from the hypothesis that one is not, both with respect to itself \((P \ 160b5-164b4)\) and with respect to others \((P \ 164b5-166c2)\). Such outcomes lie behind the statement with which Parmenides closes the dialogue: "... whether one is or is not, it itself and the others both regarding themselves and regarding each other all in every way both are and are not and appear and do not appear."\((P \ 166c3-5)\) ("Most true", agrees Aristoteles insightfully.)

Given that the issue of the one and the many is clearly of great importance to the central issues of the present work, it is of the utmost importance to determine just what the reader is to make of these explicitly acknowledged contradictions. In *Plato's Parmenides* Meinwald describes two general sorts of approaches:

The first basic kind of interpretation takes as its starting point an understanding of the contradictions as real. This produces a need to find things to reject.

The second type of interpretation supposes the contradictions to be only apparent.

Since the results of the dialectical exercises are not contradictory on this view, this type of interpretation has the potential to show that we can follow the lead of the interlocutor and accept all the conclusions.\((1991:20-21)\)

As Meinwald points out, the first sort of approach, that which understands the contradictions as real, "must suppose that Plato's purpose is to display certain mistakes in order to motivate us to recognize and reject them."\((1991:21)\) However, as she also points out, although this approach "does receive support from the circumstance that some of the individual arguments have always looked rather embarrassingly bad"\((1991:21)\), it also has a number of drawbacks, of which the most prominent is the following:

in the Socratic dialogues . . . . we commonly find that at least one contradiction appears to obtain among the things to which the interlocutor has committed himself . . . . when this point is reached, the interlocutor and Socrates remark on the fact, drawing attention to the appearance of the contradiction as problematic to the point of being unacceptable. . . . The situation regarding Parmenides' gymnastic dialectic is completely different. For although the incidence of grammatical contradictions is much higher and more systematic than in the Socratic dialogues, and many of the individual conclusions are as superficially paradoxical as they could be, there are no expressions of dissatisfaction at these results.\((1991:21)\)
As Meinwald goes on to observe, these contradictions are explicitly acknowledged in Parmenides's closing statement; yet, all Aristoteles offers in response is strong agreement, while the others present (including Socrates) say nothing. If Plato's purpose here is indeed "to display certain mistakes in order to motivate us to recognize and reject them", he is attempting to accomplish this goal in a most obscure manner.

The alternative, then, is to hold that the contradictions are apparent rather than real. Historically, those propounding this approach have attempted to account for the nature of Parmenides's arguments by supposing that different sections of argument deal with different subjects. That supposition is the basis of the interpretation associated with Neoplatonism, and also of that developed in our own century by Francis Cornford. Now clearly, if The One of one section is not the same entity as The One of another, there is no threat of real contradiction in results like

The One does not move

and

The One moves

if they occur in different sections. Thus, the basic claim of the multiple-subject type of interpretation enables it to dispose satisfactorily of the threat of contradiction, putting it in a position to go on to construe all the arguments as acceptable and as meant to establish their conclusions. (1991:24)

However, this interpretation is also subject to a major objection: Parmenides himself explicitly asserts in his description of the dialectic which he subsequently demonstrates that one is to take the hypothesis and compare what follows from both its assertion and its denial with regard to the various stated relations (that is, concerning the one regarding itself, the one regarding the others, the others regarding themselves, and the others regarding the one). While the multiple-subject interpretation thus salvages the consistency of the exercise, it concurrently savages its purpose.

What is needed is an interpretation which avoids not only reading the various conclusions as contradictory but also reading the subject of the hypothesis as changing. Just such an interpretation is provided by Meinwald herself. In her paper "Good-bye to the Third Man" she summarises the conclusions of her book regarding a distinction crucial to understanding Parmenides's dialectical demonstration, a distinction between two kinds of predication, marked in the Parmenides by the phrases "in relation to itself" (pros heauto) and "in relation to the others" (pros ta alla) . . . . A predication of a subject in relation to itself holds in virtue of a relation internal to the subject's own nature, and can so be employed to reveal the structure
of that nature. A predication in relation to the others by contrast concerns its subject’s display of some feature, which Plato takes to be conformable in general to something other – namely the nature associated with that feature. (1992:378)

According to this distinction, any form has its own property, the property of which it is the form, *pros heauto*, or in relation to itself. Any other property it has it has in virtue of partaking of some other form, and as such has that property *pros ta alla*, or in relation to the others. In relation to itself the only property the one has is oneness, or unity; in relation to the others it has all of its other properties, such as being, otherness, and so forth.

Reading the distinction Meinwald describes into *Parmenides*, and more specifically into Parmenides’s dialectical demonstration, does indeed make perfect sense of the text. When Parmenides concludes the first dialectical section by asserting that the one lacks numerous properties he is actually saying that it does not have these properties in virtue of itself, or its own internal nature; when he goes on to conclude the second dialectical section by asserting that the one possesses numerous qualities he is actually saying that it has these properties in virtue of the others, or its external nature (that is, the other forms of which it partakes). In this way the apparent contradictions vanish, for once the qualifications *pros heauto* or *pros ta alla* are considered, it is clear that the properties being asserted of and denied of the one are not the same. The same approach works with regard to the other pairs of sections.

Thus, although the moral of the dialogue is not explicitly drawn, what Plato demonstrates in *Parmenides* is that each form is one in relation to itself and many in relation to the others, and hence is both a one and a many. Properly understood, one and many are not mutually exclusive alternatives after all, but rather are actually opposite sides of the same coin. What is one is at the same time many, and what is many is at the same time one. In this way Parmenides meets the challenge put forth by Socrates in the first part of the dialogue, for he surely has shown, “what is one itself is many and also the many [are] one”. As a result Theaetetus was surely right in arguing against Socrates in *Theaetetus*, “the whole coming from the parts is some one form other than all of the parts”, for where in that dialogue Socrates simplistically makes simplicity and complexity, oneness and manyness, utterly distinct alternatives, it is now shown that the two are anything but distinct; consequently, the reason why Socrates’s “refutation” of the dream theory is illegitimate is finally laid bare, for the alternatives are more broad than he acknowledges.

Besides clarifying the nature of the interrelations of forms, another important point brought out in *Parmenides* must be considered. This point involves the dependence of being upon content, or upon being something or other, to which Plato, just as (the historical) Parmenides, is committed. This dependence has a negative corollary: just as to be is to be something or other, so too not to be just is not to be something or other. What this means is that not-being also cannot intelligibly be
devoid of content, that not-being necessarily involves reference to what it is that is not, thus identifying just what it is that is not-being. As noted, (the dramatic) Parmenides commences the second half of his demonstration by considering what follows if one is not. As he there brings out, despite its involving not-being, the hypothesis that one is not has a determinate content. Parmenides first establishes that the hypothesis that one is not differs from, indeed is the complete opposite of, the hypothesis that not one is not (P 160b6-c2), and then expands.

Therefore also it is clear now that a person says something other than the others of what is not, whenever a person should say 'if one is not', and we know what that person means? / We know. /

First then a person says something known, next something other than the others, whenever a person should say 'one', whether that person should apply to it what is or what is not. For not less is something known, if the thing is said to be something that is not, and also [not less will it be known] that it differs from the others. Or not? /

Necessarily.(P 160c5-d2)

Parmenides thus asserts that when 'is not' is provided with a subject the resulting combination is knowable and distinguishable, it has a determinate content, for the combination is not the less known even if the subject is asserted to be something that is not. (The dramatic) Parmenides asserts that what is not is cognizable; but given what it means to be cognizable, this means that what is not must be in order for it to be understood as that which is not. This somewhat paradoxical state of affairs is not further clarified in this dialogue; however, it has been agreed that what is not is the subject of meaningful discourse, and hence that it cannot simply be dismissed as nothing. Plato has not yet revealed how not-being is to have being, but he has established that if it is the subject of meaningful discourse then it must have being in some manner or other.

Although the point is not explicitly brought out in this manner, in the last passage quoted the dramatic figure Parmenides is clearly on the threshold of recognizing that meaningful speech involves two components in different roles. It is carefully established that in saying 'if one is not', by saying 'one' a person "says something known . . . something other than the others", which is to say that one picks out a particular identifiable subject. This occurs no matter what is applied afterwards, "whether one should apply to it what is or what is not", that is, whether one applies to it being or not-being. Thus, in saying something one picks out a cognizable subject and then applies a quality to it. But this in effect ensures that speech is about something, even if what it says about that something is that it is not. *Sophist* adds much to these points by explicitly discussing the components and roles of statement parts and considering how one can say what is not about something that is; but, as with those other points, these questions are also broached in a significant manner in the earlier *Parmenides* before appearing in the more celebrated later work.
§2.5: Conclusion: Plato on Negative Language (I)

As Plato brings out in *Parmenides*, while an entity can be single-propertied in relation to itself (*pros heauto*), it cannot be single-propertied *simpliciter*; rather, every entity also has properties in relation to the others (*pros ta alla*). Ontological entities must interrelate; but if this is so, then everything which is, or is being, also in some ways is not, or is not-being. However, one must be careful in understanding what Plato has accomplished, for otherwise one might mistakenly doubt whether Plato has indeed refuted Parmenides. Parmenides starts from two central premises: first, that only being is, not-being is not; and second, that one can only say or cognize being, or what is. He then uses these premises as foundations to deduce his two main conclusions: first, that one cannot say what is not, and second, that being is one. The first of these conclusions is subsequently translated by followers into its allegedly equivalent formation, that one cannot speak falsely. All of these moves are essentially conceptually based. Socrates’s acceptance that one cannot say what is not, coupled with his acceptance that one can speak falsely, leads to a rejection of the “saying what is not = speaking falsely” equivalence, but this alone accomplishes little. It is for this reason that Plato so dramatically shifts gears in the final section of *Theaetetus* and launches an examination of the logic of the situation, an examination which reaches fruition in *Parmenides*. By demonstrating conceptually that the monistic notion of a one-being is incoherent Plato places his own affirmation of complexity on an intellectually equal footing with Parmenides’s affirmation of monism. What is left is a conceptual paradox: either (contra Parmenides) not-being must be, or (contra Plato) complexity must not be.

If Plato wishes to justify conclusively his own affirmation of complexity, then he must conclusively demonstrate just how it is that not-being can be. Nothing less will serve to settle matters, and so nothing less is provided. In the last Platonic dialogue here considered, *Sophist*, Plato does everything that is needed, and much more. Rather than pick up where he leaves off in *Parmenides* and simply complete the picture, in *Sophist* Plato starts at square one, recounting each step of the problem from its Parmenidean roots to his own magnificent solution.
Part I
Chapter Three

PLATO, THE AFFIRMATION OF NEGATION, AND "THE OTHER"

§3.1: Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, in Parmenides Plato lays much of the logical groundwork for his solution to the problem of saying what is not; however, he does not there put the pieces together in a manner which makes such a solution explicit. Consequently, while a great deal has been accomplished towards settling these challenging issues, a great deal also yet remains. The complete solution is finally set forth in what is arguably Plato’s most brilliant single work, Sophist, for it is there that he offers a thorough treatment of these related issues and hence provides a comprehensive solution to the problem of saying what is not. Moreover, in this way Plato scores his greatest dialectical victories, for in the process he vanquishes both his contemporaries the sophists and his great predecessor Parmenides.

In Sophist the sophist is characterised as a purveyor of falsehoods; as such Plato’s main goal in the dialogue is to resolve the difficulty of false language by demonstrating that it is indeed possible for language to be meaningful yet false. However, as noted in previous chapters, such language is extremely problematic. On the one hand language is held to be genuine, that is, meaningful, if and only if it refers to part of what is; as such, even false language, if meaningful, must refer to being. But on the other hand language is held to be true if and only if it is meaningful and it corresponds to a part of what is; as such, false language, if meaningful, must fail to correspond to being. Thus, meaningful false language must both refer to being and fail to correspond to being, a paradox in need of resolution.

Key to the resolution of this paradox is the demonstration, contra Parmenides, that not-being does indeed interrelate with being. As discussed in the last chapter, it is clear from Parmenides’s argument that complexity and not-being stand or fall together, and Parmenides chooses to reject them both. However, in Parmenides Plato demonstrates that complexity is unavoidable and its denial unintelligible; but if this is so, then these same results must apply to not-being. Consequently, the task is no longer to determine if there can be not-being, but rather to determine how it can be. The answer has been laid bare; it is the explanation that is wanting. In Sophist Plato provides this explanation, and in doing so concurrently resolves the reference/ correspondence paradox noted.

Plato’s resolution of this paradox is presented in three steps. First, he explores the nature of being, laying out a position which contends that being has, not just positive, but also “negative” aspects. However, properly understood, such negation is only apparent rather than genuine, for neither seemingly negative ontology nor seemingly negative language is really negative at all.
Rather, both actually involve, not negation, but "otherness", or difference, which is a positive relation; consequently, the apparently negative "not-being" is actually the positive "other than", and it is in this way that not-being is part of being. Second, Plato argues that complex language has meaning in a manner different from simple language. Whereas genuine simple language, or names, are meaningful due to their reference to parts of being, genuine complex language, or statements, are meaningful due to their being composed of genuine simple parts combined in accordance with certain formation rules. As it happens, these formation rules are such that they allow for the formation of genuine complex statements, the relation between whose component names is not always reflected within being by a comparable relation between the parts of being referred to by those names. Consequently, while genuine simple language always has corresponding simple parts of being, genuine complex language does not always have corresponding complex parts of being.

Third, Plato employs the fact that only some genuine complex language has corresponding complex parts of being as the basis for his theory of truth and falsehood: genuine complex language is true when it has a corresponding complex part of being, and it is false when it lacks a corresponding complex part of being. It is in this way that Plato resolves both the difficulty of true negative language and the difficulty of false language, for genuine statements, whether positive or "negative", are true when they correspond to what is and false when they do not.

Before proceeding to examine Plato's extended treatment of the problem of saying what is not, it is helpful first to consider two preliminary issues, both of which cast prominent shadows over all that follows. The first of these issues concerns the concept of being, and of the various conceptions of being recognised in modern philosophy. The second of these issues concerns "levels" of being, as it were, for in certain crucial respects there is some question whether or not Plato is operating on the level of full Platonic metaphysical forms, and, at least for present purposes, much rides on which response one accepts.

§3.1.1: Three Concepts of Being

In presenting his solution to the problem of saying what is not Plato brings out that not-being cannot properly be understood without a concurrent satisfactory account of being, for the two are intimately intermingled. Plato accepts the principle that to be is to be something or other. However, given reservations expressed by some of his contemporaries concerning whether anything can ever correctly be characterised as something else, in the dialogue Plato takes pains to establish carefully, first, that it is possible, indeed, necessary that for every \( x \) there are values of \( f \) such that \( x \) is \( f \), and second, that this relation between \( x \) and \( f \) can involve different sorts of focuses. That this is so is explicitly brought to the surface when in *Sophist* the dialogue's principle speaker offers such explicit assertions as.

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one must agree that motion both is the same and is not the same (S 256a10-12) and

clearly therefore motion really is not being and [is] being (S 256d8-9).

As Constance Meinwald brings out so well, in Parmenides many apparent contradictions are raised, and yet one ought not be vexed by this, for these “contradictions” can indeed be reconciled in a highly satisfactory manner through recognition of the relevant distinction at issue. In Sophist Plato repeats this approach, raising apparent contradictions in order to bring to the surface the underlying distinctions needed to resolve them. Specifically, in this latter dialogue he appears to be concerned to demonstrate that there is more than one way in which an x can “be” or “not be” some f, for otherwise he could not coherently assert that motion both is and is not the same or is and is not being.

It is in this vein that W.K.C. Guthrie, for example, writes, in Sophist Plato provides “an analysis of the concepts expressed indiscriminately by the Greek word for ‘to be’ as ordinarily used” (1978:147), and then, after identifying these concepts as identity, attribution, and existence, adds, “It has been commonly thought that in the Sophist Plato recognised all three.” (1978:148) However, matters are not so simple as Guthrie suggests, for neither is there as much consensus as he implies, nor are the options so clearly delineated as he states them. Regarding this latter point, (as discussed in §1.2) the dominant ancient Greek conception of being is that described by Charles Kahn, a veridical conception such that to be is to be something or other, thus inherently fusing the existential and predicative senses. For this reason J.C.B Gosling is likely correct in suggesting, Plato “is neither so sophisticated in his problems nor so clear in his solutions” (1973:213) as many modern commentators suppose. But while it is a mistake to attribute to Plato too clear a vision of just what he is tackling, it is equally a mistake to underestimate what he achieves: as Gosling also notes, “That [Plato] is making some distinctions is not in doubt.” (1973:213) And to make sense of the Sophist remarks noted above, that one can say that motion both is and is not the same or is and is not being, some sort of distinctions are needed.

1 Indeed, the dialogue is full of them, right to its concluding assertion, “whether one is or is not, it itself and the others both regarding themselves and regarding each other all in every way both are and are not and appear and do not appear.” (P 166c3-5)

2 The difficulties involved in interpreting Parmenides, and Meinwald’s insightful proposal of the distinction needed to resolve these difficulties, are discussed in §2.4.2 above.

3 Indeed, while on the one hand, “It has in fact become quite common to suppose that [in Sophist] Plato makes some distinctions at least”, on the other hand, “Commentators vary in the number of distinctions they hold are made or intended, on the tools used to draw them and in their views on the degree of success.” (Gosling 1973:213)
However, granting Plato awareness of these distinctions in turn raises a further interpretational difficulty. The core of Plato’s treatment of not-being is found in a passage running from S 255e8-259d8. But commentators are generally agreed on three points regarding this passage: first, in the section from 255e8-257c4 Plato treats the concept of not-being as non-identity; second, in the section from 257c5-259d8 Plato treats the concept of not-being as negative predication; and third, Plato fails to signal that his concerns shift from the one section to the other. Michael Frede suggests in this regard, seeing Plato as leaping in this way from one concept of being to a “radically different” concept of being “might make us suspect that [Plato] is just confused”, or, worse still, “Less charitably we might think that Plato is cheating.”(both 1992:407) What is needed to stave off such criticism is a unified interpretation of these passages such that both sections are seen as providing treatments of the same conception of not-being.

In the present work such a unified interpretation is proposed. This interpretation builds on two aspects of Plato’s overall philosophical position. The first such aspect involves his general account of predication, of how it is that anything has the properties that it does. Central to Plato’s metaphysical theory is his position that something has the properties it has as a result of its participating in the forms corresponding to those properties. This fundamental tenet is explicitly affirmed in his middle period dialogue Phaedo, for Socrates there asserts,

if any other thing is beautiful besides the beautiful itself, it is not beautiful for any other single reason than because it partakes of that beautiful.(Ph 100c4-6)

While this remark mentions only the form of the beautiful, it is offered in Phaedo as an example of how things come to be what they are in general, and hence this remark can reasonably be broadened to cover properties in general. This tenet is reaffirmed in the later dialogue Parmenides; there “Parmenides” postulates,4 and young Socrates agrees,

forms are, and the other things sharing of them get their names from them, such as that like things come to be like from sharing in likeness, and great things in greatness, and just and beautiful things in beauty and justice (P 130e5-131a2).

Moreover, as comes out below, this notion of things having their properties through partaking of the corresponding forms continues on throughout Sophist. Understanding, then, that predicational occurrences of ‘is’ are actually truncated occurrences of ‘partakes of’, Plato’s account of predication can be spelled out as follows:

\[ x \text{ is}_{(p)} f' = \text{‘} x \text{ is}_{(p)} f \text{’} = \text{‘} x \text{ partakes of } F \text{’}. \]

4 In this chapter numerous references are made to both the historical Parmenides and the dramatic Parmenides from Plato’s dialogue of the same name. In order to distinguish the two, in this chapter reference to the dramatic Parmenides is signalled by the use of double quotation marks.
where 'x' stands for the individual having the property, 'is(p)' stands for the "is" of predication, 'f' for the property possessed by x, and 'F' for the form of the property f. (One important point brought out in Sophist is that the sort of thing for which 'x' stands need not be an individual, for forms can also partake of forms.) Thus, for example, the predicational statement 'x is beautiful' cashes out as follows:

'x is(p) beautiful' = 'x is(p) beautiful'
= 'x partakes of The Beautiful'.

This conception of the "is" of predication in turn forms the basis of Plato's treatment of the other two conceptions of "is".

Although there might be some modern reluctance to read things in this way, Plato's manner of expression in Sophist makes it clear that this notion of predication extends to something's being a thing at all, which is to say that Plato's account of the "is" of existence operates in just this same way, with 'being' taking the place of 'f'. In order for this point to be apparent, one must first expand the statement 'x is(e)' (where 'is(e)' stands for the "is" of existence) to its complete form, for the statement 'x is(e)' is really a short form for the more complete 'x is being'. With this clear, the "is" of existence can now be seen for what it really is, the special predicational case where 'f' is replaced by 'being' and 'F' by 'Being'.

'x is(e)' = 'x is(p) being'
= 'x partakes of Being'.

As such, the concepts of the "is" of predication and the "is" of existence can be interpreted in a uniform manner, for both fall under predication. However, the "is" of existence certainly raises some unique issues, and it is for this reason that, while on the one hand it operates as a sort of predication, on the other hand it remains a special such sort of predication.

The second aspect of Plato's overall philosophical position needed for a unified interpretation of his account of being involves his view of language as consisting solely of statements of the subject-predicate form.\(^5\) One consequence of this view is that Plato considers relations to be complex properties rather than something other than properties. As a result, he explains the "is" of identity, not as a relation between two objects, but as a property possessed by one object. This position, when combined with the insight employed above that some sorts of statements need to be expanded explicitly into their full formulations to be rightly understood, leads to the "is" of identity being but one more sort of the "is" of predication. The statement 'x is(i) y' (where 'is(i)'

\(^5\) Re this view confer, for example, Guthrie: "By his definition of a logos [Plato] confined propositions to the subject-predicate type (the predicate at least being for him a Form), which persisted in Aristotle (Rhett. 1404b26) and dogged the footsteps of logic until the twentieth century."(1978:160)
stands for the “is” of identity) is really a short form for ‘x is identical to y’, or ‘x is the same as y’. With this clear, the “is” of identity can now be seen for what it really is, the special predicational case where ‘f’ is replaced by ‘the same as y’ and ‘F’ by ‘The-Same-Regarding-y’:

\[ x \text{ is}_i(1) y \] = \[ x \text{ is}_i(\text{p}) \text{ the same as } y \] = \[ x \text{ partakes of } \text{The-Same-Regarding-y} \].

And in that case the concept of the “is” of identity also falls under the “is” of predication, thus allowing for a fully unified interpretation of the concept of being. (All of this is drawn out below in the context of the dialogue itself.)

Each of the three concepts of “is not” corresponding to the three concepts of “is” just discussed is to be handled in a manner parallel to that of its corresponding positive concept. The only clarification with regard to these “negations” is that this parallel treatment must include one further expansion, for not only must each instance of ‘is’ be replaced by ‘partakes of’, but also Plato’s view of negation must be reflected such that each instance of ‘not’ must be replaced by ‘other than’. Moreover, as Plato makes explicit in the dialogue, this ‘other than’ is not an independent part of the statement, but rather firmly attaches itself to the predicate (and hence, property) in question. Consequently, the “negations” of the three concepts of “is” discussed above ultimately cash out as follows:

\[ x \text{ is}_i(\text{p}) \text{ not f} \] = \[ x \text{ is}_i(\text{p}) \text{ not f} \]
\[ = x \text{ partakes of Other-Than-F}; \]
\[ x \text{ is}_i(\text{c}) \text{ not} \] = \[ x \text{ is}_i(\text{p}) \text{ not being} \]
\[ = x \text{ partakes of Other-Than-Being}; \]
\[ x \text{ is}_i(\text{i}) \text{ not y} \] = \[ x \text{ is}_i(\text{p}) \text{ not the same as y} \]
\[ = x \text{ partakes of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-y}. \]

Although he certainly does not discuss these concepts of “is” and their negations in anything like the explicit form noted here, one of Plato’s accomplishments in Sophist is to provide the foundation for an evaluation of the nature of each one of them.

§3.1.2: The Greatest Kinds: Forms or Categories?

The accounts of the three concepts of being just discussed, and of how all cases of “is” reduce to sorts of partaking, definitely reflect the logic of Plato’s approach in Sophist. However, this does not in and of itself necessarily imply that all cases of partaking are ontologically on a par. As comes out below, in Sophist Plato pays special attention to three sorts of partaking, those of partaking of Being, The Same, and The Other. He specifically identifies these three kinds as among the “greatest” (megista), surely not least because, unlike with ordinary kinds, every entity which is partakes of these three greatest kinds, for every such entity is, is the same (as itself), and is other
(than everything else). This universality of application has led some commentators to suppose that Plato does not intend these kinds to be taken as separate metaphysical entities in the same manner as the Forms of his standard theory, but rather as a different sort of kind, something akin to a logical category, with correspondingly reduced ontological implications. Interpretation of the ontological status of these greatest kinds is complicated by the fact that it is not even clear if Sophist is concerned with ontology at all; rather, the dialogue’s central issues may reasonably be read as logical rather than ontological in nature, raising the spectre that debate over the ontological status of the kinds discussed therein is altogether misplaced. For his part Guthrie notes, the view that all of the forms or kinds discussed in Sophist are Forms, that is, “realities with an objective and independent existence”, is one which “merits, and finds, no place in the logical problems of the Sophist, and their solution is none the better for metaphysical props.”(1978:160)

Nonetheless, the standard view, which Guthrie himself champions, is that when in Sophist Plato refers to forms or kinds he does mean Forms in their full ontological sense. However, as the history of philosophy has subsequently observed, the notions of existence, identity, and difference hold a somewhat unique place in the overall scheme of things, and awareness of this has led some commentators to reconsider what Plato has to say in Sophist. What these commentators have found is that while the forms and kinds certainly can be read in such an ontologically committed manner, they need not be so read, for the dialogue also makes perfect sense if one interprets them in a somewhat different way. Moreover, there are certain benefits to identifying these three kinds, not with independent objective existent realities, but rather with the classes of items which fall under them. That is to say, the form or kind Being may be seen as, not itself a Form, but rather, equivalent to all of the things which are. In similar fashion, the form or kind The Same may be seen as equivalent to all of the things which are the same (as the subject in question), and the form or kind The Other may be seen as equivalent to all of the things which are other (than the subject in question). Such an interpretation still sees the discussion in Sophist as metaphysically committed, but to a lesser extent, for the three kinds in question (and, in the case of The Other, its many parts) would then not themselves be additional independent ontological Forms over and above their constituent sets.

Perhaps the most noted proponent of this latter interpretation is A. L. Peck, who defends it in his paper, “Plato and the Megista Genê of the Sophist: A Reinterpretation”. Right in the opening sentence of his paper Peck sets down his position regarding Plato’s concerns in this dialogue, asserting, “It is important to recognize that the problem dealt with by Plato in the central part of the Sophist (232 b-264 d) is one which arises from the use of certain Greek phrases, and has no necessary or direct connexion with metaphysics”(1952:32). Later in his paper Peck continues in this vein by specifically contending that when in Sophist Plato speaks of participation (which,
as discussed above, lies at the heart of his Platonic metaphysics), he does so in a manner which lacks its previous implications. To this end Peck proposes, Plato’s proof that not-being is equivalent to otherness “will be effected by means of the terminology of ‘participation’; but, however pertinent this terminology may be for Plato’s own ulterior purposes, it is clear that in this part of the dialogue it has no reference to any metaphysical participation: it is merely a way of describing statements of attribution” (1952:39), and then adds in a footnote, “We must not assume that whenever Plato uses the term [koinônein, ‘to be a partaker’] he means to imply some sort of metaphysical ‘participation’. ” (1952:40n1)

Despite the tone of these quotes, Peck is not suggesting that in Sophist negative language is completely independent of the world, for he himself notes that the main problem is first propounded in the form of the question,

if someone, having reflected, should be required to answer in earnest to what one must apply this name, ‘what is not’, to what thing or to what sort of thing should we expect him to employ it and what would he show as the thing being asked about?

(‘ 237b10-c4)

He then continues on to acknowledge the link between language and the world accepted by ancient Greek culture, pointing out that, “owing to the Greek idiom”, the phrase ‘to believe what is not’ “appears to indicate that, in judging falsely, an act of apprehension (doxadzein) is involved whose object is described by the term to mé on.” (1952:32) Moreover, this also carries over to the phrase ‘to say what is not’: from each of these phrases, “the question at once arises, ‘To what can this name [‘to mé on’] be applied?’” In other words, ‘What is the “thing” (pragma) of which this name purports to be the verbal image?’” (1952:32) Peck thus recognises that a major task in Sophist is to determine what is the entity to which the phrase ‘what is not’ refers. Consequently, when he argues that this problem “has no necessary or direct connexion with metaphysics”, what he wishes to deny is, not that Plato’s account of negative language has any connexion with the world at all, but rather only that it has any necessary or direct connexion with Platonic metaphysics. That is to say, according to Peck, “We should hardly expect Plato to attempt to convince the sophist by parading an argument based on the Platonic doctrine of Forms; and if we examine the credentials of the genê or ‘Forms’ dealt with in the main discussion it will be patent that they cannot possibly be Platonic.” (1952:42) Peck’s point is thus that in Sophist one ought not read Being, The Same, and The Other as Forms in the traditional Platonic sense.

In his book Eros and Psyche John Rist supports Peck’s claims by arguing specifically against a Form of Being. Readily acknowledging, “The view that Plato posits a Form of Being, particularly in the Sophist, is almost universal” (1964:43), Rist nonetheless points out in this regard, such a view “is not however supported by references in the text to any auto ho estin on [what is
being itself], which would have to be a technical term for such a Form of Being, but rather seems to be founded on the plainly shaky notion that in a dialogue as late as the Sophist, the use of phrases such as eidos and idea necessarily implies the presence of Forms.”(1964:43) Rist continues on to point out that in Sophist’s critique of views of Being held by previous thinkers (discussed in §3.2.3 below), Plato’s object

is to show that in whatever way a philosopher may regard to on [being], he will be led into contradictions if he treats it as any kind of entity in itself, apart from “the things that exist.” Such misuse of the notion of Being would include the Parmenidean Sphere as well as the supposedly Platonic Idea of auto to on . . . .

What he is attempting to show is that the theory that to on is an entity in itself is fatal to every philosophical system. (1964:44)

As Rist summarises his position, in Sophist Plato demonstrates that any position which regards being as a distinct entity “is bound to be susceptible to attack on logical grounds.” (1964:45)

Despite the enthusiasm with which Peck and Rist propound this interpretation, however, it is, as noted, but one of two available interpretations, one with Platonic metaphysical implications, one without, each of which is consistent with the text. What is particularly interesting about this circumstance for the purposes of the present work is that when the account of negative language Plato provides in Sophist is read in the light of these two interpretations, the results have very different ontological consequences. Given the absence of a compelling argument in favour of one of these interpretations over the other, in this work, rather than arbitrarily adopting either interpretation alone, both are ultimately considered in depth, for such an approach provides a richer perspective of just what Plato might have had in mind with respect to the matters here at issue.

§3.2: Sophist

In Sophist the characters present in Theaetetus, that is, Socrates, Theaetetus, and Theodorus, are supplemented by an Eleatic stranger, “a follower of both Parmenides and Zeno and a man very much a philosopher”(S 216a3-4). After a few opening exchanges, the dialogue is guided entirely by the Eleatic stranger, with responses provided by Theaetetus. It is interesting to note that the dramatic juxtaposition of Theaetetus and Sophist (the discussions they contain allegedly occur on consecutive days6) creates some curious moments, for in places Theaetetus offers responses to

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6 Theaetetus ends with Socrates suggesting to Theodorus that they meet again the next day (Th 210d3-4), and Sophist begins with Theodorus announcing their presence in accordance with the previous day’s agreement (S 216a1-2). It is worth noting as well that very early in Sophist Socrates also makes reference to an occasion when, as a youngster, he heard a quite elderly Parmenides develop some “magnificent” arguments (S 217c), an obvious reference to the dialogue Parmenides. Consequently, while Plato makes an explicit effort to link Theaetetus to Sophist, he also makes an explicit effort to keep Parmenides in the fore as well.

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the Eleatic stranger which are decidedly odd when compared to his remarks of "the day before" in conversation with Socrates. (Some of these moments are pointed out below.)

Although ostensibly concerned with defining the sophist, Sophist's main focus proves to be the natures of being and not-being and their relation to language, which are discussed in a long central passage running from S 236d9-264b8. This main focus is hardly peripheral to the ostensible concern, however. Prior to the central passage the sophist has been described as a disputer and teacher of disputation concerning a wide range of topics: matters divine, heavenly, and earthbound, generation and being, laws and politics in general. But no mortal could possess genuine knowledge about the truth of all such matters; hence the sophist must possess only opinion and not true knowledge. (S 232b1-233d2) However, the sophist is able to appear to the many to really know all of these things; how is this accomplished? In order to determine this the stranger and Theaetetus consider the image-making craft. This craft is of two sorts: likeness-making, which produces images which correspond to the proportion, colouring, and so forth of the original, and appearance-making, which produces images whose proportion, colouring, and so forth, while similar to those of the original, do not fully correspond to those of it. The sophist possesses the appearance-making craft, spinning forth verbal images which, while perhaps similar to the reality they purport to describe, do not correspond to it, and hence are false. (S 235a10-236d8)

But to describe the sophist as a purveyor of false verbal images is to accomplish little, for the familiar paradoxes concerning the nature of false representation thus far remain unresolved. It is his awareness of this that leads the stranger concurrently to acknowledge the limitations of their provisional description of the nature of the sophist and to set the overall tone of the central passage by pointing out, "It is altogether difficult to determine how matters must be such that, without engaging in contradiction, one can say that false speaking or opining really are" (S 236e3-237a1). Thus, the problem of saying what is not is raised yet once more. The stranger notes the prohibition of "the great Parmenides" against such a route of inquiry, but agreement to proceed is secured nonetheless. The dialogue's subsequent treatment of the matter includes much material that is new; however, as noted in §2.4.2 above, in several key areas points are redeveloped which have already been brought out in Parmenides.

The Sophist passage of relevance here usefully divides into six main sections which follow an interesting order of development, for these six sections group into three pairs, the first of which is largely negative, the second of which is neutral/foundational, the third of which is largely positive. In the first section the stranger and Theaetetus consider the Parmenidean issue of the nature of not-being (S 237b7-239a12); this round ends in Parmenides's favour. In the second section they restate the problem of falsehood (S 239b1-242b5); this round ends in the sophist's favour. In the third and fourth sections the interlocutors regroup by considering the nature (S 242b6-
251a4) and interrelation (S 251a5-254b6) of being. From here they move on in the fifth section to consider the nature of not-being as a part of being (S 254b7-259d8), here finally gaining their victory over Parmenides. In the sixth and final section they consider the nature of language and falsehood (S 259d9-264b8), completing their task by gaining their victory over the sophist. These sections are discussed below each in turn.

§3.2.1: Round One - The Problem of Not-Being Restated (237b7-239a12)

The first section of the central passage considers territory essentially comparable to that covered in fragments 2 to 7 of Parmenides's "On Nature".7 As there, so too in this section of Sophist the nature of being itself is not explored; rather, it is the relation of not-being to being which is at issue. Specifically, the opening concern is with the relation between absolute, or unqualified, negative language and ontology: can unqualified negative language name, can the utterance 'what is not' refer to some part of being? The answer that comes out is that without qualification 'what is not' is not a genuine name, for unqualified what is not, that is, unqualified not-being, is not part of what is, or being. Thus, Parmenides "wins" round one. However, his victory is very much a limited one, for in the end the absence of prior consideration of the nature of being severely undermines the value of the results of the opening discussion.

Early in the section the stranger points out that there cannot be false speech or thought unless not-being somehow attaches to being such that what is not yet is, and this Parmenides expressly rules out. (S 237a3-9) However, this is not the end of the matter, for as the stranger confirms with Theaetetus,

And tell me: surely we dare to utter [the phrase] 'what is not in any way'? /

We certainly do. (S 237b7-9)

As the interlocutors thus agree, the negative phrase 'what is not in any way' is a part of ordinary language, and moreover it is clear that this phrase is ordinarily taken to be meaningful. It is significant that the phrase given here is not simply the usual 'what is not' (to mé on) but the specifically unqualified 'what is not in any way' (to mé damós on). This manner of phrasing is reminiscent of the wording used in the Republic passages considered in §2.3.2 above, and for good reason; just as there, so too here Plato intends eventually to establish middle ground which allows that 'what is not' in some manner refers to what is.

From here the stranger next attempts to determine to what ontological content (if any) the utterance 'what is not in any way' refers, for if it is a genuine name then it must refer to something which is. Indeed, as discussed in §1.1 above, for the Greeks speech is not just "about" its subject in some indirect manner; rather, speech attaches directly to its subject such that it cannot

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7 For discussion of these fragments see §1.2.1 above.
fail to refer. But to what subject could ‘what is not in any way’ attach itself? The stranger starts out by indicating that ‘what is not’ cannot properly be a name of any part of being:

But at any rate then this is clear, that one must not apply [the phrase] ‘what is not’ to <something> of what are. / How could one?(S 237c7-9)

He next equates an entity’s status as “something of what are” (tôn ontôn . . . tî) simply to status as “something” (tî):

Since then [one must] not [apply ‘what is not’] to what is, nor could someone rightly apply [the phrase] by applying it to something. / How indeed? /

And surely this is apparent to us, that also each time we say this [word] ‘something’ [we say it with reference] to a thing which is; for to say [the word] alone by itself, as if it was bare and utterly separated from all of what are, is impossible. Or what [do you say]? / [It is] Impossible. /

Then you agree due to your consideration of this, that one saying ‘something’ necessarily says [the word with reference to] some one thing? / [It holds] In this way. (S 237e10-d8)

But if ‘something’ means ‘something of what are’, that is, ‘something of what are being’, then by definition one cannot genuinely speak of ‘something of what are not’; rather, to attempt to do so is to fail to speak genuinely at all:

And now, as it seems, most necessarily one not speaking [with reference to] something [which is] says nothing altogether. / Most necessarily. /

Then one must not concede that such a person [who attempts to state not-being] speaks, yet says nothing, but one must say that whoever attempts to utter not-being does not speak [at all]? / The reasoning indeed holds complete difficulty [for the position that a person can state not-being].(S 237e1-7)

To speak meaningfully is to speak of something which is; but then by definition the phrase ‘something which is not’ is self-contradictory, for at the same time part of the phrase—‘something’—indicates that what would be named is a part of being, while another part of the phrase—‘is not’—indicates that what would be named is not a part of being. The phrase ‘something which is not’ cannot be meaningful.

But the stranger does not rest at having established that the phrase ‘something which is not’ is self-contradictory; rather, he goes on to provide another, seemingly even more devastating argument, the “greatest of the difficulties” in this vein. Not only is it the case that the phrase ‘something which is not’ is self-contradictory, the phrase ‘is not’ on its own is already self-contradictory. Number is part of what has being; consequently one cannot properly even word the phrase ‘is not’ in the singular or the plural. for to do so is to attempt to attach what has being to
what lacks it. But language inherently involves number; as a result language cannot genuinely represent what truly lacks being. This part of the argument begins with an explicit affirmation of the key to Parmenides’s Premise 4 (“~(being & not-being)”) by asserting the separation of being from not-being:

Surely one can add to what is something other of what are? / How not? /

But then shall we say that it is possible to add to what is not something of what are? /

And how [could we]? (S 238a5-9)

But as the stranger points out,

Now we set down number in general among what are. / If indeed one must also set down anything other as being. (S 238a10-b1)

(Theaetetus’s move to qualify his last answer here is appropriate. The nature of being has not yet been discussed; as such, just what ought be set down as being has not yet been determined. However, the issue is not here pursued, and the argument continues:)

So then we should not attempt to apply either the singular or the plural of number to what is not. / It seems that at any rate the argument says we could not attempt it rightly. /

How then could someone, expressing it either in voice or even in thought, altogether grasp what are not or what is not apart from number? / What do you mean? /

Whenever we say ‘are not’, do we not attempt to attribute plurality of number? /

How else? /

And [whenever we say] ‘is not’, [are we] not in turn [attempting to attribute] singularity? / Most clearly. /

But indeed we say that it is neither just nor right to attempt to attach being to not-being. / You speak most truly. /

Do you understand then that it is not possible rightly either to utter or to say or to think what is not itself by itself, but it is unthinkable and unstateable and unutterable and unaccountable? / By all means. (S 238b2-c11)

In this way Plato puts forth one of the classic arguments against the meaningfulness of the unqualified pseudo-name ‘what is not’, which is that it cannot be formulated apart from number. Indeed, the stranger goes on to criticise his own discussion of this matter on the grounds that in his discussion he continues to employ ‘not-being’ in the singular ("it is unthinkable and unstateable . . ."). This difficulty of discussion necessarily involving number is so onerous “that in this way what is not reduces even the one refuting it to difficulty, so that, whenever someone should attempt
to refute it, one is compelled to contradict oneself on the matter.” (S 238d4-7) Consequently, concerning not-being

we say that it is necessary, if someone will speak rightly, neither to distinguish it as one nor as many, nor to call it 'it' at all; for even according to this manner of address one would be calling it by a form of singular. (S 239a8-11)

Absolute not-being, what is not itself by itself (to mē on auto kath' hauto), thus falls prey to all that Parmenides says about not-being in general. The not-being at issue here is not-being taken as a contrast of being, not-being which lacks ontological status. For present purposes let unqualified not-being be indicated by 'not-being', and, correspondingly, let unqualified being be indicated by 'being'. The point agreed to here is that not-being cannot genuinely be represented, not even by 'is not' taken unqualifiedly. As 'is not' taken unqualifiedly thus names neither not-being nor part of being, it is not a genuine representation and hence cannot be part of meaningful language. Parmenides's dictum, reaffirmed by the stranger and Theaetetus, that being and not-being cannot intermingle has (apparently) led to an opening victory for Parmenides (and hence for his "follower", the sophist).

However, whereas Parmenides sees 'is not' as having this result without leaving room for any further distinctions, Plato establishes this result only with respect to 'is not' taken in a particular way involving not-being taken as an ontological contrast of being. Despite this qualification, however, it is nonetheless worthy of note that the ground Plato here concedes to Parmenides he makes no later attempt to regain; 'not-being' used without qualification really does fail to refer, really cannot (meaningfully) be said or cognized. What is established in this section is that the unqualified utterance 'is not' is not a possible content of meaningful speech, that not-being as a contrast of being, that is, not-being, must indeed be abandoned as an intelligible concept.

As noted, this conclusion is entirely dependent upon taking the natures of being and not-being as unqualified contrasts, upon taking not-being as nothing and being as everything. Put another way, if everything which is (being) partakes of Being, then Plato's target here is that which is not, or partakes of Not-Being, and what he has brought out is that such "entities" (if they can be called that) are unrepresentable. What this means is that the negative existential concept of "is".

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8 Thus, whereas Raphael Demos uses the uncognizability of not-being to argue that Parmenides's argument is self-refuting (see §1.2.1 above), the stranger conversely points out that the same grounds defeat one arguing against the uncognizability of not-being by similarly forcing that person into self-contradiction.

9 Which, as comes out below, is the case.

10 This notion is rather contrived, and in fact merely serves as a heuristic tool used to make the point noted.
is in fact illegitimate and incoherent. By denying the intelligibility of the phrase 'what is not in any way' Plato is concurrently denying the intelligibility of the phrase 'is\(e\) not' on the ground that it inherently involves number, which is something of what are, an impossible conflation. 'is\(e\) not' need not be further considered, for it is intellectually devoid of content.

While unqualified not-being has thus been rejected, there might yet be a place for some qualified not-being, with this place located not outside of being, but inside it, as a contrast not of non-existence with existence but as a contrast of non-predication with predication, a contrast of "not being something or other" with "being something or other". Whether or not there can be such an "internal" role for not-being within being depends upon whether being is simple or complex, for if being is simple then it has no internal aspects. As a result, further consideration of the nature of not-being will concurrently involve consideration of the nature of its apparent opposite, being.

§3.2.2: Round Two - The Problem of Falsehood Restated (239b1-242b5)

However, at this point the stranger and Theaetetus temporarily postpone direct further discussion of being and not-being in favour of further consideration of the nature of the sophist and of what it is the sophist does. It has been put forth that the sophist is a purveyor of false verbal images. But what is an image? Theaetetus first suggests that images be defined ostensively: "the images in water and mirrors, and besides drawings and sculptures ..." (S 239d6-8) But this will not do, the stranger suggests, for the sophist will act as if unable to see, and will only be willing to proceed by means of language (\(\operatorname{logoi}\)). Can images be defined linguistically?

Pray what, stranger, could we say an image is except another thing of such a kind having been made in likeness to the true one? /

Do you mean another true one of such a kind, or how do you mean 'of such a kind'? / In no way another true one, but another like the true one. /

And true meaning really being. / That is how I mean it. /

But how is that? The not true is opposite to the true? / How else? /

Then you say that the one which is like is not really being, if indeed you say that it is not true. / But at any rate indeed in some way it is. /

But therefore not truly, you say. / Why no; except it really is a likeness. /

Then that which we call a likeness, not really being, really is? / It does seem that not-being has been woven into some such intertwining with being, and it is very strange. (S 240a7-c2)
Holding a sophist to be a maker of images is thus ultimately unhelpful, for the nature of an image, which somehow is something without really being that thing, cannot be determined without generating confusion.

Nor is it especially helpful to portray the sophist as a producer in the listener of false opinion, for in similar (and familiar) fashion the question arises, what is the nature of false opinion? But also false opinion will be the opining of the opposite of what is, or how will it be? / The opposite of what is. / You say then that false opinion is the opining of what are not? / Necessarily. / Whether opining that what are not are not, or that what are not in any way in some way are? / It must be that what are not in some way are, if anyone will ever say anything falsely even a little. / What then? Does false opinion not also opine that what is entirely is not in any way? / Yes. / This then is also falsehood? / This also. / And speech, I think, will be held to be false in this same way, as saying that what are are not and that what are not are. / How else could such a thing occur? (S 240d6-241a2)

This passage involves a clear example of dramatic inconsistency between Theaetetus and Sophist. In Theaetetus Theaetetus agrees with Socrates, “opining falsely is something other than opining what are not” (Th 189b4-5); why is it then, that the very next day not only does Theaetetus agree with the Eleatic stranger, “false opinion is the opining of what are not” (S 240d9), the exact opposite of what was previously affirmed, but also Socrates himself is present for this new assertion and says nothing? The heuristic aspect of the Sophist exchange is obvious—Plato wishes to make his opponents’ case seem as strong as possible, so as to maximise the impact of his conquest of it; however, this neither minimises nor justifies this glaring dramatic faux pas.

This weakness aside, the Sophist discussion of false opinion just noted does have an important positive result, for the stranger and Theaetetus do produce a provisional account of falsehood: language is false when it states that what is is not and that what is not is. But this account of falsehood involves that being and not-being be attributed each to the other, which not only Parmenides but also the stranger and Theaetetus agree cannot occur. As a result, just as Parmenides “wins” round one due to the apparent irrationality of not-being, so too the sophist achieves “victory” in round two due to the apparent irrationality of false language.

Progress on these issues requires that, despite their previous remarks, the stranger and Theaetetus must proceed squarely in the face of Parmenides’s key premise by launching a thorough examination of the relation between being and not-being. In this way Plato, who (as noted in
§2.4.2) in *Parmenides* has already established both the interrelationship of pluralistic being and relative (or predicational) not-being as a part of pluralistic being, chooses in *Sophist* not simply to reiterate these points, but rather to reestablish them completely, and in the process to expand considerably upon them.

§3.2.3: Background (I) - The Nature of being (242b6-251a4)

In fragment 8 of “On Nature” Parmenides follows up his rejection of not-being by setting forth his views regarding the nature of being.11 In *Sophist* the Eleatic stranger (after apologising for his impending critique of “father Parmenides”) criticises Parmenides’s expression on this topic, asserting, “It seems to me that Parmenides and all [others], whosoever have ever set out to determine an answer to how many and of what sort are what are, have discoursed to us in a facile manner.” (*S* 242c4-6) Generally speaking, previous historical attempts at determining the nature of *being* have tried to account for its complexity by explaining *being* in terms of something else, thus fitting the general “*x* is *f*” formula. However, as the stranger continues on to point out, despite their seemingly smooth-sounding explanations, all such ontological explorers fail to clarify adequately the specifics of their accounts of *being*, for they fail to lay out adequately the relation between *being* and its aspects; as a result it is questionable whether in fact *being* is any better understood than is *not-being*.

In this vein the stranger and Theaetetus briefly review pluralism and monism, the positions of those who posit different numbers of first principles of the universe, in each case considering the relation of *being* to those first principles. (*S* 243d6-245e5) Addressing first the pluralists, alternative interpretations of pluralism are considered, each of which involves inherent difficulties. If *being* is over and above its component first principles then no number of first principles can fully capture *being*, for *being* inherently will include more than just those principles. Alternatively, if *being* is identical to one of the first principles then the others are not necessary, indeed, are not *being*. Lastly, if *being* is some unity consisting of those first principles together then *being* is not pluralistic after all, but rather “would most clearly be spoken of as one”.

This in turn directs attention towards monism, the Parmenidean view that all that is is indeed one. In a manner reminiscent of “Parmenides”’s treatment of this matter in *Parmenides*, the stranger inquires why there are two names, ‘*being*’ and ‘*one*’, if *being* is all that there is. Commentator Raphael Demos explains the import of this move:

The monist qualifies *being* (as one) and utters it in speech (gives it a name). In so far as the monist enters into description and discourse, he ceases being a monist, for he has articulated *being*. Thus *being* breaks up into many. The consistent monist is

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11 This is discussed in §1.3.2 above.
condemned to be a mystic—not to speak and not to think—in short, he is forced to abandon monism as a doctrine. (1939:132)

Thus for the monist to engage at all in this exercise of attempting to establish the nature of being, indeed, for the monist even to agree that being has a distinguishable nature, is for the monist to engage in self-contradiction, for such an effort inherently involves a multiplicity of concepts. The root difficulty is apparent: monism and complexity are essentially and irreconcilably incompatible.

From here the stranger presses this difficulty with monism even further. The stranger quotes Parmenides’s assertion that being is like a well-balanced sphere ("ON" 8:43-45); if this is so then being has a middle and extremes, and consequently necessarily has parts. (S 244e2-8) The stranger then continues,

But indeed nothing prevents what has been divided into parts [from] having a condition of [being] one over all the parts, and with respect to this then being is all and one whole. (S 245a1-3)

The circle is now complete: in Theaetetus Socrates argues that what is one cannot be some whole having parts; in Parmenides "Parmenides" initially echoes Socrates’s view, but then continues on to show that this view is incorrect; now in Sophist the stranger declares the opposite view, that a single whole with parts is indeed intelligible. But even though being can be a one of parts, the properties of being and of being one nonetheless differ; consequently, with respect to Parmenides’s account of being the problem remains that his one-being involves more than just one property, hence contradicting his monism.

As Demos points out regarding this approach to monism, "the consistent monist may deny that wholeness as a unity of parts exists." (1939:132) By so doing, however, such a monist also "would be denying the existence of the world of generation and of definite quantity" (1939:132). Demos then observes, "Plato’s objections in this connection do not in any way constitute an internal refutation of monism; what they do achieve is to prove that the monist is compelled to ignore important contributions of experience." (1939:132-33) Hard-core monism thus remains a viable philosophical position; however, held consistently it is not just indefensible, but also carries a very high cost in terms of what it must refuse to acknowledge.

Moving on to a different approach, the stranger and Theaetetus next consider (S 245e6-249d5) those gods and giants who view being as either strictly material or strictly ideal. Just as in the previous cases, so too here these accounts also run into difficulties explaining the relation of being to the first principles. On the one hand, "The materialist reduces the world to a collection of concrete particles; but the particles have properties, and the properties are not particles." (Demos 1939:134); consequently, materialism will not do as a general ontological account. On the other
hand, “The ideas are always at rest, always unchanging and the same, whereas corporeal things partake of generation” (Demos 1939:134); as the reality of motion cannot reasonably be denied, consequently, so too neither will idealism do as a general ontological account. The end result of this brief survey is the realisation that the relation of being to various historically-proposed first principles is not clear, and that in general being is indeed not any better understood than is not-being. (S 250d7-e6)

However, near the end of this section the stranger pays special attention to two particular concepts, an emphasis which provides a hint of the direction to come. It is agreed that, on the one hand, motion must be a part of being in order that life and soul and mind might be present to what is, while, on the other hand, so too stillness must also be a part of being in order that there be sameness of quality and nature and relations, which are necessary for knowledge and reason and mind. The philosopher must therefore hold that what is must consist of both motion and stillness together (S 248a4-249d5). However, being “is not [simply] both motion and stillness together, but rather some [third] thing other than these [two]” (S 250c3-4), for “according to its [own] nature being neither stands still nor moves.” (S 250c6-7) Consequently, being necessarily involves a multiplicity of concepts.

As discussed in Chapter One, to a large extent the conclusions Parmenides draws in “On Nature” derive from his unwillingness to accept blindly contradictions inherent in his culture; specifically, he points out that two positions ordinarily accepted by his culture, the empirical view that being involves multiplicity and the rational view that being and not-being cannot mix, lead to incompatible results. However, Parmenides himself nonetheless continues to hold the principle of ontological complexity, as demonstrated by his going on in fragment 8 to elucidate some of the properties of being. In Sophist Plato brings out this contradiction remaining in Parmenides’s work; specifically, he points out that retention of the principle of ontological complexity is incompatible with ontological monism. In this way Plato takes the first step in the refutation of the case against language by establishing that being must be complex.

§3.2.4: Background (II) - The Interrelation of being (251a5-254b6)

Having thus established being as pluralistic, the stranger next turns his attention to the matter of whether or not the three kinds thus far identified, Being, Motion, and Stillness, are capable of mixing together. In this section Plato moves from discussing being as all that is to discussing Being as a kind of which all that is partakes. It is just such a move which raises the concerns noted above regarding the ontological status of this kind, for it is not clear just how being a part of being and partaking of Being differ; surely, some argue, to partake of Being just is to be one of what are. But in that case, what is the ontological content of the kind Being over and above the general ontological content being? Is not Being now merely the sum of those things which are being?
Plato's decision not to take for granted the interrelation of being, but rather to discuss explicitly whether or not the various kinds mix together, is in accordance with the thorough manner of treatment provided previous matters in the dialogue. However, he has another reason besides thoroughness for taking matters one step at a time. In his discussion the stranger makes reference to "late-learners" who think that different kinds cannot mix, that one cannot be many nor many one, and hence "are pleased at not allowing one to call a person good but [only] good good, and a person a person."(S 251b5-c7) This reference is considered to allude to such figures as Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (who are described at Eu 272b8-c1 as being rather old when they came to their talent for disputation) and Antisthenes (who is described by Aristotle as denying that more than one term can be applied to one thing). Given that these figures are historical, it is reasonable to assume that there were in Plato's time thinkers who denied the legitimacy of predication, of the blending of kinds; as such it is not surprising that Plato sees the need to establish that such blending does indeed occur. Nor is it especially difficult to see what position could have lain beneath such denial of the legitimacy of predication; to call a person good is to say that some one thing is many, that it is and is not one, and the intelligibility of this seemingly paradoxical state of affairs had not yet been adequately demonstrated (beyond the rather technical and obscure account provided in Parmenides).

The first option regarding the mixing of kinds, that nothing mixes with anything else, the stranger and Theaetetus quickly dispose of, for if neither Motion nor Stillness partake of Being then neither of them are.(S 251e7-252d1)12 The second option, that everything mixes with everything else, is even more quickly disposed of, for in that case Motion would be still and Stillness would move.(S 252d2-11) What must be the case, then, is the third option, that only some kinds mix with some others.(S 252d12-e8) At this point in a brief tangent the stranger considers who it is who has the art of knowing what mixes with what. Not all letters combine one with another; only the grammarian knows which combine with which. In similar fashion only the musician knows which sounds mix with which. What about those things which constitute the basis of all that is? It is, unsurprisingly, the philosopher who has this great gift of knowing just which kinds mix and which

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12 Moreover, such a position cannot even be expressed, for its representation necessarily involves linking to such independent principles other principles such as "to be", "apart", "from the others", "by itself", and countless others. (S 252c2-4) This point is highly similar to Socrates' point in the dream theory that one cannot attach to the account of the primary elements any of other elements, including being (Th 201e2-202a5). Given the similarity of those primary elements to Plato's own middle-period forms and the similarity of what is rejected here in Sophist to those primary elements, this Sophist rejection may be considered to be one more indication of Plato's abandonment of forms as entirely independent entities.
do not, which mix universally and which mix with only some.\textsuperscript{(S 253b8-254a2)}\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{§3.2.5: Round Three - The Nature of not-being (254b7-259d8)}

As discussed in §3.2.1, in the opening section of the central passage the stranger concedes the unintelligibility of unqualified \textit{not-being}. After next reviewing the problem of falsehood (§3.2.2), he then takes a step back and examines the nature of \textit{being}, determining that it must consist of a plurality (§3.2.3) of interrelated (§3.2.4) aspects. This established, the stranger is now ready to get back into the ring and argue that not-being may yet be part of \textit{being}. Plato’s manner of presentation in this next section on the nature of not-being is just as careful as that of the preceding sections, but nonetheless the material in this section has been the subject of a considerable amount of debate in the literature due to difficulties in interpreting the reasoning it contains. To allow for greater ease of comprehension and analysis of this reasoning, the material in this section is here further divided into three subsections. The bulk of the interpretational debate concerns the latter two of these subsections.

\textbf{§3.2.5.1: Establishing (Some of) the Megista Genè (254b7-255e7)}

The stranger opens up this subsection by summing up what has thus far been accomplished and what is next to tackle. First, \textit{being} involves a plurality of interrelated aspects:

Since then it has been agreed by us already that some of the kinds are able to commune with each other, and some [are] not, and some [commune] with few [other kinds], and some with many, and nothing prevents some also from having communed in all ways through all...[.] (S 254b7-c1)

Second, this interrelation must be further explored in a controlled fashion if it is to be hoped that not-being can be found to part of \textit{being}:

... then after this let us proceed through discussion, considering in this way, not concerning all of the forms, in order that we are not confused in [considering] many, but choosing those which are said to be of the greatest, first of what sort each is, next in what way it has power of communion with the others, in order that if we are not

\textsuperscript{13} While this discussion (S 252e9-254b6) is tangential to the topic of \textit{Sophist} it is nonetheless of considerable interest as a hint of what Plato might have intended to develop at some later time, for early in the dialogue (S 216d2-217a8) Socrates asks the stranger to discuss the natures of the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. \textit{Sophist} clearly fulfills the first of these, and in the companion dialogue \textit{Statesman} at 257a1-c4 the stranger explicitly promises to discuss the natures of the remaining two and fulfills the former in that dialogue; however, the third dialogue was apparently never written. On this Guthrie writes, there is “no room for reasonable doubt that P. planned the \textit{Philosopher}. Most scholars agree, and conjecture that he was prevented from writing it either by the current of his own thoughts... or by circumstances such as his last visit to Sicily and consequent disillusionment...”(1978:123n1)
able to grasp being and not-being with entire clearness, then at any rate we will not lack of reasoning concerning them, so far as the present manner of consideration allows, as to whether it is permitted for us to say that not-being really is and come off unpunished. / Accordingly it is fitting [to proceed in this way]. (S 254c1-d3)

The stranger's emphasis here on their proceeding by means of discursive reasoning is of particular interest, for as noted in §3.2.2 it is just such a manner of proceeding upon which the sophist also insists. Given this, so long as their reasoning is sound the sophist is obliged to accept their conclusions.

The stranger does not explicitly explain what he means by describing those kinds he is about to discuss as "of the greatest" (τὸν μεγίστὸν). On the one hand 'greatest' may be taken here as a reference to the range of application, for the three kinds about to be discussed which are central to the present work, Being, The Same, and The Other, each apply universally to everything which is, a circumstance which surely sets them apart from kinds in general. On the other hand one may take the term 'greatest' in an evaluative sense, in which case there is something about the kinds here distinguished which makes them greater, or more important, than their lesser kindred.

The stranger's next move is to recap briefly the material currently under consideration, and in doing so concurrently to reaffirm the existential role of Being:

Surely the greatest of the kinds which we went through just now are being itself and stillness and motion. / Very much so. /

And indeed we say that two of them cannot mingle with each other. / Exceedingly so. /

But at any rate being mingle with both; for doubtless both are. / How are they not? /

Then these come to be three. / How else?(S 254d4-13)

The stranger here reviews the three kinds identified thus far, which are Being, Stillness, and Motion. In accordance with pre-Sophist accounts of predication, the stranger also indicates that each of Stillness and Motion "is" through mingling with Being. Given that the verb 'to mingle' is part of Plato's participation language, another way of putting this point is that the statements 'Stillness is' and 'Motion is' are really 'Stillness is(e)' and 'Motion is(o)', or 'Stillness is(p) being' and 'Motion is(p) being', statements which in turn translate into the more complete and explicit statements 'Stillness partakes of Being' and 'Motion partakes of Being'. In this way Plato signals acceptance of the positive existential concept of "is" discussed above:

'\( x \) is(e)\' = \( x \) is(p) being

'\( x \) partakes of Being'.

From here the stranger next proceeds to relate the three kinds noted thus far, and in the process introduces two new notions:
Therefore each of [being, stillness, and motion] is other than the [other] two, but [is] itself the same as itself. / It holds thusly. (S 254d14-e1)

By putting forth matters in this way the stranger has now introduced two further names, ‘same’ and ‘other’, which require further attention:

What ever have we said now again in this way [by] the same and the other? Are they themselves some two kinds, other than the three [previous], assuredly always of necessity mingling with those, and [of the being of the greatest kinds] must we consider concerning five and not concerning three, or without ourselves being aware of them are we [already] addressing the same and the other as some one of those [first three kinds]? / Perhaps. (S 254e2-255a2)

Whereas at Parmenides 143b3-8 Plato simply asserts that The Other is different from either of the things there under consideration, Being and Unity, in Sophist he takes a more thorough route by going through why neither The Same nor The Other can be identical to Stillness, Motion, or Being. While both Motion and Stillness partake of The Same and The Other, neither could be The Same or The Other, for if either Motion or Stillness was (identical to) The Same or The Other then the other of the two would be other than it is. (S 255a4-b4) (For example, if Motion was (identical to) The Same then since Stillness is the same (as itself) it would be in motion; but this is impossible. The same reasoning excludes the other three combinations.) The stranger thus initially concludes, “So then let us not say that motion is the same or the other, nor also [is] stillness [either of these]. / No, certainly.” (S 255b5-7)

Although his conclusion that neither The Same nor The Other is identical to either Motion or Stillness is surely correct, it is nonetheless the case that Plato is being rather loose with his manner of expression, for as he goes on to show, both Stillness and Motion indeed are the same (as themselves) and other (than each other), and he is not hesitant later to put matters in just that way.

The next exchange exhibits a similar looseness of phrasing:

But then must we think of being and the same as some one thing? / Perhaps. / But if being and the same signify nothing different, then again also saying that motion and stillness both are, in this way as they are we shall be speaking of them both as the same. / But indeed this at any rate is impossible. /

Then it is impossible for the same and being to be one. / Pretty well. (S 255b8-c4)

Again Plato’s conclusion is unobjectionable, for the properties of being and of being the same differ. However, it is not impossible to speak of both Motion and Stillness as the same, for they both are the same—as themselves.

\[14\] That is, that Motion is The Other, that Stillness is The Same, and that Stillness is The Other.
Clearly, a distinction must be drawn between what a thing partakes of absolutely, or itself by itself, as, for example, Stillness partakes of Being so that Stillness is, and what a thing partakes of relatively, or with respect to something, as, for example, Stillness partakes of The Same with respect to itself so that Stillness is the same as Stillness. This distinction, implicit in what has just passed, the stranger now brings explicitly to the fore. After agreeing that The Same must be a fourth form in addition to the initial three, the stranger next asks whether The Other is a fifth kind, or whether it might be identical to one of the four already distinguished. (S 255c5-11) He then suggests,

But I think that you agree that, of what are, some are always said themselves by themselves [auta kath’ hauta], but some are regarding others [pros alla]. / And how not? (S 255c12-14),

thus bringing out what is clearly an important distinction. This distinction is in fact needed no less to make sense of The Same than it is to make sense of The Other; however, as the primary purpose of the extended passage is to explain negation coherently, and as negation relies primarily upon The Other rather than The Same, Plato chooses to leave until this time his fundamental insights into how language and logic function. The stranger next observes,

And the other is always regarding another; or how? / [It holds] In this manner. (S 255d1-2)

In other words, The Other is participated in only relatively, never absolutely.

It would not be, if at any rate being and the other were not very much different. But if indeed other partook of both [absolute and relative] forms just as being [does], at some time there would be of the others also an other not regarding another; but now we find that utterly anything which would be other from necessity is what it is [regarding] another. / It holds just as you say. (S 255d3-7)

Whatever partakes of The Other always does so regarding another. In other words, nothing is ever other auto kath’ hauto, for nothing partakes of The Other simpliciter. Rather, every instance of otherness is pros alla, everything which partakes of The Other partakes of it with respect to something, or is other than something. Both ontologically and linguistically “other” is incomplete; to be other is to be other than . . . , and the term ‘other’ needs be completed as ‘other than . . . ‘.

This aspect of The Other, that it is never auto kath’ hauto, but rather always pros alla, is clearly of great importance. However, before continuing on to consider this aspect it is worthwhile to discuss the apparent similarity between this distinction and that drawn in Parmenides between pros heauto and pros alla. As discussed in §2.4.2, Meinwald reasonably proposes that in Parmenides Plato’s pros heauto / pros alla distinction distinguishes between the sources of a thing’s properties: if something has a property pros heauto then it itself is the source of its having that property, it has that property in virtue of its own nature, whereas if something has a property pros alla then
something else is the source of its having that property, it has that property in virtue of its relation to something else. (For example, The One is one pros heauto, it is one through partaking of itself, whereas The One is pros allos, for it is through partaking of Being.) In his paper “Plato's Sophist on false statements” Frede contends that Plato’s Sophist distinction between auto kath' hauto and pros alla is identical to his Parmenides distinction between pros heauto and pros alla. Frede argues that in the Sophist passage Plato is making a distinction comparable to that described by Meinwald, a distinction between something’s being a feature and something’s having a feature; to cite Frede’s example, the colour white is white by being this feature, whereas Socrates is white (assuming he is) by having this feature. (1992:400-01) According to Frede, to be a feature is to possess the feature auto kath' hauto, while to have a feature is to possess the feature pros alla.

However, while Frede’s interpretation does help link Sophist back to Parmenides, it simply does not fit the text, and hence in Sophist Plato must be making a different point than that established in the earlier dialogue. The problem with Frede’s interpretation concerns his identification of auto kath' hauto with pros heauto. The stranger states that The Other is never auto kath' hauto, but rather always pros alla. But every form has a nature in and of itself, including The Other. Given the Parmenides distinction, The Other is other pros heauto, it is other in virtue of its own nature. If auto kath' hauto means the same as pros heauto, then The Other would also be other auto kath' hauto; but this the stranger specifically denies, for he asserts that nothing is other auto kath' hauto. Thus, the distinction the stranger draws here in Sophist cannot be the same as that drawn in Parmenides; rather, he is making a different point entirely, that described above—to partake of something auto kath' hauto is to partake of that something simpliciter, while in this case to partake of something pros alla is to partake of that something with respect to, or relatively to, something else.

§3.2.5.2: The Megista Genê and Not-Being (255e8-257c4)

Plato is setting his stage in careful fashion, advancing in measured steps towards his ultimate goal. The “greatest kinds” which have been chosen as the content for the current investigation are not at all ordinary entities; rather they are forms (or at least something akin to forms) rather than individuals, and they are all-pervasive rather than limited. It is only after first establishing in this subsection a beachhead with the megista genê that Plato moves on to add to the mix first limited kinds (in the next subsection, S 257c5-259d8) and then individuals (in the last section, S 259d9-264b8).

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15 Actually, it is true that Motion and Stillness are not individually all-pervasive, but taken collectively they are. Further, it is the other three greatest kinds, Being, The Same, and The Other, which are of the most importance here.
As noted in §3.1.1, it is this subsection and the next which are the focus of a great deal of literature, and the reason is this. First, commentators are for the most part agreed that in this subsection the not-being with which Plato is concerned is the “is not” involving lack of identity. Second, commentators are also for the most part agreed that in the next subsection the not-being with which Plato is concerned is the “is not” involving lack of predication. And third, commentators are also for the most part agreed that in the dialogue Plato does not signal that the not-being with which he is concerned shifts from the one subsection to the other. Consequently, the task for the interpreter of this material is either to explain this shift adequately or to demonstrate that there is no such shift and that only one sort of “is not” underlies both of these subsections. As discussed above this concern is misguided; for Plato, not only are all conceptions of “is” ultimately predicative, so too are all conceptions of “is not”.

At S 255e8-9 the stranger suggests that he and Theaetetus review their remarks about the kinds one kind at a time, a review in which consideration of the nature of The Other comes to the fore:

First motion, that it is entirely other than stillness. Or how should we speak of it? / In this way. / Then it is not stillness. / In no way.(S 255e11-15)

First, then, Motion is other than Stillness. Being other than something is then equated with negation regarding that same thing so that ‘other than’ becomes ‘not’, resulting in ‘Motion is other than Stillness’ becoming ‘Motion is not Stillness’.

But at any rate motion is due to its partaking of being. / It is.(S 256a1-2)

This step covers old ground: Motion partakes of Being; consequently Motion exists, or is (one of what are).

Then again motion is other than the same. / Pretty much. / Then it is not the same. / It is not.(S 256a3-6)

Parallel to the remarks concerning Stillness, so too Motion is other than The Same. Being other than something is again equated with negation regarding that same thing so that ‘other than’ becomes ‘not’, resulting in ‘Motion is other than The Same’ becoming ‘Motion is not The Same’.

But indeed motion was the same besides because all things partake of the same. / Very much.(S 256a7-9)

All things partake of The Same (regarding themselves), including Motion; hence Motion is the same, which is to say that it partakes of The Same.

At this point the stranger draws together the two preceding conclusions ‘Motion is not The Same’ and ‘Motion is the same’ and explicitly indicates that this is neither paradoxical nor problematic:
Then one must agree that motion both is the same and is not the same and not be vexed. For whenever we say it is the same and is not the same we have not spoken in like manner, but whenever [we say it is] the same we say this due to its participation in the same regarding itself, and whenever [we say it is] not the same [we say this] due to its communion also with the other, on account of which, being separated from the same it becomes not that but other, so that it is rightly said again besides to be not the same. / Certainly then. (§ 256a10-b5)

The stranger is quite correct that in saying Motion “both is the same and is not the same” he has not “spoken in like manner”, but despite laying the groundwork for just why this is so he does not explicitly bring this out. Given the difference in representation employed in this work depending upon whether a term is being used to represent a property or a kind the difference in roles is obvious, but clearly in a verbal treatment of this matter it is much more difficult to keep things straight. The best way to demonstrate the full extent of the differences in Motion’s being the same and not The Same is to expand the stranger’s assertions so as to bring out the full content of what he is saying. Moreover, once this is done it also becomes clear that Plato employs inconsistent manners of shortening statements in order to exaggerate the extent to which such apparent contradiction is paradoxical.

Central to a proper expansion of the relevant statements is awareness of the point, brought out in §3.1.1 above, that for Plato all being has its roots in participation. that to be anything is to partake of the form of that thing. With this in mind it is clear that the statement ‘Motion is the same’ really expands as follows. First, the missing relatum must be supplied. for Motion is the same regarding something; thus the statement as it stands is actually ‘Motion is the same [as . . .]’. This missing relatum is itself, Motion. Consequently, the statement thus far expands as follows (with changes underlined):

`Motion is the same`

= ‘Motion is the same as Motion’

Next, ‘is’ is replaced by its proper expansion, ‘partakes of’, which concurrently requires a shift from ‘as’ to ‘regarding’, as well as a shift from the property “the same . . .” to the kind or form “The-Same-. . .”:

= ‘Motion partakes of The-Same-Regarding-Motion’.

Hence, properly fleshed out, the statement ‘Motion is the same’ is really the statement ‘Motion partakes of The-Same-Regarding-Motion’.

Following a comparable procedure, the statement ‘Motion is not The Same’ really expands as follows. First, in this case it is not the relatum which is missing, but the relation: Motion is not what as The Same? The answer is that Motion is not identical to, or the same as, The Same:
‘Motion is not The Same’

= ‘Motion is not the same as The Same’

Next, ‘is’ is again replaced by its proper expansion, ‘partakes of’, with ‘as’ again being replaced by ‘regarding’ and the property “the same . . .” being replaced by the kind “The-Same- . . .”:  

= ‘Motion partakes of not The-Same-Regarding-The-Same’.

But matters are not yet complete, for the term ‘not’ must also be translated by expanded into its proper expression. From the stranger’s remarks regarding Motion with respect to Stillness and with respect to The Same, it is clear that ‘not’ is equivalent to ‘other than’. Employment of this final translation reveals that ‘Motion is not The Same’ really spells out as,

= ‘Motion partakes of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-The-Same’.

When these two completed expansions of ‘Motion is the same’ and ‘Motion is not The Same’ are compared and the elements which Plato retains in their shortened versions are italicised what results is,

‘Motion / is / the same’

= ‘Motion / partakes of / The-Same-regarding-Motion’

‘Motion / is / not / The Same’

= ‘Motion / partakes of / Other-Than- / The-Same-Regarding-The-Same’.

When matters are brought out in this way it becomes quite clear the extent to which one does not speak “in like manner” in saying that Motion both is and is not “the same”. In the former case The Same is retained as the kind regarding something in which Motion partakes (that is, “The Same-Regarding- . . .”), while in the latter case The Same is retained as the something regarding which the kind in which Motion partakes is regarding (that is, “. . -Regarding-The-Same”). (Put another way, in the former case here, the case of ‘Motion partakes of A-Regarding-B’, The Same plays the role of A; in the latter case here, the case of ‘Motion partakes of Other-Than-A-Regarding-B’, The Same plays the role of B.) These are clearly very different roles, and once this is brought out it is obvious that any apparent paradox here is very much only apparent and not genuine, and hence it is only through a good deal of asymmetrical treatment of the relevant statements that Plato manages to make this seem to be a problem in the first place.

The above examination of Plato’s treatment of the “is” of identity demonstrates that he handles such relations exactly as described in §3.1.1 above; that is to say,

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16 In this particular case one might be inclined to argue that it is again the relatum which is missing, that the ‘the same’ originally present is the relation. However, other parallel cases which follow make clear that it is the relation which is missing, that this case is simply less clear because the relation and the relatum are the same. Plato is here generally concerned with the identical meaning of ‘x is not y’, which cashes out as ‘x is not the same as y”; it just so happens that in this case the ‘y’ is ‘the same’.

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In comparable fashion, so too he treats the "is not" of identity as there described:

\[
'x \text{ is}_i(y) = 'x \text{ is}(p) \quad \text{not the same as } y' = 'x \text{ partakes of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-y}'.
\]

It is thus clear that Plato does indeed treat relations as if they are properties, and treats the "is" of identity as just a special case of the "is" of predication.

After reaffirming with Theaetetus that some of the kinds are willing to mingle with each other and some are not (S 256b8-c4), the stranger continues on with their review of their remarks about the kinds:

Then let us recount once more; motion is other than the other, just as it was other than the same and than stillness? / Necessarily. /

Then according to the present account it is in a way not other and other. / True.

(S 256c5-10)

With his second remark here the stranger concurrently accomplishes two things. First, in parallel fashion to the previous two cases he points out that Motion partakes of The-Other-Regarding-The-Other, which allows him to move from 'Motion is other than Other' to 'Motion is not Other'. Second, as with 'is the same' and 'is not The Same', so too here he draws that Motion 'is other' and 'is not Other' together in a fashion which exaggerates the extent to which the two seemingly conflict, for the former statement translates as 'Motion partakes of The-Other-Regarding-[all kinds except itself]', whereas the latter statement translates as 'Motion partakes of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-The-Other' (thus similarly having The Other play the A role in one case and the B role in the other case).

It is at this point that the stranger moves towards his real target:

What then about the matter after this? Shall we say that [motion] is other than the three, but we do not give light to [its being other] than the fourth, having agreed that [the greatest kinds] are five, concerning which and in which we were ready to consider earnestly? / But how? For it is impossible to accede that the number is less than that shown just now. /

Then fighting fearlessly may we say that motion is other than being? / Most fearlessly then. /

Then clearly therefore motion really is not being and [is] being, seeing that it partakes of being? / Most clearly indeed.(S 256c11-d10)

The same pattern repeats yet once more: just as with The Same and The Other, so too 'Motion is other than Being', and hence 'Motion is not Being'; but Motion also partakes of Being, and so
'Motion is (being)'. This case demonstrates even more clearly than that discussed above Plato's inconsistent manner of contracting statements by retaining different parts of the positive and negative statements. To wit,

'Motion / is / being

= 'Motion / partakes of / Being'

'Motion / is / not / Being

= 'Motion / partakes of / Other-Than- / The-Same-Regarding-Being'.

It is clear from these expansions that Being plays very different roles in these originally seemingly-parallel positive and negative statements, and thus it is again apparent just how it is that the stranger does not "speak in like manner" in comparing seemingly similar cases.

After setting out that motion both "is and is not being", the stranger then generalises this result to kinds in general:

Then from necessity it holds that not being is, both over motion and throughout all the kinds. For throughout all [kinds] the nature of the other, filling up each other of what is, makes it not being, and then we may rightly say in this way according to the same things that everything altogether is not, and again, that it partakes of being, and is and is being. / It is likely. (S 256d11-e4)

There is nothing unique to Motion with respect to the outcome here derived. Every kind is being, for every kind partakes of Being; but also, every kind (other than Being) is not Being, for every kind (other than Being) partakes of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-Being. Hence, every kind (other than Being) both "is being and is not being".

Moreover, not only is it the case that each kind "is and is not being", each kind also is and is not many other things. Indeed, what each kind is not outnumbers what it is:

Then concerning each of the forms what is is many, and what is not is countlessly full. / It seems. (S 256e5-6)

While on a small scale the stranger's point here is not obvious, on a large scale it is. Each form "is", or partakes of, some limited number of other forms. But each form "is not", or partakes of Other-Than, some limited but nonetheless much greater number of other forms. In the big picture each form "is not" many more things than it "is". This applies not just to forms other than Being, but also to Being itself:

Therefore also one must say that being itself is other than [the other kinds]. / [This is] Necessary. /

Then also for us, however many the others are, [being] is not this many [things]. For not being those things it itself is one, but moreover the number of the other things which it is not is boundless. / [It holds] Nearly thusly. (S 257a1-7)
Being, being other than all other being things, is not each of them.  

As a result, while in the first section of the central passage the stranger concedes the unintelligibility of absolute not-being (that is, *not-being*), in this section he demonstrates the intelligibility of relative not-being. As the examples considered make clear, to not-be is simply to be other than, an account which makes ontological reference only to what is. This point the stranger now (finally) lays bare, remarking,  

Whenever we say what is not, as it seems, we do not say something opposite to what is, but only [something] other. (S 257b3-4)  

Despite the clarity both of this expression and of its preceding illustrations Theaetetus nonetheless asks the stranger to spell matters out yet more clearly, which he does first by offering an example,  

Such as whenever we should say that something is not great, do we appear to you at that time by the phrase to make clear the small rather than the middle[-sized]? / How would we? (S 257b6-7)  

and then by following up,  

Then we shall not concede [the point] whenever one should say that negation signifies opposite, but only [grant] so much, that not [*me*] and not [*ou*] indicate something of the other names than those to which they have been applied, or rather of the things concerning which the names being uttered after the negation would be applied. (S 257b9-c3)  

Negation does not indicate something “opposite” (*enantion*), but only something “of the others” (*tóon allón*). For example, ‘not great’ does not signify the opposite of ‘great’, which is ‘small’, any more than it does any other contrary of ‘great’, such as ‘middle’ or ‘medium’; all that it conveys is ‘not great’, ‘other than great’. Negation does not signify opposition, and hence not-being does not signify an opposite of being. Rather, The Other is part of *being*, and not-being has been shown to be equivalent to being other than; consequently, the nature of not-being has been distinguished as itself one of the kinds, Not-Being, and hence part of *being*.  

It is worth observing at this point how negation has thus far been spelled out ontologically. According to the account the stranger here provides, negation signifies something of the things other than that which is being negated. This manner of describing matters suggests that the negated item is essentially equivalent to some set of items other than itself. It does not pick out any specific item from this set; rather, it simply points to this set as a whole. Thus, to describe some *x* as not-*f* is not to describe *x* as some specific *g*, even if *g* is the opposite of *f*; rather, to describe *x* as not-*f* is

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17 Not only is it uncertain just how many other things there are, the terminology is ambiguous as to whether the number is finite or infinite. The term used is *aperanta*, which means ‘boundless’, ‘endless’, countless’, which might mean infinite, but might also simply mean a huge number.
to describe $x$ as $g$ or $h$ or $i$ or ..., where the set \{g, h, i, \ldots  \} constitutes the set of items other than $f$. But this is exactly what Peck contends in his paper discussed in §3.1.2 above: The Other is not to be read as itself a form in the manner of traditional Platonic metaphysics, but rather a place holder of the set of things which are other (than the subject in question).

According to this reading then, being not-$f$, that is, being other than $f$, translates into being some $g$, or $h$, or $\ldots$ other property. But just how far does this set of properties extend? Suppose that $x$ is not-$f$, that $x$ is not great, for example; how exactly is this to be interpreted? The first step in answering this question is to spell out fully what it is for something to be great: the stranger’s examples of equating not great with small and with medium makes clear that he would not mean ‘$x$ is great’ in the sense of ‘$x$ is the same as The Great’ (the “is” of identity), but rather ‘$x$ is great’ in the sense of ‘$x$ partakes of The Great’ (the “is” of ordinary predication). As a result, in parallel fashion ‘$x$ is not great’ here does not mean ‘$x$ is not the same as The Great’ or ‘$x$ partakes of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-The-Great’, but rather means ‘$x$ partakes of Other-Than-The-Great’.

(Partaking of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-The-Great is also a case of predication, but not of the “ordinary” kind, that is, predication in the modern sense, distinct from identity in the modern sense.) The question here, then, concerns just how widely the Other-Than-The-Great, that is, the set \{The Small, The Medium, \ldots\} is to be taken to be. Is this set to include every form which is not identical to The Great, thus including every form there is other than The Great? This would be the case were one to read ‘not great’ as ‘Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-The-Great’; however, this reading has already been ruled out by the examples of ‘not great’ given by the stranger. Rather, it seems clear that ‘not great’ is here to be read in terms of ordinary predicational ranges. The Great, for example, is a size predicate; as such, The Not-Great, that is, The Other-Than-Great, is to be read as including only those other forms which also generate size properties, such as The Small, The Medium, The Medium-Small, and so forth. More generally, for $x$ to be not-$f$ (in the ordinary predicational sense) is for $x$ to be some $g$, where $g$ is from the same range of properties as is $f$. As a result, not-$f$ need not be interpreted as having independent ontological status over and above those properties other than $f$ which are in the same property range as $f$. Put another way, the form Not-F need not be considered to have ontological status, or be a full-fledged Form in the Platonic metaphysical sense.

§3.2.5.3: Not-Being as Part of Being (257c5-259d8)

Thus far Plato has accomplished a great deal with respect to Not-Being, but he has not yet achieved his goal. Through The Other, Not-Being has thus far been established as one of what are; moreover, it has been claimed (S 255e3-4) that The Other pervades all of what are. However, the details of the nature of Not-Being as part of being have not been provided, and it is to this task that the stranger now turns.
Before further considering being not-great or any other such particular cases, the stranger next makes some further observations about not-being in general. He begins by suggesting,

The nature of the other appears to me to have been minced up, just as knowledge has been. / In what way? /
Doubtless [knowledge] also is one, but the idea of each part of it marked off has some name of its own; on account of which there are many arts and sciences, as they are called. / By all means then. (S 257c7-d3)

The stranger’s point is clear: not only is Knowledge itself one of what are, it further divides into parts, each of which is a sort of knowledge which is also one of what are. So too The Other works in just this way:

Accordingly also the parts of the nature of the other, each being one, have been affected in this same way. (S 257d4-5)

In other words, not only is The Other as a whole one of what are, it too further divides into parts, each of which is a sort of Other which is also one of what are. The stranger next continues on by offering specific examples of this:

Is there some part of the other which is set against the beautiful? / There is. / Then will we say that this is nameless or that it has some name? / [That] It has [some name]. For that which each time we utter to be not-beautiful is not other than anything except the nature of the beautiful. (S 257d7-11)

The Beautiful is one of what are. That part of The Other contrasted with The Beautiful is The Other-Than-The-Beautiful, or The Not-Beautiful. The Not-Beautiful, the stranger proposes, is also one of what are:

Come now and tell me the following. / What sort of thing? /
Does it not follow from this that the not-beautiful is some one kind marked off from something of what are, and again also is set against something of what are? / It holds thusly. (S 257d12-e5)

The Not-Beautiful, which is one of what are, is marked off from The Other as a whole, which is also one of what are, and is set against, or in contrast to, The Beautiful, which is another one of what are.
Then it follows that the not-beautiful is, as it seems, some antithesis of being against being? / Most right. /
What then? According to this reasoning do we hold that the beautiful is more one of what are, but the not-beautiful less? / Not at all. (S 257e6-11)

The Not-Beautiful is just as much one of what are as is The Beautiful. Moreover, this state is in no way specific to The Beautiful:
In like manner then one must say that the not-great and the great itself are? / In like manner. / Therefore also according to this reasoning one must set down the not-just next to the just in that the one is not something that is any more than the other? / How else? (S 258a1-6)

In fact, any form may be contrasted with that part of what is which is other than that form, with both the form itself and its contrary partaking equally of Being:

And we will speak of the others in this way then, seeing that the nature of the other has been shown to be one of what are, and from the other having being, necessarily also its parts are in no way less to be set down as being. / How could they not be so set down? (S 258a7-10)

Both The Other itself and “necessarily also” its parts (e.g., The Not-Beautiful, The Not-Great, The Not-Just, and so forth) are part of what are just as much as any other being things. But this result is no small matter:

Therefore, as it seems, the antithesis of setting next to each other the nature of a part of the other and of the nature of a part of being no less is, if it is right to say, than being itself; for this antithesis signifies not an opposite of being, but only this much, other than being. / That is most clear. /

What then shall we call this? / It is clear that this itself is the not-being which we were seeking on account of the sophist.(S 258a11-b7)

The target has been reached. Not-Being, not as nothing but as something, has been identified. As the sophist, following Parmenides, denies that there is any such thing, this serves to refute the sophist’s challenge, or at least the first part of it. Falsehood has not yet been explained, but the ontological groundwork upon which it depends is being laid.

The importance of what has been accomplished is underscored by the stranger’s dwelling on and reaffirming what has passed. He asserts,

Then is not-being, just as you said, no more in want of being than the others, and is it necessary to assert confidently that not-being firmly is, and has its own nature, and just as the great was great and the beautiful was beautiful and the not-great not-great and the not-beautiful not-beautiful, so also according to the same reasoning not-being was and is not-being, one form counted among the many things that are?

Or do we yet have some distrust regarding it, Theaetetus? / None.(S 258b8-c5)

The nature of not-being has been identified, and not-being is seen not to involve a lack of partaking of Being; on the contrary, Not-Being is itself one of what are, no less than Being. Not only have the stranger and Theaetetus defied Parmenides by talking about not-being, they have gone far
beyond idle discussion:

At any rate not only have we demonstrated that what are not are, but also we have shown what the form of not being is; for having demonstrated that the nature of the other is and has been distributed in small parts to all of what are regarding each other, we dared to say that each part of it, being set against what is, is such that this itself really is not-being. / And by all means, stranger, we seem to me to have spoken most truly. (S 258d5-e5)

Parmenides’s Premise 4, “~(being & not-being)”, which asserts the absolute and complete separation of being and not-being, has been refuted. And as this premise is central to all else that he asserts, Parmenides’s position as a whole has been irreversibly undermined.

As noted above, the stranger’s remarks that negation signifies something other than that to which the negation has been applied lends itself to an interpretation such that Not-F cashes out as the set of forms \{G, H, . . .\} which are different from F but are from the same property range as F, with the result that Not-F need not itself be thought of as having independent ontological status over and above those forms which are part of that set. But in the passages just discussed the stranger goes out of his way to assert that The Other “has been shown to be one of what are”, and so too “necessarily its parts are in no way less to be set down as being”, indeed that not-being is “one form counted among the many things that are”. While not explicitly contradicting the interpretation just noted, these remarks do lend themselves towards a more ontologically weighted reading of negation such that both Not-Being in general and its parts, The Not-F, The Not-G, and so forth are all to be read as themselves being full-fledged Platonic Forms. Such an interpretation thus sees Plato’s view of negation as having vast ontological implications, for his realm of Forms is now doubled in size, with each “positive” Form now having a “negative”, or Other-Than counterpart with equal ontological status. (Further implications of this view are discussed below.)

At this point the stranger provides an extended summary of what has passed throughout their extended discussion of the central passage. (In order to simplify subsequent discussion this summary is marked off into divisions.)

[i] So then someone should not say to us that we dare to say that not-being is by showing it to be the opposite of being; for concerning some opposite of being we said farewell long ago, either that it is or not, and has an account or is altogether unaccountable. [ii] But what we have now stated not-being to be, either someone must persuade us that we are not speaking well by examining what we have said, or so long as one is unable to do this one must also speak concerning this matter just as we do, [iii] that the kinds mix together with each other, and being and the other have
been spread through all of the kinds and through each other, [iv] and the other, partaking of being, on account of this partaking is, but in truth is not that of which it partakes but other, and being other than being from necessity most clearly is not-being. And moreover being, having shared in the other, must be other than the other kinds, and being other than all of those, is not each of them or all the others but only itself, so that moreover being indisputably is-not countless upon countless things, and so indeed the other things each individually and all together in many ways are and in many ways are-not. / True. (S 258e6-259b7)

The stranger here draws together what has gone before. In [i] he alludes to the first section of the central passage and the utter abandonment of not-being. In [ii] the emphasis is on rational discourse as the criterion of evaluation, just what the sophist insists upon in the second section of the central passage. In [iii] the results of the third and fourth sections are recalled, that being consists of multiple interrelated kinds. Finally, in [iv] the stranger summarises the main points of the current section, that Not-Being has a nature and existence of its own which is sufficiently spread that each and every one of what are “in many ways are and in many ways are-not”, a conclusion which somewhat tempers but nonetheless echoes “Parmenides”’s conclusion in Parmenides that both the one and the others “in every way both are and are-not”(P 166c4-5).

At this point it is worthwhile to set out clearly just what ontological position Plato has established thus far. Actually, in accordance with the two interpretations of negation discussed above, two such readings are here set forth; for reasons which become evident shortly, these readings are here identified as the I-reading and the NF-reading. Three different facets of Sophist’s discussion need be addressed in this regard.

The first such facet concerns what one might consider to be Plato’s ordinary pre-Sophist metaphysics, that is, such ordinary kinds as The Great, The Beautiful, The Just, and so forth. These kinds are accepted by both the I- and the NF-readings as full-fledged ontological entities, and as such need little discussion. The second facet concerns the greatest kinds Being and The Same. Neither of these is “negative”, yet each is rejected by Peck as a Platonic Form in the traditional sense. Modern philosophy certainly agrees with Peck that existence and identity are distinct from ordinary predication (despite Plato’s treating them as such), and they do stand out to the extent that, unlike ordinary Forms, Being and The Same apply to every entity which is. For present purposes, however, nothing much rides on this, and so, despite the obvious general interest and importance of this issue it is not further debated here; rather, in what follows Being and The Same are left aside.

The third facet, the one crucial for present purposes, concerns the ontological status of the “negative” kind The Other and of its parts, The Not-Great, The Not-Beautiful, The Not-Just, and so forth. According to the I-reading, these kinds are not separate ontological entities, instead being

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of S 255e8-259d8 from the "is not" of identity to
the "is not" of predication, concepts of "is not" they consider to be very different. However,
as the above makes clear, Plato sees these concepts as fundamentally comparable, for each involves
partaking of a particular part of being, and specifically a part of The Other. In certain circumstances
the difference between partaking of Other-Than-F and of Other-Than-The-Same-Regarding-y is
relevant and significant; however, for Plato’s purposes in Sophist these two sorts of partaking are
both merely cases of predication, and hence there is no significant shift to be explained away.
On the contrary, his method in moving from the latter to the former is consistent and united, and
failure to recognise this is caused by a modern refusal to accept Plato’s position on the united nature
of seemingly diverse concepts of "is".

Moreover, the point Plato is making by highlighting these seemingly diverse concepts is
the same in both passages: the use of "is not" does not imply "opposite", but only "other". The earlier section
highlighting the "is not" of identity points out that if \( x \) is not the same as \( y \), this
does not imply that \( x \) is the opposite of \( y \); rather, it is simply other than \( y \). In comparable fashion,
the later section highlighting the "is not" of ordinary predication points out that if \( x \) is not \( f \), that is,
\( x \) does not partake of \( F \), this does not imply that \( x \) partakes of the opposite of \( f \); rather, it simply
partakes of something other than \( f \) (though in the same property range). In each case the key point
is the same: negation does not imply opposition, only otherness. No major shift is present.

§3.2.6: Round Four - The Nature of Language and Falsehood (259d9-264b8)

Having thus come to agreement, contra Parmenides, regarding the being of not-being,
in the final section of the central passage the Eleatic stranger and Theaetetus move on to tackle
the remaining major challenge, the sophist and the problem of false language. Thus far
the ontological table has been set; it is now time to finish the meal and demonstrate that one truly
can say what is not. But as with all that precedes it, so too Plato’s treatment of negative language proceeds in measured steps. Specifically, it consists in three such steps: first, affirmation that language is part of what are; second, clarification of the nature of language in general; and third, clarification of the nature of false language in particular.

§3.2.6.1: Language as Part of being (259d9-261e5)

Plato’s first move in tackling falsehood is to establish language in general as part of what is. To this end the final section of the central passage opens with the stranger resuming his remarks concerning those who oppose the interrelation of the kinds. He observes.

For also, good man, vainly attempting to separate all things from all others is not harmonious and moreover is a sign of someone altogether boorish and unphilosophical. / Why is that? /

The sundering of each thing from all is the most complete abolition of all speech.

(S 259d9-e5)

The stranger here brings out explicitly the consequence of a complete absence of interrelation between kinds, and that is a corresponding complete absence of meaningful discourse. In this way, for the first time in the dialogue Plato goes beyond Parmenides’s argument against negative language in specific and explicitly acknowledges his case against language in general. The stranger elaborates,

For speech is for us due to the interweaving of the forms with each other. / True.

(S 259e5-7)

At face value this remark is raises no particular problems, for all of the preceding discussion has involved the interrelation of forms, and hence so too does the language employed. However, commentators, anticipating the stranger and Theaetetus’s upcoming discussion of two simple statements about Theaetetus, find this remark immensely troubling, for Theaetetus is not himself a form, and hence a simple statement about him (that is, a statement of the form ‘Theaetetus is f’) involves only one form, not a multiplicity of interrelated forms. How is this fact to be reconciled with the stranger’s, and hence Plato’s, attribution of the possibility of speech (logos) to “the interweaving of the forms [plural] with each other”(tên allêlôn tôn eidôn sumplokên)?

Several standard treatments of this issue suggest that Plato simply misstates his position. In his paper “Plato’s Sophist: the sumplokê tôn eidôn” Peck reviews a variety of influential historical views of this passage. He first quotes from F.M. Cornford’s work Plato’s Theory of Knowledge: “It is not meant that Forms are the only elements in the meaning of all discourse. We can also make statements about individual things. But it is true that every such statement must contain at least one Form”(1962:47). Peck next quotes a similar view expressed in Sir David Ross’s work Plato’s Theory of Ideas: the assertion that all discourse involves an interweaving of forms
"is in fact an over-statement, since a sentence may have a proper name for a subject, and a proper name does not stand for a Form or universal. But the predicate of a sentence normally stands for a Form" (1962:47). But as Peck aptly observes of these interpretations, "we find no explanation, but merely an assertion, phrased in courteous language, that Plato is bad at simple arithmetic, or else that he has chosen the wrong examples to illustrate his thesis" (1962:47), surely a less than satisfying resolution. A more promising suggestion is made by J.L. Ackrill in his influential paper "SUMPLOKÊ EIDÔN". He suggests, the stranger's assertion "must not be taken to imply that every statement asserts or is about a relation of Forms", but rather, "a sumplokê eidon is presupposed by any and every statement, including those about Theaetetus" (1962:47). While this certainly leads in the right direction, it is not yet strong enough. A weaving together of forms not only is a prior condition to logos, it itself brings about logos, it causes logos to come to be; speech is (gegonen, from the verb gignomai, 'to become', 'to happen') due to the interweaving of the forms. Ackrill's proposal falls short of the mark.

The answer which fits most nicely with both the text and the context is one Peck himself goes on to propose. He suggests, the solutions the commentators have put forward fail "because the difficulty which they are intended to solve is a completely fictitious one" (1962:53). The stranger's remark is not intended to shine light on the general nature of individual logos, his point is not that any particular statement involves at least two forms. Rather, the stranger is drawing attention to the fact that logos itself in general, that is, language in general, is one of the things which are, and everything which is "is" due to its partaking of, or interweaving with, Being. A major focus of the sections immediately preceding has been the point that kinds intermingle, and that all kinds partake of Being and hence for this reason "are". Peck explains, the point made by the stranger at 259e5 follows in just this vein:

We have shown that some combination of the eidê [kinds] with one another is possible; in particular, we have shown that to on (ousia) [being] combines with all other eidê; this includes combination with logos [language], which is one of the eidê: hence there is such a thing as logos. The sentence tells us nothing about the intrinsic character of logos; it merely points out that we can now be assured that there is such a thing as logos. (1962:58)

Not only does Peck's explanation makes perfect sense, it is seemingly vindicated by the very next lines following the stranger's (unecessarily controversial) assertion:

So then consider that we fought at the right time with those denying such things and compelled them that one thing can mix with another. / To what end? /

To the end that speech is for us some one of the kinds of what are. (S 260a1-6)
This is just what Peck suggests: Language is one of the kinds of being (*ton logon . . . tón oníon hen ti genón einai*), Speech is itself one of *what are*; *that* is what the stranger is here talking about.

This view of Speech as itself one of the kinds has broad ramifications for the issue of the ontological ground of statements. If Speech in general "is", then just as with Knowledge and with The Other, so too with Speech its parts "are"; but its parts just are all of the various possible (meaningful) statements. This means that the logical implication of Plato's view here is that every statement is itself one of *what are*, that statements qua statements intrinsically have being irrespective of their truth or falsity. This is not necessarily to say that each instance of a statement (that is, each occurrence of an utterance of a statement) is a being thing (although that too might be defensible). But at the least, each statement qua statement, qua *logos*, is part of *what are*. But this in turn guarantees that each statement qua statement, qua *logos*, is meaningful, for as it itself has a level of being it is guaranteed a referent. As a result all genuine Platonic language is successfully grounded within the context of the referential theory of meaning. However, while this is a step forward it needs further elaboration, for while Plato has thus established that all genuine language is meaningful he has not yet provided criteria for distinguishing between genuine and spurious language. This constitutes his next task.

Before tackling this task, however, the stranger emphasises once more his message concerning the necessity that kinds interrelate, for without such interrelation there cannot be speech:

For the most powerful result of being deprived of [discourse] is that we would be deprived of philosophy; moreover at this time we must reach agreement what speech is, but if we should be robbed of it due to its not being anything at all, doubtless we could no longer speak. And we would be robbed of it, if we conceded that there is no mixture at all of anything with anything. (*S* 260a6-b2)

Parmenides's case against language in general is once more acknowledged and its refutation noted. There is Language, Language is one of *what are*, and hence not only must the kinds interrelate, language must interrelate with Being.

Having thus clearly set forth that Speech is one of *what are*, the stranger next proceeds in a manner which hints that, while Speech "is", it "is" in a manner somewhat different from that of the kinds discussed previously. Although Theaetetus agrees with the stranger's preceding remarks, he nonetheless questions why the nature of discourse must be determined at this particular point. To this the stranger replies,

Not-being appeared to us to be some one kind other than the others, spread through all of *what are*. / This is the case. /

Then the next thing one must consider is if it mixes with opinion and speech. / Why? /

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If [not-being] does not mix with them then [with respect to opinion and speech] necessarily all things are true, but if it does mix then false opinion and speech come to be. For opining and speaking what are not, doubtless this is falsehood occurring in thought and speech. (S 260b7-c4)

And if such falsehood occurs then deceit occurs in images and the sort, and as the sophist was earlier accused of being a maker of false images such an accusation is vindicated. However, the stranger's reasoning in this last passage raises certain questions. Speech is one of what are; Not-Being is spread through all of what are; why, then, is it not immediately assumed that Not-Being spreads through Speech? The answer, it appears, is that while the place of Not-Being as one of what are has been adequately proven, that Not-Being spreads through all of what are has not. The sophist, the stranger suggests, might continue to resist by arguing,

of the forms some partake of not-being, but some do not, and speech and opinion are among those which do not partake (S 260d7-8).

In such a case there would be no such thing as making false images, and hence the sophist could not make them.

But the stranger has already demonstrated that Not-Being pervades through all of what is. In raising this possible objection on the part of the sophist the stranger must be doing one of two things. Either he is questioning their own earlier conclusions, a particularly odd move given his explicit remark at S 259a2-4 that one wishing to do so must first demonstrate where their reasoning has gone astray, or he is drawing attention to the fact that linguistic being is somehow fundamentally different from non-linguistic being, and that the blending of linguistic being with Not-Being must be demonstrated anew. This latter interpretation is clearly the more likely. However, before pursuing this aspect of matters the stranger first returns to the crucial previously-mentioned task of establishing a criterion for judging whether a purported unit of language is well-formed, and hence is genuine language.

§3.2.6.2: The Nature of Language (261c6-262e2)

It is in this context that the stranger proposes that they consider first the nature of Speech, and only then whether it associates with Not-Being in a manner which produces falsehood.

Come then, just as we spoke earlier concerning the forms and the letters, let us now examine in the same way concerning names. For what we are now seeking appears in this manner. / To what must we attend then concerning names? /

Whether all join together with each other or none, or some are able to, but some not. /

This is clear, that some names are able to join together, but some are not. (S 261d1-7)

At S 252e9-254b6 the stranger offers remarks concerning the grammarian, the musician, and the philosopher, out of which comes that regarding each sort of content—letters, musical notes, and

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forms—only some things mix with some. The stranger now picks up again on this theme, only he now focuses his attention on a new sort of content—words (or names). First, he distinguishes that only some name-combinations are meaningful:

Perhaps you mean such as this, that those spoken in sequence which make something clear join together, but those signifying nothing by their continuity do not join together. (S 261d8-e2)

Some words spoken in succession say something, they are significant, while others spoken in the same way are not. And this is not just accidental; rather, there are rules governing such formations. The next step is to distinguish between types of names:

for doubtless concerning what are we have two kinds of vocal indications. / How is that? /

One is called nouns, the other verbs. / Tell me about each. /

The indication which ranges over actions I suppose we say is a verb. / Yes. /

And the vocal sign ranging over those performing those actions is set down as a noun. / Just so. (S 261e4-262a8)

In this way the stranger draws a type distinction between different parts of speech: some words, verbs, identify an action (or, literally, a doing (praxis), which can include a state or condition), while other words, nouns, identify the subject associated with that action.

With this division in position the stranger can now work towards establishing the formation rule governing meaningful speech. He begins by pointing out that word combinations involving only one type of word are not meaningful:

Accordingly speech does not ever come from nouns alone being spoken continuously, nor again from verbs being spoken apart from nouns. / I do not understand these points. /

Clearly you were looking in a different direction when you agreed just now. Since this itself is what I wished to say, that nouns or verbs being spoken continuously are not speech. / How is that? /

Such as ‘walks, runs, sleeps’, and however many other verbs signifying actions, even if someone should speak all of them in order, do not any more form speech. / How could they? /

Then also again whenever ‘lion, deer, horse’ should be spoken, and moreover however many nouns of those performing the actions are named, nor is this continuity assembled together in any way yet speech. For neither in this case nor in the previous case do what are sounded indicate action or inaction or the being of what is or is not... (S 262a9-c4).
Rather, he continues, meaning requires a blending of the two types of words:

... until someone should mix the verbs with the nouns. At that time they fit together and forthwith the first interweaving becomes speech, just about the first and smallest unit of speech. / How do you mean that? / Whenever someone should say 'a person learns', would you say that is the shortest and first speech? / I would. / For doubtless at that time something would be indicated concerning what are or are becoming or have become or will become, and one not only names, but accomplishes something, by weaving together verbs with nouns. For which reason we say that one not only names but speaks, and moreover we uttered the name speech for this weaving. / That's right. (S 262c4-d7)

Genuine, or meaningful, speech is achieved only when a noun and a verb are woven together. This guideline constitutes the most basic formation rule for language. Moreover, such speech goes beyond simple naming, it "accomplishes something", the communication of information, for it not only picks out a subject, it also says something about that subject.

The stranger next relates how matters stand with respect to language to how matters stand with respect to ontology:

In this way then just as some things fit together with each other and some do not, again also concerning vocal signs some do not fit together, but some of them fitting together contain speech. / By all means. (S 262d8-e2)

This is an interesting comparison. On the one hand it suggests nothing more than that only some things fit together and only some words fit together. But the stranger's manner of wording, relating ontology and language by the terminology 'in this way' (houtō) and 'just as' (kathaper), suggests a certain parallel between ontology and language; if this is so then the stranger's type distinction between nouns and verbs, between doers and doings, would reflect a corresponding distinction within the realm of what are, either in terms of the entities themselves or in terms of the roles they play. And this is clearly the case in Plato's world: Plato's "facts", as it were, involve entities playing roles of very different types, for in each "fact" one entity is a partaker and another entity is partaken of. Thus this language distinction does indeed reflect an ontological distinction in Plato's realm of being.18

18 While Plato's "Forms partaking of Forms" and "individuals partaking of Forms" are surely much akin to the modern notion of facts, it is at least debatable whether they are the same; for this reason, in this section the term 'facts' is used within double quotation marks.
As noted, Plato has already provided a referent for genuine language through the introduction of linguistic being. He has now gone on to provide a rudimentary but nonetheless roughly functional criterion, a formation rule, to distinguish genuine language from spurious pseudo-language. One may contend that there is more to be said about well-formedness than the simple distinction Plato offers, but that he offers such a formation rule at all is certainly a progressive beginning on his part. As a result of the progress he has made here Plato manages to solve the difficulty of how language in general (thus including negative language) is meaningful in a manner consistent with the referential theory of meaning. What remains now is the final challenge of resolving the two ontological difficulties of saying what is not: what determines, and hence grounds, the truth of true negative statements and the falsity of false statements?

§3.2.6.3: The Nature of Falsehood (262e3-264b8)

The stranger next draws attention to two aspects of well-formed speech. His first point, that such speech is about a specific subject, draws particular attention to the importance of at least one of the roles of the sort of words he has distinguished as ‘nouns’:

Necessarily speech, whenever it is at all, is speech about something, and for it not to be about something is impossible. / It is as you say. (S 262e5-7)

By adding the qualification “whenever it is [speech] at all” the stranger emphasises that not all connected words constitute speech and that he is talking only about well-formed speech.

The second point the stranger makes draws matters into a new and crucial phase, for he further suggests that well-formed speech “must be of some quality”, and the “quality” he has in mind, it turns out, is a truth-value.

Accordingly also speech must be of some quality? / Certainly. (S 262e8-9)

At this point the stranger and Theaetetus must be particularly well attuned to each other, for whereas previously in their discussion Theaetetus often does not understand matters even after they have been explained, he now expresses agreement with the stranger before matters have been explained. What is involved does become explicit, however, with the introduction of examples.

So then I will state speech to you of a thing combined with an action through a noun and a verb. You indicate to me of what the speech is about. / I will do this as best I can. / ‘Theaetetus sits’. The speech is not long, is it? / No, rather it is moderate. / Now it is your job to indicate what it is concerning and about. / It is clear that it is concerning and about me. / How also about the following? / Of what sort? /

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19 The notion of formation rules comes to the fore in Part III of the present work, especially in Chapter Seven.

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‘Theaetetus, with whom I am now conversing, flies.’ / This also one could not say is otherwise than about me and concerning me. (S 262e12-263a10)

The stranger thus offers two sample statements, one of which states a situation which obtains, or is a “fact”,20 the other of which does not. (The care with which he here proceeds is evident in his qualification in the second statement: by affirming that he is talking about the Theaetetus “with whom I am now conversing”, the stranger denies the sophist the opportunity to claim that that statement does state a “fact”, but one about some other Theaetetus than the person currently present.) Given that these sample statements are both about Theaetetus, the stranger moves on to consider what is their quality:

But we said that necessarily each case of speech is of some quality. / Yes. / Then of what quality must someone say each of these to be? / Doubtless the one is false, and the other true. / And of these the true one states what are as they are concerning you. / How else? (S 263a11-b6)

The stranger’s next remark is about the false statement; consequently, given the lack of elaboration true statements are evidently considered to be relatively unproblematic.

In previous discussion the stranger has established that not-being is part of being. However, as noted, there are two available, very different readings of the ontological status of “negative” kinds, and as such there are two available, very different readings of the ontological basis of true “negative” statements. As discussed above, the I-reading and the NF-reading differ with respect to how they interpret the ontological cashing out of negative kinds: the NF-reading sees “negative”, or “Other-Than” kinds as ontologically equal to their positive counterparts, while the I-reading sees them as merely equivalent to the sets of positive kinds of the same range other than the kind being “negated”. Thus, for example, to take the range of action kinds, according to the NF-reading there is an ontological kind The Other-Than-Flying, whereas according to the I-reading the kind The Other-Than-Flying actually cashes out ontologically in terms of the set {The Sitting, The Standing, The Reclining, . . .}. Thus, while both readings agree on what “fact” grounds the truth of the true positive statement ‘Theaetetus sits’, that is, the fact «Theaetetus sits»,21 or «Theaetetus partakes of The Sitting», they disagree on what fact grounds the truth of the true negative statement ‘Theaetetus does not fly’. According to the NF-reading there is an ontologically full-fledged “negative” “fact” «Theaetetus does not fly», that is, «Theaetetus partakes of The Not-Flying», that is, «Theaetetus partakes of The Other-Than-Flying», thus admitting “negative” “facts” as well as positive “facts” into Plato’s ontology. According to the I-reading.

20 Although it is not expressly stated, it is here assumed that in the dialogue Theaetetus is indeed sitting.

21 In the present work representations of facts are signalled by the usage of the signs ‘<’ and ‘>’.
on the other hand, there is no "negative" "fact" such that Theaetetus does not fly; rather, there is only the positive "fact" «Theaetetus sits». It is this "fact", it is contended, which ontologically grounds the truth of the true "negative" statement, 'Theaetetus does not fly'.

But how exactly would the positive "fact" «Theaetetus sits» ground the truth of the "negative" statement 'Theaetetus does not fly'? Plato does not say. Some might hold that this is a failure on his part, but to hold this presupposes not only that Plato rejects "negative" "facts", but also that he is trying (unsuccessfully) to provide such an ontological ground, and the latter point need not be so read.22 One is entitled to propose an answer on Plato's behalf, but in doing so one ought recognise that this might well involve going beyond Plato's original goals. Of those who do speak on Plato's behalf, one commonly proposed answer in this regard is that The Sitting is incompatible with The Flying, and hence that whatever partakes of the one is precluded from partaking of the other. This is allegedly the case for all ranges of properties: each property within a range excludes, or is incompatible with, all other properties within that range. An early proponent of this view is Demos, who straightforwardly asserts, "Otherness . . . is incompatibility."(1939:157) Francis Pelletier treads a more moderate path, suggesting, "it is possible to read the account of negation given in the Sophist in an 'incompatibility' manner (although it is not necessary to do so)", and then adding, according to this reading the notion 'blends with the Different from' (= 'partakes of The Other Than') "is part of the key to the concept of 'weaving together of the forms'", for it "shows which (and how) forms do not blend together."(all 1990:86)

One obvious consequence of the I-reading, however, is that while it avoids introducing the sorts of Other-Than Forms accepted by the NF-reading, it in turn needs introduce a new set of Forms of the sort "Incompatible-With" to ground the incompatibility between properties (and given that Plato does not have relations, but rather only properties, these will be numerous new Forms: Incompatible-With-Flying, Incompatible-With-Sitting, . . . ). Thus, the I-reading needs two "facts" to ground true "negative" statements rather than just one, as is the case with the NF-reading. For example, the two readings ground the two following true statements as follows:

Statement: 'Theaetetus sits'

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NF-reading ontological ground:</th>
<th>«Theaetetus partakes of The Sitting»</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-reading ontological ground:</td>
<td>«Theaetetus partakes of The Sitting»</td>
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22 Hence John McDowell, for example, suggests, "This unconcern with analysis need not seem a defect, if we see the Eleatic Stranger's project as what it is: not to give an account of the sense of phrases like 'not beautiful', but rather to scotch a mistake about what entitles us to our confidence that they are not idle chatter, that they do indeed have the precise sense that we take them to have. (No need, in executing this project, to produce any substantive theory about what that sense is.)" (1982:120)
Statement: ‘Theaetetus does not fly’

| NF-reading ontological ground: | «Theaetetus partakes of The Other-Than-Flying» |
| I-reading ontological ground:  | «Theaetetus partakes of The Sitting» |
| and                           | «The Sitting partakes of The Incompatible-Within-Flying» |

It is thus apparent that while the I-reading does avoid postulating “negative” facts, it does nonetheless also postulate a whole new range of “facts” over and above those necessary to ground ordinary true positive statements, thus raising significant questions regarding whether there is any ontological advantage to accepting the I-reading in preference to the NF-reading as the preferable interpretation of Plato’s account of negation.23

While the stranger provides little elucidation regarding his views on truth, he does expound further on falsehood:

But then the false [case of speech] states things other than what are. / Yes. / Then it states what are not as being. / Pretty much. / And states other things that are than what are concerning you. For we said that doubtless concerning each many things that are the case, and many things are not the case. / Just so. (S 263b7-13)

Concerning any given subject, of the totality of actions (and states) that are, some are the case concerning that subject and some are not. Put another way, regarding any given subject, of the totality of actions and states of which one can partake, that subject partakes of some and partakes of other-than-some: Theaetetus, for example, partakes of The Sitting and of The Other-Than-Flying (however that is to be cashed out). Truth, the stranger suggested, involves saying what are as they are: ‘Theaetetus sits’ says two things that are, Theaetetus and The Sitting, and says them as they are, that is, interrelated—Theaetetus partakes of The Sitting. Similarly, ‘Theaetetus does not fly’ says two things that are, Theaetetus and The Other-Than-Flying, and says them as they are, that is, interrelated—Theaetetus partakes of The Other-Than-Flying. Falsehood, on the other hand, “states things other than what are” (hetera tôn ontôn), it “states what are not as being” (ta mê ont' ara hôs onta legei), but it does so, not absolutely, but rather relative to some identified subject. Not only does each subject partake of certain forms and of certain Other-Than forms, each subject also does not partake of certain other forms and Other-Than forms; for example, Theaetetus does not partake of the forms The Other-Than-Sitting and The Flying. Falsehood occurs when a statement describes a partaking which is not a “fact”, such as a statement describing Theaetetus’s

23 Not to suggest, of course, that there might not be various other reasons for preferring the I-reading of Plato’s views in Sophist. This debate between these two readings is continued, in far more detailed fashion, in Part II of the present work.
partaking of The Flying. ‘Theaetetus flies’ states things that are—Theaetetus and The Flying—but “other things that are than what are concerning [Theaetetus]”, for Theaetetus partakes of The Other-Than-Flying, not The Flying.

In this way Plato resolves both the difficulty of true negative language and the difficulty of false language, and concurrently resolves the reference/correspondence paradox noted in the Introduction to this chapter. All genuine language has meaning so long as it observes the formation rule set out in §3.2.6.2, which is to say that its component words refer to things that are, and those words are of different sorts such that the statement combines a noun with a verb. Statements, whether positive or “negative”, are true when they correspond to “facts”, that is, to instances of partaking which are the case; in other words, statements are true if they say what are as they are. Statements, whether positive or negative, are false when they do not correspond to “facts”; in other words, statements are false when they say what are, but not as they are. All meaningful statements refer to what is (to the extent that their parts refer to what is), but not all statements correspond to what is (to the extent that the alleged interrelation of their parts does not refer to what is). In this way Plato establishes once and for all a distinction between meaning and truth and hence demonstrates, contra the sophist, that meaningful language can be false.

Having thus exposed the nature of falsehood, the stranger next recounts the process once more in an effort to nail matters down and deny the sophist any opportunity for escape.

First then, from what we distinguished as defining speech, the latter speech I have stated concerning you is most necessarily one of the shortest. / And at any rate we agreed on this just now. (S 263c1-4)

The sample statement ‘Theaetetus flies’ is not long and complicated in a manner to which the sophist may protest; rather, it is short and simple.

And next it is about someone. / That is so. /

And if it is not about you, it is not about anything other. / How could it be? /

And being about nothing it would not be speech at all. For we showed that it was impossible for speech which is to be speech of nothing. / Most right. (S 263c5-12)

In agreement with their previous remarks about the nature of language, the sample statement must have a subject (which it does, Theaetetus) or else it is not speech which is (logon onta), a manner of phrasing which reaffirms once more that speech itself has being.

Now things being said concerning you, but other things being said as the same and things not being as being, such a combination occurring from verbs and nouns being united seems altogether really and truly to be false speech. / You speak most truly. (S 263d1-5)
But the sample statement, having picked out a subject, then applies to that subject things which are not with respect to that subject; for this reason it is “really and truly . . . false” (ontōs te kai aithōs . . . pseudēs) (a linguistic juxtaposition which Plato undoubtedly enjoys).

In this way the possibility of meaningful yet false speech is demonstrated. Moreover, this same result carries over to thought and opinion. This follows because, as the dialogue also brings out, on the one hand, “thought and speech are the same; except the one within, a dialogue of the soul with itself without sound, this itself has come to be given by us the name ‘thought’ . . . But the stream flowing from [the soul] through the mouth with voice has been called ‘speech’” (§ 263e3-8), while, on the other hand, in speech there is affirmation and denial (§ 263e10-13) and “whenever [affirmation and denial] should be produced in a soul through thought with silence . . . you should speak of it itself as . . . ‘opinion’” (§ 264a1-3). Thus thought is simply silent internal speech and opinion is the affirmation or denial of some such speech or thought, and hence the truth values attaching to speech can also apply to thought and opinion. But if this is so then the sophist really can be a producer of false opinion in the listener. The philosopher’s charges against the sophist are coherent after all.

§3.3: Conclusion: Plato on Negative Language (II)

Seen in context, the solution to the problem of saying what is not proposed by Plato is an extraordinary accomplishment. Overcoming the conceptual trappings of his cultural context, he provides a clear and successful resolution to each of the problem’s component difficulties. Speech in general has being due to the interrelation between Language and Being; in this way every genuine linguistic unit refers to (a part of) being. The difficulty of true negative language is resolved through the introduction of “negative”, or “Other-Than” forms, thus providing a correspondent for all true statements, whether positive or “negative”. The difficulty of false language is resolved via the distinction between units of language corresponding to being individually or collectively. The component linguistic units of false statements refer individually to what is, but they do not refer collectively, for the interrelations described by such statements fail to be the case, hence failing to correspond to what is.

As a result, Plato posts significant victories over both Parmenides and the sophists. Plato does concede to Parmenides his Premise 4, “¬-(being & not-being)”, so long as this is interpreted as “¬-(being & not-being); however, as he so clearly brings out in Sophist, being includes within itself Not-Being, where this Not-Being is to be understood, not in its face-value negative form, but rather in the positive form Other-Than. Seen in this way being and not-being need not be seen as incompatible; on the contrary, not only are they compatible, each requires the other. Put another way, far from being opposites, being and not-being turn out to be two sides of the same coin.

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By bringing out the full implications of not-being within being, Plato concurrently demonstrates how falsehood can occur. Statements are not like names, and hence they need not (collectively) pick out parts of what is to be meaningful. Rather, statements are a whole other breed of language, for, like being itself, statements are complex, and this complexity opens up whole new avenues with regard to error, avenues which demonstrate, contra the sophist, that language can very easily be false without losing its meaning. Statements can be composed of words which pick out parts of being, and hence say what are, but not interrelate those words in a manner which reflects part of being, and hence say what are but not as they are. Clearly, when in Euthydemus Ctesipppus maintains, “in some manner [Dionysodorus] says what are, however not as they are”(Eu 284c7-8), and when in Cretulus Socrates and Hermogenes agree, “Then this which would say what are as they are, is true; but [this] which [would say what are] as they are not, is false? / Yes”(Cr 385b7-9), Plato is on his way towards resolving the problem of saying what is not, no matter how many dialogues it takes him to bring this resolution to the surface.

Plato’s solution to the problem of saying what is not is without a doubt a philosophic achievement of the first order. Nonetheless, there are certain aspects of it which demand (and receive below) further consideration. Of these, three are here identified. The first such aspect is Plato’s position that otherness is a positive rather than a negative quality. Plato’s account of negation is successful so long as one accepts that he has indeed avoided involving genuine negation in his ontological realm; but has he really successfully done so? Plato claims that negation is only apparent and, as it were, “disappears” in its translation into otherness; but this claim is most certainly debatable, and hence one disinclined to agree with Plato on this is liable to reject his treatment more or less from the outset.

The second concerning aspect of Plato’s account of negative language involves the ontological inflation inherent in that account. Not only is Plato’s world still populated by all of the ordinary forms and individuals needed to ground ordinary true positive statements, it now includes either a whole new slew of Other-Than forms, each having full-fledged ontological status (the NF-reading), or a different whole slew of Incompatible-With forms, each also having full-fledged ontological status (the I-reading). In either case, the ontology needed to account for the truth of true negative statements and the falsity of false positive statements is a whole lot larger than that needed to account for true positive statements alone.

The third aspect of Plato’s account of negative language here raised has its roots in a paper by John McDowell titled “Falsehood and not-being in Plato’s Sophist”. Consider again the false statement ‘Theaetetus flies’. According to Plato, Theaetetus is, and Flying is; however, Flying is not one of the things which are relative to Theaetetus. Hence, the statement ‘Theaetetus flies’ does not correspond to an obtaining interrelation, or “fact”, and hence is false. But is this explanation
an adequate one? As McDowell observes, it is reasonable to contend, "the falsity of a false belief or statement would have to consist in the fact that the situation or state of affairs it represents is an utter nonentity, something totally devoid of being"(1982:127). But if the sophist maintains that it is indeed the state of affairs such that Theaetetus is flying which is at issue, and if admittedly this state of affairs is not, then the sophist may issue the following reply to the effect that Plato's "solution" has failed to hit its mark:

Attributes, like in flight, are not the sort of thing that I thought a description of falsehood in beliefs and statements would have to represent as not being. And it was not in the sense you exploit - not being in relation to something - but in precisely the sense you agree is problematic - not being anything at all - that I thought a description of falsehood would have to represent my different items, situations or states of affairs, as not being. You have not shown that the description of falsehood I found problematic is not compulsory, dictated by the nature of the concept of falsehood; and you have certainly not shown that it is not problematic.(1982:128)

Whatever one's sympathy with and respect for Plato's accomplishments in Sophist, McDowell's sophist appears to be raising a serious and legitimate point. Plato has not touched on the status of the non-existent complex consisting of Theaetetus's flying, presumably because there is no such complex. But if it is this complex which the sophist asserts in claiming that Theaetetus flies, then how has Plato genuinely addressed the sophist's concerns?

There are (at least) three possible answers here. The first answer is, more or less, to discount the sophist's objection as irrelevant. It is in this vein that Job Van Eck, for example, contends that McDowell's sophist has been defeated and just won't admit it:

A pupil of the ES might answer in this way. 'You are a real sophist! When you say to the ES "You have not shown that the description of falsehood I found problematic is not compulsory, dictated by the nature of the concept of falsehood", you simply ignore that that is precisely what he did show! Sure enough, that Theaetetus is flying is not the case, it is so to speak a nonfact, and Theaetetus' flying does not exist. But the sentence "Theaetetus flies" is not about that, not about a nonexistent state of affairs, a "nonfact", and not about Theaetetus' flying. And then, in fact, that is not what makes it a false sentence. What the ES did show is that there is another way in which you can describe what a falsity consists in, what it is that you say when saying what is not the case. That "Theaetetus flies" states "the things that are not as being" ... does not imply that this sentence speaks about a fancied, unreal fact as a fact, or about Theaetetus' flying as if it existed (were the case), but that it is about flying in general, which, in contradistinction to
the "utterly not being" flying of Theaetetus, is something indeed, only different from what Theaetetus in fact is doing. In a word, it speaks about something that is not the case concerning Theaetetus (in that it is different from everything that is concerning him) as something that is the case concerning him. Thus, a statement can be false without being about a nonexistent situation or an individual action not done.

(1995:41-42)

This defence of Plato doesn't measure up, however, despite its spirited presentation. Van Eck's response to McDowell's sophist amounts to nothing more than an assertion that the sophist is simply wrong. It does not explain how Plato's position can accommodate the sophist's objection, it merely denies that that objection is a valid one. And while this might well satisfy one who agrees with Van Eck that it is not nonexistent states of affairs which are really at issue in the problem of falsehood, it does nothing to placate one who sincerely thinks that it is just such states of affairs which do underlie the problem. Van Eck's response says nothing to those who do not already agree with him, and hence is clearly inadequate.

A second answer to McDowell's sophist falls out of the discussion of Sophist provided above. If one accepts (with Peck—see §3.2.6.1 above) that language is part of being, then one can assert that every state of affairs has being through the being of its linguistic representation. But this boils down to granting full ontological status to every well-formed statement, and hence only adds to the ontological inflation already incurred though acceptance of Other-Than or Incompatible-With forms. It is an option, but not necessarily an appealing one (nor one a sophist is likely to be convinced by).

The third, most direct answer is to consider more closely just what is the ontological status of merely possible states of affairs, of possible situations which are not "facts". Such an examination might well avoid the necessity of accepting all statements as ontological entities and yet genuinely address the sophist's concerns. Given that Plato offers no such examination, one proposing this answer must agree with McDowell that Plato does not resolve this difficulty (whether or not he intended to), and hence must supplement Plato's account of falsehood with further analytical scaffolding.

The remaining two parts of this work examine these three main unresolved aspects of Plato's account of negation—incompatibility, negative facts, and nonexistent states of affairs. Completion of this task requires the tools and insights of modern twentieth-century analytic philosophy, but such a context does not concurrently require treating Plato's account of negative language anachronistically, for, as it happens, a wide range of aspects of his account have close parallels in the views of major modern thinkers. Specifically, the I-reading of Plato's account finds a close approximation in the work of F.H. Bradley, for despite a general monistic overview which places him
much closer to Parmenides than to Plato, Bradley's more practical philosophical critique of negation places him firmly in the camp of incompatibility as underlying negative language. Alternatively, the NF-reading of Plato's account finds a close approximation in the work of Bradley-disciple-turned-critic Bertrand Russell, for Russell, at least in his classic "logical atomism" period, is very much inclined to accept that reality has genuine negative aspects, and it is these which ultimately ground true negations and falsehoods. (Both of these thinkers are considered in Part II below.)

The view contended by McDowell's sophist, that it is not simply attributes that are at issue, but rather complex situations or states of affairs, also finds a close approximation in modern philosophy via the work of Russell's youthful associate Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's treatment of negative language places considerable emphasis not only upon the role of possibility *per se*, but also upon the role of *mere* possibility, of what is possible but not actual, exactly what McDowell's sophist claims is really at issue.

Neither Bradley, Russell, nor Wittgenstein reveal the slightest indication that their treatments of negative language have any connection with Plato; nonetheless, as examination below makes very clear, they do indeed have very much in common with their august predecessor. As such, while the present work now shifts its focus from ancient Greece to modern Europe, only a minimum is lost in the translation. The views so carefully spun out by Plato find new life and new development, if not new acknowledgement, in the fertile minds of the great early moderns. It is to these latter thinkers that the present work now turns.
PART II

THE ONTOLOGY OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE:
BRADLEY AND RUSSELL ON
INCOMPATIBILITY AND NEGATIVE FACTS
Part II
Chapter Four

BRADLEY, AND INCOMPATIBILITY

§4.1: Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, in his work “On Nature” Parmenides contends that the natures of being and not-being compel one to conclude that what is must be a homogeneous monistic unity. However, he nonetheless concurrently provides further qualification of the nature of being, with such further qualification apparently deemed to be consistent with his ultimate ontological monism. But despite this apparent willingness to accept a plurality of qualifications of being Parmenides denies any role to negation with respect to ontology and language, a denial which raises questions concerning the extent to which he is entitled to hold that being can be described, indeed, that it can be qualified at all. Through its rejection of negation Parmenidean language also collapses meaning and truth, for it only accepts as meaningful language which directly ties to what is. Consequently, one can only say what is, or speak positively and truly; one cannot say what is not, for apparent false positive and true negative language are mere appearance, they are not really genuine language at all. Taken to its limit Parmenides’s position implies both ontological and linguistic monism such that there is ultimately only one ontological entity, being, and only one linguistic unit, the name ‘being’.

To a certain extent the views expressed in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century work of F.H. Bradley have strong parallels with those expressed by Parmenides: John Passmore observes, Bradley’s dialectic “is the dialectic of Parmenides and Zeno . . . . It is obvious that he has learnt a great deal from Plato’s Parmenides and Sophist, in which that dialectic is displayed” (1966:60). Like Parmenides, Bradley both provides a conceptual argument in favour of the view that being must be one and accepts that being nonetheless can be qualified further in a manner consistent with this monism. However, and this is a crucial distinction, unlike Parmenides, to the extent that he is able Bradley consciously builds into his philosophy a framework intended to allow for a limited internal pluralism within an unlimited external monism. As a result, whereas Parmenides cannot account for pluralism and negation and hence is ultimately compelled to reject both, Bradley is free not to follow this lead and to accept instead that a plurality of both positive and negative language (the latter in both its forms) can indeed genuinely be meaningful. Key to Bradley’s diversion from Parmenides’s path is Bradley’s acceptance, contra Parmenides, that appearances have ontological status: “appearances exist. That is absolutely certain . . . . And whatever exists must belong to reality.”(1897:114) It is by this granting the reality of appearances, albeit (as discussed below) in a significantly qualified manner, that Bradley opens the door to pluralism, and hence to negation.
Despite its obvious importance, the dual nature of Bradley's philosophy, the contention of a limited internal pluralism dependent upon an unlimited external monism, has traditionally failed to be acknowledged, either by Bradley or by his commentators. In his writings Bradley constantly degrades the pluralist position, choosing instead to embed himself firmly, at least consciously, in the monist camp. However, his acceptance of the reality of appearances compels him to accept nonetheless the legitimacy of the pluralist position, even if he fails to recognise this. Properly seen, it is clear that Bradley's overall position is thus a careful balance between two sub-positions: a Pure Philosophy, which sets out how things rationally must be, and a Practical Philosophy, which makes a sincere attempt to account, in a manner reconcilable with his deeper intellectual insights, for how things empirically seem to be. Such a dual interpretation of Bradley's philosophy is admittedly unusual; however, careful consideration below of his expressed views demonstrates that it is nonetheless textually warranted.

Bradley's Pure Philosophy, the view to which he wholeheartedly, unambiguously, intellectually commits himself, is grounded in monism, but of a particularly intricate sort. He holds that Reality is one. Language is inherently complex; as such, language cannot represent the oneness of Reality. Truth, properly understood, is identical to Reality, and as such it too cannot be fully captured or represented. However, in order to account for the reality of appearance, Bradley's one Reality is internally complex, and it is his attempt to deal with the implications of this internal complexity which constitutes his Practical Philosophy. This latter branch of his position, one to which he is halfheartedly, ambiguously, intellectually committed, is grounded in pluralism. The one Reality paradoxically involves a multiplicity of discreet appearances or facts. Language, being complex, is perfectly suited to represent this internal complexity, this world of appearance. Being identical to Reality, the grand Truth is also one; but just as a plurality of internal aspects of Reality can yet be distinguished, so too a plurality of lesser-scale "truths" can also be distinguished, truths which capture only partial reality and hence are themselves only partial truths. The Practical Philosophy often treats this internal complexity as genuine external complexity, these limited reals and limited truths as independent rather than as dependent, and it is in just this that the Practical Philosophy falls short and fails to measure up to the standards of reason, fails to scale the heights attained by the Pure Philosophy. Indeed, Bradley never stops reminding his readers of the imperfections and shortcomings of the Practical Philosophy. Everything about the Practical Philosophy must be considered in the light of the Pure Philosophy in order that its limitations are always remembered, its failure to accomplish its goal genuinely is always in mind. Everything the Practical Philosophy proclaims must be understood with the proviso, 'But things aren't really

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1 The phrases 'Pure Philosophy' and 'Practical Philosophy' as here applied to Bradley are (as far as is known) original to the present work.
like that”. Facts, statements, truths, these are the tools of the Practical Philosophy, but they are tools which build only apparent philosophical frameworks, not real ones.\(^2\)

Thus on the one hand Bradley’s Practical Philosophy is only a placebo intended to help soothe those poor souls who are unable or unwilling to relinquish their flawed, misguided pluralistic perceptions in favour of the perfect, clear monistic reality. However, on the other hand this Practical Philosophy accomplishes much more, for it does not just paper over the cracks in the error-filled world of empirical experience, it also provides a competent treatment of that world which is able to account for meaning and truth, not just with respect to positive language, but also with respect to negative language, to false statements and true negative statements. Once one gets past the disclaimers, Bradley’s Practical Philosophy talks to pluralists more or less on their own terms. The reader is never allowed to forget that Bradley intellectually never buys into the practical account he provides, but that aside, the bottom line is that that account nonetheless works remarkably well. Moreover, such a subsequent sincere pluralist as Russell can essentially respond to this account on its own terms, for it does not need further dressing to be functional, as it works fine just as Bradley originally presents it.

With regard to his treatment of negative language, examination of the position Bradley provides reveals fairly clear views concerning the issues central to this work, for, building on the tenets laid down in his Pure Philosophy, in his Practical Philosophy he expressly considers the role of negation with respect to the relation between ontology, language and truth. Specifically,

\(^2\) Central to an acceptance of this dual interpretation of Bradley’s philosophy is appreciation of the sincerity with which he holds that pluralistic phenomenal experience is ultimately compatible with the monistic all-encompassing whole which is reality, and hence that his two views ultimately meld into a single coherent position. Bradley does not claim that he is personally able to reconcile these two seemingly inconsistent realms: on the contrary, he contends that such reconciliation is beyond the finite understanding of limited beings. However, he proposes, a theory’s failure to account fully for every aspect of a problem does not itself constitute disproof of that theory:

If you wish to refute a wide theory based on general grounds, it is idle merely to produce facts which upon it are not explained. For the inability to explain these may be simply our failure in particular information, and it need imply nothing worse than confirmation lacking to the theory. The facts become an objection to the doctrine when they are incompatible with some part of it; while, if they merely remain outside, that points to incompleteness in detail and not falsity in principle. A general doctrine is not destroyed by what we fail to understand. It is destroyed only by that which we actually do understand, and can show to be inconsistent and discrepant with the theory adopted. (1897:163-64)

Bradley thus argues that an inability to understand how monism and pluralism can be reconciled is not sufficient ground to deny that they can be so reconciled. Rather, refutation of his overall philosophical position requires, not merely an absence of evidence that monism and pluralism can be reconciled, but a presence of evidence that they are actively “inconsistent and discrepant”. Without such evidence, his position is merely challenged, not defeated.

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Bradley contends that negative statements presuppose positive statements, for they involve the rejection of a proposed positive content. Ontologically, he rejects negation as a genuine aspect of reality, proposing instead to ground the truth of true negative statements in incompatibility, a relation inherent between appropriate properties. (Although he does not provide an explicit account of the ontological ground of the falsity of false positive language, the most consistent view is to hold that he treats false statements in a comparable manner.) Thus the account of negation Bradley provides is essentially comparable to that of the I-reading of the account of negative language proposed by Plato in *Sophist* and discussed in Chapter Three.

One asset for interpreting Bradley's views consists of his strenuous endeavours to lay out his difficult position as thoroughly as he is able throughout his writings. His primary efforts in this direction begin with the 1883 first edition of his work *The Principles of Logic*; this is followed in turn by the 1893 first edition of his broader work *Appearance and Reality*, the 1897 second enlarged edition of this same work, a series of papers of various dates (but primarily written circa 1905 to 1910) collected in the 1914 work *Essays on Truth and Reality*, and the 1922 second enlarged edition of *The Principles of Logic*. Throughout these writings, especially in the *Essays*, Bradley attempts again and again to cast new light on the same challenging territory. His success at accomplishing this is undoubtedly limited, but that makes his efforts in this vein no less admirable.

§4.2: Bradley and Ontology: Appearance and Reality

The lynchpin of Bradley's overall philosophical position is his metaphysics, his view concerning the nature of ultimate reality. His most developed ontological discussion is found in his self-described "metaphysical essay" *Appearance and Reality*, a work divided into two books, with Book I, "Appearance", concerned with how *being* seems to be, and Book II, "Reality", concerned with how it genuinely is. In Book I Bradley challenges the reality, indeed, the very coherence, of relations as holding between distinct independent entities, and in so doing provides an apparently devastating attack on pluralism and on the realm of phenomenal appearance in general. However, he also holds that appearances cannot be dismissed as mere nothing, for they *are* appearances, and thus *are* something. Consequently, in Book II Bradley attempts the difficult task of accounting for apparent pluralism as a legitimate aspect of genuinely monistic *being*. In the end, his account does not explain how this is so so much as it asserts that this must be so.

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3 Although he qualifies his efforts in the work by describing them as "a more or less desultory handling of perhaps the chief questions in metaphysics" (*1897*: Preface).
§4.2.1: The Rational, and Monism

In his essay "Mysticism and Logic" Bertrand Russell observes, "An elaborate logic, beginning with Parmenides, and culminating in Hegel and his followers, has been gradually developed, to prove that the universe is one indivisible Whole, and that what seems to be its parts, if considered as substantial and self-existing, are mere illusion." (1914:21) Although in his observation Russell does not mention him by name, Bradley is very much one of those "followers" continuing on in Parmenides's and Hegel's footsteps. As discussed in Chapter One, Parmenides's ontological monism is very much a result of his conceptual starting points, for it is his commitment to the view that being and not-being cannot interrelate in any way which drives him to his conclusions regarding the genuine nature of the world. Bradley is no less committed to accepting the results of his own theoretical reasoning: Passmore remarks, for Bradley, "If 'facts' and principles conflict, so much the worse for the facts; if the choice must be made between 'a great historical fact' and a 'high abstract principle', then, says Bradley, 'the issue I must decide in favour of the principle and the higher truth'." (1966:61)

Bradley's ontological monism develops as a consequence of his adherence to the view that the notion of relations between (to use Russell's phrase) "substantial and self-existing" parts of reality is ultimately unintelligible. In Chapter Two it is observed that in his dialogue Parmenides Plato makes reference to the historical figure Zeno, a follower of Parmenides, who supports his master's thesis of ontological monism by demonstrating that the thesis of ontological pluralism is inherently problematic; in Appearance and Reality Bradley adopts a similar approach with respect to pluralistic being. If being genuinely is pluralistic then its component qualities must stand in some relation; his approach is to consider what it would be for qualities to stand in some relation, and to show that no answer to this question is tenable. He begins by asking, "One quality, A, is in relation with another quality, B. But what are we to understand here by is?" (1897:17). His first consideration is to reject the option that 'is' in this context is intended to connote identity:

We do not mean that 'in relation with B' is A, and yet we assert that A is 'in relation with B'. In the same way C is called 'before D', and E is spoken of as being 'to the right of F'. We say all this, but from the interpretation, then 'before D' is C, and 'to the right of F' is E, we recoil in horror. No, we should reply, the relation is not identical with the thing. It is only a sort of attribute which inheres or belongs.

(1897:17)

4 Although, interestingly, Bradley does not himself emphasise his ties to Hegel; on the contrary, in his Preface to Appearance and Reality, for example, he downplays this connection by claiming that he himself does not "know precisely" his relation to "German writers" (although he does go on to acknowledge "the great claims of Kant and Hegel").
In other words, Bradley points out, to be “A” is not simply the same thing as to be “in relation with B”; rather, it is merely an attribute, a property of A to be in relation with B. He adds, one way of putting this is to say that the proper word to describe A’s relation with B “should not be is, but only has”.

However, Bradley continues on to question whether this shift from the identical meaning to the predicational meaning of ‘is’ really clarifies anything. His answer is explicit: “But this reply comes to very little. The whole question is evidently as to the meaning of has; and, apart from metaphors not taken seriously, there appears really to be no answer.”(1897:17) His focus here is the whole nature of predication, a key aspect of the interrelationship of pluralistic being (and just what Plato had gone to such pains to explain in Sophist): “And we seem unable to clear ourselves from the old dilemma, If you predicate what is different, you ascribe to the subject what it is not; and if you predicate what is not different, you say nothing at all.”(1897:17) Thus, Bradley alleges, the notion of predicational flounders, for in employing it either one speaks falsely by saying that a subject is something different from itself, or one speaks truly, but only trivially so, by saying that a subject is itself.

Having thus proven, at least to his own satisfaction, that qualities cannot be attributed one to the other, Bradley next considers a different tack: what if a relation is taken to be, not “an attribute of the related”, but rather “more or less independent. ‘There is a relation C, in which A and B stand; and it appears with both of them.’”(1897:17-18) But here again, he suggests, “we have made no progress”, and he quickly and efficiently points out why:

The relation C has been admitted different from A and B, and no longer is predicated of them. Something, however, seems to be said of this relation C, and said, again, of A and B. And this something is not to be the ascription of one to the other. If so, it would appear to be another relation, D, in which C, on one side, and, on the other side, A and B, stand. But such a makeshift leads at once to the infinite process. The new relation D can be predicated in no way of C, or of A and B; and hence we must have recourse to a fresh relation, E, which comes between D and whatever we had before. But this leads to another, F; and so on, indefinitely.(1897:18)

If relations are themselves some additional component over and above the qualities being related then some higher level relation is needed to relate the relation and the qualities, with this regress continuing on without end. As Bradley consequently notes, “the problem is not solved by taking relations as independently real”; on the contrary, this approach proves to be “an obvious failure”. (both 1897:18)

Based on these arguments Bradley draws a general conclusion regarding the coherence of the notion of relations between distinct independent qualities:

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The arrangement of given facts into relations and qualities may be necessary in practice, but it is theoretically unintelligible. The reality, so characterized, is not true reality, but is appearance. (1897:21)

Thus, much like Parmenides before him, so too Bradley is willing to value reason over experience and to conclude that if reason cannot make sense of what is experienced then what is experienced must be rejected as “not true reality”. True reality cannot break down into substantial self-existing facts consisting of relations and qualities; rather, relations, if they are to be retained at all, must relate interdependent aspects of one indivisible whole. Reason demands that being be some sort of monistic unity.

§4.2.2: The Empirical, and Pluralism

In his description of appearances as “not true reality”, Bradley’s usage of the adjective ‘true’ as a modifier of ‘reality’ is not redundant; on the contrary, it plays a genuinely important role. That this is so is evidenced by remarks he offers in the conclusion of his Book I on “Appearance”. Reality appears to be pluralistic; however, reason has revealed that this cannot be so. Nonetheless, appearances cannot on this basis summarily be dismissed, for in some manner or other appearances yet are, and as such they too must be included in a complete account of being:

We shall have hereafter to inquire into the nature of appearance; but for the present we may keep a fast hold upon this, that appearances exist. That is absolutely certain, and to deny it is nonsense. And whatever exists must belong to reality. That also is quite certain, and its denial once more is self-contradictory. Our appearances no doubt may be a beggarly show, and their nature to an unknown extent may be something which, as it is, is not true of reality. That is one thing, and it is quite another thing to speak as if these facts had no actual existence, or as if there could be anything but reality to which they might belong. And I must venture to repeat that such an idea would be sheer nonsense. What appears, for that sole reason, most indubitably is; and there is no possibility of conjuring its being away from it. (1897:114)

Bradley thus indicates that, while on the one hand appearances are not “true reality”, on the other hand appearances, or facts, are some part of reality nonetheless. Consequently, while true reality may perhaps be some sort of unity, reality in general must somehow or other incorporate plurality within itself.

It is certainly no easy task to determine how this can be so. As Bradley openly admits, the result of his Book I on appearance is “mainly negative”; as such, his first task in considering reality is to find some positive criterion which distinguishes the real from the merely apparent. This he quickly accomplishes: “in rejecting the inconsistent as appearance, we are applying a positive
knowledge of the ultimate nature of things. Ultimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself; here is an absolute criterion.”(1897:120) However, Bradley’s position that reality is consistent, combined with his view that appearances are real, produces a rather paradoxical consequence: “Appearance must belong to reality, and it must therefore be concordant and other than it seems. The bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity must hence somehow be at unity and self-consistent”(1897:123). But to say that appearance must be other than it seems is to say that appearance must be other than it appears, an assertion which is at the least peculiar, and at the most self-contradictory. The challenge of reconciling appearance with true reality is not one easily met.

The general problem arising here concerns not just how appearance is related to reality, but whether it can even be so related. W.J. Mander remarks regarding this latter point, "in view of [Bradley’s] central thesis that all relations are unreal, the more serious problem is to see how they can be related at all. There is no coherent means of connecting them, yet neither is it coherent to suppose that they be wholly unconnected.”(1994:137-38) Michael Foster refers to this difficulty as the “fundamental contradiction which splits [Appearance and Reality] from top to bottom . . . Bradley starts from the thesis that nothing determined by a relation is real, and he is unable to escape from the conclusion that Reality itself is determined by a relation, by its relation namely to Appearance.”(1930:43) In this way Bradley appears to be caught in the grips of self-contradiction.

In his defence Bradley provides grounds for two responses to this important difficulty. The more elusive option recalls von Fritz’s attempt to reconcile Parmenides’s views on essentially this same matter.5 Regarding Parmenides, von Fritz suggests that the constitution of a mortal is such that human nous is to be understood as inherently flawed and hence unable to grasp eon in all its completeness. So too Bradley adopts a comparable position by asserting that human nature itself stands as the ultimate barrier against human understanding of the nature of the Absolute (and hence of its relation to appearance):

Fully to realize the existence of the Absolute is for finite beings impossible. In order thus to know we should have to be, and then we should not exist. This result is certain, and all attempts to avoid it are illusory.(1897:140)

Bradley’s bottom line is that the nature of the Absolute is beyond the reach of finite human understanding. In parallel fashion the nature and role of appearance is “inexplicable. Why there are appearances, and why appearances of such various kinds, are not questions to be answered.” (1897:453) The big picture is simply beyond reach: the constitution of the “complete harmony and system in the Whole” is not to be grasped by mortals, for its details lie “beyond our knowledge”.(1897:453)

5 This attempt by von Fritz is discussed in Chapter One above.
Given Bradley's position here it follows that one cannot discuss in a literal manner how the Absolute and its appearances stand in relation to one another, for this stands beyond human capacity. Rather, one attempting to discuss this must do so figuratively, via metaphor, and this Bradley does, often speaking of appearances as "adjectives" which "qualify" reality. As Foster points out, such a metaphor can never fully be cashed out in ordinary terms, and even to attempt to do so is to destroy the metaphor altogether. Consequently,

It follows that if we are to write at all, or speak at all, or think at all about the ultimate problem, how the Absolute stands to its appearances, we must do so with a tacit reservation, inasmuch as any form of language which we may select for our expression involves consequences which contradict the truth we desire to express. In short: any words which it is open to us to use of the Absolute must imply that the Absolute stands in a relation to its appearances; we know that this is impossible, and must therefore on every occasion discount the sense of our words as metaphorical to the extent of this implication. (1930:44-45)

As a result, the position Bradley has staked out with regard to the relation between the Absolute and its appearances is, at least from his perspective, impervious to attack, as for one even to attempt to pin down this relation is for one to misunderstand it. In this way Bradley responds to this key matter by denying, sincerely but perhaps unsatisfyingly, that any adequate account can indeed be given.

However, there is also another line of reasoning available to Bradley which does not evade the issue in this way. Mander suggests that according to Bradley "all relations are unreal"; Foster refers to Bradley's thesis "that nothing determined by a relation is real". But do these characterisations accurately reflect Bradley's complete views on the nature of relations? It is correct that in Book I he seemingly dismisses relations from the realm of the real; however, in Book II he has more to say on this subject, and this too needs to be considered. In the opening chapter of Book II, after asserting the need for appearance itself ultimately to be "at unity and self-consistent", Bradley continues on to pursue matters further:

We know that the real is one; but its oneness so far, is ambiguous. Is it one system, possessing diversity as an adjective; or is its consistency, on the other hand, an attribute of independent realities? We have to ask, in short, if a plurality of reals is possible, and if these can merely coexist so as not to be discrepant? Such a plurality would mean a number of beings not dependent on each other. (1987:124)

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6 It is interesting to note that Foster's expression that one cannot literally "write at all, or speak at all, or think at all" about the ultimate problem calls to mind the stranger's remark in *Sophist* that what is not is "unthinkable and unstateable and unutterable and unaccountable". (*Sophist* 238c10)
The option that the real can consist of a plurality of independent realities he quickly rejects, for "a mode of togetherness such as we can verify in feeling destroys the independence of our reals." (1897:125) But this is not the end of the matter, for he continues on to add a remark which opens up a whole other line of reasoning: "If the relations in which the reals somehow stand are viewed as essential, that, as soon as we understand it, involves at once the internal relativity of the reals." (1897:125) The notion of "internal relativity", of, not external relations between independent reals, but internal relations between interdependent reals, offers an additional way out. As G.E. Moore points out in the opening sentence of his paper "External and Internal Relations", "In the index to Appearance and Reality... Mr. Bradley declares that all relations are 'intrinsic'"(1919:276), thus drawing attention to the important point that Bradley does not dismiss relations so much as he severely qualifies their nature. Relations can occur; however, the reals which they relate are inherently connected by their very natures such that in the end each involves every other. Aspects of reality can be related to other aspects of reality; however, they are really just various aspects of the single genuine ontological entity, Reality. As such, no relations are merely accidental or contingent aspects of the reals they relate; rather, every relation of every real to every other real is an essential aspect of the identity of that real.

The significance of this for the problem of the relation between appearance and reality is as follows. Although the details of such a defence are more than a little fuzzy, it is open for one to argue that appearance and reality are themselves internally related, and hence that the gap between the two is not the impassable gorge some commentators portray it to be. If appearance can itself involve internal relations between aspects of reality, why cannot appearance and reality comparably involve some sort of internal relation between each other? Clearly such a defence requires a great deal of elaboration, but it is not at all obvious that such a line of reasoning lacks promise. The task of determining the relation between appearance and reality certainly is not easy, but on the other hand neither is it certainly hopeless.7

----7 As noted, Bradley rejects the reality of external relations, resulting in his position of ontological monism. Given the significance of this implication, this rejection on his part gives rise to an enormous body of literature concerning the tenability of pluralism as an ontological position; indeed, Bradley is now perhaps best known for his role in the debate concerning the nature of relations. However, whether or not one accepts the pure theoretical necessity of monism, as noted above even Bradley himself continues on (via his Practical Philosophy) to discuss reality largely in a pluralistic manner; it is for this reason that the balance of his views considered here are compatible with the overall framework of this work. Given this, the interesting and important, but (for present purposes) tangential, issue of the tenability of external relations is here not further discussed.
§4.3: The Linguistic: Thought and Judgement

By affirming the reality of complex relational appearance Bradley provides himself room to allow for complexity within the realm of language, of thought and judgement. Picking up on this, early in his chapter “Thought and Reality” he remarks,

If we take up anything considered real, no matter what it is, we find in it two aspects. There are always two things we can say about it; and, if we cannot say both, we have not got reality. There is a ‘what’ and a ‘that’, an existence and a content, and the two are inseparable. That anything should be, and should yet be nothing in particular, or that a quality should not qualify and give a character to anything, is obviously impossible. If we try to get the ‘that’ by itself, we do not get it, for either we have it qualified, or else we fail utterly. If we try to get the ‘what’ by itself, we find at once that it is not at all. It points to something beyond, and cannot exist by itself and as a bare adjective. Neither of these aspects, if you isolate it, can be taken as real, or indeed in that case is itself any longer. They are distinguishable only and are not divisible.(1897:143)

By asserting that reality essentially involves two aspects, a subject (that is, a ‘that’) and a property (that is, a ‘what’), Bradley is effectively committing to the view of ontology as inherently complex. His claim, “That anything should be, and should yet be nothing in particular . . . is obviously impossible” coheres nicely with the general position that being is of the form “x is f”, that to be is to be something or other. This in turn leads to his conclusion that “x” and “f” are “distinguishable” but “not divisible”, for while the two can be distinguished by their different roles within reality, they cannot be divided, for each is dependent upon the other in order that it might play that role. By asserting that if one cannot find two aspects in something then one has “not got reality” Bradley concedes that reality, at least as it is accessible to humans, is complex. Reality itself by itself, reality auto kath’ hauto, is a simple unity devoid of divisions; however, reality in relation to the self, reality pros alla, is a complex plurality of distinguishable aspects.

This complexity plays an essential role in the nature of thought. Neither the ‘that’ nor the ‘what’ taken on its own is real; they can be distinguished but not divided. However, Bradley points out, “thought seems essentially to consist in their division.”(1897:143) The essence of thought involves the extraction of a property from reality, with this property being an idea itself devoid of existence: “an idea is any part of the content of a fact so far as that works out of immediate unity with its existence. . . .” The main point and the essence is that some feature in the ‘what’ of a given fact should be alienated from its ‘that’ so far as to work beyond it, or at all events loose from it. Such a movement is ideality”(1897:144). Thus thought inherently involves dividing from reality one of its characters and treating this character as independent rather than as
the dependent aspect of reality that it is. Bradley elaborates on this in the context of judgement, which he calls “thought in its most completed form”. Judgement, he proposes, involves the unification of an existent subject with an ideal predicate:

The point is whether with every judgement we do not find an aspect of existence, absent from the predicate but present in the subject, and whether in the synthesis of these aspects we have not got the essence of judgement. And for myself I see no way of avoiding this conclusion. Judgement is essentially the re-union of two sides, ‘what’ and ‘that’, provisionally estranged. (1897:145)

In this way Bradley brings out that thought and judgement each inherently involve two sorts of components playing two distinct but interdependent roles.

Understood in this way it is clear that thought and judgement are inherently complex. As such, they are suitable media for the representation of the apparent nature of being; however, on the other hand, they are equally unsuitable media for the representation of the genuine nature of being. Nonetheless, despite this fundamental inability of thought and judgement to capture genuine being, in Bradley's scheme this is exactly what they ultimately aim to accomplish. Thought is not aimless, but rather attends towards the specific end of representing true reality by means of language: “Truth is the object of thinking, and the aim of truth is to qualify existence ideally. Its end, that is, is to give a character to reality in which it can rest. Truth is the predication of such content as, when predicated, is harmonious, and removes inconsistency and with it unrest.” (1897:145)8 Thought achieves its end to a greater degree the more it reconciles the content of the predicate with the content of the subject, for the greater the coherence between the two contents the greater the resulting harmony, the lesser the remaining inconsistency and unrest. But this in turn requires that thought constantly expand to capture more completely the nature of reality: “And because the given reality is never consistent, thought is compelled to take the road of indefinite expansion. If thought were successful, it would have a predicate consistent in itself and agreeing entirely with the subject.” (1897:145) But for the predicate to agree entirely with the subject would be for each to reflect in an accurate and complete manner the nature of being, something which is impossible. As such, while in theory the end of thought is to capture reality fully, in practice this can never occur.

Before proceeding further, it is worthwhile to point out that Bradley's explicit distinction of two aspects of reality, a “that” and a “what”, and correspondingly his view that thought necessarily involves components corresponding to these two sorts of ontological entities, is in important respects similar to the type distinction drawn by Plato in Sophist (and discussed in §3.2.6 above). Plato there distinguishes two sorts of words roughly corresponding to the modern distinction between nouns

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8 The relation of truth to thought is discussed is the next section.
and verbs, or more widely, subjects and predicates, and proposes that (meaningful) speech does not occur until the two are woven together; upon reflection it is clear that Plato’s “nouns” play essentially the same role as Bradley’s “thats”, which is to serve as a subject of predication, and his “verbs” play essentially the same role as Bradley’s “whats”, which is to serve as that predication. In this way each of these thinkers provides a simple but important foundational distinction concerning the components necessary for language.

§4.4: The Veridical: Truth, Error, and Falsehood

Just as Bradley’s ontological views may be considered out of the ordinary, so too his views on truth, at least in their mature form, are unconventional and therefore demand particular attention. Such attention is especially necessary due to the extent to which his views on this topic are commonly misconstrued. Although in his early years Bradley apparently held a version of the correspondence theory of truth,⁹ he is much more famous for his considerably different later view. Of this latter view Mander observes, “By far the greatest number of people have thought that Bradley held a coherence theory of truth—that is to say, that he held truth to consist in the coherence of propositions among each other. . . . This is still the popular opinion.”(1994:37) Attributing the origin of this belief to Russell, Mander continues on, although “a careless reading might well give this impression . . . . the real situation is quite otherwise. The fact of the matter is that nowhere does Bradley say that truth consists in coherence. For Bradley this is the criterion, not the nature, of truth.”(1994:38) Indeed, as Mander rightly points out, “there is no excuse for misinterpreting [Bradley], for there can be no doubt as to what he actually says”(1994:29). Bradley’s theory of truth is indeed “highly unusual, and rather perplexing”, but, as the following section brings out, it is not unclear.

Important aspects of Bradley’s views on truth are found not only in Appearance and Reality but also in various of the articles published in his subsequent collection Essays on Truth and Reality. Collectively these works provide considerable insight into his views not only on the nature of truth in general, but also on truth considered both absolutely and relatively. These topics are here considered in turn.

§4.4.1: The Identity Theory of Truth

In his 1907 paper “On Truth and Copying” Bradley considers the nature of truth in general. He there begins by critiquing what he refers to as the “natural” view of the nature of truth, the view that truth involves a relation to facts, and specifically “that view for which truth consists in copying reality”, a view, if not the same as, then clearly akin to the widely-held correspondence

⁹ Or, as he calls it, the ‘copy’ theory. For discussion of this point confer, for example, Stewart Candlish’s 1989 paper “The Truth About F.H. Bradley” (Mind 98), especially page 336.
theory of truth. In his critique he presents what he considers to be a number of difficulties with this view. First among these is what he deems to be a "fatal objection", one heavily dependent upon his own ontological views, and particularly upon his rejection of pluralistic phenomena as not "true reality": truth cannot copy facts, for facts are themselves "the imaginary creatures of false theory . . . manufactured by a mind which abstracts one aspect of the concrete known whole, and sets this abstracted aspect out by itself as a real thing."(1907:108) As noted, Bradley accepts facts only as limited dependent aspects of true reality, not as themselves genuine objective entities; as such, he judges that they are inadequate to serve as a ground for truth.

In addition to this alleged primary refutation Bradley also raises a further objection which is not so dependent upon his own ontological views, but rather which draws upon a point even pluralists are likely to accept. This objection rides on his observation that there are types of judgements, such as disjunctive or hypothetical judgements, which "cannot be taken as all false, and yet cannot fairly be made to conform to our one type of truth."(1907:109) That is to say, some truths, even if they ultimately involve reference to facts, cannot reasonably be taken simply to be copies of them. He contends,

Our truths in short can all of them in some sense be verified in fact, but, if you ask if they all are copied from fact, the answer must be different. . . both truth and reality go beyond the perceived facts. The given facts in other words are not the whole of reality, while truth cannot be understood except in reference to this whole.

(1907:109)

Bradley’s point here is that even if one grants that reference to given or perceived facts is legitimate, it remains that such facts as given or perceived are always simple, or atomic, which is to say that they do not have other facts as components. Consequently, there are not disjunctive or hypothetical facts, and hence true disjunctive or hypothetical judgements cannot derive their truth from their being copies of such facts. Expanding this line of argument Bradley further observes, "Universal and abstract truths are not given facts, nor do they merely reproduce the given, nor are they even confined to the limits of actual perception."(1907:109) The implication of his objection is clear: a copy theory of truth is highly inadequate as a comprehensive theory of truth in general, for there are truths which involve much more than simply facts as they are given in perception.

Bradley’s case here is quite a strong one. Whatever one might think of his initial, allegedly "fatal" objection, his further argument that the realm of truth extends beyond the simple facts of immediate perception is sound. Defence of the correspondence theory of truth does demand significant modification, for if "facts" are taken to include only simple facts then Bradley is correct

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10 Bradley also includes negative judgements in this objection; however, in the present work negative judgements are treated separately in the next section, and as such are excluded here.
that there are other sorts of truths which do not correspond to such facts. Either one must argue that there are also other sorts of facts, such as disjunctive, hypothetical, and universal facts, to which these other sorts of truths correspond, or one must concede that the correspondence theory of truth works only within a limited sphere and that some other supplementary theory of truth is needed to cover other sorts of truths.

At this point Bradley moves from consideration of this allegedly failed theory to what he suggests is “a better way of resolving the problem” of the nature of truth, his own identity theory of truth. He foreshadows the theory he is about to present by pointing out “the main error which, if left unremoved, makes the problem insoluble. This error consists in the division of truth from knowledge and of knowledge from reality. The moment that truth, knowledge, and reality are taken as separate, there is no way in which consistently they can come or be forced together.” (1907:110) Bradley thus rejects the position that truth, knowledge, and reality can be distinct but related, arguing instead that the three must be identical:

The division of reality from knowledge and of knowledge from truth must in any form be abandoned. And the only way of exit from the maze is to accept the remaining alternative. Our one hope lies in taking courage to embrace the result that reality is not outside truth. The identity of truth knowledge and reality, whatever difficulty that may bring, must be taken as necessary and fundamental. (1907:112-13)

Acknowledging that such a conclusion “will on many sides be rejected as monstrous”, Bradley nonetheless defends his view by offering a dialogue in which he argues that the alternative is clearly unsatisfactory. Against those contending that truth is not the same as reality he replies,

Well, if so, I presume that there is a difference between them. And this difference, I understand, is not to be contained in the truth. But, if this is so, then clearly to my mind the truth must so far be defective. How, I ask, is the truth about reality to be less or more than reality without so far ceasing to be the truth? The only answer, so far as I see, is this, that reality has something which is not a possible content of truth. (1907:113)

Such an option Bradley rejects, for he sees it as leading to “the dilemma which ruined us before”: either “such an outstanding element is known, [in which case] we have knowledge and truth”, or “it is not known, [in which case] I do not know of it, and to me it is nothing.” (1907:113) He therefore concludes, “if we are to advance, we must accept once for all the identification of truth with reality.” (1907:113)
Those defending an alternative theory of truth such as the correspondence theory might well argue that at least on this point Bradley is misrepresenting their position. His exposition makes it seem as if correspondence theorists conceive of truth as attempting but failing to duplicate reality, and that the distinction between truth and reality involves some "outstanding element" which truth leaves out but which reality contains. Such a portrayal is fundamentally incorrect. According to correspondence theorists truth is not something comparable to but falling short of reality; rather, truth and reality belong to entirely different realms. Truth is a quality attributed to or denied of representation based upon the relation between that representation and the reality it succeeds or fails at representing. To put truth and reality on the same scale is simply to misunderstand the whole approach.

To his credit Bradley does go on to assert concerning truth and reality, "I do not say that we are to conclude that there is to be in no sense any difference between them"; however, he quickly adds, "But we must, without raising doubts and without looking backwards, follow the guidance of our new principle."(both 1907:113) Bradley suggests, "We must unhesitatingly assert that truth, if it were satisfied itself, and if for itself it were perfect, would be itself in the fullest sense the entire and absolute Universe"(1907:113-14), and then adds, "Truth is not satisfied until we have all the facts . . . . Truth is not satisfied, in other words, until it is all-containing and one."(1907:114) Thus, truth qua truth must capture "all the given facts" in an all-inclusive whole; however, he adds, "any such complete inclusion seems even to be in principle unattainable."(1907:115) It is this paradoxical state, its aspiration towards a completeness in principle unattainable, which leads Bradley ultimately to conclude, truth "at once is and is not reality"(1907:117), adding, "those aspects in which truth for itself is defective, are precisely those which make the difference between truth and reality." 1907:116-17) This tension between truth as aspiring to duplicate reality and truth as necessarily falling short of reality emerges as a recurrent theme in Bradley's papers. In his subsequent 1910 article "On Appearance, Error and Contradiction" he returns to this topic, there offering the paradoxical observation, "truth demands at once the essential difference and identity of ideas and reality", and then concluding enigmatically, "But the possibility of such an implication involves, in my view, a passage beyond mere truth to actual reality, a passage in which truth would have completed itself beyond itself. Truth, in other words, content with nothing short of reality, has, in order to remain truth, to come short for ever of its own ideal and to remain imperfect." (both 1910:251)

In his 1911 paper "On Some Aspects of Truth" Bradley returns once more to this important issue. In that work he initially changes tack somewhat, for he there begins by rejecting the topic as stated, asserting, "You cannot ask how in any proper sense truth is related to the real", and elaborating, "For such a relation to be possible, you would require reality on one side and truth
on the other. And, since without truth reality would not be real, and truth apart from reality would not be true, the question asked is ridiculous.” (1911:343) However, he does subsequently return to the problem in a qualified form: “On the other hand you can inquire as to how truth stands to reality, in this sense that you can ask in what way truth is different from and falls short of the Whole. What is it lacking to truth, on the addition of which truth itself would be reality? This is a question which to some extent can be discussed and answered.” (1911:343) His discussion and answer, unfortunately, involve a now-familiar combination of hint and disclaimer: hint, as in his simultaneously informative and confusing remarks, “[Truth] is Reality appearing and expressing itself in that one-sided way which we call ideal. Hence truth is identical with Reality in the sense that, in order to perfect itself, it would have to become Reality. On the other side truth, while it is truth, differs from Reality, and, if it ceased to be different, would cease to be true” (1911:343-44); disclaimer, as in his subsequent disavowal, “But how in detail all this is possible, cannot be understood.” (1911:344) As with the relation between appearance and reality, so too here once more a problematic aspect of Bradley’s difficult theory allegedly falls prey to the limitations of the human intellect, thus absolving Bradley of an obligation to provide further enlightenment.

It is one thing to accept as reasonable a claim that the relation between Truth and Reality cannot be understood “in detail”; however, it is quite another to accept as satisfactory the muddled state in which Bradley leaves the topic. Specifically, in this regard it is not clear just how the identity theory he propounds differs from the correspondence theory he rejects. The correspondence theory sets out two distinct realms, the ontological and the representational, and holds truth to be a quality present when the latter corresponds with the former. In offering as an alternative his identity theory Bradley states neither what truth is nor how it relates to reality, other than to say that it is identical yet different. Certainly in the correspondence theory the central notion of “correspondence” is left relatively undefined, and hence in the identity theory the notion of “identity” must be provided similar latitude. However, in the former case at least what it is that corresponds is relatively defined, for the notions of “ontology” and “representation” are understood. By contrast, in the latter case it is not merely the notion of “identity” which is unclear, but also what it is that is identical; what is this “truth” which is “identical” to reality? Bradley’s assertion, “without truth reality would not be real”, hints that truth is a component or an aspect of reality; this is likely not what is meant, but what then is meant? The bottom line is that Bradley’s alleged alternative to the correspondence theory of truth is not only not itself clearly enough defined to be evaluated as an alternative, it is not even clearly enough defined for it to be determined whether or not it genuinely is an alternative. There is much more to pinning down the nature of truth than simply asserting that it is identical to reality, and to a large extent Bradley fails to provide the necessary additional information.
In Appearance and Reality Bradley continues on to provide discussion which is revealing regard his view of failure of truth, or of error. It is worth noting that in discussing error he is necessarily stepping outside of the realm of Reality (for there is no error in Reality), and to that extent he is also necessarily stepping outside of the realm of his Pure Philosophy, and instead dealing with a matter firmly entrenched in the realm of the practical; it is for this reason that he is able to speak unproblematically about limited facts and partial realities. In a chapter titled "Error" he proposes for sake of discussion, "Let us suppose the reality to be X (a b c d e f g . . .)"; however, acknowledging that humans cannot perceive reality as a whole, he adds, "and [let us suppose] that we are able only to get partial views of this reality." (both 1897:170) He next suggests,

Let us first take such a view as 'X (a b) is b'. This (rightly or wrongly) we should probably call a true view. For the content b does plainly belong to the subject (1897:170).

By accepting that 'X (a b) is b' is true Bradley is clearly accepting the idea that truth involves the accuracy or correctness of the attribution asserted. His qualification that this should "rightly or wrongly" be called true strongly foreshadows that he has more to say regarding truth in general, but it is clear nonetheless that correctness of attribution is one of his criteria for truth. That this is so is reinforced by his subsequent suggestion, "Let us go further on the same line, and, having dealt with a truth, pass next to an error.

\[\ldots\text{let us now say 'X (a b) is d'. This is false, because d is not present in the subject}\]

\[\ldots\text{Thus the error consisted in the reference of d to a b; as it might have consisted in like manner in the reference of a b to c, or again of c to d. (1897:171)}\]

Here Bradley is pointing out that failure of correctness of attribution results in failure of truth; if what is attributed is not part of the subject then the result is error, or falsehood. Whatever else he goes on to say, it is clear that Bradley is not indifferent to the correctness of the attribution posited in a judgement; on the contrary, it is an essential factor in the truth of that judgement. This point needs particular emphasis because it is one easily overlooked, for while correctness is for Bradley a significant criterion of truth, it is not the criterion which receives from him the most attention. However, it also deserves attention for its relation to the point noted two paragraphs previously: in this regard Bradley's identity theory does not differ from the correspondence theory, for both hold that accuracy of attribution is a criterion of truth.

§4.4.2: Degrees of Truth and Error

Bradley's identification of truth with reality can be considered in either of two ways, absolutely or relatively. "According to the former view", he writes, "there are perfect truths, and on the other side there are sheer errors. Degrees of truth and error may, on this view, in a sense be admitted, but in the end you have ideas which are quite right, and again other ideas which are quite
wrong."(1910:252) He is clear in his rejection of this absolute view, accepting it as useful "in limited spheres and for some working purposes" but nonetheless finding it "untenable":

Ultimately there are, I am convinced, no absolute truths, and on the other side there are no mere errors. Subject to a further explanation, all truth and all error on my view may be called relative, and the difference in the end between them is one of degree. (1910:252)

According to Bradley, then, there are no complete truths or complete errors, but rather only balances of varying degrees of the two.

Bradley’s primary discussion of the relative nature of truth, of truth as admitting of degrees, is found in the chapter “Degrees of Truth and Reality” in his earlier work Appearance and Reality. He begins this chapter by reviewing now-familiar ground. As noted above, in the earlier chapters of this work he has “established” the unity of the Absolute but the plurality of appearance and of thought and judgement. In particular, thought is inherently complex, it “essentially consists in the separation of the ‘what’ from the ‘that’. It may be said to accept this dissolution as its effective principle.”(1897:319) Bradley continues on to observe, “But by embracing this separation, and by urging this independent development to its extreme, thought indirectly endeavours to restore the broken whole. It seeks to find an arrangement of ideas, self-consistent and complete; and by this predicate it has to qualify and make good the Reality.”(1897:319) Now the Absolute, considered as such, cannot be completely captured in language, for language can never fully “qualify and make good the Reality”. But only language which completely captures the Absolute would be absolutely true; it is on this basis that Bradley is led to draw his important consequence.

There will be no truth which is entirely true, just as there will be no error which is totally false.(1897:320-21)

He acknowledges, “Our thoughts certainly, for some purposes, may be taken as wholly false, or again as quite accurate”(1897:321); however, this may legitimately be done only so long as those doing it are aware that this is not literally correct, that it is practical but not rationally defensible to do so.

Consequently, language never falls at either of the extremes; it is never either entirely true or totally false. Rather, it will always fall somewhere in the middle:

With all [judgement] alike, if taken strictly, it will be a question of amount, and will be a matter of more or less. . . . truth and error, measured by the Absolute, must each be subject always to degree.(1897:321)

Specifically, the greater the extent to which a judgement accurately represents reality, the greater the extent to which a judgement is identical to reality, and the greater the degree to which that judgement is true:
Our judgements hold good, in short, just so far as they agree with, and do not diverge from, the real standard. We may put it otherwise by saying that truths are true, according as it would take less or more to convert them into reality. (1897:321)

The position Bradley here embraces is an inevitable consequence of the views he has previously adopted. Appearance, the pluralistic combination of a "that" with a "what", is part of reality. Truth is identical to reality. Hence appearance is part of truth, or, alternatively, partly true. Language, the representation of the (apparently) pluralistic association of a "that" with a "what", in parallel fashion is also partly true. Specifically, appearance and language are true to that degree to which they exhibit the two marks of truth, the mark of internal harmony and the mark of expansion and all-inclusiveness. Indeed, the greater the expansion and all-inclusiveness the greater the internal harmony; consequently the two aspects are "in principle one". Given this, Bradley summarises his position:

Hence to be more or less true, and to be more or less real, is to be separated by an interval, smaller or greater, from all-inclusiveness or self-consistency. Of two given appearances the one more wide, or more harmonious, is more real. It approaches nearer to a single, all-containing, individuality. To remedy its imperfections, in other words, we should have to make a smaller alteration. The truth and the fact, which, to be converted into the Absolute, would require less rearrangement and addition, is more real and truer. And this is what we mean by degrees of reality and truth. To possess more the character of reality, and to contain within oneself a greater amount of the real, are two expressions for the same thing. (1897:323)

In other words, the more completely a judgement represents reality, the more it possesses "the character of reality", and hence the more true it is. In "On Appearance, Error and Contradiction" Bradley clarifies this position further by suggesting, "The more the conditions of your assertion are included in your assertion, so much the truer and less erroneous does your judgement become." (1910:252-53) Continuing on to consider the further issue of whether the conditions of the judgement can ever be made complete and comprised within the judgement, he responds, "In my opinion this is impossible", and then adds, "And hence with every truth there still remains some truth, however little, in its opposite." (both 1910:253) In this way Bradley presents his second criterion of truth, completeness, or "all-inclusiveness", a criterion which in turn builds on the previously noted criterion, accuracy of attribution. A judgement which accurately attributes a property to a subject has some truth; the more completely the property attributed captures the subject, that is, the greater the degree to which the property attributed agrees with the subject, the greater the degree to which the judgement in question is true.
It is important to recognise both of these criteria of the identity theory of truth. In fact, as noted, with regard to the first criterion the identity theory does not differ from the correspondence theory, for both theories insist upon the correctness of the attributions asserted. It is with regard to the second criterion that the two theories diverge, for the two theories are ordinarily accompanied by differing conceptions of “the final nature of reality”, and it is this which underlies the identity theory’s having a relative view of truth whereas the correspondence theory (generally) has an absolute view of truth. An absolute view of truth, Bradley explains, assumes . . . that the reality, or the type, itself is self-contained and fixed. . . . Reality must be such as to comprise self-existent pieces of fact and truth. The principle and the conclusion involved here is of course Pluralism, which, if it aims to be consistent, holds to relations which are merely external and tries to take the Universe as a mere ‘And’. The point which should be emphasized is that everything ordinarily covered by the word ‘implication’ is here utterly denied. Nothing can make in the end any kind of difference to anything else, for every kind of difference and relation is external and unable to qualify that outside of which it falls.(1910:258-59)

Pluralism, combined with the correspondence theory of truth, leads to a plurality of independent, absolute complete truths. However, as discussed in §4.2.1 above, Bradley rejects the reality of external relations; consequently, so too in turn he rejects pluralism, the view that reality involves “self-existent pieces of fact”. Instead, Bradley embraces monism, which, combined with the identity theory of truth, leads to a plurality of interdependent, relative or partial truths, each of which falls short of the one complete Truth which is identical to the one complete Reality. It is in this regard more than any other that the correspondence theory and the identity theory differ; not in their inherent natures, but in their traditional accompanying baggage, the ontological perspectives to which they are ordinarily bound. Pluralism holds that individual judgements can correspond to individual independent pieces of reality and hence be completely true, while monism holds that individual judgements can only be identical to individual interdependent limited appearances of unlimited reality and hence be only partially true. The difference lies, not in correspondence versus identity, but in pluralism versus monism.

Failure to recognise the identity theory’s commitment to both of its criteria of truth can lead to unfair condemnation of it as an inadequate theory of truth. In his 1907 paper “The Monistic Theory of Truth”, a work ostensibly directed at H.H. Joachim’s book The Nature of Truth but one which clearly takes aim at Bradley as well, Bertrand Russell cleverly attempts to turn the theory against itself by focusing on the notion of partial truths. As Russell rightly observes, “Every separate proposition, on the monistic theory, expresses a partial truth: no proposition expresses something quite true, and none expresses something quite false.”(1907:154) Using this observation
as a foil with which to attack, Russell charges, “if no partial truth is quite true, it cannot be quite true that no partial truth is quite true”, adding as a coda, “unless indeed the whole of truth is contained in the proposition “no partial truth is quite true,” which is too sceptical a view for the philosophy we are considering.” (1907:152) Carrying this one step further, first amongst his summary of objections to the monistic theory he proposes,

(1) If no partial truth is quite true, this must apply to the partial truths which embody the monistic philosophy. But if these are not quite true, any deductions we may make from them may depend upon their false aspect rather than their true one, and may therefore be erroneous. (1907:159-60)

As Russell presents matters, the monistic theory appears to refute itself.

But as so often both in philosophy and in ordinary life, appearance need not coincide with reality. Russell is surely correct that according to the monistic theory the monistic theory is not, indeed, cannot be, quite wholly true. However, from here he is not justified in assuming that the monistic theory’s failure to be wholly true stems from its failure to meet its first criterion, accuracy of predication, for it might well be that the monistic theory is entirely accurate as far as it goes and is in fact a completely correct theory of truth. Rather, it might well be due to its failure to capture fully the nature of reality that the monistic theory falls short; it is not inaccurate in its own realm, it simply fails to meet its own second criterion by being incomplete as an account of all realms. Russell neglects to consider the option that the “false aspect” to which he refers need not have anything to do with shortcomings of the monistic theory qua theory of truth, but only with shortcomings qua account of Reality. Consequently, he cannot successfully refute the monistic theory in the simplistic manner he proposes.

That said, Russell does raise worthwhile questions concerning the monistic theory’s ability to “distinguish between right and wrong judgements as ordinarily understood” (1907:155); it is to this end that he also lists amongst his objections to the monistic theory,

(3) The theory is unable to explain in what sense one partial judgment is said to be true and another false, though both are equally partial. (1907:160)

Although he does not explicitly spell matters out, Russell’s point is clear. It is not enough simply to assert that all judgements are partially true, or that judgements might differ in their degree of relative truth. What is needed is a clear statement of the basis on which such judgements can be compared, a basis which not only resolves the philosophical issues involved but also “distinguishes between right and wrong judgements as ordinarily understood”, and thus far no such basis has been provided. And it is not with regard to esoteric abstract judgements that Russell raises this issue, but rather with regard to good old-fashioned matters of fact: “What I wish to make plain is, that there is a sense in which such a proposition as “A murdered B” is true or false; and that in this sense
the proposition in question does not depend, for its truth or falsehood, upon whether it is regarded as a partial truth or not." (1907:155)

In fact, at the time Russell wrote his paper on the monistic theory Bradley had not discussed this important area, and hence Russell is quite right to raise it. Several years later Bradley provides his response. Although on a philosophical level he is committed to the view that all truth is relative, or admits of degree, Bradley is not blind to the role played by "what may be called Common Sense", that is, the absolute view of truth, in ordinary life; on the contrary, he openly admits, "In the realm of the special sciences and of practical life, and in short everywhere, unless we except philosophy, we are compelled to take partial truths as being utterly true. We cannot do this consistently, but we are forced to do this." Moreover, he admits, "our action within limits is justified." (both 1910:258) Later in the same work he continues in this vein,

Within limits and in their proper place our relative view insists everywhere on the value and on the necessity of absolute judgements, both as to right and wrong and as to error and truth. Life in general and knowledge in particular rest on distinction and on the division of separate regions. And, though these divided regions are not independent and each self-contained, yet within each to a very large extent you must proceed as if this were so. (1910:266)

In this way, despite his ultimate philosophical admittance to his Pure Philosophy only of relative truth, Bradley does nonetheless concurrently recognise both the need for and ("within limits") the justification of absolute truth, and to this extent he concurrently provides a Practical Philosophy designed to include this very matter.

The establishment of absolute truths involves not just the provisional assumption that reality consists of distinct independent facts, or pluralism; less obviously, it also involves the assumption of uniqueness regarding those facts. Bradley first sets down once more the core of the absolute view of truth: "What is contended here is that a fact, in time or space or in both, is, as it stands, real, and that hence such a fact can serve as a test of absolute truth and sheer error." (1910:261) But as he then points out,

'Caesar crossed the Rubicon,' we say, 'or not'; but this 'either-or' is only true if you are confined to a single world of events. If there are various worlds, it may also be true that Caesar never saw the Rubicon nor indeed existed at all. And, with this, obviously our truth has ceased to be absolute. (1910:262)

Subsequently, Bradley concludes, lacking uniqueness one can without contradiction "at once affirm and deny that Caesar crossed the Rubicon". Thus uniqueness is necessary for absolute truth; but how is such uniqueness to be achieved, how does one get away from "various worlds" to one unique world? The answer to this lies with one's own phenomenal perceptions:
Obviously the construction in space and time which I call ‘my real world’ must be
used; and obviously, within limits, this construction must be taken as the only world
which exists. And, so far as we assume this, we of course can have at once simple
error and mere truth. (1910:266-67)

It is one’s own sentient experiences, from which one constructs one’s own real world, that underlie
the uniqueness necessary for “absolute” truths or falsehoods. In proclaiming this relation between
sentience and reality Bradley is in turn echoing a similar point made earlier in Appearance and
Reality: “We perceive, on reflection, that to be real, or even barely to exist, must be to fall with
sentience. Sentient experience, in short, is reality, and what is not this is not real.”(1897:127)

To clarify Bradley’s remarks on absolute truths via an example, one experiences, say, that
the desk is brown and that the table is grey; this grounds the “mere truth” of the judgements that
‘the desk is brown’ and ‘the table is grey’. But, given only these experiences, one does not also
experience that the desk is grey or that the table is brown (indeed, for reasons discussed in the next
section, according to Bradley given the previous experiences one cannot also have these latter experiences); consequently, the judgements that ‘the desk is grey’ or that ‘the table is brown’ are
“simple error”. In this way Bradley acknowledges, indeed, philosophically grounds, practical views
concerning truth and error. As a result, he clearly demonstrates a willingness to accept that one can,
with some legitimacy, hold that one’s judgements are simply, that is, “absolutely”, true or false.
However, this must be done with an awareness, whether conscious or not, that one is so acting by
treating as a separate and divided region what is ultimately actually part of a larger whole. One can
conditionaly treat one’s own world as the only world which exists, but one must not forget that
ultimately this is not the case; as Bradley himself summarises this matter, this approach “contains
and subordinates what we have called the absolute view, and in short justifies it relatively.”
(1910:267) Put another way, Bradley thus provides a Practical Philosophy account of absolute
truths and falsehoods; however it must be remembered that this account is not ultimate, but rather in
the end itself falls under the Pure Philosophy account of relative truth and falsehood.

§4.5: Negative Judgments

In Appearance and Reality and Essays on Truth and Reality Bradley thus expends
a considerable amount of space and effort discussing, not just his rational, monistic, Pure Philosophy
views of the natures of reality, thought and judgment, and truth and error, but also his empirical,
pluralistic, Practical Philosophy views on these matters. In those discussions he addresses the relation

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11 In Appearance and Reality and Essays on Truth and Reality Bradley spells the word ‘judgement’ with two ‘e’ s, whereas in The Principles of Logic, wherein he discusses negative judgments, he spells the word ‘judgment’, thus leaving out the middle ‘e’. In order to accord with his usage, in this section the latter spelling of the word is adopted.
between negation and judgment with respect to judgments which are not true (or at least not wholly true); however, in those works he does not discuss the other fundamental application of negation to judgment, the case where negation explicitly occurs in the judgment. Bradley's primary treatment of this topic is found in his earlier work *The Principles of Logic*, mainly in a chapter titled "The Negative Judgment", as well as in an essay of the same name added to the second edition of the work. Two initial points are worth noting regarding his treatment of such judgments. First, although he does not expressly mention this, Bradley's concern is specifically with *true* negative judgments, not with negative judgments irrespective of their truth-values. Second, his treatment of negative judgments falls entirely within the realm of his Practical Philosophy, for his discussion proceeds without demonstrating any unease that its context, a pluralistic world of distinct facts, is one forbidden within his Pure Philosophy.

Bradley sets out clearly his fundamental position regarding the nature and ground of negative judgments right from the opening section of his chapter on such judgments:

Like every other variety, the negative judgment depends on the real which appears in perception. In the end it consists in the declared refusal of that subject to accept an ideal content. The suggestion of the real as qualified and determined in a certain way, and the exclusion of that suggestion by its application to actual reality, is the proper essence of the negative judgment.(1922:114 (I:III:1))

In his view positive and negative judgments are *essentially* different. Noting that denial "can not be reduced to or derived from affirmation", he adds, "yet it would probably be wrong to consider the two as co-ordinate species", for they do not stand at the same level of reflection:

For in affirmative judgment we are able to attribute the content directly to the real itself. To have an idea, or a synthesis of ideas, and to refer this as a quality to the fact that appears in presentation, was all that we wanted. But, in negative judgment, this very reference of content to reality must itself be an idea. Given X the fact, and an idea $a - b$, you may at once attribute $a - b$ of X; but you can not deny $a - b$ of X, so long as you have merely X and $a - b$. For, in order to deny, you must have the suggestion of an affirmative relation. The idea of X, as qualified by $a - b$, which we may write $x(a - b)$, is the ideal content which X repels, and is what we deny in our negative judgment.(1922:114 (I:III:2))

In other words, according to Bradley a positive judgment compares what may be described as an ideal quality (or synthesis of ideal qualities) to a subject that appears in perception; for example, in the affirmative judgment 'that tree is green' the ideal quality of being green is compared to the perceived subject, that tree. As such, "The tree, in its presented unity with reality, can accept at

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12 References to *The Principles of Logic* are provided both by page number and by Book:Chapter:Section numbers.
once the suggested quality. I am not always forced to suspend my decision, to wait and consider the whole as ideal, to ask in the first place, Is the tree green? and then decide that the tree is a green tree.” (1922:115) A negative judgment, however, compares to the perceived subject not just an ideal quality, but a complete ideal quality-subject relation; for example, in the negative judgment ‘that tree is not yellow’ it is not simply the ideal quality of being yellow which is compared to that tree, but rather the whole ideal quality-subject relation of that tree’s being yellow: “But in the negative judgment where ‘yellow’ is denied, the positive relation of ‘yellow’ to the tree must precede the exclusion of that relation. The judgment can never anticipate the question. I must always be placed at that stage of reflection which sometimes I avoid in affirmative judgment.” (1922:115) Continuing on in the next section, he adds, “The exclusion by presented fact of an idea, which attempted to qualify it, is what denial starts from. . . . And in the consciousness of this attempt is implied not only the suggestion that is made, but the subject to which that suggestion is offered. Thus in the scale of reflection negation stands higher than mere affirmation.” (1922:115) Whereas the positive judgment compares only the ideal quality \( a - b \) to the subject \( X \), the negative judgment compares the whole ideal quality-subject relation \( x (a - b) \) to the subject \( X \), a significantly more involved process.

This initial expression of Bradley’s views on negative judgments already reveals that his root conception of pluralistic reality is such that negation is not part of that reality. There is no aspect of the real, no fact, such that (for example) that tree is not yellow; rather the ideal content of that tree’s being yellow is denied by its failure to agree with the presented fact that that tree is green. In this way Bradley foreshadows his coming explicit rejection of negative facts. In the chapter his overall strategy regarding establishing the ontological ground of true negative judgments is to argue against the view of negation as directly rooted in negative pieces of reality and in favour of the view of negation as indirectly rooted in a relation of incompatibility holding between positive pieces of reality. Such an approach on his part is of particular interest because the options he considers are precisely those considered by his philosophical adversary Russell in his lectures on logical atomism, and especially because Russell, in considering those same options, comes to the exact opposite conclusion than does Bradley. Bradley’s views (and related material) are examined in this chapter, Russell’s views (and further related material) in the next.

§4.5.1: The Case Against Negative Facts

Bradley’s rejection of negative facts takes aim at a fundamental difficulty with the proposal of such facts, and that is the lack of a coherent account of exactly how facts could manifest negation. Taking in general that a fact consists of a subject exemplifying a property, such as, for example, that the subject \( x \) is, or exemplifies the property, \( f \), in “The Negative Judgment” Bradley identifies and renounces two options concerning how a negative fact might be considered to be structured: that
a subject can exemplify a negative property, such as, for example, that \( x \) is not-\( f \), and that a subject can negatively exemplify a positive property, such as, for example, that \( x \) is not \( f \). Consequently, he concludes, negative judgments cannot have their ground in negative facts, and hence must have their ground in positive facts.

Bradley's reasoning here, considered in detail below, is an important step forward in the treatment of the difficult issue of how negative language ties to the world. However, the strength of his bottom line conclusion is undermined not only by weaknesses in the reasoning he presents, but also by his failure to recognise that there are more options regarding the structure of a negative fact than he acknowledges. Russell himself offers some thoughts on this topic; however, his remarks, considered in the next chapter, offer little of substance regarding the specific issue of the structure of negative facts. Modern thinkers have been more exact in contributing to this matter. In his paper "Negation and Generality" Herbert Hochberg considers the additional option that a negative fact can be "a complex containing a property, a subject, a tie of exemplification and something else—the negative constituent" (1969:301); in his paper "Negative Exemplification" four years later Donald Brownstein adds another option to the list, that a negative fact can involve a subject, a property other than that denied the subject, and "the 'absence' or 'lack' of" the property denied" (1973:45).

In order to most easily discuss these options, for the time being Brownstein's framework (which in turn more or less follows Hochberg's) is here adopted:

Letting '\( W \)' denote the quality white, and '\( a \)' and '\( b \)' two color-spots, let us suppose that \( a \) bears the exemplification relation or tie to \( W \). Then \( a \)'s exemplifying \( W \) is a positive fact. Adopting this as a model of the positive fact, the alternative formulations of negative facts are:

1. A negative fact consists of, e.g., \( W, b, \) and some third, negative, element as well as a tie of exemplification. [This is Hochberg's added option.]
2. A negative fact consists of, e.g., \( b, \) the tie of exemplification, and a negative quality. [This is Bradley's first option.]
3. A negative fact consists of, e.g., \( W, b, \) and the tie negative exemplification. [This is Bradley's second option.]
4. A negative fact consists of, e.g., \( b, \) some quality other than \( W \) and the "absence" or "lack" of \( W \). [This is Brownstein's added option.]

In considering these options it is important to keep in mind an "essential point" rightly emphasised by Brownstein, which is "that negative qualities are taken to be no less qualities than positive ones. They are not construed to be of a different ontological kind."

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13 The additional options do not in the end amount to much, but it is best nonetheless that they at least be considered.
Of the four options the fourth can quickly be put aside, although with qualification. In his paper Brownstein suggests that the fourth option ultimately amounts to a “confused version” of the second, and hence is not an independent option after all. He proposes, “(4) seems to be the claim that there are ‘absences of qualities’ plus the refusal to admit these ‘absences’ as things. But so far as I can see such an ‘absence’ is nothing more than a negative quality. And a negative quality is still a quality. . . . On alternative (4) one would notice the absence-of-white. . . . To notice the absence of white is to notice something ‘real.’ I suggest that this something is very much like, if not identical to, the supposed negative quality not-white.” (1973:45) Before Brownstein’s point here can be properly assessed it must first be corrected, for he mislocates its focus. Despite his suggestion to the contrary, on alternative (4) one would not notice “the absence-of-white” simpliciter; consequently, option (4) is not really about the absence of a quality. Rather, one would notice the absence-of-white with respect to a particular subject; it is not simply the absence of \( W \) which is at issue, but the absence of \( b \)’s being \( W \). As such, option (4) is really about, not the absences of properties, but rather the absences of specific subject-property complexes, or facts. Once this is understood there is no particular reason to tie option (4) to option (2). Rather, the matter boils down to whether the absence of a fact itself has ontological implications. Russell offers remarks pertinent to this issue; as such, consideration of this option is postponed until the next chapter, in which Russell’s views in general are examined.

As Brownstein also points out, whereas option (2) “seems only to require complications of the entities already involved in positive facts”, options (1) and (3) differ by admitting “a distinct negative element to be present in negative facts . . . . [for they] involve recognizing, alternatively, a separate negative element and a negative tie.” (both 1973:45) In his paper Hochberg argues against option (1) on the grounds that this separate negative element requires either “exemplification as a tie between a particular and a property in a positive fact and as a tie between a particular, a property and the negative element in a negative fact”, thus having a tie “playing a double role”, or else acknowledgement of “an additional tie besides exemplification”. (all 1969:301) Contending, “On either alternative one recognizes a negative element as well as a negative nexus or tie”, Hochberg concludes, “Thus, the simple, though awkward sounding, expedient of negative exemplification, without a negative element, seems more economical.” (both 1969:301) As Brownstein points out, Hochberg’s argument “takes the fact that the tie of exemplification plays a double role to be tantamount to there being two different ties of exemplification.” (1973:46) While quibbling somewhat with this, Brownstein in the end agrees, observing that under option (1), “we do not generate the relation between a spot and the qualities it ‘has,’ but an entirely different relation the terms of which are a spot[,] some quality it is not joined to in a positive fact, and this negative element. Thus . . . the tie of exemplification functions in two
distinct ways. It joins things in two different ways.” (1973:47) As a result, Brownstein ultimately agrees with Hochberg with regard to favouring option (3) over option (1): “Since both of the views under consideration involve some new form of exemplification, that view which is more economical with respect to the introduction of other entities is to be preferred.” (1973:47) On this they are right: it is reasonable to accept that a distinct negative element such as that proposed by option (1) would involve “some new form of exemplification”, and hence that option (1) requires all that option (3) does and more. For this reason option (1) is superfluous, and as such is also here not further considered. This leaves two options as tentatively viable, option (2), which posits negative qualities, and option (3), which posits negative exemplification, the very two options which Bradley himself considers. His remarks on these remaining options are now here examined.

Bradley begins his rejection of negative facts by attacking option (2), that they can involve negative properties. He asserts that with respect to negative judgments it is “a mistake to hold that the predicate alone is affected, and that negation itself is a kind of affirmation” (1922:116 (I:III:5)), hence denying that negation can affect only the property. He supports this denial with two lines of reasoning, although the first amounts to little more than a restatement of his basic position. He contends, “when we are asked to simplify matters by substituting “A is Not-B” for “A is not B”, we find an obvious difficulty. In order to know that A accepts Not-B, must we not already have somehow learnt that A excludes B?” (1922:116 (I:III:5)) Certainly Bradley is correct that for A to “accept”, or to exemplify, the negative property Not-B is for A to exclude B, but this does not itself constitute an argument against holding Not-B as a property, for it is not necessary that awareness that A excludes B must be prior, that one must “already have somehow learnt” that A excludes B before knowing that A accepts Not-B. On the contrary, it may well be that it just is the recognition that A accepts Not-B which prompts one to be aware that A excludes B, in which case in order to know that A excludes B one must have already somehow learnt that A accepts Not-B. Precisely the opposite of what Bradley contends. Bradley’s line of reasoning here is convincing only so long as one has already accepted his conclusion, a circular requirement which clearly cannot be considered acceptable.

However, Bradley also provides another, more substantive, case against acceptance of Not-B (or Not-A, as he uses in his subsequent argument) as a legitimate property. Later in the chapter he proposes contra negative properties.

If Not-A were solely the negation of A, it would be an assertion without a quality, and would be a denial without anything positive to serve as its ground. A something that is only not something else, is a relation that terminates in an impalpable void, a reflection thrown upon empty space. It is a mere nonentity which can not be real. (1922:123 (I:III:16)).
Bradley thus argues that Not-A must be rejected on the ground that it fails to stake out for itself any real content, and as such cannot be part of reality. Indeed, he continues on, negative properties cannot even be equated with nothing, for they are in fact "less than nothing":

It is impossible to realize Not-A in thought. It is less than nothing, for nothing itself is not wholly negative. Nothing at least is empty thought, and that means at least my thinking emptily. Nothing means nothing else but failure. And failure is impossible unless something fails: but Not-A would be impersonal failure itself (1922:123 (I:III:16)).

Bradley’s characterisation, “Nothing at least is empty thought”, is perhaps curious, for it seems to grant that even nothing possesses some sort of content which negative properties lack; nothing is a sort of thought, empty thought, whereas negative properties cannot be thought at all. However, whatever one might hold regarding this distinction, Bradley’s argument in general is clear: taken on their own, negative properties fail to be part of reality, and hence negative predicates cannot refer to negative properties: rather, to attribute to a subject a negative property is nothing more than to attribute to a subject the absence of a property, and this, in the end, is to do nothing at all.

In “Negative Exemplification” Brownstein adds a further argument against the negative property theory, which is, “it would seem to require that we introduce qualities on a wholesale basis whether or not we are ever acquainted with them.”(1973:45) He opens by proposing two basic, reasonable points: first, negative facts “function to ground the truth of true negative sentences”; and second, qualities “may be grouped in pairs one of whose elements is always a positive quality and one a negative quality. Additionally any such pair contains only qualities which are, let us say, natural complements. That is, the positive W is paired with the negative ~W as opposed to, e.g., the negative ~R.”(1973:46) From here Brownstein continues,

We can see that introducing negative qualities for the systematic reasons noted above makes latter-day Noahs of us—we must admit the qualities two-by-two. Moreover, we seem to be committed not only to introducing negative qualities in this way, but positive ones as well. Thus upon failing to notice not-white being exemplified by a, we must admit white. While we have no trouble with the color white, what about the “color” brauve? [Since] I fail to notice not-brauve being exemplified by any color-spot (since there is no such quality), must I conclude that there is a quality brauve? And what is “brauve”—a “possible” color? This is clearly too much. Even Noah had only to admit the actual animals in pairs.(1973:46)

Brownstein further contends, “it will not do to restrict the introduction of positive qualities to those cases where there ‘really are’ complementary negative qualities. We have already allowed the introduction of negative qualities on purely systematic grounds, i.e., to help provide a ground for
the truth of negative sentences."(1973:46) He then asks, "What principled objection remains to introducing not-brauve as the quality involved in the negative fact which grounds the true sentence 'α is not brauve'?” and follows up, “And once we have not-brauve we can get brauve” (both 1973:46). Such results, he suggests, constitute “serious if not fatal objections” to the negative property theory.

Despite his imaginative imagery of properties walking two-by-two up the plank onto the ontological ark, Brownstein’s objections do not in fact constitute a serious threat to the negative property option, for there is indeed a “principled objection” against “introducing not-brauve as the quality involved in the negative fact which grounds the true sentence ‘α is not brauve’”. This objection concerns involves appeal to a doctrine of acquaintance, such as that which underlies much realist philosophy.14 It is reasonable to hold as legitimate the introduction of one member of a pair of properties so long as one is acquainted with the other member of that pair; thus, one can reasonably accept the property not-white on the basis of one’s acquaintance with the property white. However, Brownstein’s introduction of the pair of “properties” brauve and not-brauve severs all ties to acquaintance, and this goes too far. He contends, “upon failing to notice not-white being exemplified by α, we must admit white”, conveniently avoiding the fact that it is on the basis of one’s being acquainted with white that not-white is admitted as a quality in the first place. One would have to hold that one is genuinely acquainted with some negative property but not with the corresponding positive property for Brownstein’s scenario to be a legitimate difficulty, an experiential occurrence which, unsurprisingly, none have so far stepped forward to defend. Lacking such a circumstance his objection amounts to nothing. Indeed, there is not even a basis upon which one is obliged to concede that the sentence ‘α is not brauve’ is meaningful, and hence the issue of the referent of the pseudo-term ‘brauve’ need not even arise.

Thus Brownstein’s objection to the negative property theory may be dismissed. But what about Bradley’s objection that negative predicates are devoid of content? This is a more difficult matter, one which perhaps cannot be resolved convincingly. However, one perspective to consider regarding this problem concerns the process by which one becomes aware of a subject’s lacking a property. If there are genuine negative properties possessing ontological status, then one might expect that it is possible to be acquainted with such properties in a manner not unlike that in which one becomes acquainted with positive properties. But in the absence of a claim of such experience a defence of negative properties, while certainly coherent, is extremely difficult to support. This objection of Bradley’s to option (2), while not definitive, does at least succeed in shifting the burden

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14 In his paper “The Role of a Principle of Acquaintance in Ontology” Fred Wilson cites such prominent realist philosophers as Stout, Moore, Russell, and Bergmann as examples of those who have adhered to this important principle.
of proof to the proponent of negative properties, a burden which has yet to be borne convincingly, or even promisingly, by proponents of such a view. Lacking an adequate response to Bradley’s objection one must at this point concede that option (2) might well be no option at all.

Bradley also supports with two lines of reasoning his denial of option (3) regarding how negative facts might be structured, that negation affects the copula alone via a tie of negative exemplification. His initial move in this regard is to suggest that if the claim that negation affects only the copula means what it says, “we may dismiss it at once, since the copula may be wanting. If the copula is not there when I positively say ‘Wolf,’ so also it is absent when I negatively say ‘No wolf.’”(1922:116 (I:III:6)) But Bradley is here oversimplifying, for without context an utterance consisting of a noun alone is neither positive nor negative, at least as these qualifications are ordinarily used; rather, such an utterance perhaps successfully picks out a subject, but it fails to assert anything of that subject, and hence fails to be meaningful. Put another way, according to Bradley’s own criteria (meaningful) language involves both a “that” and a “what”, and a single-word utterance might provide either, but not concurrently both, of these essential linguistic components. Hence, either Bradley is using the terms ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ in some unusual (and unexplained) way, or he is simply wrong on this. Just as statements rather than words alone are the bearers of truth-values, so too statements rather than words alone are the bearers of polarity. As such, his first argument against negation’s affecting the copula must be rejected.

As with his first objection to the negative properties theory, so too Bradley’s second objection to the negative exemplification theory is closely connected to, indeed ultimately consists of, his view concerning the nature of negative judgments. Bradley follows the above noted objection by continuing, “But, if what is meant [by the claim that negation affects only the copula] is that denial and assertion are two sorts of judgment, which stand on a level, then the statement once again needs correction.”(1922:116 (I:III:6)) In other words, if the claim is that the copulas “is” and “is-not” function in parallel fashion, this claim Bradley also expressly rejects. This rejection is not argued for by him so much as it is simply part of his basic position. As discussed above, it is an aspect of his fundamental conception of negative judgments that “in the scale of reflection negation stands higher than mere affirmation”; consequently, for him it is simply wrong that the two are comparable. But in that case negation cannot apply to the copula, for if it did they would be comparable. As a result, negation must function in some entirely different manner than to relate subjects and properties either positively or negatively. However, Bradley’s claim in this regard rides, not on independent evidence that this is so, but rather on prior acceptance of his general position that positive and negative judgments do indeed differ, and hence this premise carries little philosophical weight, thus undermining the power of his overall line of reasoning that negation cannot affect the copula alone. Option (3) remains unrefuted.
The negative exemplification option is affirmed in modern times by both Hochberg and Brownstein due to its alleged simplicity as an account of negative statements. Although Hochberg essentially stops there, Brownstein also goes on to discuss what he considers to be the “special appeal” of this option, an appeal which he suggests can be read into Wittgenstein’s version of logical atomism in particular. Starting from consideration of the spot \( b \) and the quality white, Brownstein suggests,

\[
\ldots \text{the object } b \text{ and the color white must stand in some relation to one another. They must be arranged so that either } b \text{ is white or so that } b \text{ isn’t white.} \ldots \text{the difference between } b \text{’s being white and } b \text{’s not being white is a difference in the “relations” or ties by which } b \text{ and white are tied. Whether } b \text{ is white or not, } b \text{ is related in some way to the quality white. If } b \text{ is white, then } b \text{ and white are related or tied by exemplification. If } b \text{ is not white, then } b \text{ and white are related or tied by negative exemplification.}(1973:47)
\]

Unfortunately, Brownstein’s case for negative exemplification is just as circular as Bradley’s case against it. As noted, Brownstein begins from the presupposition, “the object \( b \) and the color white must stand in some relation to one another”; but once this is accepted the balance of his remarks follow as a matter of course. The real issue is whether it is indeed the case that the object \( b \) and the color must stand in some relation to each other, or whether \( b \)’s not being white cannot simply translate into \( b \)’s lack of a relation to white. The answer is that there is no reason why it cannot so translate; \( b \)’s failure to be white need not display a negative relation between \( b \) and white, for it can just as easily be taken to reveal the very absence of a relation between them instead. As with Bradley, so too Brownstein’s remarks on this matter are not an argument in favour of his position, but rather a restatement of it. As such, option (3) lacks the “special appeal” attributed to it by Brownstein; however, it does at least remain standing nonetheless as a live option regarding how negation might be manifested within a negative fact.

In the end, then, of Bradley’s four objections to negative facts only one, the claim that negative properties are devoid of substantive content, carries any significant degree of power. As such, even if his objection in this regard is considered to be serious, it is not fatal to the proposal of negative facts as the ontological ground of negative judgments, for other options regarding how negation can be manifested within a fact remain unrefuted. However, this matter is not here pursued further; rather, further consideration of the tenability of negative facts for an account of negative judgments is left until the next chapter. At this point it is sufficient to note Bradley’s consideration and rejection of this alternative in favour of one he finds to possess greater intuitive appeal, an alternative which he continues on to propound to a helpful degree of detail.

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15 Wittgenstein’s views on these matters are examined in Chapter Six.
§4.5.2: The Case For Incompatibility

Elaborating his position that affirmative judgments and negative judgments do not function on the same level Bradley contends, "The truth of the negative may be seen in the end to lie in the affirmation of a positive quality; and hence assertion and denial cannot stand on one level." (1922:116 (I:III:6)) As it stands this remark explains little; however, his next statement introduces a new and highly promising element, a relation of incompatibility holding between some property already possessed by the subject and the property denied of the subject by the negative judgment:

In "A is not B" the real fact is a character \( x \) belonging to A, and which is incompatible with B. The basis of negation is really the assertion of a quality that excludes \( (x) \). It is not, as we saw, the mere assertion of the quality of exclusion \( (\text{Not-}B) \). (1922:116-17 (I:III:6))

Thus Bradley contends that in "A is not B" negation essentially consists not simply in some bare exclusion consisting of general rejection of the property B, as allegedly would be the case were one to accept as legitimate the property Not-B, but rather in the specific rejection of the property B due to its incompatibility with some quality \( x \) already belonging to A. Elaborating this position he continues,

It is the quality \( x \) in the subject which is incompatible with the suggested idea. A is not B because A is such that, if it were B, it would cease to be itself. Its quality would be altered if it accepted B; and it is by virtue of this quality, which B would destroy, that A maintains itself and rejects the suggestion. In other words its quality \( x \) and B are discrepant. And we cannot deny B without affirming in A the pre-existence of this discrepant quality. (1922:117 (I:III:7))

It is worthwhile to note that the presence of this incompatible quality \( x \) in A does not imply that one rejecting "A is B" is able to identify the nature of \( x \); rather, one so rejecting simply holds that there is some such \( x \):

But in negative judgment \( x \) is not made explicit. We do not say what there is in A which makes B incompatible. We often, if asked, should be unable to point out and to distinguish this latent hindrance: and in certain cases no effort we could make would enable us to do this. If B is accepted, A loses its character; and in these cases we know no more. The ground is not merely unstated but is unknown. (1922:117 (I:III:7))

Thus, according to Bradley the negative judgment "A is not B" essentially amounts to the rejection of the suggested content "A is B" due to the "real fact" that A possesses some specific, although unidentified, quality \( x \) which is incompatible with the proposed quality B.
This in turn reveals what Bradley means by asserting that in the end the truth of the negative may be seen to lie in the affirmation of a positive quality: the truth of the negative judgment ‘A is not B’ has the same ground as that underlying the positive judgment ‘A is x’ for some appropriate property x, which is the affirmation of the positive quality x with respect to A. This does not in turn imply that the two judgments ‘A is x’ and ‘A is not B’ are equivalent—far from it. Bradley explicitly admits, “Denial or contradiction is not the same thing as the assertion of the contrary” (1922:123 (I:III:17)), adding a section later, “In ‘A is not B’ you know indeed what it is you deny, but you do not say what it is you affirm.”(1922:124 (I:III:19)) The point is not that “A is not B” amounts to the same thing as “A is x” for the appropriate x, the point is that the piece of reality which grounds “A is not B” is the same piece of reality which grounds that “A is x”: though denial or contradiction is not the same thing as assertion of the contrary, “in the end it can rest on nothing else”.(1922:123 (I:III:17))

In his chapter “The Negative Judgment” Bradley is not specific concerning just how one is to cash out the predicate x denied of the subject. However, he is careful to assert, while Not-x “is a general name for any hypothetical discrepant . . . we must never for a moment allow ourselves to think of it as the collection of discrepant.”(1922:123 (I:III:16)) On this point at least he later comes to change his view, for in the terminal essay “The Negative Judgment” added to the second edition of The Principles of Logic Bradley expressly proposes, “disjunction within a whole is the one way in and by which in the end negation becomes intelligible.”(1922:662 (Essay VI)) Just what Bradley means by this is explained by commentator Guy Stock in his paper “Negation: Bradley and Wittgenstein”. Using as his context discussion of judgments concerning the colours of things, and employing the notion of “a three dimensional colour solid which portrays the attribute colour as determinable with respect to the continuously variable differences of hue, saturation and lightness”(1985:472), Stock elaborates Bradley’s view as follows:

The totality of differences represented by the colour solid . . . will . . . compete disjunctively to qualify any given homogeneously coloured surface. For example, if for any given surface, A, the affirmative judgment ‘A is blue’ is false we take it that ‘A is not blue’ must be true and that we can validly infer that A is either green or yellow or orange or . . . etc., etc.(1985:473)\[16\]

In other words, in the negation judgment ‘A is not blue’ the predicate ‘blue’ denied of the subject A is cashed out via disjunction within the whole (mutually incompatible) collection of discrepant

\[16\] From here Stock completes his account in a fashion agreeing with Bradley’s earlier remarks: “We may never know which difference qualifies A but we take it that one and only one of those represented on the colour solid must and whichever it is will be what makes the negative judgment ‘A is not blue’ true: will be, in other words, its positive ground.”(1985:473)
colours; A lacks the property of being blue, so it must possess one of those other properties incompatible with being blue, such as being green or being yellow or being orange or . . . . In this way, between his earlier chapter and his later essay Bradley does not modify his view regarding the relation between the properties, for he never abandons the role of incompatibility; rather, he simply modifies his view regarding the extent to which the nature of the incompatible property already possessed by the subject can be identified.

Whatever its ultimate value as a treatment of the difficult issue of the ontological ground of negative judgments, Bradley’s proposal of incompatibility as the answer to this matter holds considerable philosophical merit. It is perhaps a sign of history’s neglect of this fine philosopher, then, that subsequent discussion of this option rarely mentions his name. Even in his lectures on logical atomism, delivered while Bradley was still a philosophical force, Russell does not discuss the incompatibility option with reference to Bradley, but rather cites only his own former Harvard student Raphael Demos as an example of a proponent of this view. This is particularly unfortunate not just for its unjust slight of Bradley, but also because Demos’s position, while in certain respects highly similar to Bradley’s, deviates in a manner which in the end makes it easier for Russell to dismiss.

Demos’s main exposition of the position that incompatibility provides the most reasonable ground for true negative statements is found in his 1917 paper “A Discussion of a Certain Type of Negative Proposition”. In that work he suggests, in Bradleian fashion, “a negative proposition like ‘John is not at home,’ . . . constitutes a description of a positive proposition, like ‘John is at the shop,’ or ‘John is in the fields,’ in terms of its opposition to the content ‘John is at home’.” (1917:192) Demos’s example here of “John is not at home” plays the role of Bradley’s “A is not B”, with the properties “at the shop” and “in the fields” standing as examples of what can fill the role of x in Bradley’s scenario where “B”, that is, the property of being at home, is discrepant with, or incompatible with, x.

However, despite this similarity to Bradley’s overall position, Demos diverges from his predecessor with regard to where he locates the incompatibility involved. As noted, Bradley identifies incompatibility as holding between qualities: A is not B because A is x, and it is the qualities x and B which are incompatible. Consequently, according to Bradley the role of ‘not’ in the judgment ‘A is not B’ is to deny the quality B of the subject A. This view Demos expressly rejects: the proper interpretation “must not take the form of regarding ‘not’ as a qualification of the predicate of the negative proposition”(1917:189). Against this view that the negation applies to the predicate he provides two objections:
First, the negative element bears upon the grammatical subject almost as often as it does upon the grammatical predicate of the proposition. I may assert that God will not provide because I believe that there is no God, as well as because I believe that He is non-provident. Secondly, and more important, a large number of propositions, and specifically relational negative propositions like “X is not to the right of Y,” cannot be said to have any predicate at all. (1917:190)

However, while both of these objections carry some weight, as they stand neither raises any insurmountable difficulties.

One reply to the first objection is that expressed by Bradley himself in his chapter “The Negative Judgment”. In all judgment the ultimate subject is genuine reality, and it is of that that predicates are affirmed or denied; consequently, judgments seemingly involving non-existent subjects prove not to lack a subject after all:

Let us take such a denial as “Chimæras are non-existent.” “Chimæras” is here ostensibly the subject, but is really the predicate. It is the quality of harbouring chimæras which is denied of the nature of things. And we deny this because, if chimæras existed, we should have to alter our view of the world... The positive quality of the ultimate reality may remain occult or be made explicit, but this, and nothing else, lies always at the base of a negative judgment. (1922:120 (I:III:12))

A pluralist such as Demos may be inclined to reject such an account as that offered here by Bradley, but that is merely a rejection, not a refutation. However, even within the context of pluralism another response to Demos’s first objection is available. In his paper “On Referring” P.F. Strawson reasonably argues that the usage of a statement, that is, the holding of a judgment, involves the presupposition by the one judging that the subject of the judgment exists, that the one judging “is talking about something”; should such a presupposition be incorrect, then in that case one’s usage “is not a genuine one, but a spurious or pseudo-use” and hence such a person is making neither a true nor a false assertion. (1956:224) Under this view, if there is no God then Demos’s assertion that God will not provide is a spurious usage of this statement, and as such this objection on his part fails to constitute a genuine difficulty.17

Demos’s second objection takes for granted that relations cannot be treated as some sort of elaborate predicate, for it assumes that the proposition ‘X is not to the right of Y’ cannot be analysed as denying the property of being to the right of Y to the subject X. Whether or not this is correct, it remains that Bradley’s view of incompatibility works equally well when extended

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17 Indeed, if there is no God then according to Strawson’s position all usages of statements seemingly referring to God are spurious, which in turn raises the question whether any God-talk is significant.
to include relations,\textsuperscript{18} such that 'X is not to the right of Y' can be interpreted as denying that X has the relation "being to the right of" with respect to Y because X has the relation "r" to Y, and it is the relations "r" and "being to the right of" which are incompatible. When Bradley's view is taken in this way Demos's second objection amounts to no objection at all. Consequently, it remains to be demonstrated adequately that in negative judgments the negation indeed cannot function as a modification of the predicate.

Nonetheless, at this point Demos does not continue further in this vein, but rather simply forges ahead with his own account of negation. He proposes,

\ldots "not" is a qualification, not of any individual element in the negative proposition, but of the whole content of it. Thus the statement, "X is not dead," is really of the form "not (X is dead)," and any negative proposition is really of the form "not-p" where p is the entire content of the proposition apart from "not," and "not-p" is a function of p in terms of "not". (1917:190)

Continuing he elaborates, "not" is "a relational modification of p, and means 'opposite of' or 'contrary of'. Thus, 'John is not at home,' or 'not (John is at home),' means 'an opposite of (John is at home)'"(1917:190). This relation between propositions Demos calls "the relation of opposition or of contrariety or of inconsistency", and it is this relation "which gives rise to the qualifying expression 'opposite,' or 'contrary,' or 'inconsistent with'. The word 'not' is precisely a symbol for this qualifying predicate, and 'not-p' means 'opposite, or contrary, of p'.” (1917:190-91) (Interestingly, Demos adds that the relation of opposition is such that if p opposes q, p and q are not both true, and then warns, "This must not be taken as a definition, for it makes use of the notion 'not' which, I said, is equivalent to the notion 'opposite'. In fact, opposition seems epistemologically to be a primitive notion."(1917:191) Unfortunately, he fails to continue on to spell out just why he deems opposition to be "epistemologically primitive".)

Clearly the specifics of how Bradley and Demos see incompatibility as underlying the ground of negative judgments differs significantly, but equally clearly they are defending a position with important common ground, and moreover a position which demands and deserves serious attention as a purported resolution to an important issue. This attention it here receives, but in the next chapter, within the context of the views of its most famous opponent, Russell. There both

\textsuperscript{18} This is not to suggest that such a move might not have serious consequences for other aspects of Bradley's philosophy.
the options raised by Bradley, negative facts and incompatibility, are treated in further detail.  

§4.6: Conclusion: Bradley on Negative Language

According to Bradley meaningful (positive) language involves the linguistic representation of a proposed attribution of an ideal quality, or a “what”, to a real subject, or a “that”. In turn, meaningful negative language asserts the rejection of such a proposed attribution, it denies that the subject in question does indeed exemplify the quality in question. Thus, for Bradley meaningful negative language builds on his formation rule that meaningful positive language involves the proposed association of the name of a “what” with the name of a “that” by consisting of the rejection of that proposed association. As noted above, this view of Bradley’s is in important ways comparable to that of Plato’s as put forth in Sophist, for in that work Plato similarly proposes that meaningful language involves the association of two kinds of words performing two kinds of roles.

Also in accordance with Plato’s views in Sophist, or at least with the I-reading of those views, Bradley’s position on the ontological ground of the truth of true negative statements is that properties (presumably in general) are each incompatible with certain other properties, and that the facts which underlie what a subject is also underlie the truth of true negative judgments concerning what that subject is not. That is to say, the ontological ground which makes the true negative judgment ‘A is not f ’ true (assuming that it is true) is whatever fact about A involves

Specifically, these options are discussed in §5.5. With regard to Demos and incompatibility it is interesting to note that later in his career he goes on to attempt to cast Plato as himself also a proponent of such a view, for in his 1939 book The Philosophy of Plato Demos argues that incompatibility is the key to understanding the “otherness” account of negation Plato provides in Sophist. Specifically considering the central question, “What does Plato mean by otherness exactly?”, Demos initially answers, “He is emphatic that otherness is not opposition, and thus leads the reader to suppose that otherness is not formal incompatibility.” (both 1939:157) However, undeterred, Demos continues on to read more into the situation:

Yet a close study of the examples [Plato] mentions in support of his contention suggests a different conclusion. Plato says that the not-great need not be small; it may be something of middle-size. In this case it is clear that by opposites Plato means extremes, contrasting both with the mean; and he is saying in effect that not-A may be the mean between A and B. Whatever the esthetic or the moral significance of the contrast between mean and extremes, logically it is of no importance. The mean is incompatible with the extremes, just as the extremes are incompatible with each other. Thus, if an object be of middle-size, it is neither large nor small.

Otherness, then, is incompatibility (1939:157).

Demos is likely not wrong in asserting that incompatibility is a coherent interpretation of Plato’s otherness; however, it is another matter altogether to claim that incompatibility is what Plato means by otherness. This stronger claim is undersupported at best, making Demos’s attempt to portray Plato in his own light interesting but, as it stands, definitely unwarranted.
the property A possesses which is incompatible with the property of being f. However, this contention that an incompatibility account of negative language is superior to that of a negative facts account is not one to be accepted lightly, for there is much more to be said in this vein, and Bradley's foil Russell is not shy in doing so. It is in the context of Russell's views that this matter is continued in the next chapter.
Part II
Chapter Five

RUSSELL, AND NEGATIVE FACTS

§5.1: Introduction

As discussed in the last chapter, like Parmenides so many hundreds of years before him, F.H. Bradley also argues that reality must really be a monistic unity. And just as Parmenides’s position receives serious response within the ancient world in the work of Plato, so too Bradley’s position also prompts a serious philosophical reply from a giant of his own era, Bertrand Russell. Russell was at one time a self-described “disciple” of Bradley’s; however, this does not last, and in the end Russell goes on to be, contra Bradley, one of the foremost proponents of ontological pluralism.

In his work of central importance here, that is, his work of the first two decades of this century, Russell mentions Bradley by name only infrequently. However, in his 1924 paper “Logical Atomism” (written as a contribution to a volume on contemporary British philosophy, of which Bradley was at that time perhaps the central figure), Russell responds directly to some of Bradley’s earlier criticisms, paying particular regard to the issue of relations, which Russell deems to be “one of the most important that arise in philosophy” (1924:333). He there contends that rationalist arguments concerning simples and complexes are largely misguided, for simples and complexes are of different logical types, and as such they cannot coherently be directly compared:

That is to say, the statements ‘There are simples’ and ‘There are complexes’ use the words ‘there are’ in different senses. But if I use the words ‘there are’ in the sense which they have in the statement ‘there are simples’, then the form of words ‘there are not complexes’ is neither true nor false, but meaningless. (1924:337)

Based on his acceptance of the correctness of his own doctrine of logical types, Russell ultimately rejects Bradley’s attempt to provide a logical proof that reality is one: “If I am right, there is nothing in logic that can help us to decide between monism and pluralism, or between the view that there are ultimate relational facts and the view that there are none.” (1924:338) Another, entirely different approach is needed; in Russell’s case, “My own decision in favour of pluralism and relations is taken on empirical grounds” (1924:338-39).

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1 Russell suggests this on the grounds, “most other issues turn on [the question of relations]: monism and pluralism; the question whether anything is wholly true except the whole of truth, or wholly real except the whole of reality; idealism and realism, in some of their forms; perhaps the very existence of philosophy as a subject distinct from science and possessing a method of its own.” (1924:333)
The empiricist approach upon which Russell draws has significant links right back to the ancient Greeks, for the connection between language and ontology proposed by the empiricists in important ways mirrors that underlying much ancient Greek philosophy in general (as discussed in Part I of this work). In his seventeenth-century work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* the great early modern empiricist philosopher John Locke contends both that words are sensible signs for ideas (III:II:1), and that all ideas (other than those concerning the operations of the mind) derive from sensory experience of external sensible objects. (II:I:2-5) From this it easily follows that for Locke, as for the ancient Greeks, language has its roots in what is there to be experienced. This association of language with experience is carried into this century by Russell through his doctrine of acquaintance, which he sets out in his 1911 paper "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description":

> Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted. (1911:159)

His clarification of this claim brings forth its connection to the ancients, for he elaborates,

I say that I am acquainted with an object when I have a direct cognitive relation to that object (1911:152).

Thus Russell, following both modern and ancient predecessors, agrees that language is dependent upon direct cognitive relations to objects, that what can be said is inherently tied to what is there to be experienced.

The publication of Russell’s of primary importance to the present work is the text of a course of public lectures he delivered in London in early 1918 under the title “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”. Both the timing and the content of these lectures are of particular relevance here. Temporally, these lectures fall after not only Bradley’s major works *The Principles of Logic* and *Appearance and Reality* but also his many papers published during the 1900’s and 1910’s; consequently, Russell has by this time had ample opportunity to consider Bradley’s views. Substantively these lectures hold a significant place in Russell’s corpus, for in them he provides (what one editor describes as) “a sort of cap-stone and summation” of his important work during the period from his 1905 paper “On Denoting” to his 1914 book *Our Knowledge of the External*

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2 References to Locke’s Essay are in the form (Book:Chapter:Section(s)).

3 Interestingly, early on in his Essay Locke also argues a related issue through reference to a position of central importance in Part I of the present work. In Book I Chapter I of his Essay Locke contends that there are no innate speculative principles, there choosing as one of his examples of an alleged contender for such a principle the Parmenidean / Platonic focal point, ‘It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be’. (I:1:4)
World. Also important to the present work is Russell’s essay, “On Propositions: what they are and how they mean”, which was written a year after the lectures. In this essay Russell not only elaborates points made in the lectures, he also offers remarks concerning negative facts which cast them in a significantly different light than that projected by the lectures, and in turn offer an alternative resolution to the whole issue of negative language. The full implications of these writings are now considered in detail below.

§5.2: Russell and Ontology: Facts

Right at the outset of his lectures Russell lays down the framework upon which he intends to build:

In the present lectures, I shall try to set forth in a sort of outline, rather briefly and rather unsatisfactorily, a kind of logical doctrine which seems to me to result from the philosophy of mathematics—not exactly logically, but as what emerges as one reflects: a certain kind of logical doctrine, and on the basis of this a certain kind of metaphysic. (1918:178)

Then, obliquely acknowledging Bradley, Russell continues,

The logic which I shall advocate is atomistic, as opposed to the monistic logic of the people who more or less follow Hegel... I do not regard the apparent multiplicity of the world as consisting merely in phases and unreal divisions of a single indivisible Reality. (1918:178)

Nor is Russell willing to debate his pluralistic starting-point. Rather, it is his intention simply to build upon it—given that there are many things, here is what follows.5

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4 Largely due to his concern with World War I, Russell’s writings between 1915 and 1917 are almost exclusively political rather than philosophical in nature.

5 In discussion following the first lecture Russell is asked, “Do you take your starting-point ‘That there are many things’ as a postulate which is to be carried along all through, or has to be proved afterward?”. Answering in a manner comparable to his (above-noted) remarks in “Logical Atomism” he replies, “No, neither the one nor the other. I do not take it as a postulate that ‘There are many things’. I should take it that, in so far as it can be proved, the proof is empirical, and that the disproofs that have been offered are \textit{a priori}. The empirical person would naturally say, there are many things. The monistic philosopher attempts to show that there are not. I should propose to refute his \textit{a priori} arguments. I do not consider there is any \textit{logical} necessity for there to be many things, nor for there not to be many things.” (1918:188)

Russell’s choice to refer to Bradley only indirectly in the above-quoted passage is not unique; rather, commentator Stewart Candlish points out in this regard, in Russell’s work it is not uncommon for Bradley to be “stigmatized only by implication, in the context of remarks applied generally to ‘Hegelians’.” (1989:331)
In his opening lecture, titled “Facts and Propositions”, Russell gets right down to matters of central importance to the present work. He there initially sets out what he considers a fact to be in terms of its relation to language, asserting, “When I speak of a fact—I do not propose to attempt an exact definition, but an explanation, so that you will know what I am talking about—I mean the kind of thing that makes a proposition true or false.”(1918:182) However, perhaps anticipating the objection (noted by commentator Herbert Hochberg) “that to say that a fact is the ground of truth for an atomic sentence is not really to say anything”, and hence, one “does not mean by ‘a fact’ that which makes a sentence true or grounds the truth of an atomic sentence” (both Hochberg 1978:271), Russell continues on to describe facts in more independent terms:

If I say ‘It is raining’, what I say is true in a certain condition of weather and is false in other conditions of weather. The condition of weather that makes my statement true (or false as the case may be), is what I should call a ‘fact’. If I say ‘Socrates is dead’, my statement will be true owing to a certain physiological occurrence which happened in Athens long ago.(1918:182)

In his subsequent essay he clarifies, “In speaking of these as facts, I am not alluding to the phrases in which we assert them, or to our frame of mind while we make the assertions”, but rather to “those features in the constitution of the world which make our assertions true (if they are true) or false (if they are false).”(both 1919:285) The relation between facts and truth is examined below; at this point it is sufficient to observe the ontological aspect of Russell’s remarks. This includes his careful emphasis that facts are inherently complex, that the individual components of which facts are composed do not play the same role as the resulting wholes:

I want you to realize that when I speak of a fact I do not mean a particular existing thing, such as Socrates or the rain or the sun. . . . Socrates himself, or any particular thing just by itself, does not make any proposition true or false. . . . What I call a fact is the sort of thing that is expressed by a whole sentence, not by a single name like ‘Socrates’. . . . We express a fact, for example, when we say that a certain thing has a certain property, or that it has a certain relation to another thing; but the thing which has the property or the relation is not what I call a ‘fact’. (1918:183)

Facts and their components thus must be distinguished. Further, both of them are essential aspects of the world, for facts, “just as much as particular chairs and tables, are part of the real world.” (1918:183)

Russell asserts that facts are of “a great many different kinds”, and in lecture I he draws a number of preliminary distinctions in this regard, “so that you may not imagine that facts are all very much alike”.(1918:183) This is indeed an important observation on his part, one which is of considerable significance for the purposes of the present work, and as such his remarks on this
demand special attention. The first kind of facts Russell identifies are familiar: “There are particular facts, such as ‘This is white’”(1918:183); such facts are essentially “concerning particular things or particular qualities or relations”, or “about the relations between two things, three things, and so on”.(both 1918:184) Within the realm of particular facts he further distinguishes facts according to whether they are positive or negative, offering as examples in this vein, “‘Socrates was alive’—a positive fact—and ‘Socrates is not alive’—you might say a negative fact.”(1918:184) In his essay Russell refers to this distinction as involving “two forms that [facts] may have, which are each other’s opposites. ‘Socrates loves Plato’ and ‘Napoleon does not love Wellington’ are facts which have opposite forms.”(1919:287)

The kinds of facts noted thus far are adequate to categorise both the I-reading and the NF-reading of the account of negative language proposed by Plato in Sophist (the former of which, as discussed in the last chapter, is also embraced by Bradley). As considered in Chapter Three, one interpretation of Plato’s position, the NF-reading, is that he postulates something akin to negative facts, that he posits ontological “otherness” properties which extensionally complement but ontologically parallel ordinary “positive” properties, with such “otherness” properties combining with individuals to form “otherness”, or negative, facts. For example, if the statement ‘Theaetetus is sitting’ is true due to it being a fact «Theaetetus is sitting», which is in turn due to Theaetetus’s partaking of the form The Sitting, then according to this interpretation of Plato the statement ‘Theaetetus is not flying’ is true due to it also being a fact «Theaetetus is not flying», which is in turn due to Theaetetus’s partaking of the form The Not-Flying, or The Other-Than-Flying. The fact «Theaetetus is not flying» clearly plays the role of what would be for Russell a negative particular fact about a property of a single thing. As also considered in Chapter Three, another interpretation of Plato’s position in Sophist, which parallels that put forth by Bradley in The Principles of Logic and considered above in Chapter Four, postulates that certain properties are incompatible with each other. To retain the same example as that just used, then according to this reading of Plato and to Bradley the statement ‘Theaetetus is not flying’ is true due to the combination of the fact «Theaetetus is sitting» with the fact «sitting is incompatible with flying». The fact «sitting is incompatible with flying» (or, more precisely, «The Sitting is incompatible with The Flying») clearly plays the role of what would be for Russell a positive particular fact about a relation between two things.

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6 In his lectures Russell suggests, the distinction between positive and negative facts is “difficult to make precise”. (1918:184) In his essay he qualifies this somewhat, contending, “So long as we confine ourselves to atomic facts . . . the distinction between positive and negative facts is easily made”, but conceding, “In more complicated cases . . . it is less clear which is positive and which is negative.” (both 1919:287)
But in addition to particular facts Russell also distinguishes a whole further realm of facts unmentioned by Plato or Bradley, for he postulates "general facts, such as 'All men are mortal'", adding, "Of course, the distinction between particular and general facts is one of the most important."(both 1918:183) In lecture I he affirms such postulation of general facts by contending that particular facts alone are inadequate to provide a complete description of the world: "Suppose that you had succeeded in chronicling every single particular fact throughout the universe . . . you still would not have got a complete description of the universe unless you added: 'These that I have chronicled are all the particular facts there are'. So you cannot hope to describe the world completely without having general facts as well as particular facts."(1918:183-84) In lecture V he returns to this topic, repeating the claim presented in the earlier lecture, and then adding, "When you have taken all the particular men that there are, and found each one of them severally to be mortal, it is definitely a new fact that all men are mortal; how new a fact, appears from what I said a moment ago, that it could not be inferred from the mortality of the several men that there are in the world." (1918:236)

Russell's argument in support of the irreducible nature of general facts rides on his position that one cannot move from statements about each of the members of a totality to a statement about the totality as a whole without a separate step affirming that those members of the totality which have been considered are all of the members of that totality that there are. He contends, "You cannot ever arrive at a general fact by inference from particular facts, however numerous. The old plan of complete induction, . . . , unless it is accompanied by at least one general proposition, will not yield you the result that you want."(1918:235) He then spells out more explicitly just what he means by this:

Suppose, for example, that you wish to prove in that way that 'All men are mortal', you are supposed to proceed by complete induction, and say 'A is a man that is mortal', 'B is a man that is mortal', 'C is a man that is mortal', and so on until you finish. You will not be able, in that way, to arrive at the proposition 'All men are mortal' unless you know when you have finished. That is to say that, in order to arrive by this road at the general proposition 'All men are mortal', you must already have the general proposition 'All men are among those I have enumerated'. You never can arrive at a general proposition by inference from particular propositions alone. You will always have to have at least one general proposition in your premises.(1918:235)

According to Russell, then, any conclusion which involves universal quantification must be built upon a set of premises at least one of which must also involve universal quantification. As Hochberg aptly summarises Russell's position here,
\[
\frac{S_a \& S_b}{(x)S(x)}
\]

won't do as a valid argument form. Hence, we must add that \( a \) and \( b \) are all the objects. This would give us, in effect,

\[
\frac{S_a \& S_b \& (x)(x = a \lor x = b)}{(x)Sx}
\]

But then we have a generality as part of the basis of inference. (1969:303)

But while Russell thinks it quite obvious that such a generality must be "part of the basis of inference", not everyone agrees.

In his lectures Russell does not acknowledge that his position regarding general facts may be considered a contentious one, instead presenting matters in a rather facile manner. A modern consideration of this same issue, and one which provides a (moderately) more rounded view of this topic, is found in D.M. Armstrong's book *A Combinatorial theory of possibility*. Armstrong asserts from the outset of his discussion of this matter that there is "little doubt" that Russell, "great philosopher that he is", is correct regarding the necessity for general facts. (1989:93) However, after supporting Russell's position Armstrong continues on to entertain certain questions regarding facts of totality. Early in his work Armstrong establishes the notion of *supervenience*, such that "the supervenient is not really a feature of the world distinct from the features it supervenes on"

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\[^7\] Presumably, Hochberg's notation is flawed in his conclusion here; what he really wants is \((x)Sx\), as he has in the second formulation.
(1989:7); in his discussion of general facts he directs his attention to a question he credits to David Lewis concerning “whether the fact of totality is in fact, as Russell claims, non-supervenient” (1989:94) (and hence really is a distinct feature of the world). Armstrong notes, “How, asks Lewis, could two worlds be exactly alike in all lower-order states of affairs, yet differ in this higher-order state of affairs?” (1989:94) To this Armstrong responds as follows:

The answer, of course, is that the two worlds could not differ. But I claim that this is so only because a totality state of affairs has already been written into the description of the case. Suppose we had a list of the states of affairs in the two worlds, but with no totality condition given. It would not be the case that every world that contained those states of affairs was the same world. You get that result only if you add that the worlds contain just those states of affairs, that is, those states of affairs and nothing more. The ‘nothing more’ must have a truth-maker. I claim that that truth-maker is a totality fact or state of affairs, having the form I have tried to describe. (1989:94)

In other words, Armstrong claims that in asking how two worlds could differ with respect to their higher-order states of affairs when they are “exactly alike in all lower-order states of affairs”.

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8 Generally speaking, for some A to be ‘supervenient’ on some B is for A to be explainable in terms of B, thus making A a reducible rather than an irreducible feature of the world. Armstrong’s example in this regard is as follows:

Suppose that one considers a certain subset of worlds, where each member of the subset has certain features in common. For instance, suppose that in each such world, the individuals in that world are distributed according to the same pattern, having exactly the same properties and relations. It may appear a plausible claim that, in each such world, certain further, or ostensibly further, features are fixed. For instance, in the case just considered, it appears that the resemblances of all individuals do not differ from world to world. The resemblances are then supervenient on the original features, the pattern of qualities and relations, which each world had in common. (1989:6)

Later in the work Armstrong codifies this example more formally:

I propose to work with the following simple definition of supervenience: If there exist possible worlds which contain an entity or entities R, and if in each such world there exists an entity or entities S, then and only then S supervenes on R. For instance, if there exist worlds in which two or more individuals have the property F, then, in each world containing such states of affairs, these same individuals stand in the relation of resemblance (at least in some degree). These resemblances are therefore supervenient on the individuals in question having property F. (1989:103)

In other words, resemblance is a reducible feature of the world, for it is equivalent to the possession of a common property; hence, resemblance between individuals is supervenient on, or reducible to, those individuals having a common property, and as such “is not really a feature of the world distinct from the features it supervenes on”.
Lewis's use of the term 'all' builds in a totality condition which ensures that the two worlds "could not differ". However, according to Armstrong, in the absence of such an explicit totality condition it is an open issue whether or not the given list of states of affairs is complete, and hence whether or not worlds containing those states of affairs are identical. Armstrong's root position is thus that a list lacking a(n explicit) totality condition is open with regard to whether or not there might be further members yet to be added to that list, thus allowing for one list ultimately to apply to more than one world. What are needed are such a totality condition (to signify completeness) and an underlying totality fact to act as its "truth-maker".

While it is certainly the case that the presence of a totality condition serves to confirm that a given description is complete, despite Russell's and Armstrong's attestations on this it is not yet clear that the absence of such a totality condition serves to confirm that a given description is not, or at least might not be, complete. In his paper "Negation and Generality" Hochberg paints a scenario in which there are four objects possessing certain properties and standing in certain relations, and posits a list of the true sentences regarding these objects. Then, raising consideration of "a general sentence stating that there are only four objects or, alternatively, the assumption that the list is complete so that the fact that there are only four objects may be said to show itself" (1969:305), he next asks whether there needs be a general fact corresponding to such a general sentence. As he answers, one may reasonably respond "no" on the grounds that the general statement to which the alleged general fact would correspond is itself superfluous: one might well feel,

this requirement is already taken care of by the specification of the list of [true] sentences. That is, even the general sentence as to the number of things there are is not one that belongs to the list and is, in fact, not even necessary, since this is implied or shown by the list and the stipulation that the list is complete. (1969:305)

In other words, one may hold that "the general sentence as to the number of things there are" is not needed on the list, for this content is itself inherently part of that list; however, as Hochberg goes on to point out, such a stipulation "seems more in the nature of announcing a decision than providing an argument".

Potential difficulties arise whether one holds that there are general facts or one denies that there are. The proponent of general facts must somehow account for their peculiar nature, for general facts "might not seem amenable to analysis into components" as are particular facts, or, put another way, there is the "Wittgensteinian" worry concerning how such facts can be depicted. (Hochberg 1969:306) Particular facts are construed as involving relations between individuals, whereas general facts seem to be very different, being about whole facts rather than about

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9 Or, as he makes this same point in another paper, "The very notion of a list may be said to be that of a complete listing." (1971:486)
components of facts, and as such they seem not to be the same sort of ontological entity at all. To this Hochberg offers the creative solution that one

might consider generality to reduce to a relational property holding among
the individuals $a$ and $b$. That $a$ and $b$ are all the things there are is a relation they
exemplify. Hence, the need for only one universally general sentence like $(x)(x=a \lor
x=b)$ permits us to consider generality as a property of things. (1969:306)

This approach perhaps superficially resolves matters by stipulating that general facts also involve
individuals standing in relations, hence indeed making them structurally comparable to particular
facts; however, two weaknesses, both of which Hochberg notes, challenge its adequacy as a solution
to the difficulty in question. First, “since such a relational property is unlike any ordinary relation,
there is a sense in which [a general] fact is different, in kind, from any atomic fact” (1969:306); as such, postulating the reduction of generality to a relational property might not be enough
to establish the structural similarity of general and atomic facts. Second, the proposed approach is,
as Hochberg acknowledges, rather ad hoc, being offered, not on its own merits, but rather simply
because it fills an apparent need. Perhaps a better resolution to this difficulty is to hold that
the structural asymmetry of particular and general facts is an aesthetic rather than a philosophical
difficulty, and hence, while perhaps preferably avoided, such asymmetry does not raise any
accompanying serious philosophical problems.

The difficulty facing the opponent of general facts also requires a creative resolution. Even
if a list of sentences is considered to be complete inherently, this in itself does not resolve
the contention “that no set of atomic sentences will suffice to ground a universal generalization.”
(1969:305) In order for one to hold that $(x)Sx$ does indeed follow from $Sa \land Sb \land Sc \land \ldots$
(where the ‘. . .’ covers the balance of the entries on the list), “one would have to acknowledge that
the very meaning of the universal quantifier changes depending on the number of things there are,
i.e., its sense is relative to the domain we are using it to speak about.” (1969:306) But while it is
intuitively acceptable to hold on one level that the sense of the universal quantifier is relative to
the domain over which it quantifies, on another level one surely holds that the meaning of
the universal quantifier is consistent without regard for the realm it quantifies, and that it is just this
consistency of meaning which grounds one’s holding that it is the same (type of) quantifier which is
being applied in each case. But if one thus wishes to deny that the meaning of the universal quantifier changes depending upon the number of things there are then one is seemingly driven
to accept that $(x)Sx$ does not logically follow from $Sa \land Sb \land Sc \land \ldots$ taken without
the supplementation of an explicitly stated totality condition, which is precisely what Russell and
Armstrong contend.
The topic of general facts is not so clear cut as Russell presents it, for it is not simply a given that there are such facts; on the other hand, in the end it does appear that he is acting reasonably in affirming their existence as distinct features of the world non-supervenient on the particular facts which they summarise. While the affirmation of such facts does carry with it its own particular challenges, the denial of such facts apparently involves challenges greater still.

§5.3: Russell and Language: Propositions

Although he affirms that there are facts of various kinds, Russell is careful to point out that this variety does not extend to facts as vehicles of truth and falsehood: “It is obvious that there is not a dualism of true and false facts; there are only just facts.”(1918:184) Nor can one rightly avoid this dichotomy by holding that all facts are true; this would be a mistake, “because true and false are correlatives, and you would only say of a thing that it was true if it was the sort of thing that might be false. A fact cannot be either true or false.”(1918:184) Russell then uses this disclaimer of a relation between facts and truth-values as a lead-in to what does possess truth-values, language: “That brings us on to the question of statements or propositions or judgments, all those things that do have the duality of truth and falsehood.”(1918:184)

Propositions, Russell asserts, are complex symbols, which is to say that they are symbols which have other symbols as components. He attaches a great deal of importance to proper symbolism, for he proposes, “There are different kinds of symbols, different kinds of relation between symbol and what is symbolized, and very important fallacies arise from not realizing this.” (1918:185) Indeed, claims Russell, these fallacies reach to the very heart of some deep philosophical issues:

Some of the notions that have been thought absolutely fundamental in philosophy have arisen, I believe, entirely through mistakes as to symbolism—e.g., the notion of existence, or, if you like, reality. . . . Now my own belief is that as they have occurred in philosophy, they have been entirely the outcome of a muddle about symbolism, and that when you have cleared up that muddle, you find that practically everything that has been said about existence is sheer and simple mistake, and that is all you can say about it.(1918:186)

Russell elaborates concerning his stress on the proper use of symbolisation, “unless you are fairly self-conscious about symbols, unless you are fairly aware of the relation of the symbol to what it symbolizes, you will find yourself attributing to the thing properties which only belong to
the symbol.” (1918: 185) Clearly, then, one must tread carefully in the murky swamp of symbolisation.

Russell next continues, “When I speak of a symbol I simply mean something that ‘means’ something else”, but he then adds, “and as to what I mean by ‘meaning’ I am not prepared to tell you.” (both 1918: 186) However, he does not leave his listeners/readers totally abandoned, for he does at least go on to provide “a few illustrations” of what he means by ‘meaning’:

For instance, the word ‘Socrates’, you will say, means a certain man; the word ‘mortal’ means a certain quality; and the sentence ‘Socrates is mortal’ means a certain fact. But these three sorts of meaning are entirely distinct, and you will get into the most hopeless contradictions if you think the word ‘meaning’ has the same meaning in each of these three cases. It is very important not to suppose that there is just one thing which is meant by ‘meaning’, and that therefore there is just one sort of relation of the symbol to what is symbolized. A name would be a proper symbol to use for a person; a sentence (or a proposition) is the proper symbol for a fact. (1918: 186-87)

Regarding the illustrations which Russell here provides, perhaps the most valuable information contained therein involves his distinction between names and propositions, for this distinction in turn parallels the distinction between ontological simples and ontological complexes. Names cannot fail to refer; as Russell puts it, “A name can just name a particular, or, if it does not, it is not a name at all, it is a noise. It cannot be a name without having just that one particular relation of naming a certain thing” (1918: 187). However, propositions certainly can fail to refer, for as Russell points out, “a proposition does not cease to be a proposition if it is false.” (1918: 197-88) Thus while names are symbols which always have corresponding ontological entities, propositions are symbols which sometimes lack corresponding ontological entities, for while true propositions correspond to facts, false propositions do not correspond to anything ontological at all. It is for this reason that

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10 Indeed, Russell continues, this is “especially likely in very abstract studies such as philosophical logic, because the subject-matter that you are supposed to be thinking of is so exceedingly difficult and elusive that any person who has ever tried to think about it knows you do not think about it except perhaps once in six months for half a minute. The rest of the time you think about the symbols, because they are tangible, but the thing you are supposed to be thinking about is fearfully difficult and one does not often manage to think about it. The really good philosopher is the one who does once in six months think about it for a minute. Bad philosophers never do.” (1918: 185)

11 By asserting that a (pseudo-)name which fails to name a particular is just a noise, Russell here echoes Cratylus’s claim in Plato’s dialogue of the same name that if someone was to greet Cratylus by calling him “Hermogenes” such a person would speak neither truly nor falsely, but rather would simply make a noise, “just as if someone were striking a copper pot”. (Cratylus 439a5)
Russell argues that propositions are not names for facts:

Just as a word may be a name or be not a name but just a meaningless noise, so a phrase which is apparently a proposition may be either true or false, or may be meaningless, but the true and false belong together as against the meaningless. That shows, of course, that the formal logical characteristics of propositions are quite different from those of names, and that the relations they have to facts are quite different, and therefore propositions are not names for facts. (1918:188)

As true and false propositions are structurally indistinguishable “there is nothing in the nature of the symbol to show us which is the true one and which is the false one” (1918:187); consequently, a simple symbol implies a corresponding simple ontological entity, whereas a complex symbol does not comparably imply a corresponding complex ontological entity.

As discussed in §3.2.6 above, a strong case can be made that in *Sophist* Plato’s acceptance of language in general as itself part of *Being* implies that propositions themselves have ontological status. Early in his philosophical career Russell is inclined to accept this view, but by the time of the lectures this has changed:

Time was when I thought there were propositions, but it does not seem to me very plausible to say that in addition to facts there are also these curious shadowy things going about such as ‘That to-day is Wednesday’ when in fact it is Tuesday. I cannot believe they go about the real world. It is more than one can manage to believe, and I do think no person with a vivid sense of reality can imagine it. (1918:223)

Instead, Russell’s own “vivid sense of reality” leads him to hold in this regard, “It is quite clear that propositions are not what you might call ‘real’. If you were making an inventory of the world, propositions would not come in. Facts would, beliefs, wishes, wills would, but propositions would not come in.” (1918:214) Propositions (and names) are symbols, they are not themselves independent ontological entities there to be symbolised; rather, to treat them as such is to make the error of conflating the properties of the symbol with the properties of that which is symbolised.  

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12 In his essay the following year Russell says something which at first glance might seem to indicate that he has reverted back to his earlier view that propositions do have ontological status; however, more careful examination reveals that this is not so. He asserts in the essay, “The most important thing about a proposition is that . . . it is . . . an actual fact, having a certain analogy of structure—to be further investigated—with the fact which makes it true or false.” (1919:309) Why this assertion does not contradict what he says in the lectures is due to what fills in the ‘. . .’s above. In the essay Russell is talking about a proposition, “whether it consists of images or of words”, “whenever it occurs”, expressions which reflect his position that he is there concerned with a proposition only insofar as it is an internal mental image which is the content of a belief, an image which “occurs” and hence is part of the world. This sort of proposition the Russell of the lectures would have no difficulty accepting as ‘real’, for taken in this way it too must indeed be included in “an inventory of the world”.  

175
§5.4: Russell and Truth

Fundamental to Russell’s theory of truth and falsehood is his commitment to the view that there must be a fact underlying the truth-value of every proposition. With regard to truth this applies, not just to positive propositions, but also equally to negative ones:

It is perfectly clear, whatever may be the interpretation of ‘not’, that there is some interpretation which will give you a fact. If I say ‘There is not a hippopotamus in this room’, it is quite clear there is some way of interpreting that statement according to which there is a corresponding fact, and the fact cannot be merely that every part of this room is filled up with something that is not a hippopotamus.(1918:213-14)

With regard to falsehood one must note that there is not a fact for every proposition, for, as noted above, there are not both true and false facts but only just facts; rather, “there are two propositions corresponding to each fact. Suppose it is a fact that Socrates is dead. You have two propositions: ‘Socrates is dead’ and ‘Socrates is not dead’. And those two propositions corresponding to the same fact, there is one fact in the world which makes one true and one false.”(1918:187)

The account of truth and falsehood which Russell builds upon this framework in many ways closely resembles that proposed by Plato in Sophist. As discussed in §3.2.6, in Sophist Plato proposes a theory of truth and falsehood which rides on a statement’s correspondence (or lack thereof) with its appropriate “fact”: a true statement, whether positive or negative (that is, “positive” or “otherness”), says what are as they are, and hence matches up directly with a corresponding positive or negative “fact”, whereas a false statement, whether positive or negative, says what are but not as they are, and hence fails to match up directly with a corresponding positive or negative “fact”. For example, in the case of Theaetetus, the name ‘Theaetetus’ can combine with either of the names ‘sitting’ or ‘not sitting’ to produce the well-formed statements ‘Theaetetus is sitting’ and ‘Theaetetus is not sitting’. However, there is among what are the “fact” «Theaetetus is sitting», whereas there is not a “fact” that Theaetetus is not sitting. As such, the statement ‘Theaetetus is sitting’ matches up directly with a corresponding “fact” and thus is true, but the statement ‘Theaetetus is not sitting’ fails to match up directly with a corresponding “fact” and thus is false.

In his lectures Russell offers a very similar account of the truth or falsehood of propositions. In lecture I he asserts. “There are two different relations, as you see, that a proposition may have to a fact: the one the relation that you may call being true to the fact, and the other being false to

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13 Why there must be a fact underlying the truth-value of every proposition Russell does not say, apparently taking such a position to be self-evident.

14 Scare quotes are here again employed around the term ‘fact’ to emphasise that Plato’s conception of facts need not necessarily correspond to modern conceptions.
the fact.” (1918:187) He illustrates this proposal by suggesting, "Suppose it is a fact that Socrates is
dead." (1918:187) In such a case, as noted above, one has "two propositions: 'Socrates is dead' and 'Socrates is not dead'. And those two propositions corresponding to the same fact, there is one
fact in the world which makes one true and one false." In lecture III Russell returns to and elaborates this claim:

The essence of a proposition is that it can correspond in two ways with a fact, in what
one may call the true way or the false way. You might illustrate it in a picture like this:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{True:} & \text{Prop.} & \text{Fact} \\
\text{False:} & \text{Fact} & \text{Prop.}
\end{array}
\]

Supposing you have the proposition 'Socrates is mortal', either there would be
the fact that Socrates is mortal or there would be the fact that Socrates is not mortal.
In the one case it corresponds in a way that makes the proposition true, in the other
case in a way that makes the proposition false. (1918:208-09)

Russell thus suggests that propositions pair off in virtue of their matching content, except that in
the case of each pair of propositions one affirms that content positively and the other affirms it
negatively. Of each pair of propositions one corresponds to the appropriate fact in the true way by,
metaphorically speaking, pointing towards the fact, while the other corresponds to the appropriate
fact in the false way by pointing away from the fact. To use Russell’s example of Socrates’s
mortality, including the assumption that it is a fact «Socrates is mortal», matters may be illustrated as
follows:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{True:} & \text{‘Socrates is mortal’} & \text{‘Socrates is mortal’} \\
\text{False:} & \text{‘Socrates is not mortal’} & \text{‘Socrates is not mortal’}
\end{array}
\]

The false proposition ‘Socrates is not mortal’ does not point towards the fact «Socrates is mortal»,
it points away from it, and it is this in which the proposition’s falsehood consists. It is interesting
to note that despite these significantly differing relations which true and false propositions have
towards facts, Russell nonetheless continues to refer to both of these relations as forms of
correspondence. Indeed, Russell holds what may be described as a “correspondence theory of
falsehood”; however, such a theory of falsehood, when compared to his correspondence theory of
truth, involves, not the same sort of correspondence to a different sort of facts (for there are no false
facts), but a different sort of correspondence to the same sort of facts.
In his paper "Russell on Negative Facts" Jay Rosenberg raises a well-warranted concern regarding such an account of falsity. As he there rightly points out, there is considerable difficulty understanding "what sort of a relation 'correspondence in the false way' might be:

We understand what is essentially the metaphor of proposition-fact correspondence by analogy with commonsense cases in which the concept finds literal application. Commonsensically, however, there is only one correspondence relation: a map, for example, may correspond to a territory or it may fail to do so. It will correspond if features of the map can be matched up one to one with features of the territory in such a way that truths about relationships between map features can be translated into truths about the relationships between the corresponding territorial features according to a uniform set of translation rules. A map will fail to correspond to a given territory, then, if there are features of the map which cannot be paired with features of the territory at all or if no possible pairing of features admits of the positing of a uniform set of rules for translating true statements about map relationships into true statements about the territory. In contexts of this sort, there seems to be no room for a second sort of correspondence relation which a map might have to a territory—nor, we should note, any need for one.(1972:32)

Just as Russell holds that there are not both true and false facts, but rather only just facts, so too, Rosenberg here argues, there is not both true and false correspondence, but rather only just correspondence.

Rosenberg is quite reasonably objecting to Russell's usage in this context of the term 'correspondence', for Russell certainly does seem to have stretched matters excessively by referring to the false-making relation as a form of "correspondence". However, while his choice of terminology here may reasonably be criticised, the significance of Russell's underlying point remains. As noted, he proposes with respect to propositions, "a phrase which is apparently a proposition may be either true or false, or may be meaningless, but the true and false belong together as against the meaningless." His use of the phrase "correspondence in the false way", however awkward or literally inaccurate it may be, is intended to reflect, and to account for, this distinction between the false and the meaningless, and in that regard his phrasing retains its value. While Rosenberg is technically correct in pointing out that there is only one correspondence relation which a map might have to a territory, as he himself observes, there are two ways in which a map may fail to correspond to such a territory, for either "there are features of the map which cannot be paired with features of the territory at all", or else "no possible pairing of features admits of the positing of a uniform set of rules for translating true statements about map relationships into true statements about the territory", and these two ways of failing to correspond have very different
consequences. For the features of the map not to admit of any possible pairing with features of
the territory at all is for the map to be meaningless; indeed, it is an open question whether it ought be
considered a map at all. But for no possible pairing of the features of the map with the features of
the territory to admit of the positing of a uniform set of translation rules is for the features of
the map to stand in possible, but different than actual, relations than the features of the territory, and
hence for the map to be false. However, in this latter case, while the relations of the features of
the map thus fail to correspond to the relations of the features of the territory, the features of
the map do themselves correspond (in an extended sense of 'correspond’) with the features of
the territory, and the relations in which the features of the map stand are relations in which
the features of the territory could, although they do not, stand, and it is on these grounds that one
may say that such a map “corresponds to” the territory, albeit in the false way. This distinction
between the false and the meaningless, while perhaps awkward and difficult to elaborate clearly,
is nonetheless important, and Russell is right to draw attention to it.\(^{15}\)

§5.5: Ontology, Truth, and Negation

In lecture III Russell draws attention specifically to the notion of negative facts, for he there
explicitly asks,

Are there negative facts? Are there such facts as you might call the fact that 'Socrates
is not alive'? I have assumed in all that I have said hitherto that there are negative
facts, that for example if you say 'Socrates is alive', there is corresponding to that

proposition in the real world the fact that Socrates is not alive.(1918:211)

As discussed in the last section, Russell is clearly committed to negative facts, for his theory of truth
and falsehood presupposes that false positive propositions are false due to their correspondence in

\(^{15}\) There is also another way in which Rosenberg’s objection here may be read, a way with considerably deeper
implications, although it goes far beyond what Rosenberg explicitly says. It might be that while on the surface
Rosenberg is objecting to Russell’s extended usage of the term ‘correspondence’, on a deeper level what he is really
objecting to is Russell’s assumption of a realist context, his presumption that there are universals there to be
applied to individuals to “create” contents which can then “correspond in the false way”. That is to say, Rosenberg
might really be raising a nominalist objection to Russell’s proposed theory of falsehood. According to nominalism
properties exist only within the context of their actual exemplification by individuals; there is, for example,
no such universal as Mortality, or as Being-Mortal; rather, there is only mortality-in-Socrates, mortality-in-Russell,
and so forth. Consequently, it is illegitimate to explain falsehood in terms of a property’s being misapplied to
an individual, for there are no general properties there to be misapplied; if the proposition ‘Socrates is handsome’ is
false, then there is no handsomeness-in-Socrates, and hence no content available to correspond falsely to the
negative fact «Socrates is not handsome». Approached in this manner, the whole notion of a distinction between
the false and the meaningless becomes problematic, for if neither has an underlying content then it is unclear what
clear ground there is to distinguish the two. Consequently, a nominalist perspective seemingly undercuts
the theoretical underpinning needed to support Russell’s attempt to embed this distinction veridically. 

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the false way to the appropriate negative fact. However, that such facts can play such a role in a theory of truth is insufficient to justify their postulation; much more support is needed before any sort of claim that negative facts must be acknowledged need be taken seriously. In the lectures Russell does provide further support in this vein, but he does so, not on its own accord, but within the context of his rejection of an alternative theory of truth and falsehood, the incompatibility theory. It is in the context of that theory that matters here proceed.

§5.5.1: Incompatibility

As discussed in §4.5.2, both Bradley, in his book *The Principles of Logic*, and Raphael Demos, in his paper "A Discussion of a Certain Type of Negative Proposition", argue that incompatibility is the most reasonable ground for true negative statements. However, the two philosophers disagree on just where the incompatibility lies, with Bradley holding that it is between properties and Demos holding that it is between propositions. Thus, for Bradley the proposition 'x is not f' is true because of the fact that x is g (for some property g) and the property of being g is incompatible with the property of being f, whereas for Demos the proposition 'x is not f' is true because the proposition 'x is g' is true and the proposition 'x is f' is incompatible with the proposition 'x is g'. One point which this reveals is that Bradley and Demos are clearly using the term 'incompatible' in different ways, with Bradley’s usage being primarily ontological and Demos’s primarily veridical: for two properties to be incompatible is for it to be impossible for them both to be exemplified by the same subject at the same time, whereas for two propositions to be incompatible is for it to be impossible for them both to be true at the same time, a difference not just of shading but of realms of application.

§5.5.1.1: Russell’s Case Against Incompatibility

In his lectures Russell ignores Bradley’s views on incompatibility, choosing instead to consider only the views of his own former Harvard student Demos. In his lectures Russell frames his discussion as consideration of the question how one is to interpret such a negative proposition as 'not-p', with his goal being to demonstrate the superiority of his own negative facts account over Demos’s proposed incompatibility account. Russell there notes,

> the suggestion offered by Mr. Demos is that when we assert ‘not-\(p\)' we are really asserting that there is some proposition \(q\) which is true and is incompatible with \(p\)

('an opposite of \(p\)' is his phrase, but I think the meaning is the same). (1918:213)

Russell states that he finds it "very difficult" to accept such a theory of falsehood, and against it he offers a related series of objections which centre upon the problem of just how incompatibility is to be ontologically cashed out without itself being dependent upon negative facts. As noted above, according to Russell there must be a fact underlying every truth, including the truth that certain
propositions are incompatible with certain others. But this makes incompatibility fundamental and an objective fact, which is not so very much simpler than allowing negative facts. You have got to have here 'That $p$ is incompatible with $q'$ in order to reduce 'not' to incompatibility, because this has got to be the corresponding fact . . . . You would come back to the necessity for some kind or other of fact of the sort that we have been trying to avoid. (1918:213-14)

Thus Russell offers the fundamental objection that in order for it to do the job required of it incompatibility must itself involve special facts, and this is "not so very much simpler than allowing negative facts". However, given that negative facts are themselves special facts this "objection" is really no more than an observation that, on this ground at least, neither the incompatibility theory nor the negative facts theory has a particular advantage.

Of more value to Russell's case, at least against Demos's position, is his next objection. Russell continues on to point out, "even if incompatibility is to be taken as a sort of fundamental expression of fact, incompatibility is not between facts but between propositions", for as he succinctly (and correctly) observes in this regard, "It is clear that no two facts are incompatible." (both 1918:214) As Rosenberg spells out this relatively simple point, "opposition cannot be a relation in re, for if $p$ is a true atomic proposition and $q$ a false atomic proposition opposite to $p$, there will be no fact that $q$ to stand opposed in re to the fact that $p$ which is the verifier of $p$. If there were, of course, $q$ would not be false but true." (1972:37) It is for this reason that Russell concludes, "The incompatibility holds between the propositions, between the $p$ and the $q$, and therefore if you are going to take incompatibility as a fundamental fact, you have got, in explaining negatives, to take as your fundamental fact something involving propositions as opposed to facts." (1918:214) Now in and of itself that incompatibility holds between propositions rather than between facts need not be a problem; it is a problem, however, if one holds, as does Russell, that propositions ultimately lack ontological status. In lecture III, wherein he discusses Demos's views, Russell rather diplomatically expresses the point noted above, that "propositions are not what you might call 'real'"; but in lecture IV Russell is more blunt on this matter, straightforwardly asserting, "obviously propositions are nothing" (1918:223). And if propositions are nothing, then clearly incompatibility between them will not serve as an ontological ground for the truth of one of them. Donald Brownstein aptly captures Russell's point here by referring to Russell's "feeling that semantic qualities like falsity (or truth of negative propositions) are to be explicated ultimately in terms of non-linguistic features of the world. Thus incompatibility won't do as the ultimate explication of these semantic qualities, since it is itself a relation among propositions." (1973:44) Consequently, Russell concludes, "this incompatibility of propositions taken as an ultimate fact of the real world will want a great deal of dressing up before it will do. Therefore as a simplification to avoid negative facts, I do not think
it really is very successful.” (1918:214)\textsuperscript{16}

Unless one wishes to argue that propositions are indeed ontological entities, Russell’s case against Demos stands up. However, Bradley’s option of incompatibility as holding, not between propositions, but rather between properties, has yet to be addressed. In his lectures Russell does not broach this alternative; however, some of what he says with regard to Demos can be adapted to indicate where he ought to stand on this latter alternative. As noted, given Russell’s (and, seemingly, Bradley’s) view that every truth must be grounded in an underlying fact, Russell’s suggestion that if incompatibility is itself to be considered fundamental then it must be an objective fact would carry over even if the incompatibility were to hold, not between propositions, but between properties. As properties (unlike propositions) are something, this avoids Russell’s second objection. However, his first, that to admit incompatibility facts is “not so very much simpler than allowing negative facts”, remains, along with its result that the postulation of incompatibility facts holds no advantage. Now this may be so, but on the other hand such a conclusion hardly compels one away from incompatibility facts and towards negative facts. Something more is needed.

\textsuperscript{16} In his essay the following year Russell offers another, Lewis Carrollian Tortoise-and-Achilles style objection to Demos’s line of reasoning. Building on Demos’s positions that when one denies a proposition one is really asserting that some opposite of that proposition is true and that if \( p \) and \( q \) are incompatible then they are not both true, Russell suggests:

\begin{quote}
Now if we take Mr. Demos’s statement that ‘\( p \) and \( q \) are not both true’ and apply his definition to it, it becomes ‘an opposite of ‘\( p \) and \( q \) are both true’ is true’. But this does not yield what we want. Suppose some obstinate person were to say: ‘I believe \( p \), and I believe \( q \), and I also believe that an opposite of ‘\( p \) and \( q \) are both true’ is true’. What could Mr. Demos reply to such a person? He would presumably reply; ‘Don’t you see that that is impossible? It cannot be the case that \( p \) and \( q \) are both true, and also that an opposite of ‘\( p \) and \( q \) are both true’ is true’. But an opponent would retort by asking him to state his negation in his own language, in which case all that Mr. Demos could say would be: ‘Let us give the name \( P \) to the proposition ‘\( p \) and \( q \) are both true’. Then the proposition that you assert and that I deny is ‘\( P \) is true, and also some opposite of \( P \) is true’. Calling this proposition \( Q \), and applying my definition of negation, what I am asserting is that some opposite of \( Q \) is true.’ This also the obstinate person would admit. He would go on for ever admitting opposites, but refusing to make any denials. To such an attitude, so far as I can see, there would be no reply except to change the subject. It is, in fact, necessary to admit that two opposites cannot both be true, and not to regard this as a statement to which the suggested definition of negation is to be applied. And the reason is that we must be able to say that a proposition is not true without having to refer to any other proposition.
\end{quote}

(1919:288-89)

This infinite regress argument has its merits, but as it builds, not on statements about the world, but on statements about statements (and upon the willingness of individuals to accept statements), it brings in factors far afield from the focus of the present work, and for this reason is not here further considered.
In his essay the following year Russell does provide something more, although how much more is a matter of some uncertainty. There discussing incompatibility between properties rather than incompatibility between propositions, he first reiterates the position that incompatibility would itself be a kind of fact; however, rather than stopping at this "not so very much simpler" conclusion, in the essay he continues on to extend his view one step further. He begins by reviewing familiar ground, suggesting, "Usually it is said that, when we deny something, we are really asserting something else which is incompatible with what we deny. If we say 'roses are not blue', we mean 'roses are white or red or yellow'" (1919:287-88) But such a view, he contends, "will not bear a moment's scrutiny". Noting that such a view "is only plausible when the positive quality by which our denial is supposed to be replaced is incapable of existing together with the quality denied" (1919:288), Russell next makes the fairly obvious point that not all properties exclude each other, observing, "'The table is square' may be denied by 'the table is round', but not by 'the table is wooden'." (1919:288) But from here, instead of leaving incompatibility as fundamental, albeit no simpler than negation, Russell next asserts that incompatibility is itself dependent upon negation, and that as such, incompatibility facts themselves presuppose negative facts:

The only reason we can deny 'the table is square' by 'the table is round' is that what is round is not square. And this has to be a fact, though just as negative as the fact that this table is not square. Thus it is plain that incompatibility cannot exist without negative facts. (1919:288)

In order to best appreciate Russell's point here it is helpful to draw out each stage of his thinking, and to compare his train of thought to that of Bradley.

With respect to the ontological ground of the true negative statement 'the table is not square'. Bradley's reasoning may be summarised as follows. First, he accepts the fact «the table is round». Next, he also accepts the fact «being round is incompatible with being square». But according to Bradley there is no need for an additional fact such that the table is not square, for such an alleged fact is, to use Armstrong's terminology, supervenient on the two facts already acknowledged, and as such is "not really a feature of the world distinct from the features it supervenes on". Consequently, the two facts he acknowledges are all one needs to ground the truth of the negative statement 'the table is not square'. As a result, Bradley's view cashes out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True Statement</th>
<th>Ontological Ground (or Truth-Maker):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'the table is round'</td>
<td>«the table is round»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'being round is incompatible with</td>
<td>«being round is incompatible with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being square'</td>
<td>being square»</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'the table is not square'</td>
<td>«the table is round» and «being round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is incompatible with being square»</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Consequently, for Bradley the truth of the statement ‘the table is not square’ does not involve an additional fact over and above the fact about the shape the table is and the fact about the incompatibility of the two shapes as properties. Rather, the linguistic term ‘not’, and hence negation in general, are to be cashed out in terms of the ontological notion of incompatibility.

As best as can be determined, Russell’s thinking differs from Bradley’s in that Russell apparently is unwilling to accept Bradley’s incompatibility fact as primitive, and instead insists on cashing it out further in terms of negation. Instead of being content with moving from ‘the table is round’ to ‘the table is not square’ via the incompatibility fact «being round is incompatible with being square», Russell thinks it necessary to translate this incompatibility fact into the further fact «what is round is not square» (“The only reason we can deny ‘the table is square’ by ‘the table is round’ is that what is round is not square”), a fact which embeds negation into its foundation. His insistence upon this move suggests he does not see the two facts as equivalent; rather, he sees the negative fact «what is round is not square» as non-supervenient on the incompatibility fact «being round is incompatible with being square», thus making the negative fact a distinct and irreducible feature of the world. As a result, Russell’s view cashes out as follows:

True Statement:       Ontological Ground (or Truth-Maker):
‘the table is round’  «the table is round»
‘being round is incompatible with being square’  «what is round is not square»
‘the table is not square’  «the table is not square»17

Moreover, Russell is not the only one who takes for granted that in the end incompatibility is not to be accepted as primitive, but must rather must be cashed out in terms of negation. for this assumption is unquestioningly shared by some commentators. For example, in discussing Russell’s treatment of this very matter, Hochberg suggests that an attempt to ground the truth of something’s not being white in its being black “introduces the fact that W[hite] is incompatible with B[lack] as part of the basis for the truth of [that something’s not being white]”; such a move, Hochberg asserts, “may certainly be held to be merely another way of introducing negative facts.” (1969:300)

Despite Russell’s protestations to the contrary, although they are intended to perform the same functions, incompatibility facts and negative facts are distinct alternatives, neither of which has been shown to be dependent upon the other. Russell has proclaimed, but not demonstrated, that incompatibility facts need be “reduced” to negative facts, and as such, at least thus far, both options remain open.

17 Actually, in the essay Russell does not explicitly argue for the negative fact «the table is not square»; however, given his insistence upon the negative fact «what is round is not square», his bottom line is the same: “it is plain that incompatibility cannot exist without negative facts.”
§5.5.1.2: Armstrong’s Logical Basis for Incompatibility

Russell fails to provide a compelling case for the rejection of incompatibility facts holding between properties, and indeed, it might be that there is no such case to be made. But even if this is so, there remains one more hurdle to be vaulted by those wishing to postulate such entities, and that is their providing an account of the logical basis for such incompatibility. In his important eighteenth-century work An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding philosopher David Hume argues that all reasoning concerning matters of fact is based on experience, and points out that one never experiences any sort of necessary connection (or necessary disconnection, that is, incompatibility) between objects of experience. Expanding on this line of thought, in his work Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus Russell’s friend and former student Wittgenstein proposes that there is no such incompatibility, for the fundamental units of reality are logically unconnected: “Atomic facts are independent of one another. From the existence or non-existence of an atomic fact we cannot infer the existence or non-existence of another.”(1921:2.061-2.062)18 The challenge, then, is to provide an adequate explanation of the nature of incompatibility, not only in the absence of any empirical evidence that it occurs, but also in the apparent absence of any logical evidence that it does so, an explanation which will ground the presence of some property as a sufficient condition for the preclusion of the presence of some other property. As discussed in Chapter Four, according to Bradley, “In ‘A is not B’ the real fact is a character a belonging to A, and which is incompatible with B. The basis of negation is really the assertion of a quality that excludes (x).” (1922:116-17 (I:III:6)) But how is one to account for this mutual in re incompatibility of the properties x and B?

As a start in this direction it is perhaps obvious, but nonetheless helpful, to note that not all properties exclude each other, a point demonstrated by Russell’s observation that the table’s being square is precluded by its being round, but not by its being wooden. Another way of making this point is to observe that properties come in related groups, and that it is only within these related groups that the alleged incompatibility occurs. It is in just this direction that Rosenberg heads in his defence of incompatibility, for he proposes “that relations (including properties) come in families such that (a) if some particulars can exemplify a relation from a given family then they do exemplify some specific relation from that family, and (b) the relations of a single family stand pairwise in a primitive (higher-order) relation of exclusion. Exclusion here is to be viewed as a relation in re of real relations”.(1972:38) However, while Rosenberg’s suggestion that properties come in families may be considered to agree with one’s empirical experiences, his proposal still fails to explain how it is that the nature of the properties leads to their mutual incompatibility. His view

18 All translations from Wittgenstein’s Tractatus are by C.K. Ogden and Frank Ramsey (see Works Cited for publishing details). Choice of this translation is discussed in the next chapter.
of exclusion as "a relation both ontologically and epistemologically basic", and hence of $R_1$’s excluding $R_2$ as "a fully analyzed fact" (both 1972:39), is all well and good, but it remains that some sort of explanation of the nature of incompatibility would go a long way towards providing the incompatibility facts account with favoured status.

Much more progressive in this regard is the discussion Armstrong provides in his chapter, "Are there de re incompatibilities and necessities?". Following up on the notion of families of properties, he observes, properties “characteristically appear in ranges, so that they form classes of determinates falling under the one determinable. An individual can, at one time, instantiate only one member of this given range.” (1989:77) But unlike Rosenberg, Armstrong attempts to provide an account of the logic underlying such alleged incompatibility. He begins by asking his readers to consider the properties of being of mass of just five kilograms and being of mass of just one kilogram, and asserts, “Obviously they are distinct (different) properties. But they are not wholly distinct.” (1989:78) His reasoning in this regard builds on his assumption that for something to be of mass of just five kilograms just is for that something to instantiate five times the universal of being one kilogram:

For something to be just five kilograms in mass is (among other things) for it to be the conjunction of five states of affairs involving five wholly distinct individuals each just one kilogram in mass, where the original something is the mereological sum of these five distinct individuals. Given this, it becomes clear why the very same thing cannot be both five and one kilogram in mass. To attempt to combine the two properties in the one thing would involve the thing’s being identical with its proper part. (1989:79)

Armstrong then proposes that this reasoning may be expanded to encompass properties in general:

My suggestion is that this is a model for the logical incompatibility of properties, or at least for their typical cases. Ranges of determinates falling under a determinable are extensive quantities. These are structural properties, involving parts lying outside parts, that is, involving conjunctions of states of affairs where the individuals involved in the states of affairs are wholly distinct from each other. The attempt to bestow two different determinates of such quantities on the one individual must fail. If the individual has the larger value of the quantity, then the only relevant individuals that have the smaller value are proper parts of the individual. (1989:79)

Armstrong thus proffers the view that, “at least for their typical cases”, incompatibility between properties can be explained in terms of one of the relevant properties’ being in some sort of direct proportional relation to the other, with the result that an individual exemplifying the one property is thereby logically prevented from concurrently exemplifying the other.
As Armstrong himself observes, his proposed account of incompatibility between suitable properties is "tailor-made for extensive quantities, such as volume, duration and, as I have assumed in the preceding discussion, mass". (1989:80) As such, it is not at all clear that such an account can handle ranges of properties which fail to fit so neatly, such as properties of action, such as sitting and flying, and what he himself refers to as the "notorious instance" of colour incompatibilities. But while others might see such latter ranges as generating particular difficulty, Armstrong does not. Acknowledging "the problem of incompatibilities among secondary qualities in the same range, in particular the colour-incompatibilities", he contends in consistent fashion, "The correct way to deal with them, I believe, is to say that they are structured properties like volume, duration and mass, but that their structure does not present itself to perception in the relatively perspicuous way that is the case with these primary qualities."

(1989:82) He holds this despite his admission, "The secondary qualities appear to be other than the primary qualities, having a nature of their own which is very much simpler than the primary-quality structures with which they would have to be identified." (1989:82-83) However, for Armstrong the operative word here is 'appear'; one perceives secondary qualities to have a simpler nature than do primary qualities, but this need not actually be the case. Rather, one's neuron which triggers such perception might operate in such a manner that it "register[s] a complex stimulus, a structure perhaps, in a simple way. Various different inputs due to different features of a structure might be summed by the neuron. If, and only if, the sum is completed, the neuron reacts, but only in a simple, all-or-nothing, way. The structure would be registered as a simple." (1989:83) And if complex structures do indeed ultimately underlie secondary properties, then it is intelligible to argue that such secondary properties would be able to exclude each other in the manner discussed above.

In raising the proposal that secondary qualities are more complex than they appear Armstrong adds, "This solution, or something close to it, seems to be the one entertained by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*" (1989:82), and then goes to quote part of *Tractatus* remark 6.3751 in support of this claim. Remark 6.3751 is the final in a series of remarks Wittgenstein makes concerning the nature of logical necessity. The root of this series is remark 6.3, which divides matters into the logical realm, which deals with the necessary, and the non-logical realm, which deals with the contingent: "Logical research means the investigation of all regularity. And outside logic all is accident." One comment on remark 6.3 is remark 6.37, which emphasises the crux of the earlier remark: "A necessity for one thing to happen because another has happened does not exist. There is only logical necessity." Remark 6.37 is then further developed by remark 6.375, which introduces the notion opposite to necessity, that of impossibility: "As there is only a logical necessity, so there is only a logical impossibility." Remark 6.3751 is then offered as a clarification of this last remark, a clarification which involves the notorious issue of colour incompatibilities:
For two colours, e.g. to be at one place in the visual field, is impossible, logically impossible, for it is excluded by the logical structure of colour.

Let us consider how this contradiction presents itself in physics. Somewhat as follows: That a particle cannot at the same time have two velocities, i.e. that at the same time it cannot be in two places, i.e. that particles in different places at the same time cannot be identical.

(It is clear that the logical product of two elementary propositions can neither be a tautology nor a contradiction. The assertion that a point in the visual field has two different colours at the same time, is a contradiction.) (1921:6.3751)

The roots of remark 6.3751 can be seen in an entry from Wittgenstein’s notebooks (from which the remarks constituting the *Tractatus* were later culled):

A point cannot be red and green at the same time: at first sight there seems to be no need for this to be a logical impossibility. But the very language of physics reduces it to a kinetic impossibility. We see that there is a difference of structure between red and green.

And then physics arranges them into a series. And then we see how here the true structure of the objects is brought to light.

The fact that a particle cannot be in two places at the same time does look more like a logical impossibility.

If we ask why, for example, then straight away comes the thought: Well, we should call particles that were in two places different, and this in turn all seems to follow from the structure of space and of particles. (1979:81 (16.8.16))

In their paper “Some Remarks on (Wittgensteinian) Logical Form” Jaakko Hintikka and Merrill Hintikka summarise Wittgenstein’s overall strategy here: “Wittgenstein in effect assumes that the incompatibility problem can be solved in the case of particle mechanics by the simple expedient of a suitable kinematic notation, and claims that the solution can be extended by analogy to colors. Admittedly, it is not indicated by him how this can be done, but at least we can see what it is that Wittgenstein thinks can be done here.” (1983:414)

The upshot of all of this is that although propositions about colour-spots, such as ‘this is red’, are normally considered to be simple, given Wittgenstein’s claims that the logical product of two elementary, that is, simple, propositions cannot produce a contradiction, and that the product of the two propositions ‘this is red’ and ‘this is green’, which is the proposition ‘this is red and this is green’, is a contradiction, it follows that for Wittgenstein propositions about colour-spots are not simple propositions. Consequently, as does Armstrong, so too Wittgenstein (at least at one time) holds that colours are not simple qualities.
In a famous critical notice of the *Tractatus* Frank Ramsey draws particular attention to this position of Wittgenstein's. He first acknowledges Wittgenstein's basic position, remarking, "Mr. Wittgenstein admits that a point in the visual field cannot be both red and blue. . . he says that "This is both red and blue' is a contradiction", and then adding, "This implies that the apparently simple concepts red, blue (supposing us to mean by those words absolutely specific shades) are really complex and formally incompatible." (both 1923:57) However, Ramsey thinks it unlikely that Wittgenstein will be able to develop his line sufficiently to draw the conclusion he wants, that the assertion of two colours in the same place at the same time involves a logical contradiction. Wittgenstein tries to show that the concepts red and blue are really complex and formally incompatible

by analysing them in terms of vibrations. But even supposing that the physicist thus provides an analysis of what we mean by "red" Mr. Wittgenstein is only reducing the difficulty to that of the necessary properties of space, time, and matter, or the ether. He explicitly makes it depend on the impossibility of a particle being in two places at the same time. These necessary properties of space and time are hardly capable of a further reduction of this kind. (1923:57)

In a similar vein, in his note "*Tractatus* 6.3751" Edwin Allaire, having set up as his sample sentence 'this is red and this is green', which he subsequently dubs 'A', remarks, "What Wittgenstein hoped to do was so to define 'red' and 'green' that not-A would become a deductive consequence of his definitions. Thus, since definitions are analytic, not-A would be shown to be analytic. Or, what amounts to the same thing, A would be contradictory." (1959:86) However, this challenge which Wittgenstein sets for himself, "as he himself was soon to discover, is insoluble." (1959:86) In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein implies that colour words are definable, but fails to provide such definitions. At the time, he perhaps thought that this was simply a matter of filling in the details; however, as he himself comes to admit, this is not the case.

Armstrong's suggestion (which clearly builds on Wittgenstein's foundation) that apparently simple qualities are in fact internally complex provides a highly debatable but nonetheless coherent logical account of how it might be that some properties exclude each other, or are incompatible. However, this account requires that one accept the highly contentious premise that all properties within the same range are, in effect, some sort of multiples of each other, for without such a concession the account grinds to a halt when dealing with the very instances admitted to be most problematic. While this premise may be considered a reasonable one with respect to primary properties, secondary properties are another matter altogether; indeed it is highly questionable that the project he outlines so enthusiastically can be completed successfully. (Indeed, to cite Plato's *Sophist* examples of Theaetetus's sitting and flying, it is highly mysterious how one is even
to understand the notion of such a range of properties being some sort of multiples of each other.) As such, while Armstrong’s proposal is a valiant attempt to resolve a difficult issue, it is certainly far from conclusive.

§5.5.1.3: Wittgenstein’s Formal Basis for Incompatibility

In his 1929 paper “Some Remarks on Logical Form”, written some ten years after the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein offers another, significantly different approach to the problem of the logical basis for incompatibility from that which he presents in his earlier work. In this later work he retains his position that colours admit of degrees of content; however, he now also maintains “that the statement which attributes a degree to a quality cannot further be analysed”(1929:35), and provides the following argument in favour of this new position:

For let us call the unit of, say, brightness *b* and let *E(b)* be the statement that the entity *E* possesses this brightness, then the proposition *E(2b)*, which says that *E* has two degrees of brightness, should be analysable into the logical product *E(b) & E(b)*, but this is equal to *E(b)*; if, on the other hand, we try to distinguish between the units and consequently write *E(2b) = E(b') & E(b'')*, we assume two different units of brightness; and then, if an entity possesses one unit, the question could arise, which of the two—*b' or b''*—it is; which is obviously absurd.(1929:35)

The result of this *reductio* is that statements of degree, such as propositions about colour-spots, are indeed simple and atomic. But such a view demands that Wittgenstein abandon one of two positions, for he must now admit either that colour-spots are not incompatible or that, if they are incompatible, then, contra *Tractatus* remarks 2.061-2.062, some atomic facts, and hence also their corresponding atomic propositions, do indeed exclude each other. He chooses the latter option: “The mutual exclusion of unanalysable statements of degree contradicts an opinion which was published by me several years ago and which necessitated that atomic propositions could not exclude one another.” (1929:35)

Wittgenstein’s new approach moves away from the Bradleyian position of incompatible properties in favour of a position grounded in the very form of states of affairs themselves. His suggestion is that certain logical forms are such that they can only handle one value at a time, with the exclusion of other values being grounded, not by the value accepted by the form, but by the form itself; as he himself puts matters, “There are functions which can give a true proposition only for one value of their argument because—if I may so express myself—there is only room in them for one.”(1929:35) Consider, for example, the form of the state of affairs of a colour’s being in a certain place *P* in one’s visual field at a certain time *T*; such a form may be represented, say, by ‘( ) *P* *T*’. Further, let ‘R’ and ‘B’ be taken to stand for two different colours, such that ‘R *P* *T*’ asserts the existence of the colour *R* in place *P* at time *T* and ‘B *P* *T*’ asserts the existence of
the colour B in place P at time T. Given such a scenario, asserts Wittgenstein, "it will be clear to most of us here, and to all of us in ordinary life, that 'R P T & B P T' is some sort of contradiction (and not merely a false proposition)."(1929:35) But for 'R P T & B P T' to involve contradiction as opposed merely to falsehood, either R P T or B P T (or both) must somehow exclude the other. How is such exclusion to be considered to operate? Wittgenstein's answer to this draws in the nature of the very form of such states of affairs:

I believe it consists in the fact that R P T as well as B P T are in a certain sense complete. That which corresponds in reality to the function "( ) P T" leaves room only for one entity—in the same sense, in fact, in which we say that there is room for one person only in a chair. Our symbolism, which allows us to form the sign of the logical product of "R P T" and "B P T", gives here no correct picture of reality.(1929:36)

In other words, according to Wittgenstein, to allow discussion of a conjunction of incompatible states of affairs is to allow language to move beyond the realm of sense, for such language loses its tie to reality due to its failure to give a "correct picture", that is, a possible picture, of reality. Hence, a proper truth table for the conjunction of the two propositions 'R P T' and 'B P T' must leave out the option such that both are true, for this is "an impossible combination", and as such its representation is merely nonsense. And how is one to determine when certain truth-table combinations must be left out? As in the Tractatus Wittgenstein implies that colours can be defined but then fails to carry this out, so too in this later work he "identifies" but fails to carry out the fine tuning needed to complete the system. What is needed is the development of a genuinely adequate notation system, including a genuinely adequate syntax:

It is, of course, a deficiency of our notation that it does not prevent the formation of such nonsensical constructions [as 'R P T and B P T'], and a perfect notation will have to exclude such structures by definite rules of syntax. These will have to tell us that in the case of certain kinds of atomic propositions described in terms of definite symbolic feature certain combinations of the T's and F's must be left out.(1929:37)

According to Wittgenstein, then, a proper system of representation will inherently prevent the formation of nonsense pseudo-representations, instead allowing only propositions which accurately reflect the logical forms involved.

As noted, Rosenberg and Armstrong both place a certain emphasis on properties coming in families or ranges; so too, Wittgenstein comes to think that this plays an important role in the solution to the problem of colour incompatibilities. In a conversation recorded in his
posthumous publication *Philosophical Remarks* Wittgenstein is reported as suggesting that properties come in groups which form systems, and so do their corresponding propositions, and their forms are such that their relation to the other members of those systems determines that each excludes the others in particular cases:

I once wrote: ‘A proposition is laid like a yardstick against reality. Only the outermost tips of the graduation marks touch the object to be measured.’ I should now prefer to say: a system of propositions is laid like a yardstick against reality. What I mean by this is: when I lay a yardstick against a spatial object, I apply all the graduation marks simultaneously. It’s not the individual graduation marks that are applied, it’s the whole scale. If I know that the object reaches up to the tenth graduation mark, I also know immediately that it doesn’t reach the eleventh, twelfth, etc. The assertions telling me the length of an object form a system, a system of propositions. It’s such a whole system which is compared with reality, not a single proposition. If, for instance, I say such and such a point in the visual field is blue, I not only know that, I also know that the point isn’t green, isn’t red, isn’t yellow etc. I have simultaneously applied the whole colour scale. This is also the reason why a point can’t have different colours simultaneously; why there is a syntactical rule against *fx* being true for more than one value of *x*. For if I apply a system of propositions to reality, that of itself already implies – as in the spatial case – that in every case only one state of affairs can obtain, never several.\(^{19}\)

In this way Wittgenstein offers an alternative account of incompatibility different both from Bradley’s incompatible properties and Demos’s incompatible propositions. Russell rightly observes, “it is clear that no two facts are incompatible”; however, Wittgenstein counters, two states of affairs can be incompatible, and often are. According to Wittgenstein it is neither the simple ontological components themselves nor the complex representations of their combination which underlies incompatibility; rather, it is the inherent limitations on the possibilities of their combination which comes into play. To use the Eleatic stranger’s example, incompatibility holds, not between

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\(^{19}\) More exactly, this report comes from notes made by F. Waismann of a conversation with Wittgenstein on Christmas Day, 1929. Aspects of the passage quoted are developed by Wittgenstein in section VIII of the *Philosophical Remarks*.

\(^{20}\) Compare also *Philosophical Remarks* section 82 paragraph 2:

The fact that one measurement is right automatically excludes all others. I say automatically: just as all the graduation marks are on one rod, the propositions corresponding to the graduation marks similarly belong together, and we can’t measure with one of them without simultaneously measuring with all the others. – It isn’t a proposition which I put against reality as a yardstick, it’s a system of propositions. (1964:110)
the property of flying and the property of sitting, nor between the proposition 'Theaetetus is flying' and the proposition 'Theaetetus is sitting', but rather between the possibility of Theaetetus's flying and the possibility of Theaetetus's sitting, due to the fact that the function "Theaetetus ( )" "leaves room for only one entity", and both flying and sitting fall within the same range from which the one entity can be drawn.21

Wittgenstein's interesting account of the logical basis for incompatibility clearly attaches great weight to the notion of logical form, and particularly to the view that logical form can determine, not just what sorts of things can combine, but also how many of what sorts of things can combine. Consequently, as with Armstrong's proposal, which contends that secondary qualities are ultimately quite different from how they appear, so too Wittgenstein's proposal also involves the postulation of certain fundamental conditions, acceptance of which need not be granted. Observance of this does not imply that either or both of these proposals necessarily is wrong; it simply brings out that each of these accounts of the logical basis for incompatibility carries with it a certain amount of baggage.

§5.5.2: Negative Facts - A Rationalist Approach

As Rosenberg rightly observes, while Russell "does not explicitly subscribe to the Tractarian thesis of the inferential independence of atomic propositions [and hence of atomic states of affairs], . . . the general consilience of his position and Wittgenstein's suggests that he would regard it favorably."(1972:38) Russell rejects the incompatibility option, lock, stock, and barrel. Consequently, when in his lectures he remarks, "It seems to me that the business of metaphysics is to describe the world, and it is in my opinion a real definite question whether in a complete description of the world you would have to mention negative facts or not"(1918:215), there is no doubt where he comes down with regard to this issue: the world does indeed contain negative facts. However, as discussed in §4.5.1 above, there are significant difficulties inherent in attempts to determine just where within the constitution of a negative fact such negation is embedded. In that section four options (as they are set out by Brownstein) are considered, as follows:

Letting 'W' denote the quality white, and 'a' and 'b' two color-spots, let us suppose that a bears the exemplification relation or tie to W. Then a's exemplifying W is a positive fact. Adopting this as a model of the positive fact, the alternative formulations of negative facts are:

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21 Wittgenstein's views on possibility, and on the relation between possibility and negation, are explored at length in the next chapter.
(1) A negative fact consists of, e.g., $W$, $b$, and some third, negative, element as well as a tie of exemplification.

(2) A negative fact consists of, e.g., $b$, the tie of exemplification, and a negative quality [i.e., a negative property].

(3) A negative fact consists of, e.g., $W, b$, and the tie negative exemplification ....

(4) A negative fact consists of, e.g., $b$, some quality other than $W$ and the “absence” or “lack” of $W$. (1973:45)

As discussion below reveals, Russell rejects all four of these options in favour of a fifth, somewhat amorphous one: while there are negative facts, he contends, such facts do not contain any particular negative component. Rather, negation is an ultimate and irreducible quality possessed by some facts but not others. That is to say, according to Russell, given the fact $\sim Wb$, the negative aspect of this fact results from neither a specific negative element (option (1)), a negative property (option (2)), a tie of negative exemplification (option (3)), or an absence of a property (option (4)), but from some overriding, if mysterious, nature.

In his lectures Russell broaches this topic only in passing, for he there fails to provide any direct discussion of the structure of negative facts. However, a hint at his position may be gleaned from certain remarks he makes concerning the relation between language and reality. In lecture II Russell refers to “words which, like ‘or’ and ‘not’, are parts of propositions without corresponding to any part of the corresponding facts” (1918:196), and then again subsequently to how “In a logically perfect language the words in a proposition would correspond one by one with the components of the corresponding fact, with the exception of such words as ‘or’, ‘not’, ‘if’, ‘then’, which have a different function” (1918:197), thus explicitly committing himself to the view that the word ‘not’ lacks an ontological counterpart. At the very least, this serves to indicate Russell’s rejection of option (1), that a negative fact involves a specific negative element. Taken more broadly, it also suggests his rejection of both option (2), that a negative fact involves a negative property, and option (3), that a negative fact involves a tie of negative exemplification, for each of these does, in some sense, involve a negative ontological component corresponding to the negative term in the proposition.

That Russell’s remarks just noted do imply rejection of option (1) is incontestable; however, some commentators have denied that they also imply rejection of options (2) and (3). In his book *Bertrand Russell’s Philosophy of Logical Atomism* Wayne Patterson explicitly notes Russell’s

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22 Perhaps the closest Russell comes to providing such discussion occurs after lecture III, for he is there asked directly, “How do you define a negative fact?”. To this he responds simply, “You could not give a general definition if it is right that negativeness is an ultimate.” (1918:216)
remarks, and then summarises, "In other words 'not' doesn't stand for any entity. There is no 'notness' in the world"(1993:138); however, as his subsequent discussion brings out, Patterson sees Russell's rejection of "notness" as involving denial only of option (1), not of option (2). In discussing how one is to ground ontologically the true proposition 'That is not red' (spoken of some black dot), Patterson considers the "first and obvious interpretation" that the proposition boils down to 'Not (that is red)'. Of this interpretation he remarks,

Here the negation operator negates the entire proposition, and we emphasize this by placing the word "not" outside the bracketed proposition. The difficulty with this interpretation is that the proposition is supposed to stand for a negative fact. Since the proposition is true each constituent of the proposition must stand for some constituent in the corresponding fact which makes it true. That forces us to admit that there is some entity in the world which the word "not" stands for. In other words we must admit that there is notness in the world.(1993:142)

Patterson then adds, "We already know that Russell rejects this view and so we cannot interpret the word 'not' as applying to the whole proposition."(1993:142) But while Russell certainly does deny that the word 'not' has a corresponding constituent in the negative fact, it does not follow that it must be an aspect of some other constituent of that fact. Rather, the word 'not' might be connected to the fact in some entirely different way, and as such still apply to the proposition as a whole. This option, which Patterson does not consider, is discussed below in the context of Russell's remarks on the constitution of negative facts which are found in his subsequent essay on propositions.

For his part Patterson next asks, "If the word 'not' doesn't negate the entire proposition what other function could it have?"(1993:142). His position is that according to Russell the word 'not' negates the predicate alone:

The answer is that "not" serves to negate the predicate of the atomic proposition. We write this as

\[
(4-46) \text{ That is not-red.}
\]

The above proposition says that a certain particular has the property of being not-red. The immediate advantage of this interpretation is that it relieves us of the necessity of saying that "not" stands for an entity. Instead the word "not" qualifies the predicate "red" and the result is the negative predicate "not-red" which stands for a certain property. Which property? Simply non-redness. Non-redness is that negative property which a particular has when it lacks the property of redness. Non-redness is not quite like the positive properties of being red or being black but it is, for Russell, a perfectly legitimate property.(1993:142)
Patterson thus interprets Russell as holding option (2), that the negative aspect of a negative fact derives from that fact's inclusion of a negative component, that being a negative property.23

Before assessing Patterson's claim that one ought to attribute to Russell acceptance of negative properties, further discussion of Patterson's expressed view that Russell denies that the word 'not' can be applied to the whole proposition is called for. At first encounter Patterson's interpretation of Russell's position seems clearly incorrect, for as far back as his 1905 paper "On Denoting" Russell demonstrates the importance of moving the negation operator outside the proposition. He there observes, "By the law of excluded middle, either 'A is B' or 'A is not B' must be true. Hence either 'the present King of France is bald' or 'the present King of France is not bald' must be true. Yet if we enumerated the things that are bald, and then the things that are not bald, we should not find the present King of France in either list." (1905:48)24 Russell's solution to this dilemma involves recognition that the "subject" of the proposition is represented, not by a name but by a denoting phrase, and that all such propositions are actually complex and must be further analysed into their component simple propositions; in the present case, the apparently simple proposition 'the present King of France is bald' is actually a complex proposition asserting both that there is an entity which is now King of France and that such an entity is bald. By moving the negation operator outside the proposition one is thus not denying a simple proposition but a complex one, and as such one is denying that the entire conjunction holds; the proper negation of the false proposition 'the present King of France is bald' is not 'the present King of France is not bald', but rather 'it is not the case that the present King of France is bald', or 'not (the present King of France is bald)', or 'not (there is an entity which is now King of France and is bald)', with the failure of the existential assertion to be true underlying the failure of the conjunction to be true. It is this distinction between simple, or atomic, propositions and complex, or molecular, propositions which underlies Patterson's attribution to Russell of the position he describes. According to Patterson, "With atomic propositions Russell maintains that the external negation is logically equivalent to the internal negation,"(1993:145) whereas with molecular propositions the external negation is not logically equivalent to the internal negation. It is for this reason that Russell allegedly accepts internal negation as the proper way to negate such a (simple atomic) proposition as 'this is red', but not as the proper way to negate such a (complex molecular) proposition as 'the present King of France is bald'.

23 Patterson thus reads Russell's conception of negative facts as being very close to the NF-reading of Plato, for Russell's negative properties would be very much akin to that reading of Plato's "otherness" properties.

24 To which Russell dryly adds, "Hegelians, who love a synthesis, will probably conclude that he wears a wig." (1905:48)
In order to evaluate Patterson’s interpretation of Russell on this point it is helpful first to consider also certain other remarks of Russell’s, remarks constituting what Patterson rightly describes as “probably the most obscure passage in all of the lectures on logical atomism”. In his discussion of Demos’s defence of incompatibility Russell offers the following extended remarks:

[Demos’s] third point I do not entirely agree with: that when the word ‘not’ occurs, it cannot be taken as a qualification of the predicate. For instance, if you say that ‘This is not red’, you might attempt to say that ‘not-red’ is a predicate, but that of course won’t do; in the first place because a great many propositions are not expressions of predicates; in the second place because the word ‘not’ applies to the whole proposition. The proper expression would be ‘not: this is red’; the ‘not’ applies to the whole proposition ‘this is red’, and of course in many cases you can see that quite clearly. If you take a case I took in discussing descriptions: ‘The present king of France is not bald’, and if you take ‘not-bald’ as a predicate, that would have to be judged false on the ground that there is not a present king of France. But it is clear that the proposition ‘The present king of France is bald’ is a false proposition, and therefore the negative of that will have to be a true proposition, and that could not be the case if you take ‘not-bald’ as a predicate, so that in all cases where a ‘not’ comes in, the ‘not’ has to be taken to apply to the whole proposition. ‘Not-p’ is the proper formula.” (1918:212-13)

The challenge here is obvious: how is one to reconcile Russell’s opening statement that he does not entirely agree with Demos’s view that the word ‘not’ cannot be taken as a qualification of the predicate with his closing statement that in all cases the word ‘not’ has to be taken to apply to the whole proposition? Patterson’s answer to this challenge is to propose,

When Russell says that he doesn’t entirely agree with Demos the key word is “entirely”. Russell does agree with Demos’ point as applied to certain kinds of propositions but not as applied to others. . . . The negation of any atomic proposition always involves the negation of the predicate, and the negation of any non-atomic proposition always involves negation of the whole proposition. Russell thus disagrees with Demos about the negation of an atomic proposition but agrees with him about the negation of any non-atomic proposition. (1993:144)

Although he does not bring this out explicitly, Patterson’s answer involves distinguishing Russell’s opening statement from the balance of his other statements in the passage quoted, with Russell’s opening statement expressing his own genuine position, and the balance of his statements constituting a summation of Demos’s position; read in this way there is an apparent, but not a genuine, contradiction between Russell’s opening and closing statements. And indeed, the points
Russell makes in his "in the first place . . . in the second place" presumed summation are both raised by Demos in his original paper; what is needed, then, is to read Russell's subsequent remarks concerning the present king of France as an elaboration, not of his own position, but rather of Demos's position with which he does not entirely agree.

In his lecture Russell elaborates no more on Demos's third point, but instead moves on to discuss Demos's incompatibility proposal; as such, conclusions must be based on the information above and little more. And in the absence of further evidence Patterson's proposed reading here does make good sense of Russell's seemingly perplexing remarks: Russell accepts internal negation, although only in cases where the proposition being negated is atomic. Presumably, then, Russell's apparent enthusiasm in discussing Demos's position (as evidenced by his usage of such phrases as 'of course' and 'it is clear') stems from his own adherence to that position, except that his own adherence to it holds, not in all cases, as Demos thinks, but only in some cases, the cases where the proposition being negated is non-atomic. However, if Russell does indeed accept negative predicates and, correspondingly, negative properties, then this is a rather large ontological commitment on his part, and as such one might expect him to elaborate on this, something he fails to do. For this reason, while Patterson's claim that Russell accepts option (2) with regard to the constitution of negations of atomic facts is viable, it is certainly far from having been established.

The view that Russell holds option (3), that negation joins with the tie of exemplification, or, more generally, with the relevant relation, is proposed, although not extensively developed, by R.M. McDonough in his book The Argument of the Tractatus. McDonough apparently (and unaccountably) fails to heed Russell's reference to "words which, like 'or' and 'not', are parts of propositions without corresponding to any part of the corresponding facts", for McDonough asserts, "Russell appears to except 'not' from the claim that the logical constants do not represent something", and then adds, "Russell does strongly suggest that 'not' stands for something."(both 1986:19) Now this runs counter to what Russell explicitly says; however, given that it is not clear if Russell is rejecting any role for a negative aspect (i.e., options (2) and (3)) or rather just an independent role (option (1)), it is nonetheless worthwhile to consider the balance of McDonough’s remarks. McDonough goes on to suggest, “both ‘p’ and ‘~p’ assert the existence of a fact. If ‘p’ = ‘aR1b’ then ‘p’ is true if the possible fact that a is R1 to b exists. Similarly ‘~p’ = ‘~aR1b’.”(1986:22) McDonough then goes on to attribute the negation to a very specific part of that negative fact, the relation:

But the ‘~’, for example, combines with ‘R1’ to form the complex ‘~R1’, and ‘~R1’ stands for some relation other than R1, say the relation R2. Thus, if ‘~p’ is true it is because the possible fact that a is R2 to b exists.(1986:22)
It is one thing for McDonough to propose that Russell sees negation as attaching to the relation; however, it is quite another for him to propose that this negative relation is itself equivalent to some other relation, especially when he recognises that such a view cannot work:

If ‘p’ is ‘aR₁b’ then ‘¬p’ is, for example, equivalent to ‘aR₂b’ where ‘aR₂b’ is made true by a complex distinct from, but incompatible with, that which makes ‘aR₁b’ true. But on the face of it ‘p’ only mentions a, b and R₁. It does not mention R₂, a constituent of the fact which makes it false. It does not appear to make the additional claim that a is not R₂ to b.(1986:23)

The reason that the propositions ‘p’ and ‘¬p’ cannot exclude one another is that they do not contain the same components, and in particular the same relation, for if they contain different relations then they have no logical connection. But in that case McDonough’s reading of Russell’s position leaves Russell’s account of this matter impotent.

Clearly, at the very least McDonough should stop short of translating the negative relation ¬R₁ into some distinct relation R₂, for such a move breaks the link between the counterpart positive and negative propositions and thus removes all efficacy from the resulting account of negation. But even more than this, both Patterson’s proposal that Russell holds a negative properties account and McDonough’s reading of a negative relations account should be flagged for the reason that Russell never indicates that he considers negation to be part of any of the components of a negative fact; consequently, any reading which attributes to him such a view ought be offered tentatively and cautiously, and only in the absence of other, more coherent alternatives. Although in the lectures he fails to provide any details, Russell seems to have an altogether different conception of negative facts in mind, and in his essay the following year he provides, if not a blueprint of such facts, then at least a helpful sketch, and one which avoids the commitments proposed on his behalf in the readings just considered.

In his essay Russell begins by supposing, “for the sake of illustration, that x has the relation R to y, and z does not have the relation S to w”(1919:287); based on his general position it is clear that what Russell is supposing is the existence of two facts, the positive fact ∼xRy and the negative fact ∼zSw. He next continues on to offer the following provocative contention:

Each of these facts contains only three constituents, a relation and two terms; but the two facts do not have the same form. In the one, R relates x and y; in the other, S does not relate z and w.(1919:287)

In this way Russell moves discussion in a new direction, for he proposes to explain negative facts, not in terms of their components, but in terms of their form. He is quite specific on this, for he then reinforces both sides of this position. He first repeats his point from the lectures by asserting, “It must not be supposed that the negative fact contains a constituent corresponding to the word
'not', and then boldly adds, "[The negative fact] contains no more constituents than a positive fact of the correlative positive form"(both 1919:287). These comments, combined with his description of a negative fact consisting of $S$ not relating $z$ and $w$, thus reaffirm his rejection, not just of option (1), but also of options (2) and (3), that is, of explaining negative facts in terms of negative components. He then continues to reiterate his claim that positive and negative facts differ with respect, not to their components, but to their forms:

The difference between the two forms is ultimate and irreducible. We will call this characteristic of a form its *quality*. Thus facts, and forms of facts, have two opposite qualities, positive and negative.(1919:287)

Thus, according to Russell a negative fact not only has "no more constituents than a positive fact of the correlative positive form", it has the very same constituents as a positive fact of the correlative positive form. The only difference between the two types of facts is that they have two opposite, ultimate and irreducible, qualities, with these differing qualities translating into differences of form.25

Russell’s postulation of positive and negative qualities as what ultimately underlie the difference between positive and negative facts may be considered somewhat unsatisfying, for it fails to provide a tangible underpinning for the negative aspect of negative facts; however, this is largely an aesthetic rather than a philosophical objection, and as such carries little weight. On the other hand, just as Russell’s account of "correspondence in the false way" raises certain difficulties regarding whether it genuinely is a form of correspondence at all,26 so too here it is legitimate to ask whether a relation which does not relate its two terms genuinely is functioning as a relation at all, or whether some higher-order relation is not needed to bind these constituents together. It is to this end that Rosenberg directs his critique of this account of negative facts. Rosenberg first notes Russell’s view of (positive) facts as "complex unities. They are complexes in that they have constituents; they are unities in that the constituents are of different types, the entity of higher type—a relation—serving to bind the entities of lower type—particulars, in the case of atomic facts—into a single (complex) entity"(1972:32-33), and further observes in this regard, "It is by enforcing a type distinction among constituents and insisting that relations are real and themselves relate particulars without need for further relations to relate the relations to the particulars that Russell hopes to avoid Bradley’s notorious regress."(1972:33) But as Rosenberg rightly continues on to point out, “on this view of facts, it is difficult to see how negative facts are possible. . . .

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25 It is essential to be clear here that by the term ‘quality’ Russell does not mean ‘property’; he is most definitely not offering an account of negative facts in terms of negative properties, but rather in terms of a negative quality which operates at the more fundamental level of the form of the fact as a whole.

26 This matter is discussed in §5.4 above.
In the negative fact which serves as the falsifier of the atomic proposition ‘$zSw$’, then, we have only three constituents: $z$ and $w$, which are particulars, and $S$, a relation. But now we are open to all of Bradley’s puzzles. For what binds these three constituents into a fact? The type difference between $z$ and $w$ on the one hand and $S$ on the other is here of no consequence, for, *ex hypothesi*, $S$ does not relate $z$ and $w$. We seem, then, to stand in need of some further relation to relate $S$ to $z$ and $w$ in the appropriate way. This, of course, is the first step in Bradley’s argument for the unreality of relations and, while he wishes firmly to reject Bradley’s conclusion, Russell, in the putative case of negative facts, has provided absolutely no machinery for coming to grips with Bradley’s argument. For Russell explicitly denies the existence of an appropriately type-different constituent to provide the requisite relation. (1972:33)

As a result, Rosenberg concludes, “The positing of negative facts and a second correspondence relation to account for the falsity of false atomic propositions, then, appears to generate more problems than it solves.” (1972:33) But while he is clearly correct that, as it stands, there is a difficulty with Russell’s account which needs to be resolved, his conclusion that Russell’s account “appears to generate more problems than it solves”, and his further assessment, “But is there an alternative to it? For Russell, there is not” (1972:33), are premature. Russell’s view need only be reformed, not rejected.

The central difficulty lies in Russell’s claim that in the negative fact the relation does not relate the individuals, for if that is so then the question arises as to just what holds the complex together. However, given that this failure of the relation to relate plays no further role in Russell’s account, his claim that this is so can be removed without affecting the remaining position. What is left as the result of such a move is, at least initially, a polarity-neutral content consisting of a relation’s relating the appropriate individuals. Whether this content becomes a positive fact or a negative fact then depends upon which quality the form of the content has. So long as the negative fact is negative due to its negative form, there is no need also to have the relation fail to relate; to maintain the latter as well is to try to account twice for the same single negative aspect, an unnecessary effort. Modified in this way, Russell’s account of negative facts avoids the difficulty discussed by Rosenberg without sacrificing whatever efficacy it may be considered to possess.

As discussed, Russell rejects the first three options noted above regarding the composition of negative facts by denying that the word ‘not’ has a direct ontological correspondent within the structure of such facts. However, thus far he has not addressed option (4), the absence of a property, or, more completely, the absence of a particular individual’s exemplification of a particular property, that is, the absence of a fact. This he next proceeds to do. Moreover, this next
step on his part brings with it considerable complication, for in it he shifts ground significantly. Until this point Russell has discussed negative facts strictly within the context of negative particular facts; this now changes, for it is to negative general facts which Russell appeals in rejecting this fourth option:

There might be an attempt to substitute for a negative fact the mere absence of a fact. If $A$ loves $B$, it may be said, that is a good substantial fact; while if $A$ does not love $B$, that merely expresses the absence of a fact composed of $A$ and loving and $B$, and by no means involves the actual existence of a negative fact. But the absence of a fact is itself a negative fact; it is the fact that there is not such a fact as $A$ loving $B$.

Thus, we cannot escape from negative facts in this way. (1919:288)

As noted several times previously, Russell’s theory of truth and falsehood demands that every truth be directly supported by an underlying fact. As such, he simply cannot accept the position that it is the absence of the fact that $A$ loves $B$ which underlies the truth of the true proposition 'A does not love $B$'; rather, he is obliged to insist upon there being a fact such that «there is not such a fact as $A$ loving $B$». But such an insistence obviously involves facts other than ground-level, object-based complexes, for he is now utilising facts about facts, which is to say that he is now utilising general facts; what he is here proposing is the (alleged) negative general fact that all facts are other than the (pseudo-) fact that $A$ loves $B$.

While discussion in §5.2 above suggests that general facts summarising what entities there are within a particular realm likely must be acknowledged, the sort of general fact Russell proposes here is another matter altogether, for negative general facts concern, not what entities there are, but what entities there are not. In his lectures Russell provides argument in favour of there being positive general facts; however, in neither his lectures nor his essay does he provide comparable argument in favour of there being negative general facts. Rather, he simply postulates their existence as an ad hoc solution to just how he is to deny a position against which he apparently has no substantive objection. Russell’s postulation here of the absence of a fact to itself be a negative fact requires considerable fleshing out before it can even be seriously evaluated as a philosophical claim.

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27 In his monograph *Negation and Non-Being* Richard Gale refers to this as "the Philadelphia lawyer’s argument that it is inconsistent to say that there are no negative facts, for then there is the negative fact of there not being any negative facts"; he then eloquently adds, "Someone who argues in this manner would be wise to travel light — jockstrap and track shoes." (1976:2) (For the sake of reader safety, imagining Russell so attired is not advised.)

28 The absence of a fact account is discussed further in §6.6 below.
In his paper Rosenberg offers an interesting and relevant conjecture regarding why Russell is unwilling to accept the absence of a fact account of true negations and falsehoods. Rosenberg hypothesises, “What troubles Russell most” about this account is that it suggests a spurious epistemology. For if the falsity of an atomic proposition consists in its failure to correspond to any atomic fact, it may seem as if, in order to discover that a given atomic proposition was false, we should have to compare it one by one with each atomic fact, noting in each case that it fails to correspond.

And this, of course, is an absurd supposition. (1972:36)

Now this is surely not “what troubles Russell most” about the absence of a fact account. Rather, as noted, that account runs in direct violation of his own position that every truth and every falsehood is grounded by the presence of a fact; as such, the absence of a fact account runs in direct violation to this principle and hence must be rejected by him.

However, the issue raised by Rosenberg is an important practical difficulty which might well also have troubled Russell, and it is one that ought be resolved if that can be done. And as it happens, Rosenberg himself considers just such a resolution: one may reasonably deny the cogency of the view of the relationship between ontology and epistemology implicitly presupposed by such worries. What constitutes the falsity of a false atomic proposition—in what it ontologically consists—is one question; how it is known, another. And there seems, after all, to be no reason to suppose that an answer to the first, ontological, question will straight away provide you with an answer, or even the rudiments of an answer, to the second, epistemological, one. (1972:36)

But while Rosenberg thinks it worthwhile to discuss this response, he himself in the end finds it to be unsatisfactory:

Reasonable as this approach may seem, we must, I believe, in the end concede the point. For the objection goes deeper than we have traced it. It is not simply that the suggested epistemology is an impossible one. It is rather that the proposal seems to admit of no possible epistemology. If the falsity of a false atomic proposition does indeed consist in its failure to correspond to any atomic fact, how could it be discovered that the proposition is false? Canvassing one by one the totality of atomic facts will, of course, not do, but what will do? While the relationship of ontology and epistemology need not be such that the answer to a question of the former species entails an answer to a question of the latter, it is at least necessary that one’s ontological analyses be such as to make it possible to answer the correlative epistemological questions. An elucidation of the ontological bases of some concept which entails the impossibility of our ever being in the position to apply that concept
must, if it is a concept which we in fact do apply, on that account alone be judged inadequate. (1972:36-37)

While his objection here appears to be a reasonable one, in fact matters are not as simple as Rosenberg presents them. He considers the bottom line implied by the absence of a fact account, that knowledge of matters of fact is undiscoverable due to the unending number of facts against which a proposition must be compared, to be contrary to real life, and hence unacceptable; it is for this reason that he rejects that account. But while it is the case that in real life people do act as if they have knowledge of matters of fact, this does not conflict with the implications of the absence of a fact account, for real life knowledge of matters of fact is not certain knowledge, infallible knowledge, and it is only this which the absence of a fact account rules out. Such philosophical innovations as René Descartes’s evil genius scenario and David Hume’s rejection of necessarily unchangeable laws of nature have already firmly established that logical certainty concerning matters of fact is unattainable; nonetheless, this does not prevent those in real life from acting as if they have such secure knowledge. So it is with the absence of a fact account of negation; the available epistemology is such that it can be (relatively) discovered that a proposition is false, by checking it against the atomic facts most likely to verify its truth. Such an approach is not foolproof, but then, neither is any other. It is no grand condemnation to claim that the absence of a fact account denies one absolute certainty, for such certainty is not there to be had in the first place; given that one’s positive experiences are insufficient to ground logically the truth of an atomic proposition about the world, the failure of the absence of a fact account to provide such ground is no major difficulty. Consequently, Rosenberg’s conclusion that for this reason this account of negative truths and falsehoods “must . . . be judged inadequate” is rather a considerable overstatement.

In the end, while on the one hand Russell’s overall position is certainly coherent, on the other hand there is nothing to commend it convincingly over the other available alternatives. Just as Russell fails to demonstrate decisively the superiority of the negative facts account with respect to its rival — the incompatibility facts account, so too he fails to do so with respect to the other challenger, the absence of a fact account. In either case, preference for his view is supported mainly by individual taste rather than by intellectual reasoning.

29 As discussed in his Meditations on First Philosophy, especially Meditation I.

30 As discussed in his An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.
§5.5.3: Negative Facts - An Empiricist Approach

As just discussed, Russell’s attempts to provide solid theoretical support for the negative facts account as the favoured explanation of true negative statements fall short, for in the end he is not able to demonstrate adequately its superiority to either of the other major accounts considered, the incompatibility facts account and the absence of a fact account. Some twenty-odd years later he returns to this topic, both in his 1940 William James lectures at Harvard subsequently published as An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth, and in his 1948 book Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits. In these works Russell offers a new wrinkle on this matter, for he there considers whether it might be the case that negative facts could be experienced or perceived, thus introducing examination of whether the philosophical role of negative facts might be secured by means of empirical arguments. And while in his 1940 lectures he contends that negative facts can be supported in this manner, in his subsequent book his views take a significant and surprising turn, for he there rejects negative facts altogether in favour of an entirely different approach.

In the William James lectures Russell broaches the topic of negation as an aspect of reality by once again relating it to the question of the truth of negative statements. He suggests, "The question to be considered is: how do we know negative empirical propositions, such as ‘there is no cheese in the larder’ or ‘there are no snakes in Ireland’?" (1940:162). His answer is that one perceives an absence:

If some one brings you, in the dark, into the neighbourhood of a ripe Gorgonzola, and says "can’t you smell roses?" you will say no. When you hear a foghorn, you know it is not the song of a lark. And when you smell nothing or hear nothing, you can be aware of the fact. It seems that we must conclude that pure negative propositions can be empirically known without being inferred. "Listen. Do you hear anything?" "No." There is nothing recondite about this conversation.(1940: 162-63)

Russell concludes, “In a word: it is possible, in a certain sense, to notice what is not there as well as what is there.” (1940:164)31

31 In somewhat similar fashion, in his 1943 ontological essay Being and Nothingness Jean-Paul Sartre also argues that one can perceive absence as well as presence. In that work he considers a scenario wherein he is to meet his friend Pierre at the café. Sartre arrives late and does not see Pierre there:

Is there an intuition of Pierre’s absence . . . ? At first sight it seems absurd to speak here of intuition since to be exact there could not be an intuition of nothing and since the absence of Pierre is this nothing. Popular consciousness, however, bears witness to this intuition. Do we not say, for example, “I suddenly saw that he was not there.” (1943:9)

This appeal of Sartre’s to the intuition of seeing that someone is absent in its essentials corresponds to Russell’s appeal to the intuition of noticing what is absent.
However, as Russell himself points out, matters are not that simple. He admits, “The conclusion seems irresistible that a percept or a memory may give rise to a negative factual premise as well as to a positive one.”(1940:163) But it is essential to note that there is nonetheless an important difference between positive and negative perceptions, for negative perceptions require, in addition to the state of the world, a particular state of mind:

in the case of a positive basic proposition, the percept may cause the words, whereas in the case of a negation the words, or corresponding images, must exist independently of the percept. A negative basic proposition thus requires a propositional attitude, in which the proposition concerned is the one which, on the basis of perception, is denied. We may therefore say that, while a positive basic proposition is caused only by a percept (given our verbal habits), a negative one is caused by the percept plus a previous propositional attitude. There is still an incompatibility, but it is between imagination and perception.(1940:163-64)

It is thus the case that negative perceptions are not parallel to positive ones, for they require an input from the perceiver unnecessary for positive perceptions.32 In the Inquiry Russell does not clarify the ontological implications of the need for this additional precondition, which is to say that he does not directly relate this situation to the status of negative facts. However, in his subsequent book on knowledge he rectifies this matter.

32 Again in somewhat similar fashion, in his essay Sartre goes on to suggest that it is one’s expectation to see Pierre in the café that prompts one to say that he is absent. But Sartre goes farther than Russell on this, for according to Sartre one’s expectation does not just prompt the remark, it is itself responsible for the reality of Pierre’s absence:

To be sure, Pierre’s absence supposes an original relation between me and this café; there is an infinity of people who are without any relation with this café for want of a real expectation which establishes their absence. But, to be exact, I myself expected to see Pierre, and my expectation has caused the absence of Pierre to happen as a real event concerning this café. It is an objective fact at present that I have discovered this absence, and it presents itself as a synthetic relation between Pierre and the setting in which I am looking for him.(1943:10)

Thus Sartre explicitly asserts that the expectation of seeing Pierre makes Pierre’s absence a real event created by the clash between the positive expectation and the failure of that expectation to be met. But the expectation must be genuine, or it is not sufficient to create the fact:

By contrast, judgments which I can make subsequently to amuse myself, such as, “Wellington is not in this café, Paul Valéry is no longer here, etc.”—these have a purely abstract meaning; they are pure applications of the principle of negation without real or efficacious foundation, and they never succeed in establishing a real relation between the café and Wellington or Valéry. Here the relation “is not” is merely thought.(1943:10-11)

According to Sartre, then, only if one actually does expect something which is not the case does that expectation cause that something’s not being the case to be a real aspect of that situation.
In *Human Knowledge* Russell again raises the issue of negative propositions, asking, “How do I know what I assert when I say ‘It is not raining’?” (1948:121) But, unlike in his previous work, he here proceeds to point his compass in a more ontological direction by next asking, “In what sense, if any, are there negative facts, as opposed to true sentences containing the word ‘not’?” (1948:121) He then suggests, “Let us put the matter as follows:

Imagine a person who knew everything that can be stated without using the word “not” or some equivalent; would such a person know the whole course of nature, or would he not? He would know that a buttercup is yellow, but he would not know that it is not blue. We may say that the purpose of knowledge is to describe the world, and that what makes a judgment of perception true (or false) is in general something that would still be a fact if there were no judgments in the world. The yellowness of the buttercup may be taken to be such a fact, and must be mentioned in a complete description of the world. But would there be the buttercup’s not-blueness if there were no judgments? And must we, in a complete description of the buttercup, mention all the colors that it is not? (1948:121)

The position Russell subsequently takes with regard to this issue is the unexpected one, “it is possible to define the truth of negative judgments without assuming that there are negative facts.” (1948:122n*) He reviews a number of options leading to this end, perhaps surprisingly clearly sympathising with the incompatibility view, but in the end throwing in his lot with a new interpretation which, although superficially built on the notion of disbelief, actually has its roots in acceptance of difference as a positive relation.

Russell first echoes his position in his *Inquiry* by asserting that all spontaneous negative judgments involve both an idea of a certain sort of sensation and an encounter with a different sensation, though of the same sort, than that expected: “I look for blue, and I see red; I expect the taste of salt, and I get the taste of sugar.” (1948:122) His subsequent attempt here to avoid acknowledging that negation is involved requires a particular conception of the relation of difference, for he adds, “Here everything is positive: idea of blue, sensation of red, experience of difference.” (1948:122) He then continues on in this vein, proposing, “When, as a result of perception, I say ‘This is not blue,’ I may be interpreted as meaning ‘This is a color differing from blue,’ where ‘differing’ is the positive relation that might be called ‘dissimilarity’.” (1948:122) Russell chooses here not to stress the importance of interpreting dissimilarity as a positive relation, instead innocuously concluding, “when I say truly ‘This is not blue,’ there is, on the subjective side, consideration of ‘This is blue,’ followed by rejection, while on the objective side there is some color differing from blue”, which allows for the conclusion, “so far as color judgments are concerned, we escape the need of negative facts as what make negative judgments true.” (both 1948:122)
At this point, however, Russell does not proclaim triumph, but rather, in honest fashion, faces what he describes as "a difficulty, and a very serious one":

The above theory only succeeds in virtue of the incompatibility of different colors, i.e., of the fact that if I see red in a given direction I do not simultaneously see blue in that direction. This reintroduces "not," which we were trying to get rid of. (1948:123)

Interestingly, the difficulty Russell sees here derives from the circumstance that while he has now joined his former adversaries in granting a role to incompatibility, he retains his position, which he put forth in his paper on propositions, that incompatibility is not itself fundamental, but rather depends upon negation as its ultimate ground. In that work he refuses to accept incompatibility facts as the ontological root for negative propositions, proclaiming, "it is plain that incompatibility cannot exist without negative facts"(1919:288). But while such a claim fit well with his overall position then, it now comes back as a thorn in his side after his conversion to the incompatibility position, for he now wishes to dispense with negative facts, but finds himself unsure how to do so.

Russell proceeds to tackle this "serious" difficulty, but in an indirect manner, choosing, not to attempt to account for incompatibility without reference to negation, but rather to determine whether incompatibility is actually an answer to his problem after all. He first observes that the legitimacy of logical incompatibility holding between colours is intuitively agreeable, remarking, "The impossibility of seeing two colors simultaneously in a given direction feels like a logical impossibility, not like an induction from experience"; however, he concedes that this need not be so, granting, "but this is only one of various hypotheses that are prima-facie possible." (both 1948:123)

Instead of next focusing on whether or not it can be demonstrated that different colours are logically incompatible, Russell chooses to hypothesise that they are and considers what would be the consequences of such a hypothesis; the advantage of this approach is that if logical incompatibility proves not to be the cure-all one suspects then one need not worry over how such incompatibility is to be demonstrated. To this end he supposes, "It is logically impossible that 'This is red' and 'This is blue' should both be true of a given 'this'", but quickly concludes, "this supposition, whether true or false, will not help us." (both 1948:123) His reason for this conclusion is his view, for which he credits Leibniz, that two simple positive predicates cannot be logically incompatible. Two predicates, such as red and blue, "will only be logically incompatible if one of them contains a constituent A and the other contains a constituent not-A", but this "requires us to regard either 'red' or 'blue' or both as complex, and one at least must contain a 'not' in its definition." (both 1948:123) But if logical incompatibility itself inherently involves negation then its introduction fails to accomplish the task for which it is introduced, and as a result its postulation creates no advantage.
Whether intentionally or not, in his brief discussion here Russell never really mounts a serious attempt to rescue the logical incompatibility option. Unlike Wittgenstein, who clearly genuinely wrestles with the issue of establishing a logical basis for incompatibility in an effort to bring the matter to some sort of satisfactory resolution, Russell seemingly accepts from the beginning that no such salvage of this option is forthcoming. This might be because he has another alternative up his sleeve, or it might be simply because he cannot see a way out of the situation he describes, but in either case a more heartfelt attempt to deal with this option would have been appropriate.

Having thus rejected logical incompatibility as a fruitful alternative, Russell next considers the view “that the incompatibility of red and blue has a physiological source. That is to say, we are to suppose that a stimulus of a certain kind causes a sensation of red, while a stimulus of another kind causes a sensation of blue.” (1948:124) He himself thinks this “the best theory”, but recognises that it faces the difficulty of how to account for the incompatibility between the two kinds of stimuli:

As a matter of physics, this incompatibility may be taken to arise from the fact that each light-quantum has one definite amount of energy, together with the quantum laws connecting energy and frequency. The difficulty here is that it is not enough to say of a given light-quantum that it has such-and-such an amount of energy; we must also be able to say that it does not have also some other amount. This is always regarded as so self-evident that it is never even stated. (1948:124)

Now, as discussed above in §5.5.1.3, the problem of grounding the position that the possession of one unit of some sort of measurement precludes the simultaneous possession of a different unit of that same sort of measurement is just that considered, and perhaps solved, by Wittgenstein’s proposal in *Philosophical Remarks* that one compares against reality, not individual measurements one at a time, but rather systems of measurements all together. And while *Philosophical Remarks* was not published for the first time until 1964, according to its editor Rush Rees Wittgenstein left a typescript of the work with Russell as early as 1930 (1964:347); given that Wittgenstein’s solution to this problem is contained therein, Russell certainly ought be acquainted with it at the time of writing *Human Knowledge*. Why exactly he chooses not to employ it is unknown: it might be that he simply did not remember it, or it might be that he did not accept it, either generally, or specifically with respect to quantum physics. In any case, he does not here consider Wittgenstein’s suggestion.

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33 This last option is listed due to Russell’s distinction drawn in his closing remark in this passage that while in classical physics principles analogous to that of the possession of one quantity of energy’s excluding simultaneous possession of another quantity of energy “might have had a logical basis, . . . in quantum physics the incompatibility seems synthetic”. (1948:124)
Instead, he apparently accepts this problem as unresolved, and hence as sufficient grounds to abandon the physiological incompatibility alternative.

Russell presents the position in which he ultimately invests as building on the correlative attitudes of belief and disbelief, of which he contends, "Both are 'positive' in the sense that they are actual states of the organism, which can be described without the word 'not.'"(1948:124) Further, each of belief and disbelief "is capable of being 'true'." A positive belief, such as 'this is red', "is 'true' if it is caused by something red"; a disbelief, such as 'this is not red', "is 'true' when it is caused by something having to red the relation of positive dissimilarity which we considered earlier."(both 1948:124) These accounts, he then claims, avoid the problem of ultimate dependence upon negation:

It seems that in this way we can replace "not" and "falsehood" by "disbelief" and "the truth of a disbelief." We then reintroduce "not" and "falsehood" by definitions: the words "This is not blue" are defined as expressing disbelief in what is expressed by the words "This is blue."(1948:125)

According to Russell this approach solves matters, for "In this way the need of 'not' as an indefinable constituent of facts is avoided."(1948:125)

On the surface Russell's exercise to define away negation is reasonably successful; however, it is quite another matter to agree that reality matches up with appearance. At least three difficulties with his final position are evident. First, one is required to accept that dissimilarity is a positive relation; but it is not at all clear that dissimilarity is not related to similarity as is not-A to A. Second, one is also required to accept that disbelief is a positive attitude; now disbelief certainly differs from lack of belief, but within the positive realm of belief in general, of holding a particular position, there is the further distinction between (positive) belief and (negative) disbelief, and it is not at all clear that within this positive realm disbelief is not related to belief as is not-A to A. And third, one is required to accept, contra his own express opinion in his lectures on logical atomism, that negation can be adequately explained in cognitive terms. In those lectures Russell notes Demos's position "that a negative proposition is not in any way dependent on a cognitive subject for its definition"; he there responds, "To this I agree", and goes on to reject explicitly the view, "when I say 'Socrates is not alive', I am merely expressing disbelief in the proposition that Socrates is alive."(1918:212)

This view which he so strongly rejects in his 1918 lectures is the very one which he so firmly embraces thirty years later. Each of these difficulties taken individually raises serious concern regarding the success of Russell's elimination of the need for negative facts from the ontological realm. Taken collectively, they constitute strong grounds for withholding belief in his claim that he has indeed avoided a need for "not" as an indefinable constituent of facts.
§5.6: Conclusion: Russell on Negative Language

As the preceding discussion reveals, in the course of his storied philosophical career Russell travels down many paths in his efforts to resolve satisfactorily the matter of the ontological ground of true negative statements and false statements. As discussed in §§5.5.1-5.5.2, in his earlier, logical atomism stage he pitches his tent with the negative facts view, employing such entities directly to ground true negative statements and indirectly (via "correspondence in the false way") to ground false statements. However, by 1948 he has shifted ground on this, now basing his explanation of such statements upon notions he had explicitly previously rejected. Now negative facts become personae non gratae, entities to be rejected, preferably, but unworkably, in favour of incompatibility, and hence alternatively in favour of cognitive states.

However, as this chapter has clearly brought out, none of the options to which Russell adheres in his various incarnations need be considered especially preferable. His willingness through the years to alter his position reflects the reality that none of the views he seriously considers has particular support. The arguments Russell provides with respect to whether the incompatibility position is itself dependent upon negative facts can only be taken as inconclusive. Consequently, it is reasonable to hold that incompatibility facts are irreducible and do not require negative facts to support them. To this end, then, one may consider the incompatibility account of negative language and the negative facts account of such language to be equally attractive.

But while these accounts are equally attractive, they are also equally unattractive. Each of these accounts involves a significant ontological commitment, for each grounds negative language through the introduction of an entirely new realm of facts unnecessary to account for true positive statements alone. But given that the goal of the present work is to determine that account of negative language having the minimum ontological implications, if some other alternative involving a lesser commitment is available, it ought be pursued. In his book Human Knowledge Russell seemingly tries to avoid such major ontological commitment by ultimately drawing back to a position which depends upon cognition rather than ontology. However, for the reasons discussed at the end of the last section, such a move does not work, and hence this "alternative" fails to rescue him.

What is needed is a whole new approach to the matter, one which tackles the issue in an inventive way. Such a new approach is available, despite Russell's having dismissed it in short order in his essay on propositions. This approach is the Wittgensteinian move to ground negative language in an ontologically indirect manner, not via a new kind of facts, via a new branch of what is, but via a relation between actuality and possibility, between what is and what could be. Examination of this radically different alternative is taken up in Part III below.
PART III

THE MODALITY OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE:
WITTGENSTEIN (AND OTHERS)
ON POSSIBILITY AND ACTUALITY
Part III
Chapter Six

WITTGENSTEIN, AND POSSIBILITY

§6.1: Introduction

In his 1918 lectures “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism” Bertrand Russell remarks, “A very great deal of what I am saying in this course of lectures consists of ideas which I derived from my friend Wittgenstein. But I have had no opportunity of knowing how far his ideas have changed since August 1914, nor whether he is alive or dead, so I cannot make any one but myself responsible for them.” (1918:205) As it happens, this disclaimer of Russell’s turns out to be quite appropriate, for at the time of this remark Ludwig Wittgenstein was still very much alive, and moreover he had developed his ideas in a manner very different from that pursued by Russell. While still kindred spirits in some respects, the two philosophers end up having very different views concerning the issues central to the present work.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Plato’s *Sophist* account of negative language may be read in either of two ways. Interpreted in an ontologically weaker manner (the I-reading), the content of “The Not-F” just is those entities in the same range as F but other than F, such that, for example, The Not-Red consists of The Blue, The Green, and so forth. Under this reading the truth of true negative statements and the falsehood of false positive statements are ontologically grounded indirectly via an incompatibility between the property denied or asserted of some subject by the negative statement and the property actually exemplified by that subject. For example, under this reading the statement ‘Theaetetus is not flying’ is true because of the facts «Theaetetus is sitting», that is, «Theaetetus partakes of The Sitting», and «The Sitting is incompatible with The Flying». The treatment of negative language produced by this reading is essentially comparable to that proposed by F.H. Bradley (as is discussed in Chapter Four). Interpreted in an ontologically stronger manner (the NF-reading), Plato’s *Sophist* account of negative language holds that “The Not-F” has ontological status on its own, both in its most general form, The Not-Being, and as its various “parts”, such as The Not-Great, The Not-Flying, and so forth. Under this reading the truth of true negative statements and the falsehood of false positive statements are ontologically grounded directly via corresponding “negative” facts. For example, under the stronger reading the statement ‘Theaetetus is not flying’ is true because of the fact «Theaetetus is not flying», that is,

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1 The term ‘negative’ is here placed in double quotation marks because Plato’s “The Other” is alleged not genuinely to be negative. (This matter is discussed in Chapter Three.)
«Theaetetus partakes of The Not-Flying».2 The treatment of negative language produced by this reading is essentially comparable to that proposed by Russell (as is discussed in Chapter Five). It is thus clear that the accounts of negative language provided by Plato, Bradley, and Russell all have significant ontological implications.

A very different approach to negative language is offered by Wittgenstein in his monumental 1921 text Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. In this ground-breaking work Wittgenstein offers a bold new vision both of the relation of language to reality and of the nature of negation. Although the account of negative language which he develops is not without ontological implications of its own, it does open up avenues which allow for those implications to be further minimised, if not eliminated. Wittgenstein grounds negation neither in terms of facts with negative aspects nor in terms of negative relations (that is, incompatibility) between aspects of facts, choosing instead to see negation as a result of the relation between the possible and the actual, a move which shifts attention to modality, and specifically to the nature of possibility. One view of such a nature is present in the Tractatus and is considered below; another, modified version of this view is proposed in Chapter Seven.

Before examining the Tractatus two preliminary matters ought be discussed. The first matter concerns the internal interdependence of the Tractatus. In several notes in Chapter One similarities between Parmenides’s “On Nature” and Wittgenstein’s Tractatus are observed. As there mentioned (§1.3.1), Parmenides’s position is ill-suited to one-dimensional linear expression: rather, “other orderings are possible, none pre-eminent”. So it is with Wittgenstein’s Tractatus philosophy. Although an arrangement is evident (for “Wittgenstein has ordered the paragraphs of the Tractatus in what he judges to be the most artistic, the most striking, sequence”(Passmore 1966:352)), no arrangement is an ideal one, for as Max Black points out, “the Tractatus is a web in which almost every thought is connected with all the others.”(1964:2) As such, one must accept from the outset that much of the overall Tractatus position does not come into focus until the whole picture has been laid out.

The second matter concerns the translation of the Tractatus here employed. There are two principal English translations of the work. The first, published in 1922, provides no official translation credits, but informally acknowledges the work of editor C.K. Ogden, as well as the input of Frank Ramsey; this translation is henceforth referred to as the ‘O&R’ translation. The second, published in 1961, was translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness; this translation is henceforth.

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2 That is, «Theaetetus partakes of The Other-Than-Flying».

3 As Black further points out, “In later life, Wittgenstein proposed more in earnest than in jest to arrange the sentences of a philosophical book in alphabetical order: he always thought it harmful to force philosophical thoughts into linear deductive order.”(1964:2)
referred to as the ‘P&M’ translation. In her book *An Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus* Wittgenstein scholar and literary executor G.E.M. Anscombe writes, “English readers of the *Tractatus* may need to be warned that Ogden’s translation is notoriously very bad. Wittgenstein told me that he had not checked the whole of this translation, but only answered a few questions that were put to him about some passages”(1967:17n1), seemingly making employment of the original translation a questionable choice. However, contemporary circumstances and evidence serve to undermine Anscombe’s warning. In an introductory note to the 1922 publication Ogden claims, “The proofs of the translation . . . have been very carefully revised by the author himself”, a claim explicitly supported by Wittgenstein himself in a letter to Ogden of that same year in which he writes, “Now I think I have finished the correction of both the German and the English text. I have taken great pains but especiall[ly] as regards the English”(Wittgenstein 1973:19). Later criticism of the O&R translation might stem from passages in which the English translation fails to follow exactly the original German text, but this is also explained by Wittgenstein at the time, for in the same letter he also writes,

The translation as you said, was in many points by far too literal. I have very often altered it such that now it doesn’t seem to be a translation of the German at all. I’ve left out some words which occur in the German text or put in others which don’t occur in the original etc. etc. But I al<lb>ways did it in order to translate the sense (not the words).(1973:19)

There is thus existing evidence which suggests that, even if in places it is not a close translation of the original German, the 1922 O&R translation does indeed reflect Wittgenstein’s views at that time, a powerful prima facie reason for giving that translation favoured status; as such, it is the O&R translation which is here employed. Further evidence supporting the use of the O&R translation, as well as discussion of just why the choice of translations is significant, is provided in the next section.


(What is ordinarily interpreted to be) The ontological basis of the *Tractatus* is spelled out in a flurry of remarks which opens the work, with these remarks introducing four of the central ontological notions of the work: world (*Welt*); fact (*Tatsache*); atomic fact (*Sachverhalt*); and object (*Gegenstand*). Wittgenstein starts his exposition with everything there is, the world:

The world is everything that is the case.(1921:1)\(^4\)

Thus, for Wittgenstein, in the grand sense what is is the world. And like Plato and Russell, Wittgenstein’s world is pluralistic, it divides into smaller entities. He next echoes Russell by setting

\(^4\) *Tractatus* passages are here referenced via Wittgenstein’s own decimal notation, not by page number.
forth a central tenet of logical atomism, which is that the world consists of compounds, and specifically facts:

The world is the totality of facts, not of things.(1921:1.1)

The world divides into facts.(1921:1.2)

As discussed in his lectures on logical atomism, Russell’s complex facts are composed directly of component simples, that is, individuals and universals. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein introduces an intermediate step: facts are complexes which are composed of smaller units which are themselves also complexes, atomic facts:

What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts.(1921:2)

Wittgenstein’s usage here of the singular with respect to “the fact” and the plural with respect to “atomic facts” reveals his point, one easily (and often) missed: a single fact, a single *Tatsache*, is not the existence of a single atomic fact, a single *Sachverhalt*, an interpretation which would yield a meaningful distinction only if facts and atomic facts have different ontological status; rather, a single fact is the existence of (a plurality of) atomic facts, which reveals that facts and atomic facts differ in structure rather than in ontological status.6 Finally, it is atomic facts which are composed of the ultimate constituents of reality, objects:

An atomic fact is a combination of objects (entities, things).(1921:2.01)

As further consideration reveals, from these few brief and seemingly straight-forward remarks emerges a philosophical position which is complex, difficult, and quite exceptional.

Logically speaking, objects thus stand at the base of Wittgenstein’s ontological hierarchy, and so it is with them that the present examination begins. Wittgenstein’s root remark in this vein indicates how fundamental he takes objects to be, for he asserts,

The object is simple.(1921:2.02)

He then elaborates on the nature of objects by adding,

The fixed, the existent and the object are one.(1921:2.027)

The object is the fixed, the existent (1921:2.0271).

Wittgenstein’s basic ontological entities are thus simple (*einfach*) (2.02), fixed (or changeless) (*Feste*) (2.027, 2.0271), and existent (*Bestehende*) (2.027, 2.0271). As discussed in §2.4.1 above, such a conception of the fundamental nature of reality is hardly novel, for, as there noted, both Parmenides’s own one being and Plato’s many forms also have these essential attributes.

5 Although their general focuses are similar, one difference between Russell and Wittgenstein is already apparent. For Russell, facts are part of the world “just as much as particular chairs and tables” (Russell 1918:183), thus suggesting that the world consists equally of both facts and individual things. For Wittgenstein, the world consists only of facts, “not of things”. This emphasis on the primacy of complexes continues on throughout the *Tractatus*.

6 Wittgenstein’s purpose in specifying that a fact is the *existence* of atomic facts is discussed below.
Consequently, from the outset Wittgenstein’s philosophy has a significant link with ancient predecessors.

That objects are indeed the basis of all that is is further emphasized by Wittgenstein’s remark,

Objects form the substance of the world. (1921:2.021)

However, despite forming the substance of the world, objects are in some sense independent of the world, for the world is everything that is the case (1), and

Substance is what exists independently of what is the case. (1921:2.024)

As such, it follows (via 2, “What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts”) that what objects there are is independent of what facts, and hence what existent atomic facts, there are. This consequence is reflected in Wittgenstein’s further remarks concerning objects. He points out, although objects are simple, they also necessarily have the capability of combining:

It is essential to a thing that it can be a constituent part of an atomic fact.

(1921:2.011)

... we cannot think of any object apart from the possibility of its connexion with other things.

If I can think of an object in the context of an atomic fact, I cannot think of it apart from the possibility of this context. (last two 1921:2.0121)

Wittgenstein here indicates that the necessity involved concerns, not that an object must be a part of an atomic fact, but only that it is essential that it can be (können) (2.011), that such must be a possibility (Möglichkeit) (2.021). In other words, objects are parts of atomic facts only contingently, not necessarily.

Before further pursuing the relation between objects and atomic facts, further remarks concerning the ontological status of objects are in order. In the passages noted thus far, the O&R translation translates the cognate German terms ‘Bestehen’, ‘Bestehende’, and ‘besteht’ in consistent fashion by, respectively, the cognate English terms ‘existence’, ‘existent’, and ‘exists’—the fact is “the existence” of atomic facts (2), the object is “the existent” (2.027, 2.0271), substance is what “exists” (2.024). In the P&M translation, on the other hand, the translations are not consistent. ‘Bestehen’ in 2 remains ‘existence’, but for reasons not apparent the other terms drop in ontological status: ‘Bestehende’ there becomes ‘subsistent’ rather than ‘existent’, so that objects subsist rather than exist, and ‘besteht’ there becomes ‘subsists’ rather than exists, so that substance similarly subsists rather than exists. In this way P&M downplay the ontological status of objects by denying them full-fledged status as existents in favour of (presumably) lower-rated status as

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7 As Black comments regarding these last remarks, ‘think’ is here “not to be taken in a psychological sense”; rather, in this context ‘unthinkable’ means ‘logically impossible’. (1964:48-49)
subsistsents, thus seemingly avoiding the difficult circumstance that according to Wittgenstein objects exist without necessarily being part of any existent atomic facts. However, the notion of levels of being, of being as including more than just existence, has historically been a difficult one, and hence the benefits of such a move are questionable. Rather, one is best advised simply to face up to what Wittgenstein says, which is that atomic facts, objects, and substance have the same ontological status, and make the best of that. (This matter rearises below.)

Objects, which exist, can, but need not, be parts of atomic facts. Must atomic facts (Sachverhalten) exist in order to be genuine atomic facts? The ontological status of a Sachverhalt is a matter of some dispute, primarily because of the manner in which Wittgenstein chooses to describe these important entities. For one thing, he makes reference to both the existence (Bestehen) and non-existence (Nichtbestehen) of atomic facts:

The totality of existent atomic facts also determines which atomic facts do not exist. (1921:2.05)

The existence and non-existence of atomic facts is the reality. (1921:2.06)

From the existence or non-existence of an atomic fact we cannot infer the existence or non-existence of another. (1921:2.062)

Wittgenstein here might be taken to be suggesting that there are two sorts of atomic facts, existent ones and non-existent ones, thus implying that non-existent atomic facts are still genuine atomic facts. For another thing, in other remarks Wittgenstein refers to atomic facts simply as possible:

If all objects are given, then thereby are all possible atomic facts also given. (1921:2.0124)

Every thing is, as it were, in a space of possible atomic facts. (1921:2.013)

In similar manner to the interpretation just noted, Wittgenstein here might be taken to be suggesting that all an atomic fact has to be to be a genuine atomic fact is be possible, thus again implying that merely possible, that is, non-existent, atomic facts are still genuine atomic facts, and hence that atomic facts need not exist to be genuine atomic facts.

In his "A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'" Black identifies the root issue here as one concerning two incompatible interpretations of just what is a Sachverhalt: according to one view, which Black designates the 'P-theory', a Sachverhalt would be "regarded as a certain sort of possibility"; according to the other, the 'F-theory', a Sachverhalt is "intended to be a fact" (where 'fact' carries with it the usual full ontological status). These two theories of the nature of a Sachverhalt are reflected in the two English translations of the Tractatus. The O&R translation seems to accept the F-theory such that a genuine Sachverhalt is a (full-fledged ontological) fact, and in accordance with this translates 'Sachverhalt' as 'atomic fact'. The P&M translation, on the other hand, apparently leans towards the P-theory such that a genuine Sachverhalt need only be possible,
it need not be actual, and in accordance with this translates ‘Sachverhalt’ as the less ontologically loaded ‘state of affairs’.  

Black acknowledges that Wittgenstein's use of existential and modal modifiers with respect to Sachverhalte constitute arguments in favour of the P-theory: “it is hard to think of a fact as . . . not existing”; “One is inclined to say that a merely ‘possible’ fact is not yet a fact”. (both 1964:43) However, as Black points out, such usage is hardly conclusive: on the contrary, talk of possible atomic facts may more reasonably be taken simply to be talk of the possibility of atomic facts, not of non-actual, that is, non-existent, but possible atomic facts which are themselves entities. Evidence in favour of this latter interpretation, that is, the F-theory, is found both within and without the Tractatus. Regarding internal evidence, Black relevantly asks, “If Sachverhalte were mere possibilities, how could Wittgenstein say that what is essential to an object is that it can occur in a Sachverhalt (2.012, 2.0121b, 2.0123a, 2.0141)? On the P-theory, Wittgenstein would surely be committed to saying that an object must occur in all the Sachverhalte of which it is a constituent.” (1964:42) Another point in this regard arises from combining Tractatus 2.0271 and 2.0272. In 2.0271, after asserting that objects are fixed and existent Wittgenstein states, “the configuration [of the objects] is the changing, the variable”, in 2.0272 adding, “The configuration of the objects forms the atomic fact”; from these it follows that atomic facts are changeable, variable, something which possibilities are not. Regarding external evidence for the F-theory, Black points out, “Wittgenstein himself allowed ‘atomic fact’ to stand in the revised edition (1933) as well as in the original English edition, both of which he had an opportunity to correct. It is implausible to suppose he did not understand the difference between making Sachverhalt stand for a fact and making it stand for a possibility, or that his knowledge of English was unequal to the task of making the appropriate corrections.”(1964:41) Further external evidence in favour of the F-theory is found in a letter written by Wittgenstein to Russell after completion of the Tractatus but prior to its publication. In response to a query of Russell’s Wittgenstein writes, “Sachverhalt is, what corresponds to an Elementarsatz [elementary proposition] if it is true.”(1979:130) This response employs notions not yet covered in this chapter—such as elementary propositions and truth—but its general thrust is clear: correspondence to Sachverhalte is what makes (certain) propositions true, and what makes propositions true is correspondence to facts, not merely to possibilities (otherwise every proposition describing a possible state of affairs would be true). In other words, Sachverhalte are contingent, and hence some potential Sachverhalte are likely to remain unrealised. Such occurrences are liable to be described as non-existent or merely possible Sachverhalte, but as such

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8 Just how consciously aware of this point P&M are is, however, debatable; for example, Raymond Bradley suggests, “neither Pears nor McGuinness seems to have noted the fact” that their translation facilitates discovery of (what he considers to be) the possibilist (as opposed to actualist) underpinnings of the Tractatus.(1992:xx)
they are not really genuine Sachverhalte at all, but are simply referred to in these ways as a manner of speaking. As a result, the O&R translation of ‘Sachverhalt’ as ‘atomic fact’ best captures the inherent ontological status of such entities.

However, that said, it remains that Wittgenstein does often makes references to possibilities qua possibilities, and some terminology in that regard would be useful. In the Tractatus in addition to Sachverhalte Wittgenstein also discusses Sachlagen, which O&R translate as ‘states of affairs’ (and P&M as ‘situations’). Sachlagen are clearly somewhat akin to Sachverhalte: indeed, the two sometimes are presented as virtually interchangeable. For example, at 2.0121 Wittgenstein asserts in the first paragraph,

It would, so to speak, appear as an accident, when to a thing that could exist alone on its own account, subsequently a state of affairs [Sachlage] could be made to fit[,] and then in the second paragraph smoothly shifts into the alternate elaboration,

If things can occur in atomic facts [Sachverhalten], this possibility must already lie in them[,] thus seemingly suggesting that Sachlagen and Sachverhalten are equivalent. In similar fashion, in 2.014 Wittgenstein asserts,

Objects contain the possibiiity of all states of affairs [Sachlagen][,] and then in 2.0141, which is a comment on 2.014, he adds,

The possibility of its occurrences in atomic facts [Sachverhalten] is the form of the object[,] thus again seemingly equating Sachlagen with Sachverhalten. Given the above determination that Wittgenstein’s Sachverhalte are full-fledged ontological entities, this seems to suggest that Sachlagen would be also. However, in other places Wittgenstein seems to identify Sachlagen, not with Sachverhalten proper, that is, with genuine Sachverhalten understood as existent atomic facts, but rather with Sachverhalten in the looser sense of all possible atomic facts, whether or not they exist. This latter case arises, for example, when Wittgenstein moves discussion beyond ontology and into representation (which is discussed in depth in the next section). At 2.11, for example, he comments,

The picture presents the [Sachlage] in logical space, the existence and non-existence of [Sachverhalten]. Here Wittgenstein expressly identifies Sachlagen, not simply with genuine existent Sachverhalten, but rather with all Sachverhalten, whether or not they exist; in other words, Sachlagen are here identified, not with facts, but rather with possibilities. In similar fashion, at 2.202 he remarks,

The picture represents a possible [Sachlage] in logical space.

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9 This conclusion is also Black’s: “There are (timelessly) objects—and (contingently) [atomic] facts”.(1964:45)
But pictures do not only represent facts, for if they did they would all be true; rather, pictures represent possibilities, and hence can be either true or false depending upon whether or not the possibility pictured is the case. Given this broader usage by Wittgenstein of the term ‘Sachlage’ to mean ‘possibility’ rather than ‘fact’, in the present work the term is translated by the phrase ‘state of affairs’ in order to convey this notion of possibility per se, whether or not it is realised. To summarise, then, Sachverhalte are here interpreted to be atomic facts, which are entities which have full ontological status, whereas Sachlagen are here interpreted to be states of affairs, which are possibilities, and hence which need not exist. However, as noted, Wittgenstein’s occasional usage of existential and modal quantifiers with respect to Sachverhalte sometimes blurs this distinction.

To return now to the topic of the relation between objects and atomic facts, crucial for the purposes of the present work is Wittgenstein’s view of what it is that determines which objects have the capability of combining with which. According to him, what possibility of combination an object has is part of that object’s very nature:

In logic nothing is accidental: if a thing can occur in an atomic fact the possibility of that atomic fact must already be prejudged in the thing. (1921:2.012)

Moreover, not only must this possibility be “prejudged in”, or written into the nature of, the object, it must have always been there:

If things can occur in atomic facts, this possibility must already lie in them.

(1921:2.0121)10

Wittgenstein calls an object’s ability to enter into combinations with other objects its “form”:

The possibility of its occurrence in atomic facts is the form of the object.

(1921:2.0141)

He then explicates the notion of the form of an object via the metaphor of space—an object’s form can be conceived as a sort of grid or space of possibilities:

Every thing is, as it were, in a space of possible atomic facts. I can think of this space as empty, but not of the thing without the space. (1921:2.013)

On the one hand Wittgenstein’s remark, “[I can] not [think] of the thing without the space”, serves to reaffirm that objects necessarily are capable of combining with other objects. On the other hand, his remark, “I can think of this space as empty”, serves to reaffirm that an object might fail to be a part of any existent atomic fact.

Given that objects are the substance of the world, one might reasonably conclude that the forms of objects collectively constitute the form of the world. As it turns out, this is (more or less) what Wittgenstein says. He first asserts that all worlds, both real and imagined, must share the same form:

10 Or, as per the P&M translation, this possibility “must be in them from the beginning”.

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It is clear that however different from the real one an imagined world may be, it must have something—a form—in common with the real world. (1921:2.022)

He then goes on to explain just what constitutes this common form:

This fixed form consists of the objects. (1921:2.023)

Wittgenstein is thus committed to the position that all worlds, whether actual or merely possible, have the same fixed form, which is to say that they all consist of the same set of objects, regardless of what facts there are in those worlds. Given that he has already committed himself to objects, as the substance of the world, being independent of what is the case, this extended view of objects as the form of all possible worlds brings with it no new commitments; rather, both the real (that is, the actual) world and all imagined (that is, possible) worlds are alike in that any of them can contain (existent) objects which are not part of any (existent) atomic facts of that world.

When objects do combine to form atomic facts, they do so in a determinate manner:

In the atomic fact the objects are combined in a definite way. (1921:2.031)

The way in which objects hang together in the atomic fact is the structure of the atomic fact. (1921:2.032)

Another way of putting Wittgenstein's point here is to say that an atomic fact is not a mere agglomeration of objects; on the contrary, the objects comprising an atomic fact are arranged. This stipulation once again calls Plato to mind, for, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, much of Plato's progress on the problem of negation stems from his insight into how arrangement is the key to resolving the problem of the one and the many, and hence into just how it is that something can be a whole of parts. Wittgenstein's basic complexes are just such entities, for while they have parts, that is, objects, they are not merely the aggregate of, that is, the class of those parts; rather, those parts are properly arranged, they are "combined in a definite way".

Each timeless object is in a space of determinate possible atomic facts, or states of affairs. Some of these states of affairs exist, or are atomic facts proper. But what is to be made of those states of affairs which do not exist, or, put another way, what is to be made of merely possible atomic facts, or, more generally, of states of affairs per se? More precisely, what exactly is their ontological status? Are they something or nothing? Despite its obvious central importance, this question does not receive attention in the Tractatus, and as such similarly is not further pursued at this point. It does, however, receive considerable attention in the next chapter of the present work. Also receiving further attention below is the matter of the existence of objects, and the implications of existent objects not needing to be parts of existent facts. At this point, however, attention is turned to consideration of Wittgenstein's views on language, and specifically of his "picture" theory of representation.
§6.3: Wittgenstein on Language: Pictures, Propositions, and Sense

Wittgenstein’s views on language are an extension of his views on representation, or, more specifically, on picturing. After the opening series of ontological remarks discussed above, Wittgenstein moves on to a new series discussing picturing, opening.

We make to ourselves pictures of facts.(1921:2.1)

He next identifies what it is that a picture does:

The picture presents the facts\(^{11}\) in logical space, the existence and non-existence of atomic facts.(1921:2.11)

The picture is a model of reality.(1921:2.12)

The picture represents a possible state of affairs in logical space.(1921:2.202)

In these remarks pictures are explained in terms of several of the notions discussed in the last section —facts, atomic facts, states of affairs, and logical space.

Wittgenstein next distinguishes how pictures work. The first step is to relate the elements of pictures to the elements of reality:

To the objects correspond in the picture the elements of the picture.(1921:2.13)

The elements of the picture stand, in the picture, for the objects.(1921:2.131)

And just as states of affairs are not mere agglomerations of objects, but rather consist of objects arranged in a determinate manner,\(^{12}\) so too it is with pictures:

The picture consists in the fact that its elements are combined with one another in a definite way.(1921:2.14)

A picture represents a state of affairs because the manner of the connection of its elements represents the manner of the connection of the elements of that state of affairs:

That the elements of the picture are combined with one another in a definite way, represents that the things are so combined with one another.(1921:2.15)

Thus, as Wittgenstein sets matters up, pictures are structurally parallel to, that is, isomorphic with, states of affairs.

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\(^{11}\) The term Wittgenstein here uses is ‘Sachlage’, which, as previously noted, is translated elsewhere by O&R as ‘state of affairs’, but here as ‘facts’, presumably following #2.1. However, ‘state of affairs’ would be better here, for as Wittgenstein himself further remarks, one pictures to oneself not just (existent) facts, but rather “the existence and non-existence of atomic facts”, that is, all possible atomic facts, that is, states of affairs in general.

\(^{12}\) Here and elsewhere appropriate attributes of atomic facts are carried over to states of affairs, for given that atomic facts are, in a certain sense, a subset of states of affairs (for atomic facts are existent states of affairs) it follows that states of affairs need to embody certain of the attributes previously ascribed to atomic facts.

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In her book on the *Tractatus* Anscombe offers an important general observation regarding pictures: “while a picture may be said to *shew* how things are, *if* there is something it is a correct representation of, it certainly does not *say* that that is how things are”(1967:65). In other words, pictures are purely descriptive; they represent a state of affairs, but they neither affirm nor deny the existence of that state of affairs. Consequently, like the states of affairs they describe, pictures are, as it were, always “positive”.

Assertive force, affirmation and denial, enter the scene only via Wittgenstein’s move beyond pictures and on to propositions. He introduces propositions via the intermediate notion of thoughts: “The logical picture of the facts is the thought”(1921:3). As discussed in Chapter Three, in his dialogue *Sophist* Plato closely associates thought with the notion of speech: “thought and speech are the same; except the one within, a dialogue of the soul with itself without sound, this itself has come to be given by us the name, ‘thought’ . . . . But the stream flowing from [the soul] through the mouth with voice has been called ‘speech’”(*Sophist* 263e3-8). In similar fashion Wittgenstein moves on to associate thought with the notion of the proposition, and to assert that propositions convey what thoughts contain:

In the proposition the thought is expressed perceptibly through the senses.

(1921:3.1)

We use the sensibly perceptible sign (sound or written sign, etc.) of the proposition as a projection of the possible state of affairs.(1921:3.11)

After next introducing the related notion of the propositional sign (“The sign through which we express the thought I call the propositional sign”(1921:3.12)), Wittgenstein then reaffirms the significance of arrangement:

The propositional sign consists in the fact that its elements, the words, are combined in it in a definite way.(1921:3.14)

The proposition is not a mixture of words (just as the musical theme is not a mixture of tones).

The proposition is articulate.(both 1921:3.141)

The point here is clear: a complex, whether a state of affairs, a picture, or a proposition, is more than just its parts lumped together.

At this point Wittgenstein takes a step back and discusses what sorts of constituents are involved in propositions. As discussed in the last chapter, in his lectures Russell’s fundamental unit of language is the name, a symbol which stands for a simple ontological entity: “A name can just name a particular, or, if it does not, it is not a name at all, it is a noise. It cannot be a name without having just that one particular relation of naming a certain thing”(Russell 1918:187). In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein adopts a somewhat similar approach with respect to the representation
of his own ontological elements:

   The simple signs employed in propositions are called names. (1921:3.202)

He then assigns semantic values to names by asserting,

   The name means the object. The object is its meaning. (1921:3.203)

Names are thus the linguistic counterparts of, or correlates to, objects. As objects are ontologically irreducible, their linguistic counterparts go as far as one can in capturing objects through language:

   Objects I can only name. Signs represent them. I can only speak of them. I cannot assert them. A proposition can only say how a thing is, not what it is. (1921:3.221)

In comparable fashion, names are irreducible, they cannot be further analysed in terms of some more basic component. Consequently, a name cannot itself be given a further linguistic analysis:

   The name cannot be analysed further by any definition. It is a primitive sign. (1921:3.26)

   Names cannot be taken to pieces by definition (1921:3.261).

Objects are ontologically simple primitives; so too, names are linguistically simple primitives. Objects combine in a definite way to form facts; so too, names combine in a definite way to form propositions.

§6.3.1: Bedeutung, Sinn, and Frege

   On first impression one might presuppose a certain symmetry in the Tractatus. Ontological simples, objects, have representational correlates, names, and objects are the meanings of their names. One might thus expect that in comparable fashion the representational correlates of states of affairs, propositions, would be something akin to names, and hence that state of affairs would be the meanings of their propositions. However, matters are not that simple, for while objects qua objects always exist, and hence are always there to serve as the meanings of their names, states of affairs qua states of affairs do not always exist, and hence would not always be there to serve as the meanings of their propositions. It is such reasoning that underlies Wittgenstein's association of propositions, not with the notion of meaning (Bedeutung), but rather with the notion of sense (Sinn):

   (Names resemble points; propositions resemble arrows, they have sense.) (1921:3.144)

   Only the proposition has sense (1921:3.3)

Moreover, by asserting, "propositions resemble arrows, they have sense", Wittgenstein hints at a prime difference between pictures and propositions. A picture, to requote Anscombe, "may be said to shew how things are, if there is something it is a correct representation of, it certainly does not say that that is how things are"; the proposition, on the other hand, goes beyond the picture, for.

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13 The notion of meaning is discussed in the next section.
The proposition shows how things stand, if it is true. And it says, that they do so stand.(1921:4.022)

Propositions thus not only show how things might be, they also assert that they are so; as Anscombe observes in this regard, "A picture is not an assertion that something like it is to be found somewhere in the world, whereas in a proposition something is said to be the case."(1967:64-65) As such, while propositions are sensibly perceptible expressions of thoughts, they are not merely such expressions, for where thoughts simply picture, propositions assert.

As comes out below, the notion of propositions having sense comes to play a central role in Wittgenstein’s Tractatus account of negative language. Unfortunately, however, in the Tractatus he does not explain what he means by ‘sense’, apparently presuming that his readers will be familiar with the notion as it is introduced by his (and Russell’s) important and influential predecessor, Gottlob Frege. As such, further discussion of Wittgenstein’s views here requires a digression to cover presupposed background.

In his Author’s Preface to the Tractatus Wittgenstein specifically remarks that he is “indebted to Frege’s great works”, a debt which is confirmed by respectful references to Frege throughout the body of the text as well. The notion of sense receives its principal expression in Frege’s monumental 1892 paper “On Sense and Reference” (“Über Sinn und Bedeutung”). This paper takes its start from consideration of the challenging question of how it is that identity statements can genuinely be informative. As Frege there points out,

statements of the form $a=b$ often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge and cannot always be established a priori. The discovery that the rising sun is not new every morning, but always the same, was one of the most fertile astronomical discoveries.(1892:56)

But of what sort are $a$ and $b$ to be taken to be? Frege points out that identity statements are problematic whether $a$ and $b$ are taken to be objects (for if objects differ then they cannot be identical) or they are taken to be names or signs of objects (for names are arbitrarily assigned). How, then, is one to account for a statement of the form $a=b$ as a genuinely informative contribution to knowledge?

\[14\] A remark notable not least because, while Wittgenstein specifically acknowledges Frege’s “great works”, he refers only to Russell’s “writings”, without offering any similar sort of exemplary qualification.

\[15\] Michael Dummett observes, “Doubtless many philosophers unnamed by Wittgenstein can be shown to have given him ideas. Others, to whom he does refer, provided him with material that he found interesting to reflect or comment on: but Frege is very nearly the only one whom he quotes with approval.”(1981:31)
Frege's own proposal regarding this difficulty builds upon his observation, "A difference [in the cognitive value of \( a = a \) and \( a = b \)] can arise only if the difference between the signs corresponds to a difference in the mode of presentation of that which is designated." (1892:57)

He illustrates his insight on this matter with the following scenario:

Let \( a, b, c \) be the lines connecting the vertices of a triangle with the midpoints of the opposite sides. The point of intersection of \( a \) and \( b \) is then the same as the point of intersection of \( b \) and \( c \). So we have different designations for the same point, and these names ('point of intersection of \( a \) and \( b \)', 'point of intersection of \( b \) and \( c \)') likewise indicate the mode of presentation; and hence the statement ['the point of intersection of \( a \) and \( b \) = the point of intersection of \( b \) and \( c \)'] contains actual knowledge. (1892:57)

With this illustration in place Frege is now in position to propose his own contribution to this matter, the notion of sense:

It is natural, now, to think of there being connected with a sign (name, combination of words, letter), besides that to which the sign refers, which may be called the reference of the sign, also what I should like to call the sense of the sign, wherein the mode of presentation is contained. In our example, accordingly, the reference of the expressions 'the point of intersection of \( a \) and \( b \)' and 'the point of intersection of \( b \) and \( c \)' would be the same, but not their senses. (1892:57)

After later adding the notion of the idea, a subjective entity which is "an internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions . . . and acts, both internal and external", Frege sums up by remarking,

The reference of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by its means; the idea, which we have in that case, is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself. (1892:60)

A sense, then, is not the same as either a sign or an object, but is some third, intermediate notion, objective (for it "may be the common property of many [people]"), but "yet not the object [or reference] itself". Indeed, according to Frege a sense need not even have a corresponding reference: "The words 'the celestial body most distant from the Earth' have a sense, but it is very doubtful if they also have a reference. The expression 'the least rapidly convergent series' has a sense but demonstrably has no reference, since for every given convergent series, another convergent, but less rapidly convergent, series can be found. In grasping a sense, one is not certainly assured of a reference." (1892:58)
Frege next takes this sign-sense-reference trichotomy for words (whether single or in combination) and applies it to sentences. Taking as his focus the notion of thoughts (where by a thought he understands “not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers”(1892:62n*)), he asks, “Is this thought, now, to be regarded as [a sentence’s] sense or its reference?”(1892:62). His answer in this regard hinges upon reasoning involving the effects of appropriate substitution:

Let us assume for the time being that the sentence has reference. If we now replace one word of the sentence by another having the same reference, but a different sense, this can have no bearing upon the reference of the sentence. Yet we can see that in such a case the thought changes; since, e.g., the thought in the sentence ‘The morning star is a body illuminated by the Sun’ differs from that in the sentence ‘The evening star is a body illuminated by the Sun.’ Anybody who did not know that the evening star is the morning star might hold the one thought to be true, the other false. The thought, accordingly, cannot be the reference of the sentence, but must rather be considered as the sense.(1892:62)

The thought contained by a sentence, then, constitutes the sense of that sentence.

But what about the reference of a sentence? As Frege asks, “Is it possible that a sentence as a whole has only a sense, but no reference?”(1892:62) Not all names have references; so too, he admits, not all sentences need have references:

one might expect that [sentences with sense but no reference] occur, just as there are parts of sentences having sense but no reference. And sentences which contain proper names without reference will be of this kind. The sentence ‘Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep’ obviously has a sense. But since it is doubtful whether the name ‘Odysseus,’ occurring therein, has reference, it is also doubtful whether the whole sentence has one. (1892:62)

But not all cases are like this, for in the cases of purported statements of fact one expects a reference. Why is the sense of a sentence, the thought expressed by the sentence, not in itself enough? “Because, and to the extent that, we are concerned with its truth value. . . . It is the striving for truth that drives us always to advance from the sense to the reference.”(1892:63) This role of truth not only governs that a sentence has a reference, it itself becomes the reference of a sentence:

We are therefore driven into accepting the truth value of a sentence as constituting its reference. . . . Every declarative sentence concerned with the reference of its words is therefore to be regarded as a proper name, and its reference, if it has one, is either the True or the False. These two objects are recognized, if only implicitly, by everybody who judges something to be true (1892:63).
Thus in his treatment of sentences Frege offers two points which warrant particular attention: first, despite Plato’s ancient but essential distinction between words and statements, according to Frege declarative sentences are themselves to be regarded as proper names; and second, Frege’s world of objects includes the True and the False.

The overall system put forth by Frege is striking in its uniformity. All language, be it name (e.g., ‘Frege’, ‘Odysseus’), definite description (e.g., ‘the point of intersection of a and b’, ‘the celestial body most distant from the Earth’), or declarative sentence (e.g., ‘the morning star is a body illuminated by the Sun’, ‘Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep’), necessarily expresses a sense (Sinn) and contingently does or does not stand for some object which would be its reference (Bedeutung); thus, in this regard Frege draws no distinction between simple and complex language. But while the elegance of this comprehensive across-the-board treatment is apparent, its adequacy certainly is not, for questions can be raised regarding each level of its operation.16

The first question concerns Frege’s view that even logically proper names, that is, names attached to logical simples, have Sinn. It is perhaps intuitively agreeable at least to consider the notion of Sinn with respect to complex language, such as combinations of words or sentences, and it is noticeable that all of Frege’s examples of language with Sinn come from these two categories. But just what would be the Sinn of simple language, of individual words, over and above their Bedeutung, given that such Sinn would themselves presumably also have to be simple? According to Frege’s system it is meaningful to assert that ‘a = b’ even if ‘a’ and ‘b’ are single words which are proper names; but if these names are not truncated descriptions, but rather genuinely are single words with simple Sinn, it is not at all clear how they can differ in Sinn and yet still be identical. The notion of a simple Sinn distinct from a simple Bedeutung requires considerable elaboration before it can even approach being considered acceptable.

A challenge to Frege’s distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung with respect to combinations of words is put forward by Russell in his 1905 paper “On Denoting”. Russell centres his discussion on “cases in which the [Bedeutung] appears to be absent.

If we say ‘the King of England is bald’, that is, it would seem, not a statement about the complex [Sinn] ‘the King of England’, but about the actual man denoted by the [Sinn]. But now consider ‘the King of France is bald’. By parity of form, this

16 One point regarding what follows. Different translators and authors often use different translations of Sinn and of Bedeutung. For example, Geach and Black translate Frege’s use of Sinn as ‘sense’, as do O&R with Wittgenstein’s use of the term, but Russell translates Sinn as ‘meaning’; moreover, Geach and Black translate Frege’s use of Bedeutung as ‘reference’, while Russell translates it as ‘denotation’, and O&R translate Wittgenstein’s use of Bedeutung as ‘meaning’, the same word Russell uses for Sinn. In order to keep terminology straight, in the following discussion the original German terms are employed, including their substitution into quotes.
also ought to be about the \([\textit{Bedeutung}]\) of the phrase ‘the King of France’\). But this phrase, though it has a \([\textit{Sinn}]\) provided ‘the King of England’ has a \([\textit{Sinn}]\), has certainly no \([\textit{Bedeutung}]\), at least in any obvious sense. Hence one would suppose that ‘the King of France is bald’ ought to be nonsense; but it is not nonsense, since it is plainly false. (1905b:46)

Now one thing which is clear here is that much of Russell’s objection rides upon his own prejudices rather than upon inconsistencies in Frege’s own exposition, for at least two of Russell’s premises are debatable. First, Russell claims that since the phrase ‘the King of France’ lacks \textit{Bedeutung} one would suppose that the proposition ‘the King of France is bald’ “ought to be nonsense”; but why ought it to be so? Frege asserts that such a sentence has \textit{Sinn}, it has sense, it just lacks a \textit{Bedeutung}; there is nothing incoherent about such a position unless one imposes the requirement that all genuine declarative sentences must have a \textit{Bedeutung}. But there is no apparent reason why one is justified in imposing such a requirement, and hence this does not constitute a disproof of Frege’s system, but rather only an objection to it. Second, Russell claims that the proposition ‘the King of France is bald’ “is plainly false”; but, again, why ought it to be so? Frege holds that such sentences lack a truth value, and there is nothing incoherent about this view unless one imposes the requirement that all genuine declarative statements must have a truth value. But there is also no apparent reason why one is justified in imposing this requirement, and hence Russell’s claim that the proposition in question is false again involves aesthetic rather than logical grounds.\(^\text{17}\)

Russell is clearly unhappy with Frege’s attribution of \textit{Sinn} to phrases which lack \textit{Bedeutung}, and so he proposes an entirely different way of handling such phrases, his famous theory of definite descriptions. Rather than handle phrases which lack \textit{Bedeutung} differently than phrases which have it, he puts forward a unified treatment of such phrases which translates them in such a way that the result both always has a truth value and does not refer to the questionable referent. Key to Russell’s treatment is his assumption that propositions involving denoting phrases implicitly affirm the existence of the assumed \textit{Bedeutung} of the phrase, and it is by making this implicit affirmation explicit that he proposes to resolve matters:

Take as an instance ‘the father of Charles II was executed’. This asserts that there was an \(x\) who was the father of Charles II and was executed. . . . Thus ‘the father of Charles II was executed’ becomes: ‘It is not always false of \(x\) that \(x\) begat Charles II

\(^{17}\) Later in his paper Russell provides another, more technical objection to Frege’s system, there arguing, “The relation of the \([\textit{Sinn}]\) to the \([\textit{Bedeutung}]\) involves certain rather curious difficulties, which seem in themselves sufficient to prove that the theory which leads to such difficulties must be wrong.” (1905b:48) This argument of Russell’s has generated enormous literature, not just concerning whether it is successful, but also concerning how it is to be understood, for it is in places notoriously difficult to interpret. Rather than devote considerable space to unravelling a murky matter unessential to the purposes of the present work, this topic is not here further discussed.
Russell observes in favour of his theory, "The above gives a reduction of all propositions in which denoting phrases occur to forms in which no such phrases occur." (1905:45) By handling matters as he does Russell thus avoids a need for denoting phrases to have Sinn, providing instead a theory which effectively eliminates such phrases in favour of a series of quantified statements which will yield definite truth values depending upon the arguments available to fulfil them. Russell's theory does not refute Frege's Sinn / Bedeutung distinction, but it does provide a viable, if not superior, alternative to it.

Frege's postulation of the True and the False as objects in order to complete the symmetry of his system by providing Bedeutung for sentences is contentious on the ground that it is rather ad hoc. He himself observes in this regard,

If now the truth value of a sentence is its [Bedeutung], then on the one hand all true sentences have the same [Bedeutung] and so, on the other hand, do all false sentences. From this we see that in the reference of the sentence all that is specific is obliterated.(1892:65)

In this way the Bedeutung of sentences clearly differs greatly from the Bedeutung of words and phrases, for the Bedeutung of the latter two will clearly differ from case to case, whereas, as Frege himself points out, "all true sentences have the same [Bedeutung] and so . . . do all false sentences". It is easy to see why one might well be reluctant to follow him in this and look for another way of handling these matters by, if not rejecting his Sinn/Bedeutung distinction, then at least significantly modifying it.

This is just what Wittgenstein does. He does not follow Russell in rejecting Sinn altogether, but neither does he follow Frege in allowing the same sorts of linguistic units to have both Sinn and Bedeutung; rather, he redirects these notions each to their own applicable area. Wittgenstein's own

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18 This is actually an edited version of Russell's position, for Russell also discusses how to capture the notion of uniqueness inherent in the usage of the word 'the', an aspect irrelevant for present purposes. His further remarks run as follows: "Now the, when it is strictly used, involves uniqueness . . . . Thus when we say 'x was the father of Charles II' we not only assert that x had a certain relation to Charles II, but also that nothing else had this relation. . . . To get an equivalent of 'x was the father of Charles II', we must add, 'If y is other than x, y did not beget Charles II', or, what is equivalent, 'If y begat Charles II, y is identical with x'. Hence 'x is the father of Charles II' becomes: 'x begat Charles II; and 'if y begat Charles II, y is identical with x' is always true of y'.

Thus 'the father of Charles II was executed' becomes: 'It is not always false of x that x begat Charles II and that x was executed and that "if y begat Charles II, y is identical with x" is always true of y'. (1905:44)

19 Strictly speaking, Russell does not reject Sinn, but he does reject a distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung, which essentially amounts to the same thing.
position builds upon his rejection of Frege’s reduction of all language simply to names without regard for its simplicity or complexity. As discussed in Part I of the present work, it is just such a reduction which underlies the difficulty of negative language inherent in the soft-core Parmenidean/earlier Platonic conception of the relation between language and ontology: names which lack referents name nothing, and hence fail to be significant. Plato eventually resolves this difficulty by distinguishing between simple representations, names, and complex representations, statements, with the latter functioning in an entirely different manner than their simpler “counterparts”. Frege chooses to return to lumping simple and complex representations together under the heading of “names”, and then protects himself from reference failure by the introduction of *Sinn*, for every name has a corresponding *Sinn* even if it lacks a *Bedeutung*. But Wittgenstein rejects the notion that all representations are names, instead clearly distinguishing between names and propositions (and, although he says nothing explicit in this regard, apparently accepting Russell’s theory of definite descriptions with respect to denoting phrases). A propositional sign is a complex which has a determinate structure which a name lacks; a proposition is not simply “a mixture of words”, it is structured, it is “articulate” (1921:3.141); a name is neither of these. Consequently, propositions and names must be differentiated. However, while Wittgenstein thus contradicts Frege on this point, he lets his predecessor off the hook rather gently concerning it:

That the propositional sign is a fact is concealed by the ordinary form of expression, written or printed.

(For in the printed proposition, for example, the sign of a proposition does not appear essentially different from a word. Thus it was possible for Frege to call the proposition a compounded name.) (both 1921:3.143)

Further elucidation is provided in 3.1432, in which Wittgenstein emphasises that complex signs are to be understood in terms of the relations between their components rather than as a whole:

We must not say, “The complex sign ‘aRb’ says ‘a stands in relation R to b’ ”; but we must say, ‘That ‘a’ stands in a certain relation to ‘b’ says that aRb’”.

(1921:3.1432)

In other words, the complex sign, or proposition, ‘aRb’ is not a “compounded name”, but rather is itself a fact involving a relation between names.

Wittgenstein thus differentiates between names and propositions. As noted above, while he retains Frege’s distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, he employs this distinction in a manner different from that of Frege, choosing to divide the two just as he divides Fregean names into the two categories of names and propositions. For Wittgenstein, only names have *Bedeutung*, and only propositions have *Sinn*. As a result, the position he puts forth, while owing much to Frege’s work, differs greatly from it, and in significant respects. Wittgenstein avoids the problem of what it is for
a simple proper name to have \textit{Sinn}, for his names have only \textit{Bedeutung}. He also avoids, if not the problem, then at least the embarrassment of postulating the True and the False to serve as \textit{Bedeutung} for propositions, for his propositions only have \textit{Sinn}. In effect, Wittgenstein seems to have kept the best parts of Frege's theory and weeded out the lesser aspects, thus leaving himself with a position which is significantly more defensible than that initially proposed by his predecessor.

But while Wittgenstein thus avoids some of the difficulties associated with Frege's view, he is still open to a very large ontological one: what exactly is the ontological status of \textit{Sinn}? Wittgenstein closely associates \textit{Sinn} with states of affairs. This association is brought out first with respect to pictures, for Wittgenstein asserts both,

The picture represents a possible state of affairs in logical space.\textit{(1921:2.202)}

and

What the picture represents is its \textit{[Sinn]}.\textit{(1921:2.221)},

thus seemingly equating a possible state of affairs with a \textit{Sinn}. He subsequently makes a similar association with respect to propositions, for he later remarks,

One can say, instead of, This proposition has such and such a \textit{[Sinn]}, This proposition represents such and such a state of affairs.\textit{(1921:4.031)},

thus again tying together states of affairs and \textit{Sinn}. However, this association, while clearly relevant, hardly serves to resolve matters, for, as noted, while some states of affairs exist others do not, and this failure to exist in no way precludes them from being represented by propositions with \textit{Sinn}. Also, what exactly is the ontological status of \textit{Bedeutung}? Objects are the \textit{Bedeutung} of names, and Wittgenstein does say that objects exist, but, again, what is one to make of such existence given that objects need not be part of (existent) atomic facts? All in all, Wittgenstein's usage of these terms raises more ontological questions than it resolves.

The ontological issues just discussed follow when the \textit{Tractatus} is read in a certain way, which is to assume that Wittgenstein begins (at least logically) with ontology, not with language. Norman Malcolm, for example, makes this assumption in his book \textit{Nothing is Hidden}:

the form of the world, as conceived of in the \textit{Tractatus}, is not dependent on \textit{language} or on \textit{thinking}. I mean that the form of the world is not a creation of \textit{language} or \textit{thinking}, but indeed is \textit{presupposed} by \textit{language} and \textit{thinking}.\textit{(1986:3)}

Given Wittgenstein's remark, "This fixed form [of all worlds] consists of the objects"\textit{(2.023)}, it follows that, according to this line of thought, ontology, that is, objects (both individually and in combination) logically precede rather than follow language. Now the \textit{Tractatus} certainly \textit{can} be read in this way, and in fact ordinarily is. But such an approach faces a rather significant challenge.
On the one hand, objects constitute the form of the world. The form of the world constitutes all possible states of affairs, and language represents all possible states of affairs. Therefore, all objects are represented in language about the world. But on the other hand, as noted above, while objects must contain the possibility of combining with other objects to form atomic facts, they need not actually do so; whether or not an object is part of any atomic fact in the world is contingent, not necessary. In other words, Wittgenstein lacks an ontological principle such that existent objects must be components of existent facts. Consequently, all objects are represented in language about the world whether or not they are part of any facts of the world. But this means that genuine language can represent objects with which one cannot, even in principle, be acquainted (for no facts contain those objects), and if this is so, then the question arises, why ought one accept that there really “are” such objects in the world? If ontology is logically prior in Wittgenstein’s system then such a question seems unanswerable.

With this in mind some commentators contend instead that it is language and not ontology which is logically prior in the Tractatus. It is in this vein that in his paper “The So-called Realism of the Tractatus” Brian McGuinness offers an argument to the effect that Wittgenstein’s Tractatus is essentially a work in language and logic, and only derivatively in ontology. McGuinness certainly admits that from the outset the work appears to be ontological in nature:

On the face of it we have in Wittgenstein’s Tractatus the classic statement of a realist semantics. In his picture theory an explanation is given of how propositions have sense, i.e. are true or false, which immediately invokes ontological categories.

(1981:60)

But such an understanding of the Tractatus, he contends, mistakes appearance for reality. According to McGuinness, the answer to the question ‘what is Wittgenstein doing in the Tractatus?’ is, “he is doing logic and basing philosophy on it.”(1981:63). McGuinness observes, Wittgenstein “thinks and says that philosophy is not a science alongside the others, but is something over or beneath them. Yet occasionally he speaks of philosophy or logic as if it were a science with its own range of data or facts”(1981:63), and points out as an example of such an occasion Tractatus 2.0121, in which Wittgenstein asserts, “Logic treats of every possibility, and all possibilities are its facts.”(That this remark occurs as a comment on remark 2, “What is the case, the fact, is the existence of atomic facts”, shows just how strong an ontological tie one might read into the usage of the term ‘fact’ in 2.0121.) McGuinness continues on in this regard,

I want to say that there we have a transferred and strictly illegitimate use of the word “fact”, and that similarly the whole ontology [of the Tractatus] is a transferred and illegitimate use of words like bestehen. It is a kind of ontological myth that [Wittgenstein] wants to give us to show us the nature of language. As is well-known.
one of the chief results of the view of language so attained is the rejection of all such
myths. (1981: 63)

McGuinness thus contends that when one throws away the ladder after finally seeing the world
aright, part of what gets thrown away is the ontological "myth" constructed in the opening passages,
the myth of objects and atomic facts as basic ontological entities.

According to McGuinness, the fundamental supposition upon which Wittgenstein built
the *Tractatus* was his belief

that we could make statements knowing them to be either true or false whatever
the case in the world was. He therefore thought that we were committed to
the possibility of those propositions being expressed in such a form that all
the constituent signs used could function in that particular combination whatever
the case in the world was. They would therefore (those supposedly possible signs)
be possible constituents in propositions or possible contributors to producing a true
or false proposition, regardless of what was the case in the world. . . .

Such signs, I believe, were Wittgenstein’s names . . . (1981: 65)

In other words, according to McGuinness Wittgenstein believes that any well-formed proposition has
a truth-value, even if some of the objects picked out by the component names of that proposition are
not part of any fact in the world.

According to this view, then, Wittgenstein starts from meaningful, truth-valued language and
works his way back to ontology. Given such a view it is easy to see how questions about
the ontological status of objects (and of states of affairs) cannot even legitimately arise, for if a name
names, then it follows of necessity that there is a corresponding object. But is this reading of
the *Tractatus* correct? Aside from the extent to which it coheres with Wittgenstein’s text, one other
piece of evidence in its favour is available—his own later work. In his posthumously published book
*Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein offers remarks relevant to a wide range of topics
connected with the present work, topics covering the very adequacy of logical atomism as
a framework for the study of language, connections between the *Tractatus* and Plato’s *Theaetetus*,
and the nature of the existence of objects. These further remarks are now here considered.

§ 6.4: The Later Wittgenstein, Logical Atomism, and Socrates’s *Theaetetus* Dream Theory

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein does not draw connections between the views on ontology and
language he there puts forth and views on these topics discussed by Plato; however, in the years since
its publication a variety of parties have gone on to compare the two. Specifically, some writers have
associated aspects of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* remarks with the dream theory discussed by Socrates
in the last part of Plato’s *Theaetetus* (and discussed in the present work in § 2.4.1 above); this
association of the two works is now here considered.

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§6.4.1: Wittgenstein’s Tractatus and the Dream Theory

Connections between Wittgenstein’s Tractatus and Plato’s Theaetetus have been asserted both by various commentators and by Wittgenstein himself in his post-Tractatus writings. Of the former, perhaps the most famous, and one of the earliest to draw this connection, is Gilbert Ryle, whose linkage of the two works goes back as far as 1939. In the closing paragraph\(^{20}\) of a paper from that year titled “Plato’s Parmenides” Ryle associates what he considers to be some of the central concerns of Plato’s Theaetetus and Sophist with the work of a variety of modern philosophers, including Hume, Kant, and Russell, and then adds, these affinities apply perhaps most strongly of all to “nearly the whole of Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus”.(1939:144) But perhaps more significant in this regard is a famous paper Ryle delivered to the Oxford Philological Society in 1952, a paper which, although not published until long afterwards (1990, to be exact), has been mentioned or discussed in numerous works by other authors since shortly after its presentation.\(^{21}\) In this paper, “Logical Atomism in Plato’s Theaetetus”, Ryle explicitly ties Socrates’s dream theory to Wittgenstein, as well as (again) to other main thinkers:

What matters is (1) that Plato thought [the dream theory doctrine] worth discussing, (2) that it is worth discussing and (3) that the doctrine has quite recently been re-invented. In whole or in part, and without or with qualifications in principle, it is to be found in Meinong; in an early article by Moore; in Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein. It has been labelled “Logical Atomism”.(1990:29-30)

In the course of the development of his paper Ryle goes on to quote rather lengthy extracts from G.E. Moore’s 1899 paper “The Nature of Judgment”, Russell’s 1918 lectures “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”, and Wittgenstein’s Tractatus.

It is not difficult to see why one would associate Socrates’s dream theory with Wittgenstein’s Tractatus, for, as even a cursory examination reveals, there are certain basic similarities between the two positions. For example, with respect to basic ontological elements, the two thinkers assert,

Plato: each [primary element] itself by itself would be simple (Theaetetus 205c6-7)
Wittg.: The object is simple.(1921:2.02)

thus seemingly putting their fundamental units essentially on a par. In both cases their ontological compounds involve these simple ontological elements being combined in a particular manner:

Plato: just as the [elements] themselves have been woven together [to form compounds] (Theaetetus 202b2-3)

\(^{20}\) Not counting the Afterward added in 1963.

\(^{21}\) For a partial list of such references see the Foreward of the 1990 publication (21-22).
Wittg.: In the atomic fact objects hang one in another, like the members of a chain.
(1921:2.03)
The similarity between these remarks is also particularly close, for neither weaving nor interlinking
involve an additional component needed to tie together the connected elements.
The two thinkers are also along the same lines with respect to the relation between ontology
and language, both with respect to simples—
Plato: the primary elements . . . are such that they do not have an account. For each
itself by itself can only be named, but no other address [of it] is possible
(Theaetetus 201e1-4)
there is nothing with respect to [a primary element] other than only to be
named—for it only has a name (Theaetetus 202b1-2)
Wittg.: Objects I can only name. Signs represent them. I can only speak of them.
I cannot assert them. (1921:3.221)
and with respect to complexes—
Plato: the names of [the elements] having been woven together come to be
an account [of the compound] (Theaetetus 202b3-4)
Wittg.: The elementary proposition consists of names. It is a connexion,
a concatenation, of names. (1921:4.22)
Even from this brief examination, then, it is clear that there are strong similarities between some of
the fundamental aspects of the Theaetetus dream theory and the position proposed in the Tractatus.
However, while these rudimentary similarities certainly are present, it is important not to read
too much into the connection. Specifically, one ought not read the somewhat sketchy Tractatus
theory into the even more sketchy theory present in Socrates’s dream. As discussed in §2.4.1 above,
the dream theory is a “thoroughly indeterminate theory,” very much in need of fleshing out.
As Myles Burnyeat notes, the effect of efforts by Ryle and by Wittgenstein himself to associate
the two theories “was to create a powerful presumption that Plato’s concerns in [the last part] of
the Theaetetus have much in common with the Tractatus, and hence that the Tractatus can be used
to illuminate the Dream.” (1990:149-50) But while the first part of this presumption might be
correct, this is not enough to ensure that the last part is also. For his own part, after extensive
consideration of this vein Burnyeat is finally led to conclude:
The upshot of this examination of the comparison between the Dream and
the Tractatus is that the Dream is significantly more indeterminate than
the Tractatus. Like the Tractatus, the Dream gives no examples of elements, and in
addition, unlike the Tractatus, it offers no hint as to how they are to be reached. It is
indeterminate about methods of analysis, and correspondingly indeterminate about
how the elements are ‘woven together’ to form the complexes that analysis would unravel. Reflection on meaning is not excluded, but it is not at the forefront of attention as Wittgenstein and Ryle assume. Theirs is one way—a characteristically twentieth-century way—to make a theory out of the indeterminate schema that Plato provided. Other ways of filling in the indeterminacies will make other theories (1990:164).

As Burneyat thus points out, while Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* theory is one way to read Socrates’s dream theory, it is not the way to read it, for other readings are available. Consequently, while connections between the two works are there to be drawn, one must be careful not to make more of them than is warranted. Specifically, while the dream theory is in many ways compatible with logical atomism, it is, Ryle’s assertion aside, an unjustified stretch to see Plato as the implicit originator of the position.

§6.4.2: Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*, Logical Atomism, and the Dream Theory

The best discussion of the relation between Wittgenstein and Plato is found in Wittgenstein’s own posthumously published work *Philosophical Investigations*. The *Investigations* is closely related to his own earlier *Tractatus*; indeed, in the preface to the *Investigations* Wittgenstein remarks that having had occasion to reread the *Tractatus*, “It suddenly seemed to me that I should publish those old thoughts and the new ones together: that the latter could be seen in the right light only by contrast with and against the background of my old way of thinking.” (1968:viii) It is thus clearly his own belief that the doctrines of the *Tractatus* play a central role in the shaping of his later views. But what Wittgenstein’s attitude in the *Investigations* towards the logical atomism of the *Tractatus* is constitutes a matter of some debate: as G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker observe in the Introduction to their study *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, “At the grand-strategic level some have argued that the *Investigations* is a further development of the philosophy of the *Tractatus*, adding to and modifying, but by no means demolishing, the core of that work. Others have seen it as a wholly new departure, built upon the ashes of a magnificent failure. So its relation to its august predecessor, though crucial to its correct interpretation, is unclear.” (1980:1)

Given at least that there is a strong connection between his earlier and later works, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that Wittgenstein opens the *Investigations* by quoting a passage from Augustine’s *Confessions*, his summation of which reveals it to be highly Tractarian in its essentials: [Augustine’s] words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names.---In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with
the word. It is the object for which the word stands. (1968:§1)22

The similarities between Augustine’s views and those found in the Tractatus are obvious, for both the claim that words name objects—that objects are the meanings of names—and that sentences are combinations of names are central to the logical atomism propounded in that earlier work. But whereas in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein offers this view as an account of language in general, in his later work he sees it as incomplete, and hence inadequate for that ambitious task. As he puts matters in §3 of the *Investigations*, the Augustinian picture of language painted in §1 “does describe a system of communication”; however, he now realises,

not everything that we call language is this system. And one has to say this in many cases where the question arises “Is this an appropriate description or not?”

The answer is: “Yes, it is appropriate, but only for this narrowly circumscribed region, not for the whole of what you were claiming to describe.” (1968:§3)

In this way Wittgenstein raises his first main *Investigations* objection to his own earlier *Tractatus* position: logical atomism, even if considered as acceptable, is so only for a “narrowly circumscribed region” and not for “the whole of what [it was] claiming to describe”.

Now if this were the sum total of Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* criticism of logical atomism, then while this would be an important observation regarding language *per se*, it would have little impact on the present work, for this work is concerned specifically with language concerning matters of fact, and such language is indeed within the narrowly circumscribed region in which logical atomism is adequate. However, Wittgenstein’s goals in the *Investigations* go far beyond pointing out that the *Tractatus* view of language is insufficiently broad. In the early sections of the work this is indeed his main focus, for he there provides a preliminary survey of some of the regions of language not falling within the scope of his earlier view. But from there Wittgenstein smoothly shifts into a critique specifically of the logical atomism at the root of the earlier work, devoting the next series of sections (running roughly from §§37-64) to consideration of a range of topics relevant both to his own *Tractatus* views and, as he himself points out, Socrates’s *Theaetetus* dream theory. This series divides into three main parts: §§37-45, on logically proper names; §§46-59, on ontological simples; and §§60-64, on analysis. The issues Wittgenstein raises therein warrant serious attention in the present work, for if he successfully undermines logical atomism as a tenable position the implications for present purposes are many and profound.

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22 Citations from the *Investigations* are referenced via Wittgenstein’s own section numbers.
§6.4.2.1: Logically Proper Names (1968, §§37-45)

Wittgenstein opens discussion of logically proper names by asking, "What is the relation between name and thing named?" (1968: §37). After briefly considering the indexical "name" 'this', he next turns to a logical atomist objection one might make against "what is ordinarily called a name:

It can be put like this: a name ought really to signify a simple. And for this one might perhaps give the following reasons: The word "Excalibur", say, is a proper name in the ordinary sense. The sword Excalibur consists of parts combined in a particular way. If they are combined differently Excalibur does not exist. But it is clear that the sentence "Excalibur has a sharp blade" makes sense whether Excalibur is still whole or is broken up. But if "Excalibur" is the name of an object, this object no longer exists when Excalibur is broken in pieces; and as no object would then correspond to the name it would have no meaning. But then the sentence "Excalibur has a sharp blade" would contain a word that had no meaning, and hence the sentence would be nonsense. But it does make sense; so there must always be something corresponding to the words of which it consists. So the word "Excalibur" must disappear when the sense is analysed and its place be taken by words which name simples. It will be reasonable to call these words the real names. (1968: §39)

This objection thus distinguishes between "ordinary proper names", such as 'Excalibur', and "logically proper names". This distinction is necessary in order to accommodate the logical atomists' stipulated theses that the meaning of a (genuine) name is the object for which it stands and that if there is no corresponding object then a (pseudo) name has no meaning. 'Excalibur' stands for a complex, Excalibur, which consists of parts combined in a particular way. These parts can be broken up such that Excalibur no longer exists. But, Wittgenstein points out, the name 'Excalibur' does not lose its meaning under such circumstances. Consequently, according to the atomists' theses 'Excalibur' cannot be a genuine name. But this same situation applies, not just to 'Excalibur', but to the "name" of any complex; therefore, no complex can have a genuine name. It may have an ordinary proper name, but it cannot have a logically proper name. Only a non-complex, that is, a simple, can have one of those.

In §40 Wittgenstein immediately latches onto a key premise of this objection, beginning, "Let us first discuss this point of the argument: that a word has no meaning if nothing corresponds to it." In the Tractatus Wittgenstein clearly adheres to such a position, but in the Investigations he now chooses to bring it under attack. His strategy here is to introduce a new distinction, absent from his previous work, between a word's meaning (Bedeutung) and its bearer (Träger):
It is important to note that the word “meaning” is being used illicitly if it is used to signify the thing that ‘corresponds’ to the word. That is to confound the meaning of a name with the bearer of the name. When Mr. N. N. dies one says that the bearer of the name dies, not that the meaning dies. And it would be nonsensical to say that, for if the name ceased to have meaning it would make no sense to say “Mr. N. N. is dead.”(1968:§40)

Wittgenstein thus maintains his Tractatus contention that a name always has a meaning, but he now no longer associates this meaning with the object named, instead claiming that the object named is the bearer of the name. Consequently, when Mr. N. N. dies, the name ‘Mr. N. N.’ loses its bearer, but it retains its meaning, which is what allows the proposition ‘Mr. N. N. is dead’ to retain its sense. Although his terminology differs, Wittgenstein’s resulting position here moves him closer to Frege’s original position, for Wittgenstein is now essentially contending that any name has a meaning (Bedeutung) (= Frege’s Sinn), and might or might not have a bearer (Träger) (= Frege’s Bedeutung).

While Wittgenstein’s move to a more Fregean approach to these matters is perfectly legitimate (and perfectly understandable, for it does cohere well with ordinary language use), there is nothing philosophically wrong with the logical atomists’ position, and hence Wittgenstein’s objection here is not a refutation of the presuppositions of logical atomism, but rather simply a rejection of them. There is nothing inherently wrong with connecting the meaning of a name with the object named, and hence with saying that the meaning of a name has died. It would certainly be odd to say that, it would not be an ordinary thing to say, but, philosophically speaking, there would not be anything wrong with saying that. From the logical atomist perspective if Mr. N. N. were to die then it would technically be incorrect, indeed, technically nonsensical, to say, ‘Mr. N. N. is dead’, but it would be legitimate to say, ‘The meaning of the (formerly genuine) name “Mr. N. N.” is dead.’ What Wittgenstein expresses in §40 is, ultimately, not argument, but merely preference.

Further, as Baker and Hacker point out, this preference for a meaning/bearer distinction rather than an identification of the two is not without a difficulty of its own, one which Wittgenstein fails to address, but which “vexed Frege:

if the sense of a name is distinct from its reference, can there be names with sense but no reference, and hence sentences with sense (expressing thoughts) but no truth-value? Certainly, W. (like Frege) claimed that fictional names have a meaning, and that there are names without a bearer (unallocated names). But it is unclear what line he would take on declarative sentences containing a referenceless name (e.g. ‘Vulcan’—the supposed intra-Mercurian planet). Do they have a meaning but no truth-value? Or do they lack any meaning?(1980:248)
Consider the declarative sentence ‘Mr. N. N. is dead’. Presumably Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* view is that, given Mr. N. N.’s passing, the name ‘Mr. N. N.’ has a meaning but no bearer, or, put in Fregean terms, it has sense but no reference. But then what happens to the truth-value of ‘Mr. N. N. is dead’, given that it now contains a referenceless name? Would Wittgenstein be satisfied with saying that this sentence has a meaning but no truth-value, when ordinarily one would say it is true? But what theory of truth will support a claim of that sentence’s truth? Or consider again the less obvious case of the declarative sentence ‘Excalibur has a sharp blade’ when Excalibur is broken in pieces. ‘Excalibur’ now has meaning but no bearer; does the sentence as a whole then have meaning but no truth-value? If it does have truth-value, which value would it have, and why? While these questions are not necessarily unanswerable, it is at least clear that not only is Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* rejection of his *Tractatus* theory of meaning merely a preference rather than a refutation, his new view is not without difficulties of its own.

In §42 Wittgenstein extends discussion in a direction particularly relevant to the purposes of the present work. He there asks, “But has for instance a name which has *never* been used . . . also got a meaning . . . ?”, thus raising the case, not where a name has lost its bearer, but rather where it has never had one in the first place. Baker and Hacker generalise the thesis at issue here as the atomists’ view “that it is impossible to name future or merely possible individuals.” (1980:249) Against this thesis they raise a number of (allegedly) *reductio*-style questions:

Why is it not possible to name a future individual? Does logic prevent it?
Is the meaning of ‘name’ such as to preclude it? Cannot one name an unborn or even unconceived child? Of course, if no child is born, no reference is secured. But are such medical facts going to determine whether ‘N.N.’ is a proper name? Cannot an author name an unwritten book? Or a dancer announce the name of the dance she is about to perform? (1980:249)

Clearly, one is supposed to answer affirmatively to these questions, to acknowledge the obvious correctness of Wittgenstein’s view that meaning comes from how words are used, not from what objects they name. But what is going on in the situations Baker and Hacker describe may reasonably alternatively be described as the setting of conditions under which meaning is to be ascribed to an object, not the actual ascription of meaning via some alternative theory. Consequently, once again there is nothing incoherent about retaining the atomists’ referential theory of meaning, and hence this line of reasoning constitutes a further objection to, but not a refutation of, the logical atomist position.

It is reasonable for one to hold that only what actually is can be named, that the roots of language are firmly entrenched in ontology. Such a position clearly requires a body of supporting theory, but this does not imply that that position is in any way inherently untenable, or even
inherently objectionable. With respect to the realm of language with which logical atomism is properly concerned, that is, matters of fact, Wittgenstein has not provided any conclusive evidence that logical atomism is deficient. And, as noted, one result of this is that one may indeed legitimately hold that it is impossible to name future or merely possible individuals.

§6.4.2.2: Ontological Simples (1968, §§46-59)

In §39 Wittgenstein considers the view that a name ought really to signify a simple. As just discussed, from §40 to §45 he then considers various aspects of the first component of this view, logically proper names. In §46 he moves discussion towards the second component of this view, for he there begins to consider the proposed ontological correlates of such names, that is, simples. It is here that Wittgenstein draws in Plato, and specifically Socrates's dream theory from Theaetetus. He opens the section by asking, "What is behind the idea that names really signify simples?" He then prefaces his treatment of this question by recounting a significant portion of Socrates's initial statement of his dream theory:

Socrates says in the Theaetetus: "If I make no mistake, I have heard some people say this: there is no definition of the primary elements—so to speak—out of which we and everything else are composed; for everything that exists* in its own right can only be named, no other determination is possible, neither that it is nor that it is not . . . . But what exists* in its own right has to be . . . . named without any other determination. In consequence it is impossible to give an account of any primary element; for it, nothing is possible but the bare name; its name is all it has. But just as what consists of these primary elements is itself complex, so the names of the elements become descriptive language by being compounded together. For the essence of speech is the composition of names."(1968:§46)²³

Wittgenstein then closes this section by remarking, "Both Russell's 'individuals' and my 'objects' (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) were such primary elements", thus making explicit his own association of at least certain aspects of Plato's thought with his own. In the following sections Wittgenstein examines more closely several aspects of this association; however, as discussion below reveals, this examination serves to bring out, not just similarities between Socrates's Theaetetus dream theory and Wittgenstein's Tractatus, but differences as well.

²³ In this passage translator Anscombe flags both uses of the term 'exists' (signalled above with asterisks) and notes, "I have translated the German translation which Wittgenstein used rather than the original"(1968:21n1), thus indicating that Wittgenstein has perhaps flavoured the passage to his own taste. Moreover, comparison of Wittgenstein's translation of this passage with the fairly literal translation of the original provided in §2.4.1 serves to heighten the extent to which Wittgenstein has here been rather loose with his terminology.

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In §§47 and 48 Wittgenstein tackles the difficult issue of the specifics of what it is to be simple or complex. As discussed in Chapter Two, it is in Theaetetus that the relation between simples and complexes first comes to a head for Plato, but the issue is there left in a highly confused state; it is not until Parmenides that Plato isolates the necessity of conceptual complexity and demonstrates that what is one is also many. In the Investigations Wittgenstein raises new questions concerning the relation between simples and complexes. He opens §47 by asking, “But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed?” He then responds, “‘Simple’ means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense ‘composite’?” This point he subsequently elaborates:

If I tell someone without any further explanation: “What I see before me now is composite”, he will have the right to ask: “What do you mean by ‘composite’? For there are all sorts of things that that can mean!”—The question “Is what you see composite?” makes good sense if it is already established what kind of complexity—that is, which particular use of the word— is in question. (1968:§47)

In §48 Wittgenstein provides a context within which he further develops this line of thought. He considers nine squares, arranged in a 3 x 3 format to produce another, larger square (or, as he puts it, “The squares form a complex like a chessboard”). Each of the nine squares is coloured either red, green, white, or black. The words of the language are (correspondingly) ‘R’, ‘G’, ‘W’, and ‘B’, and a sentence is taken to be a series of these words using the order from left to right, and top to bottom. (This order can be represented as follows:

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1  2  3
4  5  6
7  8  9
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Next, these squares are given the following colour arrangement:

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1(R) 2(R) 3(B)
4(G) 5(G) 6(G)
7(R) 8(W) 9(W)
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This arrangement is therefore described by the sentence ‘RRBGGRWW’.

It is at this point that the Theaetetus account returns to the fore. Wittgenstein remarks, “Here the sentence [‘RRBGGRWW’] is a complex of names, to which corresponds a complex of elements. The primary elements are the coloured squares”(1968:§48); in other words, here is a sentence which fits the dream theory account of language. He next asks, “‘But are these [coloured squares] simple?’”, and adds, “I do not know what else you would have me call ‘the simples’, what would be more natural in this language-game.” (both 1968:§48) But the fact that the coloured squares are the most “natural” choice as the simples in this situation does not itself
imply that they are indeed simple: "But under other circumstances I should call a monochrome square 'composite', consisting perhaps of two rectangles, or of the elements colour and shape." (1968:§48) According to the dream theory a compound is a unit composed of interwoven simples; so too here the larger square RRBGGGRWW is a unit composed of the coloured squares arranged in a particular manner. For present purposes the coloured squares may be held to be simple, for no further reduction of them is relevant to the current situation. However, and this is Wittgenstein's point here, in another situation such a further reduction is liable to be relevant, and in that case the coloured squares no longer are held to be simple. Simplicity thus appears to be relative rather than absolute.

However, while one might be inclined to draw such a conclusion, one is not driven to do so. Wittgenstein is not providing an argument supporting the conclusion that no absolute simples can be reached;\(^\text{24}\) rather, he is pointing out that in some, if not most, situations, what are further reducible in principle need not be so further reduced in practice. In some cases it might be necessary to reduce further the coloured squares to their "components", colour and shape. However, in other cases, such as the one portrayed in §48, they might function perfectly well as simples while being considered as coloured squares taken as wholes. The context determines, not the limits of analysis, but rather to what extent analysis is needed for a particular case. There might be absolute simples, but for practical purposes complexes can often be treated as relative simples. So long as what level of analysis is demanded is made clear, no significant difficulties result from this varied application of the notion of simplicity. Wittgenstein rhetorically asks, when questioned what are the simples in a particular case, "Does it matter which we say, so long as we avoid misunderstandings in any particular case?"(1968:§48); the answer, it is clear, is that it does not. Questions regarding simplicity and complexity can be answered in a variety of ways, so long as the level of the question is made known. To repeat what he asserts in §47, "The question 'Is what you see composite?' makes good sense if it is already established what kind of complexity—that is, which particular use of the word—is in question." But this does not prove that there are no simples which cannot be further reduced.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{24}\) Although his failure to do so is not evidence that such an argument cannot be made.

\(^{25}\) However, one might argue that even should irreducible simples be established, they are nonetheless in some sense relative rather than absolute, for they are established within the context of, that is, relative to, some particular perspective or approach. For example, even if one accepts that logical atomism establishes that there must be irreducible simples, these simples have only been established within the context of, or relative to, the perspective of logical atomism. In the sense that every position requires a perspective Wittgenstein surely is correct that there are no "absolute" simples.
Wittgenstein’s discussion of this issue here reveals that the interrelated notions of simplicity and complexity are not so distinct and clear-cut as some might be inclined to suppose. Neither Plato’s discussion in *Theaetetus* nor Wittgenstein’s own treatment in the *Tractatus* raises the issue of whether there can be entities which are simple for one purpose and complex for another. Rather, in both cases what is taken to be simple is taken only to be simple. While the *Investigations* discussion does not undermine this view *per se*, it does bring out that in ordinary cases these notions are likely to be treated as less distinct than they might, and that this treatment need not be problematic. There is no great difficulty caused by treating Excalibur as a simple, so long as one is careful to do so only in appropriate circumstances and only if this is sufficiently publicised to avoid misunderstanding.26

In §49 Wittgenstein turns to a new topic, simple and complex language, although his discussion there is closely linked to what he has had to say in the previous two sections. He opens the section by asking, “What does it mean to say that we cannot define (that is, describe) these elements, but only name them?” Although he draws no attention to the point, much rides on his move here of equating definition with description. Indeed, it is key; it is also, however, illegitimate, and it is here that Wittgenstein’s discussion breaks its link both with Plato and with his own earlier work. A definition captures the unique essence of its subject, it states what makes that subject *that* subject. A description, on the other hand, also captures some aspect of the subject, but this aspect need not be essential, or, even if it is essential, it need not be uniquely essential. As is specifically discussed in Chapter Two, in the case of the original dream theory each primary element has only one property unique to it, and hence only one word, its name, can rightfully be attached to it as its name. The theory does not deny that other words can also be attached to a primary element, that a primary element can be described; rather, what it denies is that such an element can be *put into* words. Wittgenstein quotes the dream theory as affirming, “it is impossible to give an account of any primary element; for it, nothing is possible but the bare name; its name is all it has.” But the context of the dream theory makes clear that the term ‘account’ here does not merely mean ‘description’, it means ‘definition’, it means the capturing of what is unique and essential; Wittgenstein’s failure in §49 to keep this point at the fore consequently results in his discussion there

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26 Interestingly, while Wittgenstein does not discuss the notion that simplicity might be contextual rather than absolute in the *Tractatus*, he does consider it in the earlier *Notebooks* from which the *Tractatus* remarks were culled. For example, in the *Notebooks* he observes, “It always looks as if there were complex objects functioning as simples”; he then considers in this regard the proposition ‘Socrates is mortal’, and observes, although he “do[es] not know what structure is possessed by the thing Socrates or the property of mortality”, nonetheless in this case “they just function as simple objects”. (all 1979:69) Further discussion of the relative simplicity or complexity of objects explicitly brings the role of perspective to the fore, for he adds at one point, “This object is *simple for me!*” (1979:70), thus emphasising that these notions need not be considered mutually exclusive.
being removed from Plato's original context. Moreover, Wittgenstein's own Tractatus 3.221 makes much this same point as Plato's; he there asserts, "Objects I can only name. Signs represent them. I can only speak of them. I cannot assert them. A proposition can only say how a thing is, not what it is." A proposition cannot capture the unique essence of an object, it cannot give an account of an object by putting it into words; rather, it can only describe an object, it can only speak about it. To this extent Wittgenstein's discussion in §49 of the Investigations fails to reflect both Socrates's dream theory and his own earlier Tractatus position.²⁷

Wittgenstein continues §49 by remarking, "Here we might say—though this easily leads to all kinds of philosophical superstition—that a sign 'R' or 'B', etc. may be sometimes a word and sometimes a proposition. But whether it 'is a word or a proposition' depends on the situation in which it is uttered or written." This remark clearly parallels his point in the previous two sections about the "relativity" of simples. Just as Excalibur may be considered to be either a simple or a complex depending upon the circumstance, so too 'Excalibur' may be considered to be either a name or a proposition depending upon the circumstance. But this is only to suspend temporarily what it really means to be a genuine simple. In similar fashion Wittgenstein proposes, in one situation the word 'R' is "a description—a proposition", and in another situation it is "not a description; it names an element". He then suggests, "but it would be queer to make that a reason for saying that an element can only be named!"(1968:§49) But that is not why one says that an element can only be named; one says that because a genuine element, an element with only one unique essential nature, cannot be put into words. It is only when the ultimate complexity of something is temporarily overlooked that it can be both named and described.

In §50 Wittgenstein raises a particularly challenging matter regarding ontological simples, the notion of existence. He now asks, "What does it mean to say that we can attribute neither being nor non-being to elements?" He then conjectures,

One might say: if everything that we call "being" and "non-being" consists in the existence and non-existence of connexions between elements, it makes no sense to speak of an element's being (non-being); just as when everything that we call "destruction" lies in the separation of elements, it makes no sense to speak of the destruction of an element.

²⁷Wittgenstein's break with both Plato and his own earlier self is also evidenced by how he follows up his opening question. He conjectures, "This might mean, for instance, that when in a limiting case a complex consists of only one square, its description is simply the name of the coloured square."(1968:§49) However, Socrates is quite clear that a complex involves a plurality of elements, while so too the earlier Wittgenstein specifically sets out that a complex state of affairs involves a plurality of objects. Consequently, in both cases a "complex" consisting of only one square is no complex at all, and so too a description/definition cannot consist of only one name.

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One would, however, like to say: existence cannot be attributed to an element, for if it did not exist, one could not even name it and so one could say nothing at all of it.

(1968:§50)

As noted previously in this chapter, the issue of the existence of objects is difficult but crucial. Moreover, there are a variety of ways of tackling it, as consideration of Theaetetus, the Tractatus, and the Investigations reveals.

Although seemingly straightforward, the Theaetetus dream theory's position regarding the existence of primary elements must be carefully interpreted. The theory states,

everything that exists in its own right can only be named, no other determination is possible, neither that it is nor that it is not . . . . . But what exists in its own right has to be . . . . named without any other determination.

But, as discussed previously, Socrates's assertion that one cannot address a primary element "either as that it is, or as that it is not" is not to be taken at face value, but rather must be considered in context. Elements cannot be asserted as being or not-being so long as the language in question is intended to capture the unique essence of the subject in question; in other words, being cannot be part of the account of an element, for being does not serve any function as a distinguishing characteristic. However, this is not to deny that Plato does nonetheless treat existence as a property of some sort, for, as discussed in Chapter Three, even in the later dialogue Sophist Plato continues to refer to something's being as a result of its participation in the form or kind Being, where such participation constitutes his account of predication. For Plato it is not wrong to include being in a description of an element, it is just wrong to include being in a definition of an element. Wittgenstein's conflation of the notions of definition and description in §49 clearly reveals why he fails to recognise this aspect of the dream theory view. Plato is willing to countenance being as a property of primary elements. One result of this is that when in §50 Wittgenstein considers the view, "everything that we call 'being' and 'non-being' consists in the existence and non-existence of connexions between elements", he is not considering a view related to the dream theory, even if he thinks that he is. Socrates's dream theory does not limit the attribution of existence only to compounds and not to elements; rather it limits the attribution of existence only to descriptions and not to definitions.

However, while the view that being and not-being consists in the presence and absence of connexions between elements cannot properly be ascribed to the dream theory, it is an apt summation of the Tractatus's view on such matters. The Tractatus is quite clear that existence cannot be representationally attributed to objects (See, for example, 4.1272: "So one cannot, e.g. say, 'There are objects' as one says 'There are books'.") One can only talk about what objects do, how they connect; thus, one can speak of whether or not certain combinations, or states of affairs,
exist, for some do and some do not. But one cannot speak of objects themselves as existing, for this attempts to say what can only be shown. What would be needed to say such a thing would be (as Russell puts this point in his introduction to the *Tractatus*) “another language dealing with the structure of the first language, and having itself a new structure”; but as the ideal language of the *Tractatus* is not such a meta-language, but rather only a ground-level object language, the existence of objects is something that cannot there be addressed.

But to recognise this point is in turn to recognise that in a meta-language, and ordinary language is such a meta-language, the existence of objects can be discussed, and even explained. Hence, Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* view on this topic need not be problematic for his *Tractatus* view, but rather might indeed be considered a clarification of it. In the *Investigations* Wittgenstein proposes that existence be looked at, not as some queer sort of property, but rather as a qualifying condition for being part of the system at all. He remarks,

And to say “If it did not exist, it could have no name” is to say as much and as little as: if this thing did not exist, we could not use it in our language-game.(1968:§50)

But we do use it in our language-game; therefore it exists. This point now links back to the question which led into this whole section, the question concerning which is logically prior, ontology or language. In accordance with McGuinness’s view (discussed in §6.3.1), it is the assumption of language as meaningful which guarantees the existence of corresponding objects. Existence seems to be some odd sort of necessary property—“What looks as if it had to exist, is part of the language”—which things have; rather, it turns out, language, even existence language presupposes meaning, and hence requires that there be entities being represented. Consequently, for logical atomism to suppose objects is merely for it to hold that there is meaningful representation:

It looks to us as if we were saying something about the nature of red in saying that the words “Red exists” do not yield a sense. Namely that red does exist ‘in its own right’. The same idea—that this is a metaphysical statement about red—finds expression again when we say such a thing as that red is timeless, and perhaps still more strongly in the word “indestructible”.

But what we really want is simply to take “Red exists” as the statement: the word “red” has a meaning.(1968:§58)

Existence language is not metaphysical language, despite its resemblance to metaphysical language; rather, it is operational language, merely identifying what needs be there given that there is meaningful language. The *Tractatus* claim that objects cannot be represented as existing is quite right—not because objects do not exist, but because the meaningfulness of the terminology itself assures that they do. Hence, Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* remarks serve to support McGuinness’s contention that in the *Tractatus* language is logically prior to ontology.
§6.4.2.3: Analysis (1968, §§60-64)

The last topic Wittgenstein tackles in the *Investigations* regarding logical atomism concerns analysis. Logical atomism places a certain importance on analysed forms as opposed to unanalysed ones, treats them as somehow more informative, more important than their unanalysed counterparts. In the earlier sections Wittgenstein challenges the products of analysis, that is, simple, logically proper names and simple ontological elements; now, in this final section he challenges the process itself, questioning whether one really is ahead of the game with an analysed outcome as opposed to an unanalysed one. As he remarks in §63, to describe one sentence as an “analysed” form of another

readily seduces us into thinking that the former is the more fundamental form; that it alone shews what is meant by the other, and so on. For example, we think: If you have only the unanalysed form you miss the analysis; but if you know the analysed form that gives you everything. (1968:§63)

But to this Wittgenstein retorts, “can I not say that an aspect of the matter is lost on you in the latter case as well as the former?” (1968:§63) It is correct that analysis provides something which is not there in the unanalysed whole; but, so too, the unanalysed whole provides something which is not there in the parts.

Here too Wittgenstein’s point relates to what precedes it. In the last two sets of sections considered above he brings out that the distinctions between names/elements and descriptions/compounds are not so severe as they appear. While this is not necessarily ultimately correct, he is right that under normal circumstances what is complex may be treated as simple without creating undue difficulty. Now Wittgenstein points out that both forms, analysed and unanalysed, have places in the language game. The distinction between simples and complexes is not a qualitative one; analysed forms are not better than unanalysed forms, they are just different.

The end result of Wittgenstein’s *Investigations* critique of logical atomism is clear. He does not “demolish” his earlier “magnificent failure”, for he in no way shows that it is indeed a failure. Rather, what he shows is that language is more sophisticated than he had first supposed. Not only does not all language fall within the scope of logical atomism, language which does fall within that scope is not thereby cleansed and improved. Logical atomism is one way of treating some language, but its distinctions are not so clear cut as it supposes, nor are its results so privileged. But while such insights certainly do serve to tarnish somewhat logical atomism’s previous paradigmatic status, it is nonetheless important not to exaggerate the extent of that tarnish. Logical atomism remains a perfectly acceptable framework within which to examine language, it is a perfectly acceptable language game. Moreover, despite its limitations, with regard to its own sphere, the realm of language about the world, it remains the most viable available framework. Its focus on the symbiotic
relation between wholes and parts, a relation interpreted by the philosophers examined here in a variety of manners, makes it the ideal context within which to examine the problem of negative language at the centre of the present work.

§6.4.3: Wittgenstein on Ontology: Postscript

As discussed in §6.3.1, Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* ontology may be read in either of two ways. According to one reading, objects and states of affairs are logically prior to language. This reading leaves questions unanswered, questions relating both to what it means for objects to exist and states of affairs not to exist, and to what is the ontological status of *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*. Some sort of ontological implications certainly seem to be involved, even if what they are is not evident. According to the other reading, (meaningful) language is logically prior to objects and states of affairs, and hence ontology might be considered to be merely some sort of logical off-shoot of language. But while on one level this is helpful, its value as a final answer is questionable. Is it enough simply to hold that there must be objects because meaningful language requires them, or is some sort of account of what objects *are* still needed? One may reasonably contend that ontology must cohere with logic, but that ontology is yet more than just logic, and that something more needs be addressed. McGuinness’s reading of what is going on in the *Tractatus* might well be correct, and it helps explain why Wittgenstein does not there pay more attention to ontological matters, but this need not be considered to lessen the need for such attention. Given Wittgenstein’s failure to discuss this issue further it is not raised again in this chapter; instead, attention is now shifted to his views on negative language. This issue is, however, reconsidered in the next chapter.

§6.5: Wittgenstein on Truth: Agreement With Reality

Although he does not say so in so many words, the conception of truth to which Wittgenstein adheres in the *Tractatus* is much like the correspondence theory advocated by Russell, for in similar fashion Wittgenstein contends that truth consists in agreement with reality:

The picture agrees with reality or not; it is right or wrong, true or false. (1921:2.21)

In the agreement or disagreement of its sense with reality, [a picture’s] truth or falsity consists. (1921:2.222)

In comparable fashion, Wittgenstein also associates truth with how things are:

... a proposition is true, if what we assert by means of it is the case (1921:4.062).

Put another way, truth is associated with what exists:

If the elementary proposition is true, the atomic fact [it pictures] exists (1921:4.25).

As with so many other topics, so too regarding truth Wittgenstein fails to give any sort of systematic account of his position. However, the above remarks are enough to infer what he thinks:
for a proposition to be true is for it to correspond to reality, for the state of affairs it describes to be the case. It is perhaps due to the relatively uncomplicated nature of this view, and due to its common acceptance (Bradley aside) that Wittgenstein apparently sees so little need to go into specifics regarding the details of this position.

§6.6: Wittgenstein on True Negation and Falsehood: Reversal of Sense, and Absence of Fact

In order to understand Wittgenstein's views on negative language, that is, on true negation and on falsehood, it is necessary first to grasp his view on the nature of negation. To this end two points are of particular importance. The first point is standard enough—negation is one of the logical constants. The second point is central to Wittgenstein's views in the *Tractatus*, indeed, involves its "fundamental" idea with regard to the relation between logic, representation, and ontology:

The possibility of propositions is based upon the principle of the representation of objects by signs.

My fundamental thought is that the "logical constants" do not represent. That the logic of the facts cannot be represented.(both 1921:4.0312)

By asserting this fundamental idea that the logical constants are not representatives Wittgenstein in turn contends that there are no objects corresponding to negation:

. . . the sign "¬" corresponds to nothing in reality.(1921:4.0621)

Here it becomes clear that there are no such things as "logical objects" or "logical constants" (in the sense of Frege and Russell).(1921:5.4)

And if there was an object called "¬", then "¬p" would have to say something other than "p". For the one proposition would then treat of ~, the other would not.

(1921:5.44)

One consequence of this absence of negative objects is that all complexes of objects, that is, all states of affairs (and hence reality as a whole), must be positive. Elementary propositions, which describe individual states of affairs, are therefore also all positive.

Wittgenstein's explanation of the nature of negation is that it is, not an object, but an operation, one which "reverses the sense of [the] proposition" in which it appears.(1921:5.2341)

As such, negation does not function on the level of "ontology", on the level of objects and states of affairs, at all, for there is no negative aspect to reality. Rather, negation operates on the level of sense by reversing the direction of the sense to which it is attached; as a result, such propositions as 'p' and '¬p' have opposite senses. Both 'p' and '¬p' picture the same state of affairs, they correspond to the same reality, but the one affirms, and the other denies, that that state of affairs is the case.

As discussed in §6.2, Wittgenstein discusses ranges of states of affairs in terms of logical space. He returns to this metaphor in his description of how negation works:
One could say, the denial is already related to the logical place determined by the proposition that is denied.

The denying proposition determines a logical place other than does the proposition denied.

The denying proposition determines a logical place, with the help of the logical place of the proposition denied, by saying that it lies outside the latter place.

(All 1921:4.0641)

In other words, the basic content of the proposition picks out a certain logical place, that is, a certain state of affairs or situation. A positive proposition affirms the existence of that state of affairs. The negative of that proposition denies that existence, instead affirming that what is the case lies somewhere other in logical space than that place picked out by the proposition being negated.

In her book on the *Tractatus* Anscombe offers some insightful remarks in this regard. She writes,

> It is clear that one must convey what situation one is saying does not exist, and this will be conveyed precisely by the picture depicting that situation. No other picture could be involved: you could not for example make a picture of the situation's not existing. We must be careful not to confuse what is not the case with what is the case instead of it; if you tried to make a picture of a situation's not existing you would only make a picture of what did exist instead of it. (1967:69-70)

With these words Anscombe captures, not just what Wittgenstein is up to, but also what Bradley and Russell were up to. The core content of a proposition is a picture depicting some state of affairs; negating the proposition denies that that state of affairs is the case. But the negating proposition does not replace the picture being denied with another that is being affirmed. Bradley errs by trying to account for what is not the case by affirming a picture of what is the case instead of it; but the denying proposition does not pick out some specific alternative state of affairs. some alternative logical place, it simply points away from the place being denied. Hence, Bradley's account tries to do too much. So too does Russell's, for his postulation of negative facts and their corresponding assertions attempts to make pictures of states of affairs's not existing, and this cannot be done. The negative proposition denies the existence of some particular state of affairs, and that is all it does. It does not concurrently affirm some specific other state of affairs to replace the one being negated.

The bottom line on Wittgenstein's account of negation is that it does not support the denial of some atomic fact with some alternative fact, atomic or otherwise. Rather, for Wittgenstein, the denial of the existence of some state of affairs is supported, not by the existence of some alternative fact, but by the absence of the atomic fact corresponding to the state of affairs pictured.
This ontological basis for negation is made explicit via a two-step process. First of all, Wittgenstein accepts a translation of the negation of a proposition in terms of that proposition’s truth and falsehood:

“\(~p\)” is true if “p” is false. Therefore in the true proposition “\(~p\)” “p” is a false proposition.\(^{(1921:5.512)}\)

In other words, the truth of \(~p\)” and the falsehood of \(p\)” are interchangeable. Consequently, so too would be their ontological grounds. And the ontological ground of a false proposition, Wittgenstein proposes, consists, not in the presence of some conflicting state of affairs, but in the absence of the proposition’s corresponding state of affairs:

If the elementary proposition is true, the atomic fact exists; if it is false the atomic fact does not exist.\(^{(1921:4.25)}\)

Thus, Wittgenstein grounds the truth of a true negative proposition and the falsehood of a false proposition neither in the presence of a negative fact\(^{28}\) nor in the presence of an incompatible fact, but rather in the absence of a fact, in the failure of a state of affairs to exist, or be a fact at all.

In his companion to the Tractatus Black raises a concern regarding the verification of elementary propositions which is familiar from Chapter Five:

the proposition \([P]\) is successively compared (cf. 2.223, 4.05) with each atomic fact . . . ; when we encounter a ‘match’ . . . we count \(P\) as true, and we count \(P\) as false if this never happens. This means that \(P\)”s truth is established directly, by confrontation with a fact; but its falsity is established by default. Since we can never be in a position to know that every atomic fact has been inspected, the best we can say of even a false elementary proposition is that it has not been found to be true so far, and disconfirmation will be provisional in a way in which confirmation is not.\(^{(1964:214)}\)

This Tractatus “radical asymmetry between confirmation and disconfirmation” Black finds “disagreeable”, but “unavoidable” given how Wittgenstein has set matters up. As discussed in §5.5.2 above, in his paper “Russell on Negative Facts” Jay Rosenberg offers a similar response to the “absence of a fact” account of falsehood, there objecting, according to such a view “in order to discover that a given atomic proposition was false, we should have to compare it one by one with each atomic fact, noting in each case that it fails to correspond. And this, of course, is an absurd supposition.”\(^{(1972:36)}\) But as also discussed above, however severe this objection might be, it is ultimately an epistemological objection—how one can know that an atomic proposition is false—and not an ontological one—what grounds the falsehood of the atomic proposition—and hence, while certainly troublesome, it is not conclusive. Wittgenstein’s position is a difficult, but nonetheless tenable one.

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28 That is, a Russellian negative fact as a negative complex with ontological status.
A more substantive objection against the "absence of a fact" account of the ontological basis of negation is the claim that the absence of a fact must itself be some sort of fact, and (as discussed in the last chapter) in his paper "On Propositions" Russell makes exactly such a point: "the absence of [such] a fact [as A loves B] is itself a negative fact; it is the fact that there is not such a fact as A loving B." (1919:288) In his study Being, Negation and Logic Eric Toms carries this line of argument one step further: having "the non-actualisation of the possibility 'A r B'" serve as the negation of 'A r B' not only involves a further fact, analysis of that fact draws one into a never ending cycle:

In this case, the fact that A has not r to B is really the fact that the possibility 'A r B'

is not actualised; but this fact in turn is really the fact that the possibility "'A r B' is actualised" is not actualised, and so on. The real form of the fact is never reached, but instead we are always required to look for it in the next stage of an infinite regress. (1962:84)

Hence, according to Toms a move to explain negation in terms of the absence of facts not only still involves other facts, these other facts are themselves ultimately unanalysable.

In his paper "Negation and Generality" Herbert Hochberg provides a more developed treatment of this matter. He there begins by positing a miniature universe consisting of four facts: "Wa", "Bb", "Sa", and "Sb". He then proposes.

Consider two lists. One, (a), a list of true atomic sentences; another, (a') a list of all possible atomic sentences for our miniature universe. 'Wa' is true since it is on (a). '¬Wb' may be held to be true since 'Wb' is not on (a'). In short '¬Wb' is true in virtue of a relation between (a) and (a'). This relation would reflect or ground the truth of negative sentences. (1969:297)

After next denying that negation is something one does or thinks due to one's comparison of the lists ("since what grounds the truth of '¬Wb' is not our comparison of the two lists but the connection between them"), Hochberg then moves on to his main point—such an approach involves a "covert extension" of one's ontology:

In putting the matter in terms of the two lists, (a) and (a'), the covert extension of our ontology is perhaps made more explicit if we consider the matter in terms of possible facts. For, one way of explicitly stating what is involved would be to hold that '¬Wb' is true since 'Wb' indicates a possible fact, rather than a fact of the sort 'Wa' does.

The existence of the two kinds of facts, possible facts and actual facts, would replace the explicit recognition of [Russellian] negative facts and positive facts. (1969:298)

Hochberg then winds up his view by summarising,
To use the absence of ‘Wb’ from the list as an ontological ground is obviously to make use of ‘Wb’ being false as the ground of truth for ‘~Wb’. This could be just another way of making use of a possible fact referred to by ‘Wb’. (1969:298)

Hochberg’s terminology clearly reveals his view on this matter. His use of the term ‘fact’ itself hints at ontological commitment, a hint confirmed by his explicit talk of the “existence” of both possible and actual facts. Hochberg sees possible facts as ultimately no different from Russell’s hard-core negative facts, or any other full-fledged ontological entities.

The Russell/Toms response to the absence of a fact account is not particularly troubling, for it does not really substantively address that account at all. Instead, that response simply reworks the absence of a fact account to fit its own “fact behind every truth” position and then points out how this affects that account, showing either that the absence of a fact account offers nothing new (for “the absence of a fact is itself a negative fact”)(Russell) or that it both offers nothing new (for “the fact that A has not r to B is really the fact that the possibility ‘A r B’ is not actualised”) and is problematic (for “The real form of the fact is never reached, but instead we are always required to look for it in the next stage of an infinite regress.”)(Toms) In neither case is the absence of a fact account seriously considered as an independent account with its own merit; rather, both authors presuppose their own perspective, remodel the absence of a fact account to fit that perspective, and then conclude that that account is either unhelpful or defective. As a result, all that Russell and Toms demonstrate is that if one accepts as a precondition that every truth requires an underlying fact then the absence of a fact account fails to contribute anything novel. However, if one does not accept such a precondition then the views expressed by the two authors really do not address the absence of a fact account at all.

But while Russell’s and Toms’s objections can thus be set aside, Hochberg’s strikes much more at the heart of the matter. Hochberg also presupposes too much, for he simply assumes that a possible fact is an ontologically “hard” fact, and hence the absence of a fact account does not really differ in its ontological implications from the negative facts account. This assumption moves too far too fast, but it does at least point out in which direction one must head. While one is not entitled simply to presume that possible facts have full-fledged ontological status, one certainly is entitled to ask just what is the ontological status of possible facts. It is clear that by the phrase ‘possible fact’ Hochberg means just what Wittgenstein means by the phrase ‘state of affairs’, and hence the real issue underlying Hochberg’s remarks is the same one noted above in various places: just what is the ontological status of states of affairs (and, in turn, of objects)? One can reasonably deny that states of affairs are the same as atomic facts, but what then are states of affairs? It is contended that they are not (full-fledged) somethings, but neither are they nothing, a position which stands in need of considerable elaboration. One ought not presume that the Parmenidean

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something/nothing dichotomy need be unresolvable here, but neither ought one presuppose that it is resolvable. What is needed is a *demonstration* of the intelligibility of this view, not simply a supposition.

§6.7: Conclusion: Wittgenstein on Negative Language

The view of negative language put forth by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* requires careful consideration, for, while his employment of the notion of possibility as a key factor ostensibly avoids the direct ontological commitments accepted by Bradley and Russell, as has been brought out throughout this chapter his dependence upon the notion of states of affairs is not obviously less loaded. Hence any gains to be claimed by adopting Wittgenstein’s position over those of his predecessors require significant support. Moreover, one attempting to sidestep this problem by arguing that possibilities are not themselves distinct entities, but rather are simply embedded in the forms of objects, is left defending the extensive realm of objects postulated by Wittgenstein, a realm whose independence from the facts raises its own difficulties. In the end, one wishing to build upon Wittgenstein’s account of negative language must face up to what Wittgenstein himself does not, and that is the nature of possibility. This task constitutes the bulk of the next, and final, chapter.
§7.1: Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Six, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Ludwig Wittgenstein presents a new approach to the problem of negative language, one which views negation as rooted in the relation between the possible and the actual. As brought out below, in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein employs a *combinatorial* theory of possibility, a theory which views possibility in terms of basic component units and basic rules of combination. Generally speaking, such a theory provides a promising framework for the resolution of the challenge of interpreting the nature of negative language; however, for reasons to be discussed, the particular manner in which Wittgenstein fleshes out his version of combinatorialism is problematic, and hence in need of modification. In this last chapter the specifics of Wittgenstein's view of possibility are examined, their limitations brought out, and improvements made, such that the resulting final product is best suited to serve as the basis for a philosophically satisfactory solution to the problem of saying what is not. An interesting aspect of the version of combinatorialism here ultimately derived is that it serves to delimit, not just which individual combinations of basic units are acceptable, or possible, but also which sets of individual combinations of basic units are acceptable, or compossible. In other words, limitations may reasonably be set, not just upon possibilities taken individually, but also upon possibilities taken collectively, that is, upon possible worlds.

A preliminary distinction with regard to possibility can usefully be dealt with at this point, and that is the distinction between possibility *de dicto*, possibility as it applies to language, and possibility *de re*, possibility as it applies to ontology. Both Bertrand Russell, in his lectures "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism", and Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, discuss possibility *de dicto*. In his lectures Russell propounds an application of possibility in terms of propositional functions (where a propositional function is explained as "any expression containing an undetermined constituent, or several undetermined constituents, and becoming a proposition as soon as the undetermined constituents are determined" (1918:230)), and proposes that modality, that is, the realms of necessity, possibility, and impossibility taken collectively, is concerned with how often those functions are true given some particular range of arguments: "One may call a propositional function necessary, when it is always true; possible, when it is sometimes true;...

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1 For example, "If I say 'x is a man' or 'n is a number', that is a propositional function". Russell then adds (without apparent concern for its implications), "A propositional function is nothing, but, like most of the things one wants to talk about in logic, it does not lose its importance through that fact." (both 1918:230)
impossible, when it is never true. . . . If you take ‘x is x’, that is a propositional function which is true whatever ‘x’ may be, i.e., a necessary propositional function. If you take ‘x is a man’, that is a possible one. If you take ‘x is a unicorn’, that is an impossible one.” (1918:23)

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein employs a comparable notion of possibility, although his is based on propositions, not propositional functions, where propositions are taken to be compounds consisting of logically connected elementary propositions (that is, propositions describing individual states of affairs). In his discussion of propositions Wittgenstein asserts that the truth-conditions of a proposition consist of “the agreement and disagreement of the truth-possibilities of the elementary propositions” (1921:4.431), and goes on to point out that propositional truth-conditions include “two extreme cases”:

In the one case the proposition is true for all the truth-possibilities of the elementary propositions. We say that the truth-conditions are *tautological*.

In the second case the proposition is false for all the truth-possibilities. The truth-conditions are *self-contradictory*.

In the first case we call the proposition a tautology, in the second case a contradiction. (all 1921:4.46)

In a further comment on remark 4.46 he adds, “The truth of tautology is certain, of propositions possible, of contradiction impossible.” (1921:4.464) Wittgenstein’s notions here of certainty, possibility, and impossibility closely resemble those of Russell, with the main difference being Russell’s substitution of “necessary” for “certain”. But the overall similarities are striking: Russell’s propositional functions are necessary when they are always true, while Wittgenstein’s tautologies are certain because they are always true; Russell’s propositional functions are possible when they are sometimes true, while Wittgenstein’s propositions are possible because they are sometimes true and sometimes false, and Russell’s propositional functions are impossible when they are never true, while Wittgenstein’s contradictions are impossible because they are always false.2

The sort of possibility discussed here by Russell and by Wittgenstein is very much rooted in language. Russell’s discussion of modality centres upon the truth values of resulting propositions when a general propositional form containing a variable has that variable replaced by various arguments, while Wittgenstein’s discussion of modality centres upon the truth values of resulting propositions when a general compound propositional form containing multiple variables has those variables replaced by various arguments. But neither of these approaches captures the notion of possibility at issue in the present work, which is possibility de re, that rooted in ontology and concerned with the existence and non-existence of states of affairs. In his lectures Russell never

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2 This topic is covered in considerably greater depth in R. Bradley (1992), especially Chapter 1, “Logical Atomisms: Modal and Nonmodal”.

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moves beyond possibility *de dicto*; however, in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein does, for, as noted in the last chapter, besides references to possible propositions he also makes references to (such ostensible entities as) possible atomic facts (*möglicher Sachverhalten*) and possible states of affairs (*möglichen Sachlagen*). It is in this latter vein (and its underlying theory) that this chapter begins.

§7.2: The Combinatorial Theory of Possibility

In his paper "The Nature of Possibility" David Armstrong defends one version of the combinatorial theory of possibility. He there acknowledges, "The combinatorial idea is not new, of course", and adds, "Wittgenstein gave a classical exposition of it in the *Tractatus.*"(both 1986:575)3 The accuracy of Armstrong's attribution of a combinatorialist approach to Wittgenstein is supported by the line of reasoning underlying the very opening passages of the *Tractatus*: "The world is the totality of facts"(1921:1.1); "the fact, is the existence of atomic facts"(1921:2); "An atomic fact is a combination of objects"(1921:2.01); "If all objects are given, then thereby all possible atomic facts are also given."(1921:2.0124) In this series of remarks Wittgenstein thus expressly ties what atomic facts, and hence what worlds, are possible to how objects *combine*.

A good general explanation of the notion of combinatorialism is that given by William Lycan, who writes,

> Suppose that there are some *metaphysically* basic elements out of which our universe is composed. Call them "atoms" (in the metaphysical rather than the chemical sense). Our world, we may say, consists of these atoms' being *arranged* in a certain fabulously complex way. The actual *arrangement* of the atoms could be taken to be, or to be represented by, a vastly complex *set* built up out of nothing but atoms and sets as members. Now let us construe "other possible worlds" as *alternative* arrangements of our atoms which mirror the ways our world might have been just as the actual arrangement mirrors the world as it is.(1979:304-05)

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3 For his part Armstrong supports this attribution by citing *Tractatus* passage 3.4: "The proposition determines a place in logical space: the existence of this logical place is guaranteed by the existence of the constituent parts alone . . . ." In this passage Wittgenstein indicates that places in logical space, that is, logical possibilities, owe their "being" to the being of their constituent parts, simple objects, and to the natures of those objects. And as discussed in the last chapter, objects have one particular property emphasised above all others, their capability of *combining* with each other. (Consider, for example, *Tractatus* remark 2.0121: " . . . we cannot think of *any* object apart from the possibility of its connexion with other things. If I can think of an object in the context of an atomic fact, I cannot think of it apart from the *possibility* of this context." This aspect of objects is discussed in §6.2 above.) This circumstance, combined with the central role of objects in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* philosophy, justifies Armstrong's identification of Wittgenstein's position as fundamentally combinatorialist in spirit. However, more explicit (and more obvious) support for Armstrong's attribution is about to be given.

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A combinatorial theory of possibility thus builds upon the idea that possibilities involve the rearrangement of the "metaphysically basic elements out of which our universe is composed" to form "alternative arrangements of our atoms which mirror the ways our world might have been". Given the generality of this description, however, it is clear that a variety of combinatorial theories of possibility can be developed depending upon how one chooses to fill out two key points. The first such point concerns the atoms issue: just what are to be taken to constitute the "metaphysically basic elements" which constitute the building blocks of our universe? The second such point concerns the arrangement issue: just what is to be taken to govern how "alternative arrangements" of atoms are to be formed such that they do indeed "mirror the ways our world might have been"? What sort of combinatorialism one puts forth depends primarily upon how one handles these two issues.

§7.3: Wittgensteinian Combinatorialism

In the Tractatus Wittgenstein is fairly explicit about how his version of combinatorialism is fleshed out. As it happens, the answers he proposes to the two issues just noted (that is, the atoms issue and the arrangement issue) are sufficiently closely interrelated that they stand or fall together. And as discussion below brings out, in Wittgenstein's case it is the latter of these outcomes which proves to be the case.

Wittgenstein's answer to the atoms issue is clear—his metaphysically basic elements are his objects. This answer quickly falls out from the following series of remarks:

Objects form the substance of the world.(1921:2.021)

It is clear that however different from the real world an imagined world may be, it must have something—a form—in common with the real world.(1921:2.022)

This fixed form consists of the objects.(1921:2.023)

In other words, for Wittgenstein objects are what constitute the atoms which are arranged ("in a certain fabulously complex way") in the actual world and which can be rearranged (to "mirror the ways our world might have been") to form other possible worlds.

Wittgenstein's answer to the arrangement issue is also clear—what governs alternative arrangements of the objects such that other possible worlds do mirror the way the actual world might have been are the internal forms of those objects:

If things can occur in atomic facts, this possibility must already lie in them.

(1921:2.0121)

If I know an object, then I must also know all the possibilities of its occurrence in atomic facts.

(Every such possibility must lie in the nature of the object.) (last two 1921:2.0123)
Wittgenstein thus contends that the combinations into which objects have the potential to enter are part of the a priori internal natures of those objects. Various combinations of various realisations of those potentials constitute various possible worlds, one of which happens to be the actual world.

The interrelatedness of Wittgenstein's two answers is apparent. If an object's internal a priori form determines with which other objects that object can combine, then every possible state of affairs of every possible world of which that object can be a part must be built into that object right from the start, for otherwise new combinations would evolve in new circumstances, something Wittgenstein denies occurs. But if every object contains all of its possibilities right from the start, then every object is interrelated with every other object, and hence any world containing any object must concurrently contain every object. As a result, it follows that every possible world, including the actual world, must have the same form, or consist of the same objects.

Wittgenstein's combinatorialism thus cashes out roughly as follows. There is a certain stock of objects which forms the metaphysical substance out of which all worlds, whether actual or merely possible, are formed. Each object has built into it as part of its own internal nature all of its possibilities of combination with all other objects. Consequently, all possible worlds are based upon the same logical space, the same sum total of states of affairs, or possible atomic facts. In each world certain of these states of affairs exist, or are genuine atomic facts, with the differences between which states of affairs exist constituting the differences between possible worlds. As noted in §6.2 above, while it is necessary that objects are capable of combining with other objects to form atomic facts, it is merely contingent whether or not they do so, and failure to do so does not affect their status as existent objects. Consequently, any given world is liable to contain objects which are not components of atomic facts of that world.

Such a consequence is open to a rather significant practical challenge, the full impact of which is perhaps more easily appreciated in the context of an example. Let the actual world henceforth be designated 'W_a'. Now consider some possible world W_p. Let W_p consist of only two facts, «Fa» and «Gb»; it is thus the case that in W_p only four different objects, a, b, F, and G, are components of facts of W_p. But it is obvious that the facts of the actual world, W_a, have more than four different objects as components. Let two of the objects which are components of facts of W_a be designated 'c' and 'H'. Now it is reasonable to assume that there are some such objects c and H such that, for example, c can combine with F, a can combine with H, and c can combine with H; in other words, such that «Fc», «Ha», and «Hc» are all genuine states of affairs. According to Wittgenstein all worlds, both possible and actual, have a common form. Hence, c and H are also part.

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4 In this vein see, for example, Tractatus remarks 1, 2.021 and 2.024: “The world is everything that is the case”; “Objects form the substance of the world”; “Substance is what exists independently of what is the case.” This matter is discussed more thoroughly in §6.2. above.
of the form of, that is, objects of $W_p$, even though they are not components of any facts of $W_p$. This, in and of itself, while unusual, might not seem especially problematic; however, when the relation between language and ontology is added, difficulties arise. As discussed in Chapter Six, according to Wittgenstein a proposition is meaningful if it pictures a genuine state of affairs, that is, a legitimate possible atomic fact. Given that $\langle Fc \rangle$, $\langle Ha \rangle$, and $\langle Hc \rangle$ are all genuine states of affairs of all worlds, including $W_p$, ‘Fc’, ‘Ha’, and ‘Hc’ are all meaningful propositions of all worlds, including $W_p$. Now it is easy to accept that ‘Fa’ and ‘Gb’ are meaningful (true) propositions of $W_p$, for they picture facts of $W_p$. It is even relatively easy to accept that ‘Fb’ and ‘Ga’ are meaningful (false) propositions of $W_p$, for they picture recombinations of objects which are components of facts in $W_p$. But what, within the context of $W_p$, is one to make of such propositions as ‘Fc’, ‘Ha’, and ‘Hc’? Specifically, how is one to be certain that the symbols ‘c’ and ‘H’ do indeed represent genuine objects, when, within the context at issue (that is, $W_p$), one is in principle prevented from being acquainted with those alleged objects?

Wittgenstein’s failure in the *Tractatus* to set forth any sort of principle of realisation such that within a given world a genuine object must be part of an existent atomic fact of that world thus has the following consequences. First, Wittgensteinian combinatorialism fails to contain a principle of acquaintance such that one must in principle be able to be acquainted with all of the objects of that world, for given that worlds may contain objects unrealised in facts in those worlds it follows that one cannot be acquainted with those objects. Second, in such a case one has no grounds upon which to distinguish between names of genuine objects unrealised within facts of a given world and pseudo-names of non-existent pseudo-objects. Thus, third, in many cases one in principle cannot distinguish between meaningful and meaningless language. While on a strictly theoretical level one might be willing to bite the bullet and accept this consequence in order to preserve one’s theory, on a practical level an inherent inability to distinguish between meaningful and meaningless language is surely intolerable. The view that a world can contain legitimate states of affairs, some or all of whose component objects are not parts of any atomic facts of that world, surely ought not be
Before considering how Wittgensteinian combinatorialism might profitably be modified, a certain aspect of the objection above benefits from clarification. The objects under discussion here are the simple objects lying at the root of logical atomism, that is, logically simple objects. Some commentators contend that such objects in general are so primitive that none of them are possible subjects of acquaintance; consequently, one may contend, that objects might fail to be part of facts, and hence for that reason fail to be possible subjects of acquaintance, is really no further problem at all. But this objection appears to carry more weight than it really does. Even if it is correct that the nature of logically simple objects precludes them from being direct subjects of acquaintance, it nonetheless remains that they are ultimately units of entities (that is, facts) with which one can be acquainted; hence, they are rooted in what is. In contrast, the objection raised above regarding the inability of certain objects to be subjects of acquaintance involves objects which have no connection with what is, for given that certain objects will not be components of facts of a given world those objects are not "there" at all to be experienced; hence, in this context these objects are not rooted in what is. Consequently, to reduce these two sets of circumstances to comparable cases of inexperiencability is to conflate what are actually cases which differ in kind. It is for this reason that a charge that Wittgenstein's Tractatus objects already cannot be experienced does not reduce the strength of the objection discussed above.

§7.4: Wittgensteinian Combinatorialism Modified

Given the objection discussed, the first step in modifying Wittgensteinian combinatorialism in order to derive a more workable theory of possibility (and hence of negation) is obvious; Wittgenstein's claim that all possible worlds possess the same logical form, and hence the same set of objects, must be rejected. Rather, circumstances demand that what objects are considered to be part of a world vary with that world; to wit, only those objects which are components of facts of a given world are to be considered to be genuine objects of that world. For example, to return to the illustration offered in §7.3, within the context of \( W_p \), a world consisting only of the facts \(<Fa>\)...

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5 Some interpreters might attempt to protect Wittgenstein from this aspect of his combinatorialism by contending that Wittgenstein's objects are intended to be limited to those objects realised in facts of the actual world, and that Wittgensteinian possible worlds are intended to be limited to recombinations of the objects of the actual world such that all objects are part of facts of those possible worlds, with none left unrealised; in other worlds, one might attempt to defend Wittgensteinian combinatorialism by denying that \( W_p \) offered above is a genuine possible world. But while such an attempt might be intuitively appealing, it is not justified by the text. As noted previously, according to Wittgenstein all possible worlds share the same logical form, and this form consists of the objects. But he does not impose any restrictions upon which worlds are possible, nor does he state that all objects must be part of atomic facts. Such an attempt to reinterpret Wittgensteinian combinatorialism is simply unwarranted.
and «Gb», there would "be" only the four different objects, \(a, b, F, \) and \(G\), which are components of facts of \(W_p\). Although \(c\) and \(H\) are objects which are components of facts found in \(W_a\), so long as they are not components of facts of \(W_p\) they are not considered to be objects of \(W_p\). It is thus here proposed that what objects a world contains is a contextual matter, one resolved only via reference to the facts of that world. As Armstrong succinctly puts this point (although with reference to a slightly different issue), "The possible is determined by the actual, and so, saving recombination, cannot outrun the actual."(1989:56) What can be extends no farther than what is, suitably rearranged.

Wittgenstein’s basic combinatorial premise that objects are the basic metaphysical atoms can be retained, but the set of atoms available for combination is not fixed, instead varying from world to world. Such a view of world-atoms as relative rather than absolute in turn raises problems for Wittgenstein’s answer to the arrangement issue, for if the objects with which some object can combine within some world are limited by the facts of that world, then the combinatorial rules governing combinations of objects cannot be a priori internal to those objects. (Wittgenstein’s view of each possible world as populated by every object is henceforth referred to as the ‘all-objects’ view, whereas the view proposed here, that each world is populated only by those objects which are components of facts of that world, is henceforth referred to as the ‘fact-based-objects’ view.) Consequently, a new answer to the arrangement issue must be developed. Fortunately, such an answer is not far to be found. Just as what objects there actually are serves to limit what objects there can be, so too how those objects are actually arranged can be taken to serve to limit how those objects can be rearranged. In other words, the rules governing which arrangements of objects reflect how any given world might have been are the same as those rules which govern which arrangements of objects in any given world are, or are facts. Determination of the rules of factuality concurrently determines the rules of possibility.

Examination of facts as they are presented in the philosophies of the thinkers discussed in the previous chapters of the present work reveals (although with various idiosyncratic shadings) two consistent interrelated points. First, the components of facts always fall into two distinct categories: they are either individuals or they are universals. Second, facts always draw upon at least one component from each of these categories; in other words, every fact involves at least one individual and one universal. This latter point constitutes the basic, fundamental formation rule governing which alternative arrangements of a world’s basic metaphysical elements do indeed mirror the ways
that world might have been. With regard to individual possible arrangements, there are no further limitations on this basic rule. The range of possibilities for any given world consist of the combinations of every individual which is a component of at least one fact in that world with every universal which is a component of at least one fact in that world.

§7.5: Formation Rules, Possibility, and Compossibility

Individual possibilities, that is, individual combinations of objects or states of affairs, are thus governed by the formation rule that all combinations must include at least one universal and one individual; henceforth, let this rule be designated the ‘Ui’ (for Universal/individual) formation rule. The Ui formation rule is fairly commonly recognised, and hence its identification here contributes nothing new. However, when applied to sets of possibilities, that is, possible worlds, there are further implications of the fact-based combinatorialist view which commentators have failed to appreciate, for further examination reveals that on a broader level additional formation rules surface, rules which significantly limit which sets of possibilities can be formed. In other words, if possible worlds are indeed not only to be built from the same “metaphysically basic elements [as those] out of which our universe is composed”, but are also to be structured such that “alternative arrangements of our atoms”, taken both individually and collectively, “mirror the ways our world might have been”, then not only is there the Ui formation rule governing which arrangements of objects are possible, or mirror those found in our world, so too there are formation rules governing which sets of arrangements are compossible, or mirror our world as a whole.

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6 The claim that this formation rule is present in the philosophies of the thinkers discussed above, while generally accurate, needs be qualified somewhat. Parmenides, being a monist, is an obvious exception to this claim. Plato goes to great pains to point out both that genuine language involves combining two distinct sorts of words, nouns and verbs, and that this linguistic combination reflects a corresponding ontological combination (§ 261c6-262e2); however, while his examples in that section of Sophist involve individuals and universals (or forms), much of the dialogue concerns the interrelations of forms, which is somewhat different territory (although not as much as one might think). F.H. Bradley distinguishes two inseparable elements of reality, a “what” and a “that”, an existence and a content (1897:143), but his contents, while akin to universals, are not identified as such. Russell’s ground-level facts clearly involve individuals and universals; however, he also discusses other sorts of facts, such as general facts, which function very differently. Wittgenstein’s facts are ground-level facts, but he does not explicitly distinguish different sorts of objects within their components. All in all, facts consisting of combinations of individuals and universals are common to the majority of the philosophers considered in the present work, but each adds his own particular flavouring.

7 For the sake of simplicity this general formulation will do; however, universals are of two sorts, properties and relations, and relations require two (or more) individuals to complete them rather than just one. As this point does not affect the position being presented here, universals are here generally discussed as if they are simply properties.
Derivation of these additional formation rules builds upon observation of the fact that not only do individuals exemplify various universals through manifestation of their corresponding properties, these universals/properties themselves come in a variety of types or sorts; in other words, while explication of the formation rule for possibilities only requires reference to single-sorted logic, explication of the formation rules for sets of possibilities, or compossibilities, requires reference to many-sorted logic such that properties come in distinct ranges, not all of which are on a par.\textsuperscript{8} Awareness of this point allows for the identification and accommodation of two further classes of formation rules: rules of exclusion and rules of inclusion. Rules of exclusion cover both the long-standing issue of exclusion within a range of properties (including the "notorious instance" of colour incompatibilities discussed at length in Chapter Five above) such that an individual exemplifying a property from some range cannot concurrently exemplify another property from that same range, and the issue of exclusion between ranges of properties such that an individual exemplifying a property from some range cannot exemplify any property from certain other ranges. Rules of inclusion cover the issue of inclusion between ranges of properties such that an individual exemplifying a property from some range must also exemplify some property from certain other ranges.

But before directly considering rules of exclusion and exclusion, it is worthwhile once more to review the ground for such rules. To this end, consider again the \textit{Ui} formation rule. This rule follows from the circumstance that all facts encountered are of the form universal/individual. This circumstance in and of itself does not positively preclude combinations of the form universal/universal or individual/individual; rather, it is the circumstance that such combinations never do occur which is taken negatively to rule out such combinations as being possible. One might counter that it is more than this, that the very logical structures of these two sorts of objects are such that they preclude members of these sorts from combining directly with other members of the same sort. This might be so, but this line of reasoning is nothing other than speculation, the same sort of speculation which contends that every world might contain the same objects, even if some of those objects are not components of facts within some of those worlds. The advantage of the facts-based view over the all-objects view is that it shifts from logical speculation to ontological observation, and hence limits what could be to alternative forms of what is, and in what there are no combinations of the forms universal/universal or individual/individual. It is this which grounds the \textit{Ui} formation rule.

\textsuperscript{8} In this vein see, for example, Timothy Smiley: "The only grammatical difference between this 'single-sorted' [first-order predicate] logic and the corresponding many-sorted logic is that in the latter the variables are split up into a number of different categories or sorts. And the only difference in interpretation is that an interpretation of a many-sorted logic requires the choice not of one domain but of as many domains as there are sorts of variables, each domain serving as range for the variables of one sort." (1962:58)
This same line of reasoning regarding which individual combinations of elements are to be considered as possible within worlds serves to determine which sets of combinations of elements are to be considered as compossible as worlds; in other words, this same reasoning allows for world formation rules as well as fact formation rules. Consider first the matter of properties within a range, that is, first-order properties. It has been widely observed that properties do indeed come in ranges, and that an individual’s exemplifying any property within some range seemingly precludes that individual’s concurrently exemplifying any other property within that same range. The long-standing problem has been to find an adequate ground to hold such exclusion as a law rather than merely an accident. Traditionally, the search for such a ground has been a logical one, and it has been fruitless. However, a shift from an all-objects view to a facts-based view, and consequently a shift from logical to ontological possibility, now provides an answer to this difficult problem. Possibility cannot outrun actuality, and in actuality there are no individuals concurrently exemplifying two different properties from the same range; therefore, in possibility as here considered no single individual can concurrently exemplify two different properties from the same range. Let \( P_{1a} \) and \( P_{1b} \) be two first-order properties within some property range \( R \), and let \( i \) be some individual. It is the case in the actual world that there are no facts \( \langle P_{1a}i \rangle \) and \( \langle P_{1b}i \rangle \); or, put another way, \( \langle P_{1a}i \rangle \nRightarrow \langle P_{1b}i \rangle \). If possibilities are to mirror facts, then so too sets of possibilities are to mirror sets of facts, and hence so too in possible worlds there cannot concurrently be the facts \( \langle P_{1a}i \rangle \) and \( \langle P_{1b}i \rangle \). Let this rule henceforth be designated the ‘\( P_{1a}i \nRightarrow P_{1b}i \)’ formation rule. Thus, unlike the \( \Pi i \) formation rule, which operates on the level of individual possibilities, the \( P_{1a}i \nRightarrow P_{1b}i \) formation rule operates on the level of first-order collective compossibilities.

It is readily apparent that the problem of colour incompatibilities falls under this very situation, and hence that the problem is resolved via one application of the \( P_{1a}i \nRightarrow P_{1b}i \) formation rule. Individual colours are instances of first-order properties, and to consider the problem of colour incompatibility is to consider the problem of whether one individual can exemplify two different colours at the same time and in the same respect. The answer to this question is now obvious: no, one individual cannot do so, for this would involve the concurrent existence of two facts of the form \( \langle P_{1a}i \rangle \) and \( \langle P_{1b}i \rangle \) within one world, and this violates the \( P_{1a}i \nRightarrow P_{1b}i \) formation rule. In effect, the problem of colour incompatibility is a logical problem, but not an ontological one, and hence within the context of the facts-based view it need not even be considered.

It is important that one be clear regarding just what is being affirmed here with regard to the status of the actual world’s (and hence by extension all possible worlds’) formation rules. Within the philosophy of science the question of just what are formation rules, or laws of nature, as they are more popularly known, is a lively one. On the one hand some theorists argue that such
"laws" are nothing more than semi-Humean regularities, while on the other hand other theorists defend a more expansive and more traditional notion which not only generalises over past and present circumstances but also limits what can occur in future ones.\textsuperscript{9} What is being proposed here is more in keeping with the former than the latter. Specifically, what is here being proposed is that for practical purposes, that is, to avoid the sorts of problems arising from a Wittgensteinian lack of limits, the notion of possibility is constrained to extensions of what is actual—indeed, this is the very essence of a combinatorial theory of possibility. But to proceed in this way is not to deny that it is conceivable that what might occur in the future can go beyond what has been the case thus far, it is just to affirm that such "possibilities" will not be considered until they occur. A practical theory of possibility demands practical limits, and those practical limits are here set at the boundaries of the actual. In principle, more can indeed be conceived, but as argued above, mere conception is inadequate as a limit on possibility. It is for this reason that the present work employs an actuality-centric theory of possibility.

With this point cleared, the matter of compossibilities can be considered once more. Just as (as discussed above) first-order properties come in ranges such that an individual's exemplifying any property within some range precludes that individual's concurrently exemplifying any other property within that same range, so too ranges themselves constitute second-order properties such that an individual's exemplifying any property within certain ranges seemingly precludes that individual's exemplifying any property within certain other ranges: in other words, just as first-order properties can exclude each other, so too can second-order properties. (Consider, for example, the second-order properties of being coloured, being shaped, and having aural volume (that is, being loud or quiet). Something that is coloured is not precluded from being shaped, but it is precluded from having aural volume, for things which are coloured are never themselves things which have aural volume—the sounds emanating from them (if any) do, but they themselves do not.) While such exclusions are also commonly observed, the search for a logical ground for this sort of exclusion has also been fruitless. However, once more, a shift from an all objects view to a facts-based view, and consequently a shift from logical possibility to ontological possibility, provides an answer. Possibility cannot outrun actuality, and in actuality there are certain pairs of ranges, certain second-order properties, such that no individual concurrently exemplifies both of those second-order properties; therefore, in possibility as here considered no single individual can concurrently exemplify both of those second-order properties. Let $P_{2a}$ and $P_{2b}$ be two property ranges, or second-order properties, and let $i$ be some individual. It is the case in the actual world that

\textsuperscript{9}This simplistic summation, it must be admitted, does faint justice to the sophistication and breadth of this topic. For fairly recent extended treatments of this matter see Armstrong's own 1983 book \textit{What is a Law of Nature?} and John Carroll's 1994 work \textit{Laws of Nature}. 

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there are, and therefore is the case in possible worlds that there are, pairs of ranges such that there cannot concurrently be the facts \(P_{2a'i}\) and \(P_{2b'i}\); or, put another way, \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow \neg P_{2b'i}\). Let this rule henceforth be designated the ‘\(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\)’ formation rule. Like the \(P_{1a'i} \rightarrow \neg P_{1b'i}\) formation rule, the \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\) formation rule also operates on the level of collective compossibilities. However, unlike the \(P_{1a'i} \rightarrow \neg P_{1b'i}\) formation rule, which operates universally between first-order properties, that is, within ranges of first-order properties, the \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\) formation rule does not operate universally between second-order of properties, that is, between ranges of first-order properties. Rather, only selected second-order properties fall under this rule, thus severely hampering one’s ability to determine in advance exactly when it is the case such that a given \(P_{2a'i}\) does indeed preclude some other given \(P_{2b'i}\).

Rules of inclusion operate in similar fashion. Just as second-order properties are such that an individual’s exemplifying a second-order property sometimes precludes that same individual’s concurrently exemplifying some other second-order property, so too an individual’s exemplifying a second-order property sometimes necessitates that individual’s concurrently exemplifying some other second-order property. (Something that is coloured, for example, not only is not precluded from being shaped, it necessarily is shaped.)\(^{10}\) Letting \(P_{2a}'\) and \(P_{2b}'\) be two second-order properties and letting \(i\) be some individual, it is the case in the actual world that there are, and therefore is the case in possible worlds that there are, second order properties (that is, pairs of ranges) such that there must concurrently be the facts \(P_{2a'i}\) and \(P_{2b'i}\); or, put another way, \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow \neg P_{2b'i}\). Let this rule henceforth be designated the ‘\(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\)’ formation rule. Like the \(P_{1a'i} \rightarrow \neg P_{1b'i}\) and the \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\) formation rules, the \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\) formation rule also operates on the level of collective compossibilities, or possible worlds. However, unlike the \(P_{1a'i} \rightarrow \neg P_{1b'i}\) formation rule, which operates universally between first-order properties, the \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\) formation rule, like the \(P_{2a'i} \rightarrow P_{2b'i}\) formation rule, does not operate universally between second-order properties. Rather, only selected second-order properties also fall under this rule, thus severely hampering one’s ability to determine in advance exactly when a given \(P_{2a'i}\) does indeed necessitate some other given \(P_{2b'i}\).

\(^{10}\) One might attempt to deny this association on the grounds either that something coloured might be extended without limit, such as the blue sky, or have its shape constantly change, such as a flickering flame, in either of which case what is coloured seems not to have a shape. Such counterexamples might be dealt with by changing the second-order property involved from that of being shaped to that of being extended, and the main point remains. However, this move eliminates different first-order properties falling under the second-order property, for there is only one way of being extended, and so one might prefer to deal with this objection by countering that, on the one hand, “entities” extended without limit are excluded (indeed, their status as entities might be open to challenge), while entities whose shape constantly changes do have a particular shape at each moment in time, they just do not have a single constant shape through time.

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The key to all of this reasoning is acceptance of Lycan's basic combinatorial conception of "other possible worlds" as "alternative arrangements of our atoms which mirror the ways our world might have been". This world reflects certain formation rules, rules such as \( U_i, P_{1a1} \rightarrow P_{1b1} \), and (in certain cases) \( P_{2a1} \rightarrow P_{2b1} \) and \( P_{2a2} \rightarrow P_{2b2} \). Any possible world which is going to mirror this world must reflect these formation rules, with the result that certain logically possible worlds will be ontologically ruled out. The bottom line is as follows. As discussed above, the all-objects view allows for a wide range of individual possible combination of objects with which one ought not be concerned. Such combinations are logically possible, but they have no connection with what is the case, they do not mirror ways which (individual arrangements within) our world might have been; that is to say, they are not ontologically possible. It is for this reason that the facts-based-objects view is preferable, for it limits possibility to arrangements of individual components with which one can, at least in principle, be acquainted, thus providing a safeguard against the excesses of the unrestricted all-objects view. In parallel fashion, the all-objects view allows for a wide range of sets of possible combinations of objects with which one also ought not be concerned. Such sets of combinations are also logically possible, but they too have no connection with what is the case, they do not mirror ways which (sets of arrangements of) our world might have been; that is to say, they too are not ontologically possible. But in that case they need not be the subject of philosophical speculation.

§7.6: The Facts-Based View and Negation

With the above limitations on possibility in place, a new general theory of negation can now be presented which both retains Wittgenstein's insight into negation as a relation between the possible and the actual and employs the facts-based view's limitations on possibility. The statement 'Fx' is meaningful within the context of possible world \( W_p \) if the complex \( Fx \) is a state of affairs of \( W_p \), and \( Fx \) is a state of affairs of \( W_p \) if \( F \) and \( x \) are elements of facts in \( W_p \). If 'Fx' is meaningful then 'Fx' is true if \( Fx \) is a fact of \( W_p \), and '¬Fx' is true, or 'Fx' is false, if \( Fx \) is not a fact of \( W_p \).

Further clarification of the general view of the nature of negation here offered can profitably be achieved within the context of consideration of a view of negation put forth by Fred Wilson in a critical notice of R. Grossmann's book *The Categorical Structure of the World*. In that work Wilson outlines an account of negation which both propounds a view similar to that just proposed and raises important further questions regarding the nature of possibility.

Wilson begins his consideration of negation by stating, "We do have acts of perceiving which have negative states of affairs as their intentions, as when we observe that Peter is not present in the room" (1986:171), thus granting a starting point similar to that of Russell's in his *Inquiry Into*
Meaning and Truth, wherein Russell asserts, “In a word: it is possible, in a certain sense, to notice what is not there as well as what is there.”(1940:164) Wilson next signals his agreement with Grossmann’s rejection of such ontological accounts of negation as incompatibility, negative exemplification, or negative properties. Grossmann’s move at this point is to offer the alternative ontological conclusion, negation “is an ineliminable ontological category of its own” which manifests itself in negative facts, a move very similar to that made by Russell in his paper “On Propositions”, wherein he proposes that facts simply have either of two “ultimate and irreducible” qualities, positive or negative.(1919:287) Wilson refuses to follow Grossmann (and Russell) down this path, however, for he suggests, one “may well want to grant something like” an ineliminable ontological category of negation, “without going on to agree with Grossmann that this implies that besides all the non-negative facts in the world, every true negated statement also represents a fact.”(1986:171) But this retort in turn raises the question, how can such an ontological category of negation be accounted for if one denies that there are negative facts?

Wilson’s answer to this question is, “granting ontological status does not always consist in admitting an entity.”(1986:172) He illustrates and defends this answer by postulating a “very simple” possible world consisting of two facts, «Fa» and «Gb». He then suggests, “For representing states of affairs in this world, we use sentences of the form (*) fx where ‘f’ is replaced by a term referring to a property and ‘x’ is replaced by a term referring to an individual”(1986:172),11 thus proposing a representational formation rule equivalent to ‘Uf’. At this point Wilson advances from the representational to that which is represented, for he next asserts, “Given what we perceive, (‘) represents a pattern in what is perceived.”(1986:172) He then moves one step further by introducing unrealised but possible combinations of perceived entities (with this emphasis on perceived entities placing him firmly in the facts-based view): “of course, other combinations of entities we perceive are not given in perception but are compatible with (*))”(1986:172). In other words, in this simple world the entities a, b, F, and G are all perceived, but only in the combinations Fa and Gb; however, the combinations Fb and Ga are “combinations of entities we perceive [which] are not given in perception but are compatible with [the pattern in what is perceived, that is] (*)”.

Thus far Wilson has covered territory similar to that discussed above; however, from here he next moves on to what is surely still a crucial question: what is the ontological status of merely possible states of affairs? The move from Wittgenstein’s all-objects view to the facts-based view eliminates concern regarding objects which are merely conceivable, that is, which are not components of any facts. But the issue remains of the status of merely possible states of affairs which are composed solely of objects which are components of facts of the world in question but which are not themselves realised as facts; to wit, what, in Wilson’s case, is the ontological status of Fb

11 With (*) here not itself operating on the form fx, but rather serving simply as a reference for that form.
and Ga? As Wilson remarks, in the context of his simple world Fa and Gb "are actual: they are given in perception. But [Fb and Ga] are not actual: they are merely possible. What, however, does the latter mean?"(1986:172)

Wilson begins by stating what it does not mean to describe Fb and Ga as 'merely possible': "It does not mean that, besides the two facts, Fa and Gb, there are also two other entities, namely, the two merely possible facts Fb and Ga. Or rather, we are not required so to construe it." (1986:172) Another option is available:

We can instead proceed as do Humeans with respect to causation, and treat the formation rule (*) as a law, which on the one hand simply describes a pattern discovered in the world we perceive but on the other hand places constraints upon the combinations which the mind can think. In this sense, there is no possibility apart from the capacity of the mind to move beyond the actual; and what counts as possible rather than ill-formed nonsense is determined by the constraints on thought which are imposed by the patterns that thought discovers in the entities which it experiences. (1986:172-73)

Wilson's answer here clearly has two distinct aspects: on the one hand there is the pattern in what is perceived; on the other hand there is the mind thinking additional combinations in conformity with that pattern, with the pattern in what is perceived determining which possibilities can be thought.12 He continues on, "It is not true, then, that in the small world that we are considering, Fa and Gb are facts while Fb and Ga as mere possibilities are separate entities in their own right ('possible facts'). Rather, the ontological ground of those possibilities consists in the observed pattern ('constant conjunction') that individuals always exemplify properties and properties are always exemplified by individuals."(1986:173) Wilson's use here of the phrase 'observed pattern' again intertwines his two aspects, for he does not refer simply to the pattern in the world, but rather to that pattern as it is observed, once again implying the need for a perceiver, an observer, a thinker.

Wilson summarises his view on negation (or at least this part of it) as follows:

Possible states of affairs are described by strings, combinations of names and predicates, which are compatible with the formation rule (*). Actual states of affairs or facts are those possibilities which occur in the picture of the world that we draw on the basis of our perceivings. Those strings are true, we say, that describe facts; and those strings are false that describe states of affairs that are merely possible. Our

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12 Whether or not what combinations the mind can think are indeed actually constrained by perceived patterns in the world is an interesting but, for present purposes, tangential issue, and hence is not here further pursued. Rather, the focus here is on the role of the perceiver with respect to how one is to understand the nature of the pattern in the world.
capacity to establish a formation rule that permits us on the basis of perception to unequivocally divide possibilities into the actual and the merely possible is not only psychological but depends upon the perceived world having a certain pattern; this pattern is the ontological ground of the two-valuedness of the world. Again, what is important is not an entity but rather the patterns we discover in the entities we perceive. Negation now enters in an obvious way, as (to speak succinctly) the object-language reflection of the metalinguistic predicate 'false.' That is, (again to speak succinctly), the two valuedness of the world permits, via the usual truth-table definitions, the introduction of negation into our object-language description of the world. Negation thus has an ontological ground, namely, the two valuedness of the world, but that ground is, contrary to Grossmann, not an entity. (1986:173-74)

In this description Wilson takes for granted the psychological role inherent in the perceptual side of things, and directs his energies upon arguing for acceptance of patterns in what is perceived, his focus being to contend that mere possibilities have their roots in such patterns and hence need not be entities. This focus is entirely in accord with the present work. However, Wilson's construal of the essential role of the mind in "generating" possibilities introduces a whole new factor, one which must be examined carefully. However, despite the prominent role he assigns it, in his critical notice Wilson does not provide further discussion of the psychological in his account of negation;13 for this reason further attention to this matter here shifts to consideration of a (seemingly) kindred position offered by Nicholas Rescher.

In his paper "The Ontology of the Possible" Rescher argues that possibilities must be taken to be mind-dependent. He there casts his central question in a form which fits perfectly with present purposes, asking, 'What is the ontological status of nonexistent possibilities?', and then clarifying his focus by adding, "the question is not one of the existential status of the proposition [e.g.] 'that the cat is on the mat' (qua proposition), but rather one of the existential status of the state of affairs that this proposition claims to obtain." (1973:168) In his answer to this question Rescher clearly rejects any sort of attempt to grant mind-independent ontological status to non-existent states of affairs, instead following the entirely different tack that possibilities per se have being only as mind-dependent entities:

It is my central thesis that by the very nature of hypothetical possibilities they cannot exist as such, but must be thought of: They must be hypothesized, or imagined, or assumed, or something of this sort. For, unlike real acts, hypothetical ones, by

13 Although such omission is easily explained, given that the work in question is not intended as an expression of his own views but rather as a critical review of those of Grossman, and hence certain aspects of his discussion are bound to remain underdeveloped.
their very nature, lack, \textit{ex hypothesi}, that objective foundation in the existential order which alone could render them independent of conceiving minds. \textit{(1973:167-68)}

Rescher formalises his argument in favour of this “possibility idealism” in the following manner:

(1) The natural world of mind-independent reality comprises only the actual. This world does not contain a region where nonexistent or unactualized possibilities somehow “exist.” Unactualized hypothetical possibilities \textit{ex hypothesi} do not exist in the world of objective reality at all.

(2) Nor do unactualized possibilities exist in some mind-accessible Platonic realm of mind-independent reality existing wholly outside the natural world order.

(3) The very foundation for the distinction between something actual and something merely hypothetically possible is thus lacking in a “mindless” world. Unactualized hypothetical possibilities lack an independent ontological footing in the sphere of objective reality: They can be said to “exist” only insofar as they are \textit{conceived}, or \textit{thought of}, or \textit{hypothesized}, and the like. For such a possibility to be (\textit{esse}) is therefore to be conceived (\textit{concipi}). In consequence, possibility is mind-dependent. \textit{(1973:170-71)}

In (1) Rescher apparently reasonably rejects the option that mere possibilities, that is, possibilities qua possibilities, can have being. In (2) he rejects the Meinongian option that possibilities “are” despite not being.\textsuperscript{14} Consequently, he concludes in (3), the only option left is that possibilities “exist” only insofar are they are conceived. Building on this base, Rescher then spells out a rather serious further implication of his position:

On such a view, then, mere or strictly hypothetical possibilities are mind-made. Does it follow from this position that if there were no men—or rather no rational minds—there would be no unreal possibilities? Are we driven to a possibility-idealism as the logical terminus of the line of thought we have been tracing out? These questions must, I believe, be answered affirmatively. If the conceptual resources that come into being with rational minds and their capabilities were abolished, the realm of supposition and counterfact would be abolished too, and with it the domain of unrealized, albeit possible, things would also have to vanish. \textit{(1973:172)}

\textsuperscript{14} In his interesting and influential paper “The Theory of Objects” Alexius Meinong contends, “the totality of what exists . . . is infinitely small in comparison with the totality of the Objects of knowledge” \textit{(1904:79)}, and goes on to argue that an object’s having characteristics or properties is independent of its having being or non-being. \textit{(1904:82)} (However, it is worth adding that Meinong himself ultimately admits that it is as if an object “must have [some more primitive form of] being in the first place, before we can raise the question of its being (\textit{Sein}) or non-being (\textit{Nichtsein}).” \textit{(1904:84)}

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In other words, without rational minds only what is would be something; what could be, "the domain of unrealized, albeit possible, things", would be reduced to nothing.

On the surface Rescher's position appears to be a reasonable and coherent one; however, further consideration reveals that matters are not so straightforward as one might suppose. According to Rescher mere possibilities are held to exist "only insofar as they are conceived, or thought of, or hypothesized, and the like". Taken literally this makes what possibilities there are strictly a contingent and accidental matter, for out of the myriad of combinations one might conceive, only those one actually does conceive "can be said to 'exist'"; but surely it is mere caprice which combinations are actually conceived, hardly a very acceptable ground for distinguishing the possible from the non-possible. Even if one holds that possibility is mind-dependent, one will most likely want a broader application than mere actual instances of conception underlying possibility. That is to say, it is not being conceived that ought determine what is possible, it is being conceivable which ought determine what is possible, thus making use of the full range of depth of rational minds.

But while defining possibility in terms of what is conceived yields too little, defining it in terms of what is conceivable raises its own difficulties. Specifically, as Raymond Bradley rightly points out, a shift from being conceived to being conceivable "invites the charge of circularity. An explanation of the ontological status of unactualized possibilities that requires reference to unactualized possibilities of conception is no explanation at all."(1992:197) This is surely correct, for the difference between the realm of what is conceived and the realm of what is conceivable consists just in those possible conceptions which are not actualised. Rescher's position thus falls between a rock and a hard place: if possibilities are limited to what are actually conceived, too much is left out, but if possibilities are extended to include what might be but are not conceived, the account is circular. All in all, a conceptualist approach fails to provide an adequate account of the status of merely possible states of affairs.

§7.6.1: The Rejection of Possibilities as Entities

The view that possibilities are to be taken to be some sort of entities is entirely problematic. Rescher successfully argues against taking possibilities to be mind-independent entities; however, his own proposal that they be taken to be mind-dependent entities also flounders. Somehow possibilities seem to be something less than full-blooded entities, yet something more than nothing; but what, then are they?. In his paper "Possibility" Max Black observes, possibilities, even if something, are not quite like the somethings which populate the actual world; rather, they seem to be somehow shadowy, an imitation of reality rather than a part of it. Discussing possibilities in the context of possible moves one might make in a game he contrasts possible moves with actual moves and observes, making an actual move "is like selecting one card from a pack. There is the pack of
possible moves—the impossible ones having been discarded—from which I must draw just one.” (1960:122) And somehow or other, the selected card differs ontologically from the unselected ones:

It is as if the cards in the pack were in monochrome, while the one I choose becomes vividly colored as I draw it. As if my choice made the “mere” possibility become fully real. My choice, as it were, brings the sleeping possibility to life, as the prince did when he kissed the sleeping beauty. The realized possibility comes to life while the others slumber on. (1960:122)

But while picturesque, Black’s description here cannot stand even as a marker towards an adequate account of possibility for a reason already encountered: to follow this path is to defend once more some sort of “levels of existence” doctrine, an option which is at best as problematic as the interpretation of possibilities as full-fledged entities, and which is at worst simply incoherent.

What is needed is a new way of thinking, a complete break from the notion of possibilities as entities. Black next points out, at the centre of his cards analogy “is the idea of a direct comparison between two things—the actual move and the possible one—the two conceived as differing only in the presence or absence of some quality or character.” (1960:122) He then goes on to suggest, it is this very idea which is in error: it is

the mistake of treating ‘possible X’ and ‘actual X’ as coordinate species of a single genus. These are mistakes about the “logical grammar” of the word ‘possible,’ traceable to an over-simplified and faulty conception of the ways in which we use that word and its cognates, and the ways in which they differ from the uses of adjectives such as ‘thin’ and ‘bloodless’ that apply to material objects. (1960:126)

The answer, in other words, does not lie in trying to figure out what odd sort of “things” possibilities are—things which “are”, but which are other than actual. Rather, the answer lies in treating possibility as operating on a different level than actuality.

§7.7: Possibilities as Outcomes of Operations

The key to an alternative interpretation of possibility can be found by returning to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus. As discussed in Chapter Six, Wittgenstein’s “fundamental thought” in the Tractatus is “that the ‘logical constants’ do not represent. That the logic of the facts cannot be represented.” (1921:4.0312) Put another way, a molecular proposition, that is, a proposition involving a logical constant, has no content beyond its component atomic propositions and the logical constant governing their interrelation. As commentator Herbert Hochberg points out, the truth value of a molecular proposition can be determined solely from the truth values of the atomic propositions and from the truth table for the logical operation involved. (1969:296-97)

Hence, there is no reason (within the context of Wilson’s “very simple” world) to postulate such a molecular fact as, for example, «Fa & Gb», for such a fact would be devoid of any content beyond
that already present in the facts `<Fa>` and `<Gb>` and the operation “&” (that is, conjunction). Purported conjoined facts really are nothing more than the sum of the individual facts and the operation.

Possibilities may be understood in just such a vein. A possibility has no content beyond its component objects and the formation rule governing their interrelation. There is no reason to postulate such a possible fact as, for example, “Fb”, for such a fact would be devoid of any content beyond that already present in the objects F and b and the operation of `Ui` (that is, the universal/individual formation rule). More generally, purported possible facts really are nothing more than the sum of the individual objects and the operation. Black correctly points out, “Given a description of a position of the pieces on the board, and the accepted rules of the game, a conclusion about the legality of a given move follows by deductive inference. That a given . . . move is possible in a given . . . position is an analytic proposition.” (1960:117) In other words, there is no debate about the outcome of plugging the components into the operation, there is no disagreement about the product which results from combining the facts `<Fa>` and `<Gb>` with the operation “&”; determination of the result, “`Fa & Gb`”, is analytic. So too there is no debate about the outcome of plugging the component objects F and b into the operation “Ui”, for here too determination of the result, “`Fb`”, is also analytic. Possibilities are thus not to be taken to be “things” at all. Rather, they are outcomes whose legitimacy is grounded by the status of both their component objects and their operation formation-rule as fact-based.

In the Tractatus Wittgenstein observes,

> From [colloquial language] it is humanly impossible to gather immediately the logic of language.

> Language disguises the thought; so that from the external form of the clothes one cannot infer the form of the thought they clothe, because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized.

> The silent adjustments to understand colloquial language are enormously complicated. (all 1921:4.002)

This point applies to possibility no less than to any other aspect of ordinary language. The very wording of the phrase ‘the possible fact `Fx`’ suggests that `Fx` is some sort of entity, some sort of fact, but a fact of a very odd and mysterious sort; it is this suggestion which has led so many philosophers to pursue this seemingly obvious but ultimately misleading path. Rather, what is needed in order to resolve this mystery is to recast this phrase in logically perspicuous language, for once this is done

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15 It is certainly recognised that in many cases the order of the components within the operation will affect the outcome of the operation; however, this aspect does not carry over to possibility, and so is ignored here.
the temptation to treat possibilities as entities is overcome. The phrase ‘the possible fact \( Fx \)’ ought more properly be expressed as ‘it is possible for \( F \) and \( x \) to combine in accordance with the formation rule for facts, “\( U! \)”’. Seen in this light, so-called “possible facts” are recognised as what they really are: not ontological complexes, as are actual facts, but mere logical complexes, which might or might not have ontological correspondents.

In similar fashion it is now clear just how misleading the phrase ‘state of affairs’ is revealed to be. The descriptions ‘state of affairs’ and ‘existent state of affairs’ lend themselves very nicely to Black’s card analogy: there is the deck of cards, the (possible) states of affairs, out of which some few are selected and which magically become “existent”, a mysterious but wondrous transmogrification from an ontologically poverty-stricken realm to a rich one. But in fact matters are nothing like that. Mere states of affairs are not like existent ones, only undemourished; rather, they are nothing like existent ones. Mere states of affairs, indeed, states of affairs per se, are logical outcomes. Existent states of affairs, or facts, are ontological entities. To describe the two with identical noun phrases which differ only with respect to their modifiers is to demonstrate just how right Wittgenstein is that colloquial language disguises thought.

Possibilities, or states of affairs, are the logical outcomes of world-objects combined in accordance with the formation rules governing how those objects can combine. Facts are those world-object combinations which exist, or are the case. Both possibilities and facts are described by representational strings, combinations of names and predicates, but this surface similarity masks an enormous underlying difference, the very difference between meaning and truth. A string is meaningful if it describes a possibility; a string is true if it describes a fact.

§7.8: The Representation of Negative Language

Recognition of the dual usage of representational strings just noted not only allows for a perspicuous account of the nature of negative language, it also brings out just how negation fits in with other aspects of the world. Let a string be considered to be describing a possibility when it is preceded and followed by the mark ‘\( \cdot \)’; thus, for example, \( \cdot Fx \cdot \) cashes out as ‘\( Fx \) is a possibility’. Let a string be considered to be describing a fact when it is preceded and followed by the mark ‘\( \ast \)’; thus, for example, \( \ast Fx \ast \) cashes out as ‘\( Fx \) is a fact’. It is now the case that negative language, both true negative and false positive (and false negative, for that matter) can be made explicit without having to employ some sort of negation sign in the account (which would obviously render such an account circular). Rather, affirmation and denial can be indicated via the inclusion and exclusion of appropriate string-signs. Assume, for example, Wilson’s world consisting only of the facts \( \langle Fa \rangle \) and \( \langle Gb \rangle \). The string ‘\( \cdot Fa \cdot \ast Fa \cdot \)’ would be interpreted as affirming that the string ‘\( Fa \)’ describes both a possibility and a fact; given that this is correct, the string would be true. Since this string conveys all of its content via inclusion, it may be considered to be “positive”; hence, in this context
"Fa* • Fa*" would be a true positive string. The string "Fa*" would be interpreted as affirming that the string 'Fb' describes a possibility but denying (due to the exclusion of the appropriate sign) that the string 'Fb' describes a fact; given that this too is correct, this string would also be true. Moreover, since this string conveys part of its content via exclusion, it may be considered to be "negative"; hence, in this context "Fa*" would be a true negative string. The string "Fa* • Fb*" would be interpreted as affirming that the string 'Fb' describes both a possibility and a fact; given that this is incorrect (for there is no fact such that Fb), the string would be false. Since this string conveys all of its content via inclusion, it too may be considered to be "positive"; hence, in this context "Fa* • Fb*" would be a false positive string. Finally, the string "Fa*" would be interpreted as affirming that the string 'Fa' describes a possibility but denying (due to the exclusion of the appropriate sign) that the string 'Fa' describes a fact; given that this is incorrect (for there is a fact «Fa»), the string would be false. Since this string conveys part of its content through exclusion, it too may be considered to be "negative"; hence, in this context "Fa*" would be a false negative string.

Moreover, it is easy to see how certain conventions could serve to simplify matters further. For example, affirmative strings could be indicated by consolidating the appropriate signs, such that, for example, the string "Fa* • Fa*" could be reduced to the string "• Fa*". Or, matters could be simplified ever further. One could only employ one sign in either case, with the use of the possibility sign, "•", signifying affirmation that the string in question describes only a possibility and not a fact (or "mere possibility"), and the use of the fact sign, "*", signifying affirmation that the string in question describes both a possibility and a fact.16 Thus, for example, given Wilson's world, the string *Fa* would affirm that Fa is both a possibility and a fact, and hence would be true and positive, the string *Fb* would affirm that Fb is only a possibility and not a fact, and hence would be true and negative, the string *Fb* would affirm that Fb is both a possibility and a fact, and hence would be false and positive, and "Fa*" would affirm that Fa is only a possibility and not

16 This last notation is facilitated by the circumstance that it is incoherent to maintain that a string describes a fact but not a possibility.
a fact, and hence would be false and negative.17

§7.9: Possibility and Negative Language

From the account of negative language spelled out in this chapter it follows that negation is precisely as eliminable an aspect of the world as is possibility, for the two are exactly on a par. Moreover, given the combinatorial theory of possibility discussed above, a theory which grounds possibility in nothing more than the components of the actual world, that is, fact-based objects and fact-based and world-based formation rules, it follows that in the end negation and possibility may reasonably both be considered to be ontologically, though not linguistically eliminable. The world contains neither possibilities nor negation; however, it does not follow from this circumstance that the two are mind-dependent. Rather, both possibility and negation, while not themselves aspects of the world, are nonetheless world-dependent in that they are the logical extensions of the world itself, for they involve, one the one hand, possibility as nothing more than “alternative arrangements of our atoms which mirror the ways our world might have been” and on the other hand, negation as comparison of those alternative arrangements with “the actual arrangement [of] . . . the world as it is.” (both Lycan 1979:304-05) In neither case need the world suffer ontological inflation in order to account for the notion at issue. Negative language is not really language which directly says “how things are not” (to use Wittgenstein’s Notebooks phrase), but rather language which indirectly either affirms or denies how things are compared to how they could be. Seen in this way, the so-called “mystery of negation” turns out in the end not to be so mysterious after all.

17 To illustrate this matter in more concrete terms consider once more Plato’s Sophist and Theaetetus. Let it be held that the world contains the individual Theaetetus (representationally, ‘th’) and the first-order positional properties of sitting (representationally, ‘S’) and of flying (representationally, ‘F’) (although one might argue that flying is an odd sort of “position”, but for present purposes let this pass); as such, according to the “P_{la} = \sim P_{lb}” formation rule since S and F fall under the same range they exclude each other. Given the fact «Sth», the (true) positive string “Sth’ affirms that it is both a possibility and a fact that Theaetetus sits (that is, asserts, ‘Theaetetus sits’), the (true) negative string “Fth’ affirms that it is only a possibility and not a fact that Theaetetus flies (that is, asserts, ‘Theaetetus does not fly’), the (false) positive string “Fth’ affirms that it is both a possibility and a fact that Theaetetus flies (that is, asserts, ‘Theaetetus flies’), and the (false) negative string “Sth’ affirms that it is only a possibility and not a fact that Theaetetus sits (that is, asserts, ‘Theaetetus does not sit’).

The correct answer to McDowell’s sophist (discussed in §3.3 above) is now finally clear. Theaetetus’ being in flight is indeed “not anything at all”, but that is to be understood only ontologically, and that is not enough to make the statement ‘Theaetetus flies’ meaningless, for the meaning of that statement depends only upon whether Theaetetus and flying are objects in the world, which they are, and whether they can conjoin in accordance with the Ul formation rule, which they can. It is only the truth of the statement which is dependent upon ontology, not its meaning, and it is just this ontological failure which renders the statement false. And it is now clear that this outcome is not problematic, exactly what McDowell’s sophist challenged one to show.

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Conclusion

THE NATURE OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE

As the present work clearly brings out, the problem of negative language has a long and elaborate history, going back at least as far as fifth-century B.C. Greece, and continuing on to the present day. From its earliest appearance in Parmenides’s poem “On Nature” the problem threatened the most complete abolition of all speech, and in its guises two and a half millennia later it remained a philosophical conundrum of the first order, the mystery of just how it is that one can say what is not. The goal of this thesis was not only to explore the history of this mystery, but to probe potential solutions in an effort to find a philosophically satisfactory account of negative language which minimises the ontological implications involved. That has been done: it is time to tally the results.

In Part I the ancient history of the problem was reviewed, and the problem of negation was seen to be closely linked to the problem of complexity, of the one and the many. Despite Parmenides’s protestations to the contrary, in Parmenides Plato demonstrates that pluralism is conceptually unavoidable, and hence what is must also in some sense not-be; in Sophist he goes on to flesh out this not-being in the form of The Other, a form spread through everything which is, for everything which is is other than, or is-not, everything else which is. As Plato also points out, complexity extends not just to ontology but also to representation, to language; while words simply name, statements do more, for they both pick out a subject and say something about that subject. It is this dual function of statements which allows for falsity and hence introduces a distinction between meaning and truth.¹

In Part II the context of discussion shifts from ancient Greece to modern Britain, and focus shifts from how negation can occur to where in the world it is rooted. In his work The Principles of Logic F.H. Bradley contends that negation occurs in the world indirectly via a fundamental incompatibility between properties, while in his lectures “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism” Bradley’s follower-turned-critic Bertrand Russell alternatively suggests that negation occurs in the world directly via negative facts. By handling matters in these ways both thinkers contend that negative language has significant ontological implications.

¹ Given the prominence of this point in this important Platonic work, it is surprising (to say the least) to find that when in his lectures on logical atomism twenty three hundred years later Bertrand Russell similarly draws attention to the point that propositions are not names for facts, he adds, “"It is quite obvious as soon as it is pointed out to you, but as a matter of fact I never had realized it until it was pointed out to me by a former pupil of mine, Wittgenstein."”(1918:187) Clearly Russell would have benefited from paying greater attention to his important predecessor.
In Part III attention shifts to the innovative proposal of Russell's one-time student Ludwig Wittgenstein: negation is not itself a feature in the world at all, but rather consists in the relation between possibility and actuality. While Wittgenstein's own combinatorial theory of possibility proves problematic due to further assumptions he makes, in the last chapter an alternative version of the combinatorial theory is developed which avoids such complications. This version successfully accounts for possibility in terms of nothing more than that which is already present in the actual world, being dependent simply upon the objects contained in that world and the formation rules determining how those objects combine. While Wittgenstein's references to possible atomic facts and possible states of affairs are ontologically misleading, he is certainly on the right track with his description of logical space as the sum total of all possibilities, for this metaphor perhaps captures most closely the ultimate view of the present work that what is itself ultimately forms the axes which determine what can be.

It has been here argued that the problem of negation ultimately boils down to the problem of what is possible. In closing, then, consider once more Plato's *Sophist*. In that work the Eleatic Stranger observes that it is the musician who knows which notes can combine and which cannot, the grammarian who knows which letters can combine and which cannot. The philosopher is both akin to and greater than these craftspeople, however, for the philosopher deals with nothing less than being itself: it is the philosopher who "knows how to distinguish according to kind which things are able to commune with each other and which are not" (S 253e1-2); put another way, it is the philosopher who know the formation rules, the rules which determine what is possible. The essence of philosophy may thus be held to be the understanding, not just of what is, but also of what can be, and as the problem of negative language involves these very notions it follows that this problem is not just philosophical, but in some sense lies at the very heart of philosophy itself.
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