The Unity of Plato's *Sophist*
Between the Sophist and the Philosopher

Plato's later dialogue, the *Sophist*, is deemed one of the greatest works in the history of philosophy, but scholars have been shy of confronting the central problem of the dialogue. For Plato, defining the sophist is the basic philosophical problem: any inquirer must face the 'sophist within us' in order to secure the very possibility of dialogue, and of philosophy, against sophistic counter-attack. Examining the connection between the large and difficult philosophical issues discussed in the *Sophist* (appearance, image, falsehood, and 'what is not') in relation to the basic problem of defining the sophist, Dr Notomi shows how Plato struggles with and solves all these problems in a single line of inquiry. His new interpretation of the whole dialogue finally reveals how the philosopher should differ from the sophist.

Noburu Notomi is Associate Professor in Philosophy at Kyushu University, Japan

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Between the Sophist and the Philosopher

NOBURU NOTOMI

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For my family

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PREFACE

Philosophy is said to have been born in Ancient Greece. Yet we do not know how to understand this. Does it mean that people living before, or outside, ancient Greek civilisation, such as the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Celts, lived without philosophy? Western civilisations since then have all in this respect followed Greek tradition, and still use words derivative of φιλοσοφία (*philosophia*) (with a few exceptions, such as German 'Weltweisheit' and Dutch 'wijsbegeerte'). In the 1860s, after Japan was opened up to the Occident, one Japanese thinker of the enlightenment era, Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897), introduced Western civilisation and encountered a new branch of wisdom called philosophy, which he expected to play a role in integrating a hundred disciplines of human knowledge into one. He saw the essential meaning of 'philosophy' as lying in its Greek origin, and coined a new word 'tetsu-gaku', 哲学 (originally, 'ki-tetsu-gaku', 希哲学 which means the science aspiring to wisdom), instead of adopting any Confucian or Buddhist vocabulary (cf. Havens 1970 and Hasunuma 1987). Now 哲学 is a common word for philosophy not only in Japanese ('tetsu-gaku') but also in Chinese ('zhé-xué') and Korean ('철학'). This, however, cannot mean that Eastern civilisation, before the introduction of Western civilisation, did not cultivate profound philosophical thinking or scientific thought. On the contrary, Ancient India investigated cosmology and logic, Ancient China developed highly theoretical systems of moral and political teaching, and Neo-Confucianism, after the twelfth century, systematised thinking about nature in terms of *Li* and *Chi*. Nevertheless, these studies were not unified as 'philosophy', so that Nishi Amane, who once was a Confucianist scholar, found in 'philosophy' a new and peculiarly

Western way of thinking. We still confront the question of what 'philosophy' is.

In my view, it was between Socrates and Plato that a firm basis for the Western tradition of philosophy was laid down. After Plato, philosophy came to mean 'to think in a certain Greek way', or especially, to live an examined life as had Socrates and to think universally and critically as had Plato. It is also since Plato, as we shall see, that the original meaning of philosophy has been in a way neglected and concealed under many layers of history; the question about the sophist has hardly been dealt with, although, for Plato, philosophy is not possible without serious confrontation with sophistry. The question of what philosophy is depends primarily upon examination of what Plato thought of philosophy.

Examination of Plato's notion of philosophy will answer the question of whether and, if so, how we can take philosophy as a universal intellectual activity of human beings. For to rediscover the original meaning of philosophy in Plato is to show the possibility of our doing philosophy in dialogue with him. I do not mean by this that Plato's thought alone constitutes philosophy, nor that Greek philosophy alone is universal. Rather, Plato's philosophy is just one of the great foundations, and it is incomprehensible independently of its historical context. There can be many forms and styles of universal thinking. I believe, nonetheless, that proper understanding of philosophy for Plato will reveal universality in its particular context. It is only serious concern about one's present condition that can produce universal thinking. Again, it is only when we appreciate someone's serious concern for the present that we can understand something universal in it, or something essentially common to us. If we are really to be concerned about our own present, we need, on the other hand, to be aware of its particularity or peculiarity, and must go beyond that. It is therefore only when we realise our own peculiarity that our concern for this present will become universal. There is no universality separate from the time we live in, nor is there any possibility of finding it in our own

present only. We need a mirror between the present and the past: a mirror between our predecessors' philosophy and our own.

We need dialogues over differences: dialogues between us, modern readers, and Greek philosophers of the fourth century BC; and dialogues within ourselves. For philosophical thinking, as Plato put it in the *Sophist*, is nothing other than inner dialogue. To that purpose, I try to show the possibility and the essence of philosophy, by going back to its Greek or Platonic origin. I try to elucidate the meaning of philosophy, not take it for granted. While people engage in, or believe they engage in, philosophy without asking what philosophy really is, most have lost sight of philosophy, ignorant of its peculiarity *and* universality. I focus on Plato's *Sophist* as the culmination of Greek philosophy and representative of its essence, but I hope my research will finally reveal how we can understand philosophy beyond its local Western or Greek context. This will be a dialogue between the present and the past and, therefore, contribute to how we nowadays can bring about understanding between East and West.

My first seminar in Greek philosophy was on Plato's *Statesman* given by Professor Shinro Kato at the University of Tokyo from 1985 to 1987. After that exciting but perplexing dialogue, Professor Kato chose the *Sophist* as the text of his seminar at Tokyo Metropolitan University from 1987 to 1990. These seminars were my initiation into Plato's later philosophy. Having worked on the *Sophist* for a few years, I was still struggling to see how to deal with this extremely difficult and fascinating dialogue. I had realised the philosophical importance of the question about the sophist, but I felt a completely new approach was needed. When I went to Cambridge, I had a vague idea that the concept of appearance must be the key to reading the *Sophist* as a whole. Lively and intensive discussion with my supervisor, Professor Myles Burnyeat, who has long been concentrating on the *Theaetetus* and examining the concept of appearance as one of its main themes, gradually developed and confirmed my original idea, and the wide scope of historical and philosophical research

on ancient Greek civilisation practised at the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge University, led me to believe that this concept is one of the most important in ancient philosophy, from the Presocratics to the Hellenistic philosophers. By these paths I finally reached my present position. The present work is a revised form of a Ph.D. dissertation entitled 'The Appearances of the Sophist' (submitted to Cambridge University in April 1995).

On my Ph.D. dissertation, my examiners, Professor Michael Frede and Dr Malcolm Schofield, gave several valuable comments, in the light of which I have extensively improved the argument. I must confess that of their important suggestions, there are two points I have not met. Professor Frede emphasised the triadic structure of the philosopher, sophist, and statesman, and he suggested that, without considering the relationship to the last, the first two would never become clear. It is doubtless true, but that requires another huge task of investigating Plato's notion of philosopher-ruler. Promising that I will examine it in a future work, I avoid entering into that topic at present. Dr Schofield also suggested that the concept of irony (discussed in the final chapter) would become more illuminating if I were to examine it more fully, particularly in relation to Socratic irony. Yet, that project also is postponed. The aim of this work is to clarify the topic with which the *Sophist* is mainly concerned, and I do not discuss other hotly debated topics, such as the senses of the verb 'to be', and the dialogue's relation to the theory of Forms.

My teachers and friends at Cambridge University, particularly Professor Geoffrey Lloyd, who was my supervisor in the Michaelmas Term, 1991, and Professor Myles Burnyeat, my supervisor since 1992, have always encouraged me and given generous comments and advice on my work and life. This work would never have been written without the intellectual inspiration of those devotees of ancient philosophy. My friends, Verity Harte, Mary-Hannah Jones, and Gabriel Richardson, excellent young scholars, carefully read my early draft and gave me valuable comments on both the style and

content of this work. Richard Mason, Tatsumi Niijima, Charles Kahn, Mary-Louise Gill, David Sedley and Kenji Tsuchiya read parts of the earlier versions of my dissertation and discussed them with me. Michael Frede, Malcolm Schofield, Job van Eck, Kim Nam Duh and Michael Reeve read my Ph.D. dissertation or the later versions, and very much helped my revision. Derek Birch corrected the style of the whole thesis. Finally, I again wholeheartedly thank Myles Burnyeat, who has always been my first, last, and best reader. Conversation with these people has tremendously improved my initially vague argument and added many important points.

納富 信留

NOTOMI Noburu

NOTES

The edition of Plato's text I use is the Oxford Classical Text (edited by John Burnet, 1900–1907; for the first volume, I also consult the new edition by E. A. Duke, W. F. Hicken, W. S. M. Nicoll, D. B. Robinson, and J. C. G. Strachan, 1995). I refer to the text by Stephanus' page numbers. The translation of Greek texts is my own, but readers may find it helpful to consult modern English translations of the *Sophist* (e.g. Cobb 1990 and White 1993). The references are given by the author's name and year (see Bibliography).

As for the third-person pronoun, I usually use 'he' for stylistic reasons, but that should be understood as neutral with regard to gender.

Abbreviations

Plato

Alc. 1 *Alcibiades 1*
Alc. 2 *Alcibiades 2*
Ap. *Apology of Socrates*
Crat. *Cratylus*
Ep. *Epistles*
Euthd. *Euthydemus*
Gorg. *Gorgias*
Hipp. Mj. *Hippias Major*
Hipp. Mi. *Hippias Minor*
Lach. *Laches*
Lg. *Laws*
Lys. *Lysis*
Men. *Meno*
Menex. *Menexenus*

Parm. *Parmenides*
Phd. *Phaedo*
Phdr. *Phaedrus*
Phlb. *Philebus*
Plt. *Statesman*
Prot. *Protagoras*
Rep. *Republic*
Sph. *Sophist*
Symp. *Symposium*
Thg. (Plato), *Theages*
Tht. *Theaetetus*
Tim. *Timaeus*

Xen. Xenophon
Mem. *Memorabilia*

Arist. Aristotle
Cat. *Categories*
Int. *On Interpretation*
Top. *Topics*
SE. *Sophistical Refutations*
Phys. *Physics*
DA. *On the Soul* (*De Anima*)
Meta. *Metaphysics*
EN. *Nicomachean Ethics*
EE. *Eudemian Ethics*
Rh. *Rhetoric*
Po. *Poetics*

Hdt. Herodotus

Thuc. Thucydides

DL Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*

Plotinus
Enn. *Enneads*

Proclus

In Alc 1	*Commentary on Plato's* First Alcibiades (ed. Westerink 1954)
In Crat.	*Commentary on Plato's* Cratylus (ed. Pasquali 1908)
In Parm.	*Commentary on Plato's* Parmenides (ed. Cousin 1864)
In Rep.	*Commentary on Plato's* Republic (ed. Kroll 1899, 1901)
In Tim.	*Commentary on Plato's* Timaeus (ed. Diehl 1903, 1904, 1906)

Hermias

In Phdr.	*Scholia on Plato's* Phaedrus (ed. Couvreur 1901)

Olympiodorus

In Alc. 1	*Commentary on Plato's* First Alcibiades (ed. Westerink 1956)
In Gorg.	*Commentary on Plato's* Gorgias (ed. Westerink 1970)
In Phd.	*Commentary on Plato's* Phaedo (ed. Westerink 1976)

Damascius

In Parm.	*Dubitationes et Solutiones, de Primis Principiis, in Platonis* Parmenidem (ed. Ruelle 1889)
In Phd.	*Commentary on Plato's* Phaedo (ed. Westerink 1977)
In Phlb.	*Lectures on Plato's* Philebus (ed. Westerink 1959)

Anonymous

Anon. Prol.	*Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (ed. Westerink 1962)

DK H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, I-III* (Berlin, 6. Aufl. 1951–52)

ABBREVIATIONS

LS A. A. Long & D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers, Volume 1: translations of the principal sources with philosophical commentary; Volume 2: Greek and Latin texts with notes and bibliography* (Cambridge, 1987)

LSJ H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, & H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, with a supplement (Oxford, 1968)

TLG *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*

DIVISION OF THE *SOPHIST*