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ETYMOLOGY IN PLATO'S *SOPHIST*

I start with a passage from Plato's great dialogue on philosophical logic, the *Sophist*. The unnamed Visitor from Elea is interrogating young Theaetetus, in search of an agreed definition of 'sophist'. On a comparatively benign, indeed almost Socratic, portrayal of the sophist's role, a sophist is some kind of specialist in κάθαρσις or 'purging' – specifically, the purging of false beliefs, and especially of the conceit that one knows what one in fact does not know. Making a case for this analysis of the sophist requires dividing and subdividing the skill of purging, until the specifically sophistic kind is reached. And that for its part requires, among its preliminary steps, distinguishing moral from intellectual badness, since purging must always be the removal of something bad, but it is only what is intellectually bad that sophistry might aspire to purge. The following points are agreed:

- The kinds of badness that may need to be purged divide into those of the body and those of the soul (227 c 7 – d 1).
- The soul's badness itself further divides into two kinds: (a) soul's counterpart to bodily sickness, and (b) soul's counterpart to bodily ugliness (227 d 13 – 228 a 2).
- Of these, (a) psychic sickness is στάσις, an internal disorder of the soul's components; (b) psychic ugliness is ἀμετρία, 'disproportion' or 'lack of measure' (228 a 4 – b 10).

This last distinction is a difficult one to grasp, but the Visitor makes some effort to clarify it. (a) Psychic sickness turns out to be πονηρία – wickedness, or moral badness. (b) Psychic ugliness will differ from psychic sickness in being not another kind of sickness, but a specifically intellectual failing, ignorance. Here is how the Visitor starts to clarify the distinction (228 b 2–10):

> ΞΕ. Τί δέ; ἐν ψυχῇ δόξας ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ θυμὸν ἡδοναῖς καὶ λόγον λύπαις καὶ πάντα ἀλλήλοις ταῦτα τῶν φλαύρως ἐχόντων οὐκ ᾐσθήμεθα διαφερόμενα;

ΘΕΑΙ. Καὶ σφόδρα γε.
ΞΕ. Συγγενῆ γε μὴν ἐξ ἀνάγκης σύμπαντα γέγονεν.
ΘΕΑΙ. Πῶς γὰρ οὔ;
ΞΕ. Στάσιν ἄρα καὶ νόσον τῆς ψυχῆς πονηρίαν λέγοντες ὀρθῶς ἐροῦμεν.
ΘΕΑΙ. Ὀρθότατα μὲν οὖν.

V: Next, inside the soul of people in a defective condition haven't we
noticed the clash of opinions with appetites, of anger with pleasures, of
reason with pains, and of all of these things with each other?
T: Very much so.
V: And the whole lot of these must of necessity belong to a single kind?
T: Of course.
V: So if we call wickedness the disorder and sickness of the soul, we will
be speaking correctly?
T: Yes, entirely correctly.

Down to here, the Visitor has simply been reminding Plato's readers
of a thesis thoroughly familiar to them, especially from *Republic* book
4, that all forms of moral badness consist in disorder among the various
drives making up the soul, drives whose natural and healthy state would
be one of mutual harmony. But he now adds to that familiar thesis about
moral badness a quite distinct characterization of intellectual badness.
Here is his opening move (228 c 1–6):

ΞΕ. Τί δ'; ὅσ' <ἂν> κινήσεως μετασχόντα καὶ σκοπόν τινα θέμενα πει-
ρώμενα τούτου τυγχάνειν καθ' ἑκάστην ὁρμὴν παράφορα αὐτοῦ γίγνηται
καὶ ἀποτυγχάνῃ, πότερον αὐτὰ φήσομεν ὑπὸ συμμετρίας τῆς πρὸς
ἄλληλα ἢ τοὐναντίον ὑπὸ ἀμετρίας αὐτὰ πάσχειν;
ΘΕΑΙ. Δῆλον ὡς ὑπὸ ἀμετρίας.

V: Next, whatever things partake in motion, and set up some target which
they are trying to hit, but every time they strive to do so overshoot it
[παράφορα αὐτοῦ γίγνηται, 228 c 3] and miss, are we going to say that
the result is produced by proportionality with each other, or on the
contrary by disproportion?
T: By disproportion, obviously.

The description of this disproportion is worded so as not to focus
narrowly on mental processes. In fact the subject expression, 'whatever
things partake in motion' most obviously calls to mind ballistic sports,
especially archery. When an arrow misses its target, the archer's failing
does not lie in the sort of internal disorder that the Visitor would equate
with sickness. Instead, it lies primarily in a lack of measured co-ordination
or proportion between the various protagonists: the archer's arms, the
bow, the arrow and the target.

Once readers have grasped this generic point about the causes of
kinetic failures, they are ready to apply it to the mental kinetics specific
to the learning process. The next exchange runs as follows (228 c 7–8):

ΞΕ. Ἀλλὰ μὴν ψυχήν γε ἴσμεν ἄκουσαν πᾶσαν πᾶν ἀγνοοῦσαν.
ΘΕΑΙ. Σφόδρα γε.

V: Now, we know that whatever ignorance any soul has, it has
unwillingly.
T: Very much so.

This thesis, that all ignorance is involuntary, is recognizably Platonic.[1]
Although its role in the present argument is somewhat opaque, the Visitor's
point seems to be that, since no soul wants to be ignorant, it follows that
every soul is aiming for knowledge. Thus all ignorance will consist in, or
result from, a failed effort to know, and none from inertia. And the ensuing
analysis of ignorance will be universally applicable (228 c 10 – e 5):

ΞΕ. Τό γε μὴν ἀγνοεῖν ἐστιν ἐπ' ἀλήθειαν ὁρμωμένης ψυχῆς, παραφόρου
συνέσεως γιγνομένης, οὐδὲν ἄλλο πλὴν παραφροσύνη.
ΘΕΑΙ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.
ΞΕ. Ψυχὴν ἄρα ἀνόητον αἰσχρὰν καὶ ἄμετρον θετέον.
ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔοικεν.
ΞΕ. Ἔστι δὴ δύο ταῦτα, ὡς φαίνεται, κακῶν ἐν αὐτῇ γένη, τὸ μὲν
πονηρία καλούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν, νόσος αὐτῆς σαφέστατα ὄν.
ΘΕΑΙ. Ναί.
ΞΕ. Τὸ δέ γε ἄγνοιαν μὲν καλοῦσι, κακίαν δὲ αὐτὸ ἐν ψυχῇ μόνον
γιγνόμενον οὐκ ἐθέλουσιν ὁμολογεῖν.
ΘΕΑΙ. Κομιδῇ συγχωρητέον, ὃ νυνδὴ λέξαντος ἠμφεγνόησά σου, τὸ δύο
εἶναι γένη κακίας ἐν ψυχῇ, καὶ δειλίαν μὲν καὶ ἀκολασίαν καὶ ἀδικίαν
σύμπαντα ἡγητέον νόσον ἐν ἡμῖν, τὸ δὲ τῆς πολλῆς καὶ παντοδαπῆς
ἀγνοίας πάθος αἶσχος θετέον.

V: And ignorance, when a soul striving towards truth travels beyond
understanding [παραφόρου συνέσεως γιγνομένης, 228 d 1], is nothing
other than delirium [παραφροσύνη, d 2].
T: Absolutely.
V: Then a soul that lacks understanding must be reckoned ugly and
unbalanced.
T: It seems so.
V: So there are evidently these two kinds of badness in it, one of which
is what ordinary people call wickedness, because its being a sickness of
the soul is quite obvious.

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[1] The same motif recurs barely a page later, 230 a 5.

> T: Yes.
> V: And the other one they call ignorance, but because it occurs only inside the soul they are unwilling to agree that it is a kind of badness.
> T: I have to agree entirely on a point which I doubted when you said it earlier, that there are two kinds of badness in the soul, and that cowardice, intemperance and injustice are jointly to be considered a sickness inside us, while suffering from a great deal of wide-ranging ignorance is to be reckoned ugliness.

As Theaetetus' words here confirm, the argument we have witnessed so far has been aimed at an improved understanding of the distinction between moral and intellectual badness, so that the further divisions that will follow can concentrate on the purging of the latter, specifically intellectual, kind of badness. According to the Visitor, intellectual vice's existence is not widely acknowledged. His proffered explanation is that, being entirely contained within the soul, it does not manifest itself behaviorally in the way that moral vices do. Plato's deeper reason would no doubt be that this intellectual vice is one that all ordinary people suffer from, making it seem to them to be the norm rather than some kind of failure.

To support his contention that we are here dealing with a distinct class of badness, the Visitor offers just one item of evidence. He appeals to the term παραφροσύνη, 'delirium' or 'derangement'. Its etymology reveals the imbalance to which it refers to be a specifically intellectual one. For the Visitor represents παραφροσύνη as a contraction of **παράφορα συνέσεως**, 'travelling beyond understanding': **παρα-φορα cυν-ε-σεως = παραφροcύνη**. The etymology indicates that at least one disorder of the soul, delirium, consists in an intellectual mistake, that of aiming for the truth (as everyone does) but, in one's haste, overshooting it and missing. That is what ignorance really is: not a mere absence of knowledge, but lack of the proper controls when seeking it.

I shall refer to this as a 'Cratylean' etymology. In Plato's *Cratylus* it is a ubiquitous feature of the huge series of etymologies proposed by Socrates that a word's underlying meaning is excavated, not by listing its superficially obvious components, but by detecting below these a more condensed, complex and profound message. For example, at *Cratylus* 411 d φρόνησις, 'wisdom', is not analysed into its obvious components, the verb stem φρονε- and the regular termination -σις, which would jointly mean something like 'thinkfulness'. Instead (or perhaps additionally) it is decoded as concealing the description φορᾶς καὶ ῥοῦ νόησις, 'conceiving motion and flow'. This is taken by Socrates to have been encoded in it by the ancient name-makers as a way of conveying their own conviction that reality should be understood, in Heraclitean style, as constituted all the way down by change, motion or flux. Likewise here in the *Sophist*,

παραφροσύνη is not decomposed into the obvious παρα + φρονε- + συνη, meaning roughly 'beyond-thinking-ness': that is, going beyond the proper limits of rational thought. Instead, in the style of the *Cratylus*, the word's first three syllables are re-analysed as παρα-φορ-, 'travel beyond', and -σύνη, its termination, as abbreviating a further word, σύνεσις, 'understanding'.

It is not surprising that this linguistic manoeuvre has, although occasionally noticed in passing, drawn very little comment from Platonic scholars. After all, the *Sophist* is a serious work on philosophical logic, whereas the *Cratylus* has for the last two centuries been read as a text designed by Plato to ridicule the fanciful etymological practices that these examples illustrate so well. For my part, especially in my 2003 book *Plato's Cratylus*, I have fought to resist any such reading of the latter dialogue. In Plato's eyes, I believe, each word really does encode a covert meaning in the way the *Cratylus* etymologies depict. Expert decoding by etymological methods can teach us why this or that word has achieved currency in the language, thanks to the skills of the νομοθέτης or 'custom setter' who originally devised it and succeeded in putting it into circulation. The reason why each word to a lesser or greater extent *feels* right for naming its particular object is that it was designed to encode just such a description of that object, whether or not today's ordinary users of the language are capable of seeing how it accomplishes this.[2]

At the opening of the *Cratylus* (385 a 6 – b 1)[3] Hermogenes protested that the words ἄνθρωπος ('man') and ἵππος ('horse') could just as well be interchanged, and if they were anyone would happily call a horse ἄνθρωπος. Socrates implicitly disagrees (399 b 6 – c 6). The reason the word ἄνθρωπος succeeded, against all its potential competitors, in becoming the name of the species man is that the human species is the only one to combine sense-perception with rationality. Hence man is quite properly described as 'reviewing what he has seen', ἀναθρῶν ἃ ὄπωπε, condensed into the three syllables ἄν/θρω/πος. Only an expert in the domain that was known as 'correctness of names', ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων, could have told us why this word feels so right. But once we have heard Socrates' decoding, we are meant to appreciate immediately why, contrary to Hermogenes' contention, ἄνθρωπος could never have achieved currency as a name for the species horse, or indeed for anything else but human beings.

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[2] Cf. English 'smarmy'. Whatever its historical origin, the reason it works is surely that it expands into something like 'smug-charm-y'.

[3] Cf. the reprise at 433 e, where the examples are 'large' and 'small'.

That Plato really does think the discipline of etymological decoding has the explanatory potential displayed at length in the *Cratylus* is, it seems to me, strongly confirmed by the passage of the *Sophist* which I have been examining. There the deep etymology of παραφροσύνη, far from being invoked for satirical purposes, is the Visitor's sole proffered ground for a division, that between moral and intellectual vice, which plays a key role in his current attempt to demarcate the meaning of 'sophist'.

This observation may, however, appear to open up a new gap between the two dialogues. One salient conclusion drawn by Socrates in the *Cratylus* was that the study of things' names cannot reveal the nature of those things, but only, at best, what the original name-makers thought that nature to be. How then can the same linguistic method be relied on in the *Sophist* to teach us something about the true nature of vices?

In the *Cratylus*, Socrates' doubts about the reliability of the original name-makers are focused mainly on their poor construction of the moral vocabulary (411 a 1 – 420 e 3), in which they chose to concentrate on instability, ignoring the all-important underlying fixity of values. This negative judgement reflects Plato's conviction that ethics is an area of philosophy in which his and Socrates' predecessors had shown scant understanding. Socrates manifests no such doubts about, for example, their ancestors' highly skilful naming of sun and moon, presumably because astronomy was a domain concerned with change, not rest, and in which the Presocratics had already excelled.

The Visitor's proposed decoding of παραφροσύνη is Cratylean not merely in the sense that the word is revealed as condensing a different and richer informational content than appears on the surface, but also in the way that the revealed deeper meaning conveys a message specifically about motion. According to Socrates in the *Cratylus* the original name-makers believed in a Heraclitean world of radical flux, and encoded this belief into the Greek language, along with a cognitive vocabulary that associated successful understanding with always following the motion and flow wherever they might lead. That the new etymology, that of παραφροσύνη, belongs to the same family as those in the *Cratylus* seems overwhelmingly likely. But by a subtle difference between the two we are enabled to work out that the Visitor from Elea has marginally outperformed Socrates, tracing in the ancestral Greek vocabulary a more nuanced, and one might add Platonically more advanced, relationship between motion and truth than Socrates had found in it. In the *Cratylus* Socrates had already made some headway by showing how the existing cognitive vocabulary, despite its constant evocation of flux, does after all hint at a role for stability, for instance in the case of ἐπιστήμη (437 a 2–8), which he now thinks echoes not ἕπεσθαι 'to follow' but ἱστάναι, 'to stand'. However, in the

Sophist we will learn from the Visitor that stability is not really the chief mark of knowledge. For later in the dialogue (248 a – 249 d) he will be challenging certain people he calls 'the Friends of the Forms' (τοὺς τῶν εἰδῶν φίλους), who think that true being is characterized by total stability. These people are recognizable as preaching the radical dualism of stable Forms and unstable particulars that Plato himself seemed already to favour when writing the *Cratylus*. In criticizing the Friends of the Forms, the Visitor will insist that true being must include life, thought and soul, all of them subject to interaction and therefore to change.

By bearing in mind this ensuing refinement of Platonic principles, we are enabled to see that the Visitor's new etymology, although unmistakably from the same family as those in the *Cratylus*, is that little bit better informed metaphysically. In his etymological decoding of παραφροσύνη, by treating the termination σύνη as if it were the beginning of σύνεσις, 'understanding', Plato is borrowing from the *Cratylus* (412 c 7–8), where δικαιοσύνη, 'justice', was analysed into δικαίου σύνεσις, 'understanding of the just'. And this link in turn implicitly invokes the *Cratylus*' decoding of σύνεσις itself (412 a 4 – b 1), according to which it is the noun cognate with συν-ιέναι, 'to go with', so that σύνεσις means keeping up with the flow. In the light of this we can loop back to the *Sophist* and appreciate even further the Visitor's decoding of παραφροσύνη. Understanding, his analysis confirms, is itself a kind of motion, process or change. No doubt the name-makers invoked in the *Cratylus* had glimpsed this fact. But on further examination of their linguistic legacy it has become clear that understanding is above all a *measured* process of change. Ignorance – now identified with παραφροσύνη – does not consist in the opposite state, that of remaining mentally immobile. It consists in a failure to observe due measure in the learning process.

This same redefinition of ignorance as a failure to observe measure, we should note, also has an implied bearing on the methodology of definition by division introduced by the Visitor, because the need not to rush ahead when dividing, but to keep pace with the complex nature of the *definiendum*, is strategically at the centre of that method.

Even in other dialogues Plato will occasionally call on Cratylean-style etymologies to support a philosophical contention. A good example is in the *Laws* (714 a, cf. *Pol.* 297 a–b), where his conception of law, νόμος, is elaborated with help from the etymology νοῦ διανομή, 'distribution of intelligence'. In his eyes, the better informed you are philosophically, the more chance you have of recognizing philosophical subtleties implied by others, the original name-makers included. This does not require the name-makers to have been infallible. But their intellectual achievement in inventing a language, and the further venerability conferred by their

sheer antiquity, makes them always worth consulting – as, thanks to etymological expertise, one can indeed learn to do.

I am not suggesting that Plato ever recanted his verdict in the *Cratylus* that studying things through their names is less satisfactory than studying the things themselves in their own right. But from this verdict it by no means follows, as many have too quickly inferred, that the former method, that of studying things through their names, is a thoroughly misconceived enterprise, of no heuristic value whatsoever. The *Sophist* confirms that Plato does not intend any such corollary.

The case I have discussed so far, that of παραφροσύνη, may on the other hand seem no more than marginal to the *Sophist*'s main enterprise, which is the definition of 'sophist', to be followed by that of 'statesman' in the ensuing dialogue and, apparently, that of 'philosopher' in a further dialogue which, if so, was never written. But there is a second Cratylean etymology in the *Sophist*, and this time it will take us much closer to the heart of Plato's enterprise.

The announced method of definition is that by division, or rather by repeated division and subdivision of a genus until the precise species sought has been marked off from all others. This leads to a series of seven competing definitions of 'sophist', of which so far we have focused just on the sixth. The final division, which analyses the sophist as the practitioner of a particular kind of imitation, is clearly the dialogue's major philosophical achievement. But that impressive climax does not entail that even this final division is philosophically a complete success. To see why, we must go back to the beginning.

To introduce his method of division, the Visitor offers a simple illustration of it. As he remarks (218 c–e), before undertaking a large and onerous task one should first sharpen one's skills on a smaller and easier example. Hence he suggests that, to prepare the ground for defining the sophist, they should first use the same method, that of division, to define angling (ἀσπαλιευτική). The angling example is chosen as something 'lowly' (φαῦλος), a choice of term which may remind us of a common methodological procedure in the Platonic search for definitions. A 'lowly' example will normally be a simple one, where the right definition will be not only quickly arrived at but also instantly recognized, because its object is already entirely familiar and understood. In the *Theaetetus* (the dramatic prequel to the *Sophist*) Socrates explained to the young Theaetetus what he expected of a successful definition of knowledge, and to help make his point he used the 'lowly' (147 a 1–2) example of mud, which can safely be defined as 'earth mixed with liquid' (147 c 3–6). A further example occurs in the *Laches*, where the definition of

'speed' serves Socrates as a simple model for the more demanding task of defining what courage is (192 a–b).

One reason why sophistry may prove harder to define than angling is that, as Socrates hints to the Visitor in their opening discussion (216 d 3 – 217 a 9), it can be quite hard to tell whether the people of the Visitor's hometown Elea, at least back in the great days of Parmenides and Zeno, made a clear distinction between the terms 'sophist', 'statesman' and 'philosopher'. He means, I think, that even the venerable Parmenides, philosopher and legislator though he was, can seem like a sophist as well.[4] It could then prove a hard task to discover the essential nature of sophistry, beneath what may turn out to be a veneer of conflicting cultural accretions. A merit of angling, it seems, is that unlike sophistry it has a simple core-nature, not much obscured by diverse cultural viewpoints.

The division proceeds as follows. Expertise is divided into productive and acquisitive; acquisitive expertise into commercial and imposed; imposed acquisitive expertise into combat and hunting; hunting into that of the inanimate and that of animals; hunting of animals into that of terrestrial and that of aquatic animals; hunting of aquatic animals into that of winged and that of underwater kinds; and so on, until the specific expertise of catching fish by a hook drawn upwards from below is isolated.

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[4] At the dialogue's opening Socrates was introduced to the unnamed visitor from Elea, described as 'a companion of the circle of Parmenides and Zeno, and very much a philosopher' (216 a 3–4). Socrates queries whether this visitor really is a philosopher, and not some higher being, but is reassured on the point. He then turns the spotlight onto the label 'philosopher', observing that philosophers can at times give the impression of being statesmen or sophists: he therefore wants to hear from the Visitor how the three terms – 'sophist', 'statesman' and 'philosopher' – were used back in his home town of Elea, by this past tense apparently meaning back in the days of Parmenides. Were the three treated as equivalents, or as corresponding to two, or even three, distinct kinds (216 c 8 – 217 a 9)? Parmenides had been a brilliant philosopher, as Socrates recalls from his youthful encounter with the great man (217 c), but had also differed markedly from Socrates in serving his city as a lawmaker (Parmenides P 20–22 L.-M.). In addition, at least some of Parmenides' philosophical arguments could easily incur the charge of sophistry, as they arguably do in the *Sophist* itself. For his follower Zeno, the celebrated author of paradoxes, this danger was of course even greater. Hence when in the opening scene Socrates asks how the Eleatics used the three terms 'sophist', 'statesman' and 'philosopher', I think he is genuinely puzzled as to whether or not they were operating with the same semantic distinctions as have been familiar to him in his own day at Athens. The fact that in the Visitor's sixth division the sophist will sound almost indistinguishable from Socrates, at Athens a paradigmatic philosopher, confirms that the risks of intercultural confusion are severe, but at least the Visitor's distinctions are subject to approval by Theaetetus, himself an Athenian.

There is no doubt that this is done in a partly jocular spirit, because in the following passage (221 c – 223 b) a pointedly analogous first attempt will be made to define sophistry as another kind of expertise in hunting, namely the hunting of young men. But at the same time an entirely serious point is made, one that implicitly addresses the old paradox raised in Plato's *Meno*: in a definitional inquiry, it was asked, even if you were to hit upon the right answer, how would you know that it *was* the right answer? The Visitor no doubt has that problem in mind as he sums up the final stages of his definition (221 b 6 – c 3):

> ἁλιευτικῆς δὲ (sc. μέρος) πληκτικόν, πληκτικῆς δὲ ἀγκιστρευτικόν· τούτου δὲ τὸ περὶ τὴν κάτωθεν ἄνω πληγὴν ἀνασπωμένην, ἀπ' αὐτῆς τῆς πράξεως ἀφομοιωθὲν τοὔνομα, ἡ νῦν ἀσπαλιευτικὴ ζητηθεῖσα ἐπίκλην γέγονεν.

> Of fishing (ἁλιευτική) one part is strike-fishing (πληκτικόν); and of strike-fishing, hook-fishing (ἀγκιστρευτικόν); and of this, the part concerned with a strike drawn upwards from below (τὸ περὶ τὴν κάτωθεν ἄνω πληγὴν ἀνασπωμένην) – the name being derived by imitation of the actual action – is how 'angling' (ἀσπαλιευτική), the object of our present inquiry, has come to be called.

In short the very term for 'angling' announces its place in the complex taxonomy of skills, by decomposing into ἀ(νω)σπα-(ἁ)λιευτική, 'upward-draw fishing', condensed into ἀσπαλιευτική. One may suspect that the term is, here too, deliberately presented as closely echoing the sound pattern of the name assigned to its immediate genus, ἀγκιστρευτικόν, 'hook-fishing'. If so, the name as a whole presents angling as 'upward-draw hook-fishing'.

The Visitor and young Theaetetus seem to agree that this definition has been most successfully demonstrated (221 a 7 – b 2, c 4–5), and it is hard to doubt that in their eyes its confirmation lies to a considerable extent in the Cratylean etymology with which the series of divisions concluded. When you have been systematically through the divisions, you can see that they are correct, partly because in the light of them you now for the first time understand why it is that ἀσπαλιευτική feels like exactly the right word for angling.[5]

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[5] Despite a lack of confirmatory textual evidence, I think we must assume that ἀσπαλιευτική, or at least such cognates as ἀσπαλιευτής, was current by the mid 4th century, when the *Sophist* was written. True, the Visitor does freely invent a lot of terms in this dialogue's divisions, but at 218 e he and Theaetetus agree that ἀσπαλιευτής is already familiar.

To repeat, the angling definition is set up as exemplary of how the method of division should establish the target definition, that of sophistry, and Cratylean etymology, we have seen, plays a key role in the confirmatory phase of this process. By contrast none of the seven definitions of the slippery 'sophist' which now follow sets a similar seal – etymological or otherwise – on its own final division. Of course the divisions are formulated in full awareness of the obvious fact that 'sophist' is derived from σοφός, 'wise' (see 268 b 10 – c 4, and cf. 221 d 4), but that is common knowledge, assumed rather than exploited in the heuristic process. If σοφιστής were to be subjected to a more ambitious, Cratylean etymological analysis, that might require revisiting and reviewing the findings of *Cratylus* 412 b 1–8, where σοφία was hesitantly identified as an obscure Laconian coinage. There is no sign that Plato wishes to follow that path, or, if he does so wish, that he has found a means of doing so.

I end with the following thought. The difference between the successful 'angling' definition, with its concluding etymological seal, and the divisions subsequently attempted for sophistry, which lack any corresponding seal, constitutes a covert warning: for all their rich informativeness, none of these seven divisions should be treated as altogether conclusive. When, 47 Stephanus pages later, he ends the discussion without having adjudicated among the seven, the Visitor is heeding his own Cratylean redefinition of ignorance as παραφροσύνη, 'rushing ahead of understanding'. If instead he had hastily endorsed any one of the divisions, even the last and most impressive of them, such impetuosity would have been enough to convict him of *real* παραφροσύνη.[6]

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D. Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus* (Cambridge 2003).

The etymological method displayed at considerable length in the *Cratylus* is widely assumed to be intended by Plato as an object of ridicule. In my 2003 monograph *Plato's Cratylus* I resisted this assumption. In the present paper I seek to strengthen my case by arguing that in Plato's major work on philosophical logic, the *Sophist*, the same method is re-employed twice, at 221 a–c and 228 b–e, for entirely serious purposes.

Принято считать, что этимологический метод, пространно описанный в *Кратиле*, служит Платону предметом насмешек. Автор уже оспаривал этот тезис в своей монографии о платоновском *Кратиле*. В настоящей статье приводятся дополнительные аргументы: в *Софисте* – труде, специально посвященном философской логике, – этот метод применяется дважды (в 221 a–c и 228 b–e) во вполне серьезных рассуждениях.