

Gorgias on Not Thinking: A Philosophical Defense

Note to Princeton Classical Philosophy Conference readers:

*Thank you for your interest in my paper. When Hendrik asked whether I had something to present that might fit this year's theme, he encouraged me to share a draft in progress rather than something more polished. For better or for worse, I have taken on this suggestion. You may notice that some footnotes and references still need to be fleshed out further. I also would like to acknowledge that this is part of a broader project I am embarking on with my colleague Michael Roche, a philosopher of mind at Idaho State, on Gorgias' epistemology and philosophy of mind. Thanks to Mike for numerous helpful conversations about this material, especially when it comes to understanding the argument in the second part of *On What-Is-Not* as reported by Sextus. Thanks also to Verity Harte and Gabriel Shapiro for very helpful comments on an earlier draft, and to Joshua Billings for serving as the official commentator for the upcoming event.*

*I am also appending translations of both paraphrases of *On What-Is-Not* that I am preparing for the *Public Philosophy in Classical Greece* volume edited by Mirjam Kotwick and Christopher Moore. Many thanks to the editors for some initial comments on these translations.*

I look forward to discussing the paper with you at the colloquium. I also very much welcome any comments or suggestions on the paper or on the translations by email: evanrodriguez@isu.edu

Introduction

According to Gorgias, you can't always think what you want. In fact, you can't think anything that is. At least, so he argues in his treatise *On What-Is-Not* or *On Nature*. The standard view is that this treatise contained arguments that nothing can be known; in this way, Gorgias was in good company among other ancient Greek thinkers who contrasted knowledge with mere opinion and worried about the possibility of ever attaining higher forms of epistemic achievement.¹ But the evidence suggests that he argued for a stronger conclusion by denying an even more basic grasp of what-is. This should come as no surprise given how radical some of the other conclusions of the treatise are: that communication is impossible and that nothing even *is* in the first place. But the force of his arguments concerning our own individual access to what-is—granting that there is something we might come to think about or know—have not been fully appreciated.

¹ This view has recently been defended by Caston (2002) and Ioli (2010).

Interpreting *On-What-Is-Not* has its peculiar challenges. It survives only in two paraphrases, one in Sextus' *Against the Logicians* and one in *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*, transmitted as part of the Aristotelian corpus but likely not written by Aristotle. In addition, the relevant portions of Sextus' paraphrase appear to attribute a blatantly fallacious argument to Gorgias, and thus have been seen as hopelessly confused. Finally, confusion over the meaning of the term ἄγνωστος (standardly translated as “unknowable”) has compounded the misunderstanding.

Here I argue, however, that Sextus' paraphrase gives a coherent argument for the claim that what-is cannot be thought, and that something like this argument is likely to have been present in the original treatise. The structure of Gorgias' overall argument, its Eleatic context, and the relevant cognitive vocabulary used by Gorgias and his contemporaries all support my claim that he argued for this stronger conclusion. This is an example of how Gorgias' arguments were more innovative—and deserve closer attention—than is often thought. It also displays how his distinctive methods were still continuous with other philosophical methods at the time.

The Argument of *On What-Is-Not* and its Eleatic Context

Both paraphrases of *On What-Is-Not* report a tripartite structure. Gorgias appears to have argued that nothing is, that even if something is it cannot be recognized,² and that even if it can be recognized it cannot be communicated to someone else. This has long been understood as a response to the Eleatics. In particular, it takes Parmenides' injunction against thinking or speaking about what-is-not—or claiming that it is—and applies that same injunction against what-is.

The first part of *On What-Is-Not* argues that nothing, not even what-is, is. At issue here is the scope of what Gorgias denied in the second part. Consider the following three options:

- (1) Gorgias only denied that we can attain the highest of epistemic or cognitive achievements: we cannot *know* what-is. His argument allows that we can still come into cognitive contact with what-is through, for example, forming opinions about it.

² See the next section for a discussion of the specific language used by both paraphrases. The current section and the two that follow will explain why I believe “cannot be recognized” is more accurate portrayal of the conclusion than the more standard “cannot be known.”

- (2) Gorgias denied any sort of cognition about what is. We cannot even *think* about what is or *have it in mind* in any way, let alone form opinions about it.
- (3) Gorgias denied much, but not all cognition about what is. For example, he denied that we can *recognize* what-is or *conceive of what-is as what is*.³ This would allow that we may still be able to represent what-is in some sense (say, form a thought that happens to correspond with what-is) but deny that we can come into cognitive contact with what-is in such a way that it would count as *conceiving it as* what-is, or even forming an opinion about what-is.

No doubt there are many other ways to put what could have been Gorgias' conclusion. My contention is that we do have enough evidence to rule out the first option. If the first option were an accurate description of Gorgias' conclusion, then his point would merely be that we cannot form reliable enough judgments about what-is (say, because we cannot reach a high enough degree of certainty or cannot reliably distinguish what is true from what is false). But, as I will argue, Gorgias seems to have denied that we can come into the right sort of cognitive contact with what-is in the first place, whether that was to deny any cognition whatsoever about what-is or a slightly more restricted set of cognitive relations (though broader than those denied by the first option). I do not believe we have enough evidence to establish the precise scope of his conclusion, though there is enough evidence to show that he took something like the more ambitious route along the lines of (2) or (3).

³ There is an obvious difference between recognizing something as what-is and conceiving it as what-is: in English, 'recognize' is factive while 'conceive' is not. That being said, denying the ability to recognize what-is and denying the ability to conceive of what-is as what-is might come to the same thing. First, note that we may attribute the ability to recognize some object without thereby attributing full mastery of the relevant domain. At age four, for example, a child may not have mastered their letters (they may, for example, consistently mix up the letter 'b' and the letter 'd'). Even so, when they correctly identify a 'b' as a 'b', we may praise them for recognizing it. Next, note that it is one thing to deny that they have recognized a 'b' in an individual case (say they point to a 'b' but mistake it for a 'd') and another thing to deny that they are capable of recognizing a 'b'. To be incapable of recognizing a 'b' would require not only getting it wrong, but lacking a more basic capacity, such as the capacity to conceive of a 'b' as a 'b' (a capacity that, I take it, the four-year-old has but a newborn infant lacks). I am not here intending to give a theory of recognition or to insist that these are the terms on which Gorgias offered his argument in the second part of *On What-Is-Not*; instead, I offer this as one plausible candidate for what Gorgias' conclusion may have been. Below I will describe the conclusion variously as denying that we can conceive what-is, recognize what-is, or think-what is while keeping alive the possibility that there may be important distinctions between these options that are underdetermined by the evidence.

My first piece of evidence that Gorgias argued for the stronger claim is the Eleatic context of *On What-Is-Not*. Parmenides made the stronger claim that what-is-not cannot even be conceived or thought of, not merely that it cannot be known. Thus, it would be odd if Gorgias granted that what-is—if it is—can be thought of or conceived as what-is and only maintained the weaker claim that it cannot be known.

The cognitive vocabulary used throughout Parmenides' poem shows that the Eleatic position involved a strong thesis about what-is-not in the vicinity of (2) or (3) above. Parmenides most often uses *voeiv* and cognates, often translated as 'to think' in this context.⁴ He says that there are only two paths of inquiry available to thought (D6.2/B2.2) and that thinking and being go hand-in-hand (D6.8–9/B3.1–2, D8.39/B8.34). He says that there can be no thought or judgment or even talk about the path characterized by "is-not", using first the verb *γινώσκειν* in D6.7/B2.7, then switching back to the verb *voeiv* at D.8.12–14/B.87–9. He also uses *voeiv* and *φρονεiv* in the same context to discuss human cognitive faculties (D51/B16).⁵ Thus, Parmenides denied that there could be any basic cognitive grasp of what-is-not and reserved that grasp only for what-is. We should expect Gorgias to respond, then, by denying that there could be any basic cognitive grasp even of what-is. We will see below that Gorgias' cognitive vocabulary matches Parmenides' quite closely.

Looking at the relationship between the second part of *What-Is-Not* and the argument as a whole should also lead us to suspect that Gorgias argues for the stronger conclusion. The tripartite structure reported in both paraphrases employs a concessive strategy familiar from Gorgias' other works, especially the *Palamedes*. Gorgias has Palamedes argue, for example, that he could not have met with the Trojans, and even if there was a meeting he could not have communicated with them, and even if there was communication there could not have been a credible pledge, and so on (*Palamedes* 8–11). It is natural to grant as little as possible for each succeeding step when employing this strategy. Thus, it would be odd for Gorgias, after granting that something is, to also

⁴ This is the translation, for example, used in the recent Loeb edition by Laks and Most (2016). Leshner (1994) also suggests that these words refer to thinking rather than knowing (27n54). Mourelatos (2008) argues that the word is used in Parmenides to describe discursive thought, but it retains its earlier use that implies not just any kind of thought, but one that involves some penetration into or understanding of the way things are (68–70). Tor (2015) stresses that the verb implies the formation of a judgment about a situation and an attempt to grasp things correctly, whether successful or not (13–14). How exactly one understands *voeiv* and cognates might provide some evidence for deciding between options (2) and (3) above, though there is consensus that Parmenides' terminology does not suggest the analogue of (1) above.

⁵ For a helpful discussion of this fragment and Parmenides' epistemology more broadly see Tor (2015).

immediately grant a host of claims about our relation to what-is (that we can conceive it as what-is and form thoughts and opinions about it) without first challenging some of these claims. The third part, too, makes more sense as part of a series of arguments first denying that what-is can be thought, then granting it for the sake of further argument. Gorgias need not concede that what-is can be *known* for the argument in the third part; he need only concede that one individual can form some kind of thought about what-is. What is at stake is whether that individual can put another individual in the state of having that very same thought; Gorgias' answer, of course, is "no": speech is not of the appropriate ontological type to communicate that thought, and even if it was, it would be impossible for the second person to have the *very same thought* as the first.⁶ If knowledge were at issue, an objector might insist that the first person can still help the second person come to a state of knowledge in their own way and that communication would have been successful even if the two do not have the exact same thing in mind. We should expect the third part to run differently if the second part were really about knowledge as opposed to mere opinion about what-is.

Yet, even if we should expect that the second part would be about thought or recognition—about more basic cognitive or epistemic achievements rather than the most elevated ones—one might worry that the language of the paraphrases themselves suggests otherwise. If the paraphrases tell us straightforwardly that the second part is about knowledge, then we should at least do our best to take those reports at face value. A closer look will show that Gorgias' language, too, suggests the former view despite often being read as announcing the latter.

Gorgias' Cognitive Vocabulary

What language did Gorgias use to describe the conclusions of this part of the treatise, and what did he mean by it? Did he only deny us the most significant of epistemic achievements (knowledge or certainty), or did his language indicate a wider target?

The *MXG* consistently uses the term ἄγνωστον, usually translated "unknowable", to describe the conclusion. To be precise, it uses the term twice: once in the initial summary of the

⁶ The first of these two arguments is reported in different forms in both paraphrases. The second is reported only in the *MXG*.

whole treatise and once at the end of this specific argument (5.1, 6.20).⁷ The language that Sextus uses to describe the conclusion is more varied. He, too, uses ἄγνωστον paired with ἀνεπινόητον (“inconceivable” or “unintelligible”) when introducing the argument, then sums it up there and in what follows by saying that what-is is “not thought” (οὐ φρονεῖται, 77). He also uses the later Hellenistic term ἀκατάληπτον (“incomprehensible”) both in the initial summary of the whole argument (65) and at the end of the specific argument, in the latter case paired again with οὐ φρονεῖται (82). In his final summary of the whole work Sextus switches again to μὴ γνωρίζεσθαι, “not known” or “not acquainted” (87).

As we will see below, it is clear that Sextus reads the argument as entailing the stronger conclusion that what-is cannot even be thought. Thus, his account of the actual argument uses the weaker verb φρονεῖν, “to think”, as the denial of a weaker claim entails a stronger conclusion (77–82). Similarly, the *MXG* uses φρονεῖν and διανοεῖσθαι, “to have in mind”, in its account of the actual argument (6.17–20). Why, then, do both paraphrases use seemingly stronger language when reporting the conclusion, often read as indicating the weaker conclusion that what-is only cannot be *known*? And why is Sextus’ language in particular so varied?

It is plausible that Gorgias himself used the term ἄγνωστον. It appears independently in Sextus, in the *MXG*, and in Plato’s *Parmenides*, where Plato is clearly alluding to *On What-Is-Not*.⁸ The sole occurrence in Sextus has a Gorgianic ring suggesting that, in this case, he may very well be preserving Gorgianic language:

(77) ὅτι δὲ κἄν ἦι τι, τοῦτο ἄγνωστόν τε καὶ ἀνεπινόητόν ἐστιν ἀνθρώπῳ, παρακειμένως ὑποδεικτέον.

(77) Next, it must be shown in a similar way that, even if something is, it can neither be recognized nor conceived by a human.

⁷ Similarly, when conceding this conclusion for the next stage of the argument, the *MXG* consistently uses the positive form γνωστόν (“knowable”; 5.1, 6.21). The beginning of the argument for this conclusion is unfortunately corrupt in the manuscripts. The *MXG* may well have used the same term there too.

⁸ Plato has his character Parmenides sum up his criticisms of Socrates’ theory of forms using the same concessive trio of denying their existence, recognizability, and communicability. He says that someone may well dispute that forms don’t exist, that even if they do exist they are unrecognizable, and that even if someone could learn of their existence they couldn’t teach it to someone else (135a3–b2). He uses the same term for “unrecognizable”, ἄγνωστον (135a5).

Note the alliteration (ἄγνωστόν, ἀνεπινόητόν, ἀνθρώποι) and homeoteleuton (ἄγνωστόν, ἀνεπινόητόν, ὑποδεικτέον) that is characteristic of Gorgias' other works. Gorgias also frequently varies his vocabulary to achieve this effect, which helps explain the presence of both ἄγνωστον and ἀνεπινόητον.⁹ This also helps explain why Sextus' own vocabulary is so varied: here he follows Gorgias' original language (with the meaning to be clarified in the ensuing argument).

What would Gorgias likely have meant by these words? We can get some traction by looking at Gorgias' use of similar terminology in other works. In the *Palamedes*, Gorgias has Palamedes use the distinction between knowledge and mere opinion as part of his case. He uses the verb εἰδέναί, “to know”, in contrast with the noun δόξα, “opinion”, to portray himself as knowing what happened and his accuser as having mere opinion (*Palamedes* 5, 22–24).¹⁰ These terms are not directly related to those used in the summaries of Gorgias' argument in *On What-Is-Not*. The same work, however, does use the verb ἀγνοεῖν to describe two people being unable to understand each other's language (*Palamedes* 7). It also uses the adjective γνώριμος to describe a hypothetical, wide-spread recognition of the jurors' wickedness (36). What is at stake here is not the highest of epistemic achievements, but rather a more basic form of recognition.

This is very much in keeping with the way that ἄγνωστον is used both before and during Gorgias' time. It is used in Homer's *Odyssey* to describe how, due to Athena's disguise, Odysseus is unrecognizable to anyone else when he returns home to Ithaca (II.175, XIII.191, 375). Likewise, in its subsequent usage—as in Gorgias' *Palamedes*—it frequently refers to people or to language that is unrecognized or unfamiliar. Pindar claims that those who do not attempt great deeds go unrecognized (*Isthmian* 4.29). Euripides' *Helen* has Menelaus declare that he is not unfamiliar in all places (504). Thucydides speaks of an unfamiliar Aetolian language (*History of the Peloponnesian War* III.94.5). Aristophanes makes fun of Aeschylus for using complicated,

⁹ I am less confident that ἀνεπινόητον is Gorgias' own word. It is of course possible, but it is also frequently used by Sextus in other contexts. Another possibility is that Gorgias had a different word with an alpha-privative (e.g. the more common ἀνόητον) that Sextus then translated into his own idiom.

¹⁰ Cf. also *Helen* (5), (10)-(13), and (21). Gorgias also uses ἐπίστασθαι in *Palamedes* (3) to similar effect. The distinction between knowledge and opinion would have been familiar from earlier thinkers. Xenophanes, for example, uses the same terminology to deny human knowledge about the gods (D49/B34). Cf. also Protagoras' denial of knowledge about the gods (D10/B4).

unrecognizable vocabulary (*Frogs* 926).¹¹ A particularly telling example comes at the beginning of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*: Oedipus tells his people that (a) what they long for is not unfamiliar to him and (b) he is well aware that they are sick (58–60). He uses the adjective ἄγνωστον in (a) to refer to a sort of knowledge by acquaintance, then switches to the verb εἰδέναι in (b) when referring to propositional knowledge.¹² Again, this suggests that when Sextus and the *MXG* author report Gorgias as saying that what-is is ἄγνωστον, this likely does not indicate the weaker claim that we can only have opinion, not knowledge, about what-is, but rather the stronger claim that what-is is unfamiliar or unrecognizable.

Gorgias uses the related noun γνώμη to refer to a generic faculty of thought. *Helen* (13) states that philosophers use the swiftness of this faculty to change opinions, and *Helen* (19) partially blames the overwhelming effects of love on its absence. In the *Funeral Oration*, this faculty is deemed essential for good deliberation. Gorgias goes on to describe those virtuous Athenians as “stopping foolishness with sound judgment” (τῷ φρονίμῳ τῆς γνώμης παύοντες τὸ ἄφρον). Here Gorgias brings into the same context language from the same root as φρονεῖν, translated above as “to think”. It is sound judgment (τῷ φρονίμῳ τῆς γνώμης) that stops foolishness (τὸ ἄφρον). In fact, he uses this terminology along with νόημα and cognates to refer to human cognitive faculties. In *Palamedes* 26 Gorgias switches between the two word-families, contrasting the ἀνόητοι (“mindless”) with the φρόνιμοι (“sound-minded”). *Helen* 17 describes how a fearful sight can overcome thought, first using φρόνημα then switching to νόημα. It is likely that Gorgias varied his language in similar ways in this second stage of *On What-Is-Not* but that the central point remained the same: even if something is, it cannot even be recognized, even be conceived, in the first place.

Thus, the language used by Gorgias—and by Parmenides and others before him—strongly suggests that the second part of the treatise has this stronger conclusion. Next, we will look at the

¹¹ Cf. also Pindar *Isthmian* 2.12; Minermus fr. 5.7; Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 94; Xenophon *On Hunting* 6.15; and Demosthenes *Letters* 3.27.

¹² While ἄγνωστον retains this use in later authors, it also starts being used more interchangeably with εἰδέναι, ἐπίστασθαι and other epistemic vocabulary. Aristotle, for example, argues that pure matter cannot be cognized in *Metaphysics* Z 10 (ἄγνωστον, 1036a9), but uses the term along with other epistemic vocabulary without clear distinction to discuss knowledge of first principles in *Posterior Analytics* I.3 72b5–18. The latter case may be due to a tradition of calling certain fundamental elements or principles ἄγνωστον also referenced in Plato's *Theaetetus* (202e1 ff).

actual argument as it is described in both paraphrases. The argument in Sextus' paraphrase suggests the stronger conclusion. The argument in the *MXG* is obscured by a text that is likely corrupt and therefore is more indeterminate.

Sextus' Argument

As we have seen, Sextus' summary of the second part begins as follows, suggesting the stronger conclusion that denies us even a basic cognitive grasp of what-is:

(77) ὅτι δὲ κἂν ἦ τι, τοῦτο ἄγνωστόν τε καὶ ἀνεπινόητόν ἐστιν ἀνθρώποι, παρακειμένως ὑποδεικτέον.

(77) Next, it must be shown in a similar way that, even if something is, it can neither be recognized nor conceived by a human.

Sextus goes on to present a logically coherent (even if not sound) argument for this stronger conclusion.

Sextus sets out Gorgias' argumentative strategy in (77) and (78):

(77) [...] εἰ γὰρ τὰ φρονούμενα, φησὶν ὁ Γοργίας, οὐκ ἔστιν ὄντα, τὸ ὄν οὐ φρονεῖται. [...(78)...] τὰ δέ γε φρονούμενα (προληπτέον γάρ) οὐκ ἔστιν ὄντα, ὡς παραστήσομεν· οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὄν φρονεῖται.

(77) [...] If things that are thought, says Gorgias, are not things-that-are, then what-is is not thought of. [...(78)...] And—to look ahead—we will establish that things that are thought are not things-that-are. Thus, what-is is not thought of.

The strategy is clear. Gorgias relies on a conditional premise; he argues for the conditional premise's antecedent, then infers the conditional premise's consequent in accordance with *modus ponens*.¹³

¹³ An argument for the conditional premise is given in the intervening portion of (77)–(78):

(77) [...] καὶ κατὰ λόγον· ὥσπερ γὰρ εἰ τοῖς φρονουμένοις συμβέβηκεν εἶναι λευκοῖς, κἂν συμβεβήκει τοῖς λευκοῖς φρονεῖσθαι, οὕτως εἰ τοῖς φρονουμένοις συμβέβηκεν μὴ εἶναι οὖσι, κατ' ἀνάγκην συμβήσεται τοῖς

The conditional premise is naturally read as linking one universal generalization with its contrapositive. Specifically, the conditional's antecedent states that all things that are thought are not things-that-are (or, alternatively, if a thing is thought, then it is not a thing-that-is), and the conditional's consequent states that all things-that-are are not things that are thought (or, alternatively, if a thing is a thing-that-is, then it is not thought). Thus, it can be stated as follows:

Conditional Premise: If all things that are thought are not things-that-are, then all things-that-are are not things that are thought.

The next two sections, (79) and (80), appear to contain two independent arguments for the conditional premise's antecedent. Yet, so understood, they appear to be fallacious. We could read the conditional premise differently to save the arguments for the antecedent, but doing so would make the premise itself and the interpretation of the first two sections less plausible. We could also attribute fallacious reasoning to Sextus or to Gorgias. Yet a third, more charitable alternative presents itself upon a closer examination of the text.

The arguments are naturally read as *reductio ad absurdum* arguments (or, alternatively, *modus tollens* arguments). Each assumes that “(all) things that are thought are things-that-are”. From this assumption, Gorgias then claims that an unacceptable consequence follows. Thus, the negation of the assumption is indirectly proven. The problem is that the negation of the assumption is distinct from the conditional premise's antecedent. What the *reductios*, if successful, deliver is: *it is not*

οὔσι μὴ φρονεῖσθαι. (78) διόπερ ὑγιές καὶ σῶιζον ἀκολουθίαν ἐστὶ τὸ ‘εἰ τὰ φρονούμενα οὐκ ἔστιν ὄντα, τὸ ὄν οὐ φρονεῖται’.

(77) [...] And this makes sense. For if being light goes along with things that are thought, then being thought of goes along with being light; similarly, if what-is-not-a-thing-that-is goes along with the things that are thought, not-being-thought-of necessarily goes along with things-that-are. (78) For this reason, ‘if things that are thought are not things-that-are, then what-is is not thought of’ is sound and follows logically.

The reasoning here—though not the conditional premise itself—is obviously flawed but easily repaired. All that is required is the addition of “not” in two places:

(77) [...] And this makes sense. For if [not] being light goes along with things that are thought, then [not] being thought of goes along with being light; similarly, if what-is-not-a-thing-that-is goes along with the things that are thought, not-being-thought-of necessarily goes along with things-that-are.

When dealing with abstract logical reasoning, it is all too easy to lose track of one's negations. Since the conditional is independently defensible, there is no need to dwell on this matter.

the case that all (things) that are thought are things-that-are. This is consistent with there being *some* things thought that are. What is needed is: (all) things that are thought are *not* things-that-are. This is not consistent with there being some things thought that are. It is natural to wonder whether Sextus or Gorgias is simply committing a scope fallacy here.¹⁴ Yet the text suggests a more charitable reading.

The key to this reading is to understand the arguments from (79) and (80) as a first step in a two-step argument for the conditional premise's antecedent. These first two sections are intended to show exactly what they in fact deliver, namely, that *it is not the case that* (all) things that are thought are things-that-are. The second step of the two-step argument is then supplied by (81). The latter passage has puzzled interpreters. What it does, I suggest, is supply a bridge from the conclusion of (79) and (80) to the conditional premise's antecedent.

As already stated, the arguments from (79) and (80) have the same form. Each assumes, for the sake of argument, that (all) things that are thought are things-that-are. Each then claims that an unacceptable consequence follows from this assumption, thereby leading to the assumption's denial.

Consider (79) in full:

(79) εἰ γὰρ τὰ φρονούμενά ἐστιν ὄντα, πάντα τὰ φρονούμενα ἔστιν, καὶ ὅπη ἂν τις αὐτὰ φρονήσῃ. ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀπεμφαῖνον· ἧ δέ ἐστι, φαῦλον.¹⁵ οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν φρονῆι τις ἄνθρωπον ἱπτάμενον ἢ ἄρματα ἐν πελάγει τρέχοντα, εὐθέως ἄνθρωπος ἱπταται ἢ ἄρματα ἐν πελάγει τρέχει. ὥστε οὐ τὰ φρονούμενά ἐστιν ὄντα.

(79) For if things that are thought are things-that-are, then all things that are thought are, and precisely in the way someone thinks them. And that is manifestly wrong; how this is so is trivial. For it's not the case that if someone thinks of a person flying or a chariot racing on the sea, a person thereby flies or a chariot thereby races on the sea. Accordingly, it's not the case that things that are thought are things-that-are.

¹⁴ This is the view of Caston (2002, 219–222) and Ioli (2012, 168–170).

¹⁵ Following Laks and Most. The manuscripts read ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀπεμφαῖνον, εἰ δέ ἐστι, φαῦλον. Bekker, Buchheim, Graham and Ioli print: ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀπεμφαῖνον· [εἰ δέ ἐστι, φαῦλον.] Laks and Most's solution I think is preferable to Bekker. Especially since we have had many clauses similar to “εἰ δέ ἐστι” in this work, it is easy to see how a copyist not following closely could make this mistake.

The first sentence makes clear that we are targeting a universal generalization here: the claim that *all* (πάντα) things thought are. It also specifies that those things that are thought will be *in a particular way*, namely, *precisely in the way someone thinks them*. This rules out a possibility on which things that are thought are things-that-are but only in a less than fully robust sense, perhaps merely as the abstract contents of thoughts.¹⁶ In the remainder of (79), he argues that this claim leads to an unacceptable consequence. The argument is quite simple. Clearly, some things that are thought do not exist precisely in the way that they are thought. Either of his two examples illustrates the point: although I am now thinking of a person flying—and now you are too assuming that you understood my words—there is no person flying, at least not in the way that my thought specifies. It follows from this that the initial assumption is false: it is not the case that (all) things that are thought are things-that-are.

Consider, next, (80) in full:

(80) πρὸς τούτοις εἰ τὰ φρονούμενά ἐστιν ὄντα, τὰ μὴ ὄντα οὐ φρονηθήσεται. τοῖς γὰρ ἐναντίοις τὰ ἐναντία συμβέβηκεν, ἐναντίον δέ ἐστι τῶι ὄντι τὸ μὴ ὄν. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντως, εἰ τῶι ὄντι συμβέβηκε τὸ φρονεῖσθαι, τῶι μὴ ὄντι συμβήσεται τὸ μὴ φρονεῖσθαι. ἄτοπον δ' ἐστὶ τοῦτο· καὶ γὰρ Σκύλλα καὶ Χίμαιρα καὶ πολλὰ τῶν μὴ ὄντων φρονεῖται. οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὄν φρονεῖται.

(80) In addition, if things that are thought are things-that-are, things-that-are-not will not be thought of. For opposites go along with opposites, and what-is-not is the opposite of what-is. It by all means follows that, if being-thought-of goes along with what-is, then what-is-not-thought-of goes along with what-is-not. But this is absurd: Scylla, Chimera, and many other things-that-are-not are thought of. Thus, it's not the case that what-is is thought of.

The key claim here, as with (79), is the conditional from the first sentence: if (all) things that are thought are things-that-are, then (all) things-that-are-not will not be thought of. This conditional is

¹⁶ Gorgias does not defend this claim further here, though the argument of (81) is relevant; see below for discussion of that section.

then supported by the typical Gorgianic thought that opposites go with opposites.¹⁷ As was the case with the main conditional premise from (78), the conditional premise here is naturally read as linking one universal generalization with its contrapositive. Moreover, its consequent is clearly false. Gorgias alludes to the fact that it is commonplace for people to think of that which does not exist (or at least that which is regarded as not existing). Surely, we can (and do) think about Scylla and Chimera. Yet Scylla and Chimera are regarded as non-existent. It follows from this that the initial assumption is false: it is not the case that (all) things that are thought are things-that-are.

As already noted, the conclusion of the two arguments from (79) and (80) is distinct from the conditional premise's antecedent (though the two claims superficially resemble each other). It would thus be a mistake to suppose that this conclusion could be used in conjunction with the conditional premise to infer (by *modus ponens*) that the conditional premise's consequent is true. Viewed in this light, it is not at all surprising that the argument continues. More work is needed: in particular, a way of moving from the conclusion of (79) and (80)—it is not the case that (all) things that are thought are things-that-are—to the conditional premise's antecedent—(all) things that are thought are not things-that-are. And that is exactly what (81) provides.

Consider (81) and (82) in full:

(81) ὥσπερ τε τὰ ὀρώμενα διὰ τοῦτο ὀρατὰ λέγεται ὅτι ὀρᾶται, καὶ τὰ ἀκουστὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἀκουστὰ ὅτι ἀκούεται, καὶ οὐ τὰ μὲν ὀρατὰ ἐκβάλλομεν ὅτι οὐκ ἀκούεται, τὰ δὲ ἀκουστὰ παραπέμπομεν ὅτι οὐχ ὀρᾶται (ἕκαστον γὰρ ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας αἰσθήσεως ἀλλ' οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλης ὀφείλει κρίνεσθαι), οὕτω καὶ τὰ φρονούμενα καὶ εἰ μὴ βλέποιο τῆι ὄψει μηδὲ ἀκούοιο τῆι ἀκοῆι ἔσται, ὅτι πρὸς τοῦ οἰκείου λαμβάνεται κριτηρίου. (82) εἰ οὖν φρονεῖ τις ἐν πελάγει ἄρματα τρέχειν, καὶ εἰ μὴ βλέπει ταῦτα, ὀφείλει πιστεύειν ὅτι ἄρματα ἔστιν ἐν πελάγει τρέχοντα. ἄτοπον δὲ τοῦτο· οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὄν φρονεῖται καὶ καταλαμβάνεται

(81) Things that are seen are said to be visible because they are seen, and things that are heard are said to be audible because they are heard. We don't reject visible things because they're not heard or dismiss audible things because they're not seen (for each ought to be judged by its particular modality rather than by some other one). Similarly, things that are

¹⁷ We see the same reasoning employed in the first argument of the first part of *On What-Is-Not*: see (67) of Sextus and [5.5] of the *MXG*.

thought will be, even if they're not seen by the eyes or heard by the ears, because they follow their own standard of judgment. (82) So, if someone thinks that a chariot is racing on the sea, they ought to trust that a chariot is racing on the sea, even if they don't see it. But this is absurd. Thus, it's not the case that what-is is thought of or comprehended.

Here, Gorgias provides a case for the following bridge principle:

Bridge Principle: It's not the case that some, but not all, things that are thought are things-that-are. In other words, either all things that are thought are things-that-are, or no things that are thought are things-that-are.

This principle, in conjunction with the conclusion of the two arguments from (79) and (80), implies that no things that are thought are things-that-are. This, in turn, is equivalent to the conditional premise's antecedent: (all) things that are thought are *not* things-that-are. The bridge principle thus serves as a bridge between the conclusion of (79) and (80), on the one hand, and the conditional premise's antecedent, on the other hand. From the latter, Gorgias can infer the main conclusion, namely, that all things-that-are are not things that are thought.

But why take (81) to make a case for the bridge principle? The bridge principle rules out a "mixed" position on which *some* but *not all* things that are thought are things-that-are. This section provides a rebuttal to a natural line of reasoning in support of such a mixed position. According to that reasoning, sense experience can be used to distinguish things thought that *are* from things thought that *are not*. If you are thinking, say, of a person who is flying, then your senses will not corroborate this thought (you will not see or otherwise sense a person flying). But if you are thinking, say, of wet grass, then your senses might very well corroborate this thought (you see and feel the wet grass). You thus have reason to suppose that the thing thought in the former case is a thing-that-is-not but that the thing thought in the latter case is a thing-that-is. In other words, sensory experience supports a mixed position.

Sextus here reports Gorgias as claiming that this use of sensory experience is illegitimate. It applies an inappropriate standard of judgment to the domain of thought. Only thought can provide an appropriate standard of judgment for thought, just as only sight is an appropriate standard of judgment for sight. We need either to accept or reject what is thought as a whole. To summarize

the argument of (81) as a whole: if some, but not all things that are thought are, then there must be some standard of judgment to distinguish the thoughts that are from the thoughts that are not. But there is no such standard of judgment. Therefore, if some things that are thought are, then all things that are thought are. We are then reminded in the next section, (82), why it is untenable to simply accept that all things that are thought are. Thus we are left with the only remaining option: no things that are thought are or, in other words, all things that are thought are not things-that-are. This is the antecedent of the conditional premise and, as that premise tells us, is equivalent to Gorgias' main conclusion, that what-is is not thought of.

Of course, there is room to push back here on Gorgias' argument. But this bridge principle is something that Gorgias' Eleatic interlocutors might easily agree with. And even if the argument is not sound—as should be no surprise given its radical conclusion—it by no means is blatantly fallacious or relies on mere sophistic trickery. Like Gorgias' other work, we can read this argument as a challenge and a goad to further inquiry rather than some trifle to be dismissed out of hand.

Sextus' paraphrase, then, reports an argument worth taking seriously. Thus, we have every reason to take seriously his portrayal of Gorgias' conclusion for the second part. The argument as Sextus reports it suggests the stronger conclusion that what-is cannot even be thought.

The Argument of the *MXG*

Taken on its own, the summary of second part of *On What-Is-Not* in the *MXG* is difficult to follow. It is not even clear where the argument begins, though scholars have reasonably identified [6.17] as the most likely candidate and have supplemented the text accordingly. The argument as it is passed down to us is short and difficult to follow in several places. The section titles offered by Laks and Most (2016) are telling: they change from “First thesis” for the first part to “Remnants of the second thesis?” for the second (pp.219–226).

Because of these difficulties, most scholars supplement the text to reconstruct the argument. The danger with this approach is that it requires one to rely on antecedent assumptions about what Gorgias' argument likely would have been, or at the very least on paleographical decisions that by their very nature involve a significant degree of uncertainty. For our purposes, I will first offer a conservative reconstruction and translation of the text as it is handed down to us and discuss what we can glean from those portions of the text that are more secure. Then I will

discuss how we should understand any tensions between the argument as reported here and as reported by Sextus.

First, here is a conservative reconstruction of the text as it is handed down to us. By “conservative” I mean that I am following the manuscript readings—especially the more reliable L—where possible and only emending the text when it is grammatically necessary to do so:¹⁸

[6.17] εἰ μὲν οὖν οὐδέν, τὰς ἀποδείξεις λέγειν <εἶναι ἄγνωστα>¹⁹ ἅπαντα. δεῖν γὰρ τὰ φρονούμενα εἶναι, καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν, εἴπερ μὴ ἔστι, μηδὲ φρονεῖσθαι. [18] εἰ δ' οὕτως, οὐδὲν ἂν εἶναι ψεῦδος, [οὐδεῖς]²⁰ φησὶν, οὐδ' εἰ ἐν τῷ πελάγει φαίη ἀμιλλᾶσθαι ἄρματα· πάντα γὰρ ἂν ταῦτα²¹ εἶη. [19] καὶ γὰρ τὰ ὀρώμενα καὶ ἀκουόμενα διὰ τοῦτο ἔστιν, ὅτι²² φρονεῖται ἕκαστα αὐτῶν· εἰ δὲ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἂ ὀρώμεν ἔστιν, οὕτω μᾶλλον ἂ ὀρώμεν ἢ <ἄ> διανοούμεθα.²³ [20] καὶ γὰρ ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ πολλὰ ἂν ταῦτα

¹⁸ I have of course benefited from previous editions of the text, especially recent editions by Buchheim, Graham, Ioli, and Laks and Most. Ioli provides the most systematic apparatus and commentary.

¹⁹ This emendation is an exception to my general approach in that it is motivated by the sense of the surrounding argument. Given the tripartite structure at the beginning of the entire summary in 5.1, the content of the ensuing argument, and the transition from the second to the third part announced in 6.20–21, we should expect the second conclusion to be explicitly announced here.

²⁰ Following Ioli. Both manuscripts (L&R) have εἶναι ψεῦδος οὐδεῖς φησὶν οὐδ' εἰ. Diels offers a similar solution: εἶναι ψεῦδος, οὐδ' εἰ, φησὶν, [οὐδ' εἰ]. Buchheim follows Apelt with εἴποι ψεῦδος οὐδεῖς, φησὶν, οὐδ' εἰ.

²¹ R has ταῦτα, though I would understand the point similarly either way (either [a] all things would be the same [with respect to their truth] or [b] all these things would be [true]).

²² Diels adds <ὀράται καὶ ἀκούεται, καὶ ὁμοίως τὰ φρονούμενα ἔστιν, ὅτι>, presumably in comparison with Sextus. It is not at all an unreasonable addition, but the more paleographically sound move here is to leave it out as Buchheim, Ioli, and Laks & Most do.

²³ This follows the conservative strategy of sticking with the manuscripts, even when the sense is not clear and there is likely to be some corruption in the text. Ioli's reconstruction is quite reasonable and well-defended in her commentary, but inevitably relies on some level of speculation and, unlike most of Ioli's decisions, comparison with Sextus (81). Her reconstruction is as follows: εἰ δὲ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἂ <ἀκούομεν ἢ ἄ> ὀρώμεν ἔστιν, οὕτως <οὐ> μᾶλλον ἂ ὀρώμεν ἢ <ἄ> διανοούμεθα. “And if not for this reason then, instead, just as what <we hear> is no more <than what> we see, so what we see is <no> more than <what> we have in mind.” Less explicable from a paleographical standpoint, it seems to me, is the idea of removing something from the οὕτω clause rather than adding something to the ὥσπερ clause. This is Diels' solution, followed by Caston: εἰ δὲ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἂ ὀρώμεν ἔστιν, οὕτω <οὐδὲν> μᾶλλον ἂ [ὀρώμεν ἢ] διανοούμεθα. “And if not for this reason then, instead, just as what we see no more is, so what we have in mind <no> more is.”

ἴδοιεν, καὶ ἐνταῦθα πολλὰ ἂν ταῦτὰ διανοηθείημεν. τὸ οὖν μᾶλλον δὴ τοιάδ' ἐστὶ.²⁴ ποῖα δὲ τάληθῆ, ἄδηλον. ὥστε καὶ εἰ ἔστιν, ἡμῖν γε ἄγνωστ' ἂν εἶναι τὰ πράγματα.

[6.17] If, then, nothing is, the demonstrations say that all things <are unrecognizable>. For what's thought must be, and what-is-not, since it is not, must not even to be thought. [18] And if that's the case, nothing would be false, he says, not even if someone were to say that chariots are competing on the sea; all things would be the same. [19] For both what is seen and what is heard are, for the following reason: that each of them is thought. And if not for this reason, then, instead, just as what we see no more *is*, so what we see is more than <what> we have in mind. [20] For, in fact, just as many people might see the same things there, so too many of us might have the same thing in mind here. The 'more', then, is of this sort, but which sort are true is unclear. As a result, even if it is, then things can't be recognized, at least not by us.

It is difficult to follow the exact line of reasoning and is controversial where, if anywhere, we should understand new arguments to be introduced. What is most secure is the announcement of the conclusion following ὥστε at the end of [20]. Reasonably secure as well are four transition points: the γὰρ (“for”) in the middle of [17], the γὰρ at the beginning of [19], the second sentence of [19], beginning εἰ δὲ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο, ἀλλ' (“And if not for this reason, then, instead”), and the γὰρ at the beginning of [20]. Let us examine each in turn.

The first γὰρ in the middle of [17] transitions from the statement of the main conclusion—that is, assuming that the first sentence does indeed state the main conclusion—to argumentation in favor of that conclusion. We need to be cautious here given the issues with the manuscripts: it is possible that some reasoning has dropped out in the vicinity, including between the statement of the conclusion and the γὰρ in question. What follows the γὰρ identifies the Eleatic position that things that are thought are and what is not is not thought. It then draws the conclusion that nothing

²⁴ This is the reading of the more reliable L. The sense is hard to follow here, so many posit that this section is somehow corrupt. There appears to be a gap in R, so some speculate about filling in that gap. Ioli prints the following given an intriguing parallel with a similar passage in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Γ: οὐθὲν μᾶλλον τάδε ἢ τάδε ἐστίν. “It is no more this way than that way”. The *Metaphysics* passage is Γ 5, 1009b9–11: ποῖα οὖν τούτων ἀληθῆ ἢ ψευδῆ, ἄδηλον· οὐθὲν γὰρ μᾶλλον τάδε ἢ τάδε ἀληθῆ. She suggests that the author is either assimilating Gorgias to passages in Aristotle he knows well (passages that, like this one, at least according to Ioli, are in conversation with Protagorean relativism) or the Γ passage is picking up on Gorgias' arguments. Caston, following Apelt, prints: τί οὖν μᾶλλον δὴ<λον εἰ τοιάδ' ἢ> τοιάδ' ἐστὶ.

would be false, eliciting the same example as used in (79) and (82) of Sextus' paraphrase. Caston suggests that this is "plainly intended as a *reductio*" and assimilates it to (79) of Sextus (213). This reading requires either positing some lacuna before the $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ or understanding it as ranging over the entire ensuing argument, since this *reductio* on its own would not be sufficient to establish the conclusion. Ioli instead thinks that the premise is positively accepted and that the overall conclusion, that nothing can be known, is drawn on its basis in one of two coordinate arguments (the first anti-Parmenidean, the second anti-Protagorean). On this interpretation, the chariot example simply exemplifies the conclusion that nothing can be known rather than motivating a *reductio*.²⁵

The next $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ appears at the beginning of [19]. On Ioli's reading, the $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ supports the preceding claim that all things that are thought are (again, taken on as a positive premise that leads to the overarching conclusion). On her view, this wraps up the first anti-Parmenidean argument before turning to an anti-Protagorean one. Caston suggests that this $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ instead introduces a new dilemma. The first arm of the dilemma, contained here in the first sentence of [19], offers a new argument against the claim that all things thought are. The reasoning behind this telescoped argument, he suggests, is the following: since things seen and things heard are also thought, they will also be, but that this is absurd since there are obvious conflicts between different mental states (225).

We then transition to another argument in the second sentence of [19]: "And if not for this reason, then, instead..." Unfortunately, it is hard to make sense of the ensuing argument. For this reason, most translators and commentators emend the text. According to Caston, the initial point is to state the other arm of the dilemma: just as some things seen are and some things seen are not, so too some things thought are and some things thought are not. The point is different on the emendation followed by Ioli: on her view it begins a new argument for the main conclusion and states the independence sight, hearing, and thought as different cognitive modalities, each with an equally valid claim to the truth.²⁶ Both interpreters then read the $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$ in [20] as supporting the

²⁵ Ioli (2010) discusses her interpretation of the argument in the introduction on pages 50–52, in her reconstruction of the text on pages 103–104 (with accompanying notes), and in her comparison between Sextus and the *MXG* on pages 168–170. Page 168 makes it sound as if she interprets this first argument as a *reductio*, but her discussion in the introduction and in her notes on the text suggest an interpretation where there are two separate arguments for the main conclusion.

²⁶ See n. 23 above for each interpreter's reconstruction of the text.

preceding claim, and ultimately the conclusion that what-is is unknown because of the impossibility of adjudicating between different mental states.²⁷ These two reasonable, yet divergent, interpretations exhibit how little there is that we can rely on without further emendation and speculation. These sections are unlikely, then, to give us any independent leverage for understanding the structure of Gorgias' argument or the force of the conclusion in greater detail.

Both Ioli and Caston understand this argument as leading to the weaker conclusion that what-is simply cannot be known. If we accept that there is a conflict in the way each paraphrase understands the overall conclusion, then it is possible that (a) Sextus' paraphrase is more or less accurate, and that the argument of the *MXG* betrays a mistake on the part of the author. The author could have, for example, read what was an assumption for *reductio* in the original as a positive premise, or they could have misunderstood the force of the argument behind Sextus' (81) in support of the stronger conclusion. This could have then led the author of the *MXG* to understand the conclusion as the weaker one that what-is cannot be known.²⁸ The reverse is also possible: it could be that (b) the original only argued for the weaker thesis, and that Sextus misunderstood it for the stronger one and/or mistook a positive claim for an assumption for *reductio*. Yet there are other possibilities as well. Of course, it could be that (c) both paraphrases are inaccurate in such a way that we are simply out of luck when it comes to understanding the original. But it could also be that both are more or less accurate. It could be that (d) a proper reconstruction of the *MXG* text vindicates Sextus' understanding of the argument. Finally, it is possible that (e) the original contained two arguments, first arguing that nothing can be thought, then arguing that, even if anything can be thought, it cannot be known.²⁹

²⁷ Cf. the relatively secure "which sort are true is unclear" that precedes the main conclusion.

²⁸ I argue in my (2019) that the *MXG* author misses important structural features of the argument in the first part of *On What-Is-Not*, due in part to their interest in showing that most arguments are not unique to Gorgias. Cf. [6.26] where the author suggests that these arguments are unoriginal and therefore are not in need of their own examination.

²⁹ We see this concessive structure in the work as a whole, of course, but also in the third part of *On What-Is-Not* as reported by the *MXG*. There we first get an argument that a speaker cannot successfully say what they want to communicate, next that the hearer cannot successfully hear it, and finally that, even if both are possible, the speaker and hearer could not have the exact same thing in mind. One advantage of this final option is that it would give Gorgias a more complete response to an Eleatic opponent. The argument as reported in Sextus shows a tension between three claims: (a) the bridge principle, (b) the intuitive idea that we can think of at least some things that are, and (c) the intuitive idea that we can think of at least some things that are not. Gorgias then leans on (c) to reject (b). An Eleatic could grant the bridge principle (a), but instead lean on (b) to reject (c). For this kind of opponent, Gorgias could

Insofar as we have independent reason to think that Gorgias argued for the stronger conclusion, we have a reason to think that (b) is less likely. And given the state of the *MXG* text, and the fact that Sextus' text reports a cogent argument as is, it would be premature to simply abandon Sextus' paraphrase without other strong reasons for doing so.

Gorgias as a Philosopher

One might worry that attributing such a strong conclusion to Gorgias' *On What-Is-Not* is inconsistent with taking him seriously as a philosopher. After all, we clearly are able to at least think about or conceive of what-is as what-is, even if we do sometimes get it wrong. As a result, one might be tempted either to deny that this was the main conclusion of part two or deny that Gorgias was trying to do anything philosophical in the first place. Yet understanding Gorgias' argument as drawing the stronger conclusion is consistent with taking the text seriously as a work of philosophy and can help us appreciate his concessive methodology. We can also see how this methodology fits within the broader context of other antilogical methods in Gorgias's time.

It is easy to dismiss Gorgias' concessive method as a convenient device for tying together a grab-bag of clever arguments. You could read the *Palamedes*, for example, as a mere show piece of the different sorts of arguments that may be useful for a defense speech in court. But it may also be part of an effective defense strategy. Any individual argument is subject to failure. Built in to Gorgias' concessive strategy is a recognition of this fact: Palamedes' case need not rely on just one argument, but on the overall likelihood that he could have been either willing or able to commit the crime. Each successive argument reduces that likelihood and does so independently of the others, making the ultimate conclusion seem inevitable by the time Palamedes reaches the end of his speech.

We can understand the concessive strategy of *On What-Is-Not* similarly. To make his overall case, Gorgias appears to have only conceded as much as he needed to at each successive stage. Do you think you have some way out of the initial web of arguments that nothing is? Well, then, whatever remains cannot even be thought. And you think you have some way of showing that it can in fact be thought? Well, then, that same thing cannot be communicated to someone

concede the point but emphasize the consequence: that all things thought will be things that are. Gorgias could then use an epistemic argument to show that, in that case, what-is could not be known.

else. Unlike the case of the *Palamedes*, where the speaker's guilt or innocence is at stake, it is less clear what the inevitable consequence is meant to be of the arguments in *On What-Is-Not*. We get an intriguing hint toward the end of Sextus' paraphrase, however, of at least one consequence: since joint inquiry will be problematic if the object of inquiry does not exist or cannot be thought or communicated, our time will be better spent understanding the one thing we do have direct access to: speech or argument (λόγος).

As discussed above, the third section argues that what-is cannot be communicated in part because speech is of the wrong ontological type. We see this in both paraphrases. Sextus lays out the basic argument as follows:

(84) ὧι γὰρ μηνύομεν, ἔστι λόγος, λόγος δὲ οὐκ ἔστι τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα· οὐκ ἄρα τὰ ὄντα μηνύομεν τοῖς πέλας ἀλλὰ λόγον, ὃς ἕτερός ἐστι τῶν ὑποκειμένων. καθάπερ οὖν τὸ ὄρατὸν οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο ἀκουστὸν καὶ ἀνάπαλιν, οὕτως ἐπεὶ ὑπόκειται τὸ ὄν ἐκτός, οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο λόγος ὁ ἡμέτερος·

(84) Speech is what we use to indicate anything, but the underlying things-that-are are not speech. Thus, it is not the case that we indicate things-that-are to others; rather, it's speech, which is different from what underlies it. So, just as the visible can't become audible, nor the reverse, so too what-is can't become our speech, since it is a separate, underlying thing.

And similarly in the *MXG*:

[6.21] (...) ὥσπερ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἡ ὄψις τοὺς φθόγγους γινώσκει, οὕτως οὐδὲ ἡ ἀκοὴ τὰ χρώματα ἀκούει, ἀλλὰ φθόγγους· καὶ λέγει ὁ λέγων, ἀλλ' οὐ χρωμα οὐδὲ πρᾶγμα.

[6.21] (...) For just as sight doesn't recognize sounds, hearing also doesn't hear colors, only sounds, and the speaker speaks, but not a color or a thing.³⁰

Sextus then reports Gorgias as considering the potential objection that speech can at least communicate other speech:

³⁰ The *MXG* appears to give a similar line of reasoning in the following section to make a similar case for the listener (that is, that speech is of the wrong type to give them what they need for successful communication), but the text is likely corrupt.

(86) καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ ἔνεστι λέγειν ὅτι ὄν τρόπον τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ ἀκουστὰ ὑπόκειται, οὕτως καὶ ὁ λόγος, ὥστε δύνασθαι ἐξ ὑποκειμένου αὐτοῦ καὶ ὄντος τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα μὴνύεσθαι. εἰ γὰρ καὶ ὑπόκειται, φησὶν, ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διαφέρει τῶν λοιπῶν ὑποκειμένων, καὶ πλείστῳ διενήνοχε τὰ ὄρατὰ σώματα τῶν λόγων· δι' ἑτέρου γὰρ ὀργάνου ληπτὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ὄρατὸν καὶ δι' ἄλλου ὁ λόγος. οὐκ ἄρα ἐνδείκνυται τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων ὁ λόγος, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνα τὴν ἀλλήλων διαδηλοῖ φύσιν.

(86) Moreover, it's not possible to say that speech is an underlying thing in the way that things seen and heard are and, as a result, that someone can indicate underlying things-that-are by underlying things-that-are. For even if speech is in an underlying thing, he says, it is rather different from the other underlying things. In fact, visible bodies differ from words to the greatest extent (for speech is grasped by one organ and the visible by a different one). Thus, it's not the case that speech can display most underlying things, just as those other things cannot reveal each other's nature.

The main argument is clear: even granting that speech can qualify as an underlying thing, it still will not be able to communicate most underlying things (that is, those that are not speech). Yet this argument involves a striking concession: for all that Gorgias has said, speech *can* be communicated. Thus, if anything is, can be thought, or can be communicated, it is speech.

It may well be that the first two parts of *On What-Is-Not* in particular had a polemical purpose, whether directed at the Eleatics, Protagoras, the natural philosophers, or all of the above. But we need not see this as exhausting Gorgias's purposes. The negative point, that inquiry into what-is may be more difficult and problematic than supposed by Gorgias' competitors, is consistent with Gorgias weaving in a positive suggestion that we are encouraged to work out on our own. Each concessive stage makes it more likely from the perspective of the listener or reader that our efforts are best spent on understanding the one thing we have the most direct access to: λόγος itself. Given the argument as a whole, this would also have to come with some humility about how far that line of inquiry might ultimately extend. Gorgias' work may have been polemical and at times playful, but this does not preclude seeing it as also a serious and philosophically interesting work.

We can appreciate Gorgias' concessive methodology as part of a broader trend in Gorgias' time of offering arguments that we might, broadly speaking, call 'antilogical'. By 'antilogical' in

this broad sense I mean any argument that has built into it a consideration of two opposing views. The contrast case would be an argument that functions solely by putting forward a single view, especially by appeal to the authority of the speaker. An argument by authority need not consider alternative possibilities: the argument should be accepted on the strength of the authority alone. Gorgias' concessive methodology, on the other hand, has a built-in invitation to consider alternative possibilities. Put another way, it invites us not only to see the force of the argument at hand, but also to consider the possibility that the conclusion is false. This is a feature of Gorgias' argumentation that he shares with many other philosophers of the fifth and fourth century, including Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Protagoras, and Plato just to name a few.

A similar move is present in another argumentative strategy present throughout Gorgias' works, what I have elsewhere called "playing both sides". Playing both sides involves looking to what at least are taken to be a set of exclusive and exhaustive alternatives and showing that some conclusion follows *no matter what*. The *Helen*, for example, argues that *no matter what* made Helen go to Troy, she is not to blame. It thus acknowledges alternative possibilities (in this case, different possible causes of her leaving) in order to highlight some consequence as inevitable. Gorgias also uses this method in the *Palamedes* and in *On What-Is-Not* within the overarching concessive structure.³¹ Playing both sides and the concessive methodology are both antilogical in the broad sense of involving opposed views, though their structure differs: playing both sides involves looking at each of an exclusive and exhaustive set of alternatives hypothetically and seeing what follows. Gorgias' concessive methodology involves arguing to some conclusion, then conceding the contradictory and offering another argument based on that concession. Both have a similar effect, however, in supporting the likelihood or inevitability of some further conclusion.

I hope that the observations in this paper will help challenge two tendencies of contemporary scholarship that have kept contemporary philosophers from taking Gorgias more seriously. The first is the tendency in recent decades to treat Sextus' paraphrase as unreliable, especially when compared with the *MXG*. It was for a good reason that scholars criticized Diels and Kranz' decision not even to include the *MXG* in their edition of Gorgias, especially when it comes to understanding the third part of the treatise. But, when it comes to the second part, we need to be more cautious about the testimony of the *MXG*. This is not to say that Sextus' paraphrase

³¹ See my (2020) for more on playing both sides in Gorgias and its relation to what I call "exploring both sides" in Socratic methodology.

is free from any errors or biases, but there is no good reason to treat it as blatantly fallacious and misguided. A serious argument emerges when we take Sextus seriously, one corroborated by our other evidence as argued above. If I am right, then even the language of Sextus' paraphrase has more to tell us than is usually assumed.³²

The second tendency that I hope this study will challenge is the tendency, influenced by Plato's *Gorgias*, to see Gorgias as a sophist or rhetorician *instead of* a philosopher. There is a tendency to assume that Gorgias cared about power and persuasion over truth and that, as a result, any arguments found within his corpus should be taken less seriously. But Gorgias should be taken seriously *as a philosopher*—at least in the contemporary sense—not only because he used rigorous argumentation, but also because he encourages second order of reflection on the kinds of questions that interest us as philosophers. For example, Rachel Barney has shown how Gorgias' *Encomium* both contains a rigorous argument and encourages us to reflect on the nature of moral responsibility.³³ If we come to Gorgias with the assumption that the arguments are less than serious, we are unlikely to get much out of them. But if we approach them the same way we approach a Platonic text—keeping in mind that the philosophical significance might arise out of a dialogue between different views, or between reader and text—we can see that Gorgias' works have much more to offer us from a philosophical perspective.

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³² See Giombini (2018) for another argument along these lines.

³³ Barney (2016).

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Appendix A: Gorgias' On What-Is-Not, Sextus' paraphrase (M VII.66–76), Translated by Evan Rodriguez

0 Sextus' introduction to the work

<p>(65) [Γοργίας δὲ ὁ Λεοντῖνος] ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ Περὶ φύσεως τρία κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς κεφάλαια κατασκευάζει, ἐν μὲν καὶ πρῶτον ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔστιν, δεύτερον ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἔστιν, ἀκατάληπτον ἀνθρώπῳ, τρίτον ὅτι εἰ καὶ καταληπτόν, ἀλλὰ τοί γε ἀνέξοιστον καὶ ἀνερμήνευτον τῷ πέλας.</p>	<p>(65) [Gorgias of Leontini], in his work titled <i>On What-is-Not or On Nature</i>, maintains three main claims sequentially. The first one is that nothing is. The second is that, even if anything is, it can't be comprehended by a human. The third is that, even if it can be comprehended, it still can't be expressed or explained to the next person.</p>
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1 Summary of the argument for the first claim: it's not the case that anything is

<p>(66) ὅτι μὲν οὐδὲν ἔστιν, ἐπιλογίζεται τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον· εἰ γὰρ ἔστι <τι>,³⁴ ἦτοι τὸ ὄν ἔστιν ἢ τὸ μὴ ὄν, ἢ καὶ τὸ ὄν ἔστι καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν. οὐτε δὲ τὸ ὄν ἔστιν, ὡς παραστήσει, οὐτε τὸ μὴ ὄν, ὡς παραμυθήσεται, οὐτε τὸ ὄν καὶ <τὸ>³⁵ μὴ ὄν, ὡς καὶ τοῦτο διδάξει· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι τι.</p>	<p>(66) First, then, that nothing is, he concludes in the following way: if indeed anything is, then either what-is or what-is-not is, or both what-is and what-is-not are. But neither what-is is, as he will establish, nor what-is-not, as he will explain, nor what-is and what-is-not, as he will suggest even this. Therefore, it's not the case that anything is.</p>
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1.1 It's not the case that what-is-not is

<p>(67) καὶ δὴ τὸ μὴ ὄν οὐκ ἔστιν. εἰ γὰρ τὸ μὴ ὄν ἔστιν, ἔσται τε ἅμα καὶ οὐκ ἔσται· ἢ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὄν νοεῖται, οὐκ ἔσται, ἢ δὲ ἔστι τὸ³⁶ μὴ ὄν, πάλιν ἔσται. παντελῶς δὲ ἄτοπον τὸ εἶναι τι ἅμα καὶ μὴ εἶναι· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι τὸ μὴ ὄν. καὶ ἄλλως, εἰ τὸ μὴ ὄν ἔστι, τὸ ὄν οὐκ ἔσται· ἐναντία γὰρ ἔστι</p>	<p>(67) And indeed, to begin, what-is-not is not. For if what-is-not is, it will be and will not be at the same time: insofar as it's conceived as not being, it will not be, and insofar as what-is-not is, it will in turn be. But it's entirely absurd for something to be and not to be at the same time. Thus, it's</p>
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³⁴ Bekker; without it, read "if it is".

³⁵ Bekker; cp. 75 (τὸ τε ὄν καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν).

³⁶ N τὸ μὴ ὄν (the article is missing from the other manuscripts) against most editors.

<p>ταῦτα ἀλλήλοις, καὶ εἰ τῷ μὴ ὄντι συμβέβηκε τὸ εἶναι, τῷ ὄντι συμβήσεται τὸ μὴ εἶναι. οὐχὶ δὲ γε τὸ ὄν οὐκ ἔστιν· <τοίνυν>³⁷ οὐδὲ τὸ μὴ ὄν ἔσται.</p>	<p>not the case that what-is-not is. And alternatively, if what-is-not is, what-is will not be: these are opposite to one another, and so if being goes along with what-is-not, not being will go along with what-is. But it's not at all the case that what-is is not; nor, then, will what-is-not be.</p>
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1.2 *It's not the case that what-is is*

<p>(68) καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ τὸ ὄν ἔστιν. εἰ γὰρ τὸ ὄν ἔστιν, ἥτοι αἰδιόν ἐστιν ἢ γενητόν ἢ αἰδιόν ἅμα καὶ γενητόν· οὔτε δὲ αἰδιόν ἐστιν οὔτε γενητόν οὔτε ἀμφοτέρα, ὡς δείξομεν· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι τὸ ὄν.</p>	<p>(68) And next, not even what-is is. For if what-is is, then it's either eternal, or generated, or at once eternal and generated. But is it neither eternal nor generated nor both, as we will show. Therefore, it's not the case that what-is is.</p>
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1.2.1 *It's not the case that what-is is eternal*

<p>εἰ γὰρ αἰδιόν ἐστι τὸ ὄν (ἀρκτέον γὰρ ἐντεῦθεν), οὐκ ἔχει τινὰ ἀρχήν. (69) τὸ γὰρ γινόμενον πᾶν ἔχει τιν' ἀρχήν, τὸ δὲ αἰδιόν ἀγένητον καθεστῶς οὐκ εἶχεν ἀρχήν. μὴ ἔχον δὲ ἀρχήν ἄπειρόν ἐστιν. εἰ δὲ ἄπειρόν ἐστιν, οὐδαμοῦ ἐστιν.</p> <p>εἰ γὰρ πού ἐστιν, ἕτερον αὐτοῦ ἐστιν ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἐν ᾧ ἐστιν, καὶ οὕτως οὐκέτ' ἄπειρον ἔσται τὸ ὄν ἐμπεριεχόμενον τινι· μείζον γὰρ ἐστι τοῦ ἐμπεριεχομένου τὸ ἐμπεριέχον, τοῦ δὲ ἀπείρου οὐδὲν ἐστι μείζον, ὥστε οὐκ ἔστι που τὸ ἄπειρον.</p> <p>(70) καὶ μὴν οὐδ' ἐν αὐτῷ περιέχεται. ταῦτόν γὰρ ἔσται τὸ ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ δύο γενήσεται τὸ ὄν, τόπος τε καὶ σῶμα (τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ᾧ τόπος ἐστίν, τὸ δ' ἐν αὐτῷ σῶμα). τοῦτο δὲ γε ἄτοπον. τοίνυν οὐδὲ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐστι τὸ ὄν.</p> <p>ὥστ' εἰ αἰδιόν ἐστι τὸ ὄν, ἄπειρόν ἐστιν, εἰ δὲ ἄπειρόν ἐστιν, οὐδαμοῦ ἐστιν, εἰ δὲ</p>	<p>If what-is is eternal—one must start from here—has no starting point. (69) Everything generated has some starting point, while the eternal, standing ungenerated, does not. Without a starting point, it's unlimited, and if unlimited, it's nowhere.</p> <p>For if it's somewhere, the thing it's in is different from it. As a result, what-is will no longer be unlimited since something surrounds it. This is because the thing surrounding something is bigger than what it surrounds, but nothing is bigger than the unlimited. Thus, the unlimited isn't anywhere.</p> <p>(70) Nor, in turn, is it contained in itself. Were it so, container and contained would be the same, and what-is would become two, place and body (the container being the place, the contained the body). But this is absurd. So what-is isn't in itself either.</p>
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³⁷ Accepting Bekker's emendation along with Buchheim, Diels-Kranz, Graham, Ioli, and Laks-Most (cf. τοίνυν οὐδὲ in (70) below).

<p>μηδαμοῦ ἐστίν, οὐκ ἔστιν. τοίνυν εἰ ἀίδιον ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν, οὐδὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν ὄν ἐστίν.</p>	<p>Thus, if what-is is eternal, it's unlimited, and if it's unlimited, it's nowhere, and if it's nowhere, it is not. In other words, if what-is is eternal, it's not even what-is in the first place.</p>
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1.2.2 *It's not the case that what-is is generated*

<p>(71) καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ γενητὸν εἶναι δύναται τὸ ὄν. εἰ γὰρ γέγονεν, ἦτοι ἐξ ὄντος ἢ ἐκ μὴ ὄντος γέγονεν. ἀλλ' οὔτε ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος γέγονεν· εἰ γὰρ ὄν ἐστίν, οὐ γέγονεν ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἤδη· οὔτε ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος· τὸ γὰρ μὴ ὄν οὐδὲ γεννησαί τι δύναται διὰ τὸ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ὀφείλειν ὑπάρξεως μετέχειν τὸ γεννητικόν τινος. οὐκ ἄρα οὐδὲ γενητὸν ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν.</p>	<p>(71) And, next, what-is isn't capable of being generated either. For if it has been generated, it has been generated either from what-is or from what-is-not. But it can't have been generated from what-is: if it is something that is, it hasn't been generated but already is. Nor can it have been generated from what-is-not: what-is-not isn't capable of generating anything given that, by necessity, it would need to have some substance to be able to generate something. Therefore, it's indeed not the case that what-is is generated.</p>
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1.2.3 *It's not the case that what-is is both eternal and generated*

<p>(72) κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ οὐδὲ τὸ συναμφοτέρων, ἀίδιον ἅμα καὶ γενητὸν· ταῦτα γὰρ ἀναιρετικά ἐστίν ἀλλήλων, καὶ εἰ ἀίδιον ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν, οὐ γέγονεν, καὶ εἰ γέγονεν, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀίδιον. τοίνυν εἰ μήτε ἀίδιον ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν μήτε γενητὸν μήτε τὸ συναμφοτέρων, οὐκ ἂν εἶη τὸ ὄν.</p>	<p>(72) And, likewise, it's not the two together, eternal and generated at the same time: for these are destructive of one another, and if what-is is eternal, it has not been generated, and if it has been generated, it's not eternal. Thus, if what-is is neither eternal nor generated nor both, it couldn't be the case that what-is is.</p>
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1.2.4 *What-is is neither one nor many*

<p>(73) καὶ ἄλλως, εἰ ἔστιν, ἦτοι ἓν ἐστίν ἢ πολλά· οὔτε δὲ ἓν ἐστίν οὔτε πολλά, ὡς παρασταθήσεται· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι τὸ ὄν. εἰ γὰρ ἓν ἐστίν, ἦτοι ποσὸν ἐστίν ἢ συνεχές ἐστίν ἢ μέγεθος ἐστίν ἢ σῶμά ἐστιν. ὅτι δὲ</p>	<p>(73) And, besides, if it is, it is either one or many. But it is neither one nor many, as will be established: therefore, it's not the case that what-is is. For if it is one, then it is either a quantity or a continuum or a magnitude or a body. Yet whichever of</p>
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<p>ἂν εἴη³⁸ τούτων, οὐχ ἓν ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ ποσὸν μὲν καθεστῶς διαιρεθήσεται, συνεχῆς δὲ ὄν τμηθήσεται. ὁμοίως δὲ μέγεθος νοούμενον οὐκ ἔσται ἀδιαίρετον. σῶμα δὲ τυγχάνον τριπλοῦν ἔσται· καὶ γὰρ μῆκος καὶ πλάτος καὶ βάθος ἔξει. ἄτοπον δέ γε τὸ μηδὲν τούτων εἶναι λέγειν τὸ ὄν· οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ἓν τὸ ὄν.</p> <p>(74) καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ πολλά ἔστιν. εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἔστιν ἓν, οὐδὲ πολλά ἔστιν· σύνθεσις γὰρ τῶν καθ' ἓν ἔστι τὰ πολλά, διόπερ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀναιρουμένου συναναιρεῖται καὶ τὰ πολλά.</p> <p>ἀλλὰ γὰρ ὅτι μὲν οὔτε τὸ ὄν ἔστιν οὔτε τὸ μὴ ὄν ἔστιν, ἐκ τούτων συμφανές.</p>	<p>these it might be, it isn't one. If it exists as a quantity it will be divided, and if it is a continuum it will be cut. Similarly, if it is understood as a magnitude it will not be indivisible. And if it happens to be a body it will be threefold: it will have length and breadth and depth. Yet it is absurd to say that what-is is none of these. Therefore, it's not the case that what-is is one.</p> <p>(74) And next it's not many, either. If it isn't one, neither is it many; after all, the many is a composition of singular things. Because of this, when the one is denied, the many is denied along with it.</p> <p>In summary, for these reasons it's clear: neither what-is is, nor what-is-not.</p>
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1.3 It's not the case that both what-is and what-is-not are

<p>(75) ὅτι δὲ οὐδὲ ἀμφοτέρα ἔστιν, τό τε ὄν καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν, εὐεπιλόγιστον. εἴπερ γὰρ τὸ μὴ ὄν ἔστι καὶ τὸ ὄν ἔστι, ταῦτόν ἔσται τῷ ὄντι τὸ μὴ ὄν ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ εἶναι· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐδέτερον αὐτῶν ἔστιν. ὅτι γὰρ τὸ μὴ ὄν οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁμόλογον· δέδεικται δὲ ταῦτό τούτῳ καθεστῶς τὸ ὄν· καὶ αὐτὸ τοίνυν οὐκ ἔσται.</p> <p>(76) οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' εἴπερ ταυτόν ἔστι τῷ μὴ ὄντι τὸ ὄν, οὐ δύναται ἀμφοτέρα εἶναι· εἰ γὰρ ἀμφοτέρα, οὐ ταυτόν, καὶ εἰ ταυτόν, οὐκ ἀμφοτέρα.</p>	<p>(75) And it can easily be inferred that it's not the case that both are, both what-is and what-is-not. For if in fact what-is-not as well as what-is is, what-is-not will be the same as what-is insofar as their being is concerned; for this reason, neither of them is. For it's agreed that what-is-not is not, and it has been shown that what-is is the same in this respect. Thus, it too will not be.</p> <p>(76) Moreover, even if what-is is the same thing as what-is-not, it's not possible for both to be: if both are, they are not the same thing, and if they are the same thing, it's not the case that both are.</p>
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1.4 Conclusion of the first part

<p>οἷς ἔπεται τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι. εἰ γὰρ μήτε τὸ ὄν ἔστι μήτε τὸ μὴ ὄν μήτε ἀμφοτέρα, παρὰ δὲ ταῦτα οὐδὲν νοεῖται, οὐδὲν ἔστιν.</p>	<p>From these considerations it follows that nothing is. If neither what-is nor what-is-</p>
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³⁸ Keeping εἴη with the manuscripts. Bekker emends to ἦ.

	not nor both are, and nothing is recognized beyond these, nothing is.
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2.1 Summary of the argument for the second claim: what-is is not thought of

<p>(77) ὅτι δὲ κἂν ἦ τι, τοῦτο ἄγνωστόν τε καὶ ἀνεπινοήτόν ἐστιν ἀνθρώπῳ, παρακειμένως ὑποδεικτέον. εἰ γὰρ τὰ φρονούμενα, φησὶν ὁ Γοργίας, οὐκ ἔστιν ὄντα, τὸ ὄν οὐ φρονεῖται. καὶ κατὰ λόγον· ὥσπερ γὰρ εἰ τοῖς φρονουμένοις συμβέβηκεν εἶναι λευκοῖς, κἂν συμβεβήκει τοῖς λευκοῖς φρονεῖσθαι, οὕτως εἰ τοῖς φρονουμένοις συμβέβηκεν μὴ εἶναι οὖσι, κατ' ἀνάγκην συμβήσεται τοῖς οὖσι μὴ φρονεῖσθαι. (78) διόπερ ὑγιὲς καὶ σῶιζον ἀκολουθίαν ἐστὶ τὸ 'εἰ τὰ φρονούμενα οὐκ ἔστιν ὄντα, τὸ ὄν οὐ φρονεῖται'. τὰ δὲ γε φρονούμενα (προληπτέον γάρ) οὐκ ἔστιν ὄντα, ὡς παραστήσομεν· οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὄν φρονεῖται.</p>	<p>(77) Next, it must be shown in a similar way that, even if something is, it can neither be recognized nor conceived by a human. If things that are thought, says Gorgias, are not things-that-are, then what-is is not thought of. And this makes sense. For if being light goes along with things that are thought, then being thought of goes along with being light; similarly, if what-is-not-a-thing-that-is goes along with the things that are thought, not-being-thought-of necessarily goes along with things-that-are. (78) For this reason, 'if things that are thought are not things-that-are, then what-is is not thought of' is sound and follows logically. And—to look ahead—we will establish that things that are thought are not things-that-are. Thus, what-is is not thought of.</p>
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2.2 Things that are thought are not things-that-are, first argument

<p>καὶ ὅτι τὰ φρονούμενα οὐκ ἔστιν ὄντα, συμφανές· (79) εἰ γὰρ τὰ φρονούμενά ἐστιν ὄντα, πάντα τὰ φρονούμενα ἔστιν, καὶ ὅπη ἂν τις αὐτὰ φρονήσῃ. ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀπεμφαῖνον· ἢ δὲ ἐστὶ, φαῦλον.³⁹ οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν φρονῆι τις ἄνθρωπον ἰπτάμενον ἢ ἄρματα ἐν πελάγει τρέχοντα, εὐθέως ἄνθρωπος ἵπταται ἢ ἄρματα ἐν πελάγει τρέχει. ὥστε οὐ τὰ φρονούμενά ἐστιν ὄντα.</p>	<p>And it is quite clear that things that are thought are not things-that-are. (79) For if things that are thought are things-that-are, then all things that are thought are, and precisely in the way someone thinks them. And that is manifestly wrong; how this is so is trivial. For it's not the case that if someone thinks of a person flying or a chariot racing on the sea, a person thereby flies or a chariot thereby races on the sea. Accordingly, it's not the case that things that are thought are things-that-are.</p>
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³⁹ Following Laks and Most. The manuscripts read ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀπεμφαῖνον, εἰ δὲ ἐστὶ, φαῦλον. Bekker, Buchheim, Graham and Ioli print: ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀπεμφαῖνον· [εἰ δὲ ἐστὶ, φαῦλον.] Laks and Most's solution I think is preferable to Bekker, especially since we've had many clauses similar to "εἰ δὲ ἐστὶ," in this work, I could see how a copyist not following closely could make this mistake.

2.3 Things that are thought are not things-that-are, second argument

<p>(80) πρὸς τούτοις εἰ τὰ φρονούμενά ἐστιν ὄντα, τὰ μὴ ὄντα οὐ φρονηθήσεται. τοῖς γὰρ ἐναντίοις τὰ ἐναντία συμβέβηκεν, ἐναντίον δὲ ἐστὶ τῶι ὄντι τὸ μὴ ὄν. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντως, εἰ τῶι ὄντι συμβέβηκε τὸ φρονεῖσθαι, τῶι μὴ ὄντι συμβήσεται τὸ μὴ φρονεῖσθαι. ἄτοπον δ' ἐστὶ τοῦτο· καὶ γὰρ Σκύλλα καὶ Χίμαιρα καὶ πολλὰ τῶν μὴ ὄντων φρονεῖται. οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὄν φρονεῖται.</p>	<p>(80) In addition, if things that are thought are things-that-are, things-that-are-not will not be thought of. For opposites go along with opposites, and what-is-not is the opposite of what-is. It by all means follows that, if being-thought-of goes along with what-is, then what-is-not-thought-of goes along with what-is-not. But this is absurd: Scylla, Chimera, and many other things-that-are-not are thought of. Thus, it's not the case that what-is is thought of.</p>
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2.4 Things that are thought are not things-that-are, supplement to the first two arguments

<p>(81) ὥσπερ τε τὰ ὁρώμενα διὰ τοῦτο ὁρατὰ λέγεται ὅτι ὁρᾶται, καὶ τὰ ἀκουστὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἀκουστὰ ὅτι ἀκούεται, καὶ οὐ τὰ μὲν ὁρατὰ ἐκβάλλομεν ὅτι οὐκ ἀκούεται, τὰ δὲ ἀκουστὰ παραπέμπομεν ὅτι οὐχ ὁρᾶται (ἕκαστον γὰρ ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας αἰσθήσεως ἀλλ' οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλης ὀφείλει κρίνεσθαι), οὕτω καὶ τὰ φρονούμενα καὶ εἰ μὴ βλέποιο τῆι ὄψει μὴδὲ ἀκούοιο τῆι ἀκοῆι ἔσται, ὅτι πρὸς τοῦ οἰκείου λαμβάνεται κριτηρίου. (82) εἰ οὖν φρονεῖ τις ἐν πελάγει ἄρματα τρέχειν, καὶ εἰ μὴ βλέπει ταῦτα, ὀφείλει πιστεῦειν ὅτι ἄρματα ἔστιν ἐν πελάγει τρέχοντα. ἄτοπον δὲ τοῦτο· οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὄν φρονεῖται καὶ καταλαμβάνεται.</p>	<p>(81) Things that are seen are said to be visible because they are seen, and things that are heard are said to be audible because they are heard. We don't reject visible things because they're not heard or dismiss audible things because they're not seen (for each ought to be judged by its particular modality rather than by some other one). Similarly, things that are thought will be, even if they're not seen by the eyes or heard by the ears, because they follow their own standard of judgment. (82) So, if someone thinks that a chariot is racing on the sea, they ought to trust that a chariot is racing on the sea, even if they don't see it. But this is absurd. Thus, it's not the case that what-is is thought of or comprehended.</p>
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3.1 The main argument for the third claim: what-is cannot be communicated

<p>(83) καὶ εἰ καταλαμβάνοιο δέ, ἀνέξοιστον ἐτέρωι. εἰ γὰρ τὰ ὄντα ὁρατὰ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀκουστὰ καὶ κοινῶς αἰσθητά, ἅπερ ἐκτὸς ὑπόκειται, τούτων τε τὰ μὲν ὁρατὰ ὁράσει καταληπτά ἐστὶ τὰ δὲ ἀκουστὰ ἀκοῆι καὶ</p>	<p>(83) And even if it should be comprehended, it can't be expressed to someone else. For if things-that-are are visible and audible and perceptible in common—and are indeed separate, underlying things—and things seen are</p>
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<p>οὐκ ἐναλλάξ, πῶς οὖν δύναται ταῦτα ἐτέρῳι μηνύεσθαι;</p> <p>(84) ὧι γὰρ μηνύομεν, ἔστι λόγος, λόγος δὲ οὐκ ἔστι τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα· οὐκ ἄρα τὰ ὄντα μηνύομεν τοῖς πέλας ἀλλὰ λόγον, ὃς ἕτερός ἐστι τῶν ὑποκειμένων. καθάπερ οὖν τὸ ὄρατὸν οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο ἀκουστὸν καὶ ἀνάπαλιν, οὕτως ἐπεὶ ὑπόκειται τὸ ὄν ἐκτός, οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο λόγος ὁ ἡμέτερος·</p> <p>(85) μὴ ὦν δὲ λόγος οὐκ ἂν δηλωθεῖ ἐτέρῳι.</p>	<p>comprehended through sight and things heard through hearing and not vice versa, how could they then be indicated to someone else?</p> <p>(84) Speech is what we use to indicate anything, but the underlying things-that-are are not speech. Thus, it is not the case that we indicate things-that-are to others; rather, it's speech, which is different from what underlies it. So, just as the visible can't become audible, nor the reverse, so too what-is can't become our speech, since it is a separate, underlying thing. (85) And, since it's not speech, it can't be revealed to another person.</p>
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3.2: Further support: speech is different from its cause

<p>ὁ γε μὴν λόγος, φησίν, ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξωθεν προσπιπτόντων ἡμῖν πραγμάτων συνίσταται, τουτέστι τῶν αἰσθητῶν· ἐκ γὰρ τῆς τοῦ χυλοῦ ἐγκυρήσεως ἐγγίνεται ἡμῖν ὁ κατὰ ταύτης τῆς ποιότητος ἐκφερόμενος λόγος, καὶ ἐκ τῆς τοῦ χρώματος ὑποπτώσεως ὁ κατὰ τοῦ χρώματος. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, οὐχ ὁ λόγος τοῦ ἐκτὸς παραστατικός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐκτὸς τοῦ λόγου μηνυτικὸν γίνεται.</p>	<p>Next, he says, speech arises from things that come to us from the outside, that is, from sensible objects. For an encounter with a taste brings out in us a speech that takes place in accordance with that quality; being struck with color causes speech in accord with that color. If this is so, then speech does not signify what is outside of it; rather, what is outside is indicative of speech.</p>
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3.3 Speech cannot reveal what underlies even if it is an underlying thing itself

<p>(86) καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ ἔνεστι λέγειν ὅτι ὄν τρόπον τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ ἀκουστὰ ὑπόκειται, οὕτως καὶ ὁ λόγος, ὥστε δύνασθαι ἐξ ὑποκειμένου αὐτοῦ καὶ ὄντος τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα μηνύεσθαι. εἰ γὰρ καὶ ὑπόκειται, φησίν, ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ διαφέρει τῶν λοιπῶν ὑποκειμένων, καὶ πλείστῳι διενήνοχε τὰ ὄρατὰ σώματα τῶν λόγων· δι' ἐτέρου γὰρ ὀργάνου ληπτὸν ἔστι τὸ ὄρατὸν καὶ δι' ἄλλου ὁ λόγος. οὐκ ἄρα ἐνδείκνυται τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων ὁ</p>	<p>(86) Moreover, it's not possible to say that speech is an underlying thing in the way that things seen and heard are and, as a result, that someone can indicate underlying things-that-are by underlying things-that-are. For even if speech is in an underlying thing, he says, it is rather different from the other underlying things. In fact, visible bodies differ from words to the greatest extent (for speech is grasped by one organ and the visible by a different one). Thus, it's not the case that speech can</p>
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λόγος, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνα τὴν ἀλλήλων διαδηλοῖ φύσιν.	display most underlying things, just as those other things cannot reveal each other's nature.
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Appendix B: Gorgias’ *On What-Is-Not*, the *MXG* paraphrase (5–6, 979a12–980b21), Translated by Evan Rodriguez

0 Anonymous’ introduction to the work

<p>[1] Οὐκ εἶναί φησιν οὐδέν· εἰ δ’ ἔστιν, ἄγνωστον εἶναι· εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔστι καὶ γνωστόν, ἀλλ’ οὐ δηλωτὸν ἄλλοις</p>	<p>[1] He says that nothing at all is, but if it is, it can’t be recognized, and if it both is and can be recognized, it still can’t be revealed to others.</p>
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1 Summary of the argument: nothing is

<p>[2] καὶ ὅτι μὲν οὐκ ἔστι, συνθεῖς τὰ ἑτέροις εἰρημένα, ὅσοι περὶ τῶν ὄντων λέγοντες τάναντία, ὡς δοκοῦσιν, ἀποφαίνονται αὐτοῖς, οἱ μὲν ὅτι ἓν καὶ οὐ πολλά, οἱ δὲ ὅτι πολλά καὶ οὐχ ἓν, καὶ οἱ μὲν ὅτι ἀγένητα, οἱ δ’ ὡς γενόμενα ἐπιδεικνύντες ταῦτα, συλλογίζεται τ’⁴⁰ ἀμφοτέρων.</p> <p>[3] ἀνάγκη γάρ, φησίν, εἴ τι ἔστι,⁴¹ μήτε ἓν μήτε πολλά εἶναι μήτε ἀγένητα μήτε γενόμενα.⁴² οὐδὲν ἂν εἴη· εἰ γὰρ⁴³ εἴη τι, τούτων ἂν θάτερα εἴη. ὅτι⁴⁴ οὐκ ἔστιν οὔτε ἓν οὔτε πολλά, οὔτε ἀγένητα οὔτε γενόμενα, τὰ μὲν ὡς Μέλισσος, τὰ δὲ ὡς Ζήνων ἐπιχειρεῖ δεικνύειν μετὰ τὴν πρώτην ἴδιον αὐτοῦ ἀπόδειξιν, ἐν ἧ λέγει ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν οὔτε εἶναι οὔτε μὴ εἶναι.</p>	<p>[2] And to begin, that nothing is, he collects what others have said, as many as, when speaking about being, declare things that appear to contradict one another: some showing that they are one and not many, others that they are many and not one; some that they are ungenerated, and others that they are generated. He draws out the conclusions⁴⁵ of both.</p> <p>[3] For it is necessary, he says, if anything is, that it is neither one nor many nor ungenerated nor generated. Nothing can be; if something were, it would be one of these. He sets out to show that it is neither one nor many, neither ungenerated nor generated, following Melissus for some arguments and Zeno for others. He does this after his own first display, in which he says that neither what-is nor what-is-not is.</p>
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⁴⁰ The manuscripts have τ’. Cassin prints τ’, though Buchheim, Diels, Graham, Ioli, LM, and Untersteiner print κατ’.

⁴¹ Taking out the following addition of Diels, which isn’t followed by Untersteiner, LM, Graham, Ioli, Cassin, or Buchheim: <ἢ ἓν ἢ πολλά εἶναι καὶ ἢ ἀγένητα ἢ γενόμενα. εἰ οὖν μὴ ἔστι>

⁴² I’m repunctuating by putting a full stop here and a half stop after εἴη. Others have a comma here and a full stop after εἴη. I am also tempted to go with Ioli’s reconstruction, which is smoother Greek and also smoother from a logical standpoint (but requires intervening more in the text). Ioli prints: “εἴ τι ἔστι μήτε ἓν μήτε πολλά, [εἶναι], μήτε ἀγένητα μήτε γενόμενα, οὐδὲν ἂν εἶναι.”

⁴³ Graham follows R and prints μὴ here (omitted in L). He translates: “For if it were not one of these, it would be the other.”

⁴⁴ LM and Ioli follow Cook-Wilson with <οὐ>. Buchheim and Untersteiner add <δ’>, while Cassin and Graham add nothing.

⁴⁵ This is one possibility, but not sure if this is the right way to translate συλλογίζεται τὰ ἀμφοτέρων.

1.1 Gorgias' own argument: nothing is

<p>[4] εἰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἔστι μὴ εἶναι, οὐδὲν ἂν ἦττον τὸ μὴ ὄν τοῦ ὄντος εἶη. τό τε γὰρ μὴ ὄν ἔστι μὴ ὄν καὶ τὸ ὄν ὄν, ὥστε οὐδὲν μᾶλλον εἶναι ἢ οὐκ εἶναι τὰ πράγματα. [5] εἰ δ' ὅμως τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἔστι, τὸ εἶναι, φησὶν, οὐκ ἔστι, τὸ ἀντικείμενον. εἰ γὰρ τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἔστι, τὸ εἶναι μὴ εἶναι προσήκει. [6] ὥστε οὐκ ἂν οὕτως, φησὶν, οὐδὲν ἂν εἶη, εἰ μὴ ταυτόν ἐστιν εἶναι τε καὶ μὴ εἶναι.</p> <p>[7] εἰ δὲ ταυτό, καὶ οὕτως οὐκ ἂν εἶη οὐδέν· τό τε γὰρ μὴ ὄν οὐκ ἔστι καὶ τὸ ὄν, ἐπεὶ γὰρ γε⁴⁶ ταυτό τῷ μὴ ὄντι. οὗτος⁴⁷ μὲν οὖν ὁ αὐτὸς⁴⁸ λόγος ἐκείνου.</p>	<p>[4] For if what-is-not is what-is-not, what-is-not would be no less than what-is. For what-is-not is what-is-not and what-is is what-is,⁴⁹ with the result that things no more are than they are not. [5] But, for all that, if what-is-not is, what-is, he says, is not (that is, the opposite). For if what-is-not is, it belongs to what-is not to be. [6] As a result, he says, nothing at all would be, unless what-is and what-is-not are the same.</p> <p>[7] But if they are the same, in this way too nothing would be: for what-is-not is not, and the same goes for what-is, if in fact it is the same as what-is-not. This then is the same argument as the former one.⁵⁰</p>
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[[omitting anonymous' critique of the argument, 979a34–979b19. At this point we are in chapter 6 of the *MXG*]]

1.2 Gorgias' first borrowed argument, nothing is (either generated or ungenerated)

<p>[9] μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον φησὶν· εἰ δὲ ἔστιν, ἦτοι ἀγένητον ἢ γενόμενον εἶναι. καὶ εἰ μὲν ἀγένητον, ἄπειρον αὐτὸ τοῖς τοῦ Μελίσσου ἀξιώμασι λαμβάνει· τὸ δ' ἄπειρον οὐκ ἂν εἶναι ποτέ.⁵¹ οὔτε γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ οὔτ' ἂν ἐν ἄλλῳ εἶναι· δύο γὰρ ἂν οὕτως ἢ πλείω⁵² εἶναι, τό τε ἐνὸν καὶ τὸ ἐν</p>	<p>[9] After this argument he says: if it is, it is either ungenerated or generated. And if it is ungenerated, he takes it that it is unlimited, by Melissus' principles; and the unlimited won't ever be. For it is neither in itself nor in another (for then there would be two or more, that within</p>
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⁴⁶ R omits this γε.

⁴⁷ Printing οὗτος with L. R has οὕτως.

⁴⁸ Cassin and Graham print αὐτός along with the manuscripts, but Buchheim, Diels, and Untersteiner all emend to πρώτος. LM follow Foss in emending to αὐτὸς ὁ.

⁴⁹ I have been translating both 'τὸ ὄν' and 'τὸ εἶναι' as "what-is". So far it doesn't seem to me that the text distinguished between the two.

⁵⁰ I take it this means that it's an argument for the same conclusion. I defend my interpretation of what's going on here in my (2019).

⁵¹ Sticking with the manuscripts' ποτε now. Diels' emendation to που followed by Untersteiner, Buchheim, and Ioli makes a lot of sense considering the sense of the argument, but less paleographical sense. Cassin, Graham and LM keep ποτε. Cassin takes out the punctuation to read it along with the next sentence.

⁵² This is the manuscript reading, but Diels emends ἀπείρω followed by Untersteiner and Ioli. Ioli helpfully explains her reading: she thinks this is the *lectio difficilior* and is backed up by "l'argomento melissiano dei due infiniti (30B6

<p>ᾧ· μηδαμοῦ δὲ ὄν οὐδὲ⁵³ εἶναι κατὰ τὸν τοῦ Ζήνωνος λόγον περὶ τῆς χώρας.</p> <p>[10] ἀγένητον μὲν οὖν διὰ ταῦτ' οὐκ εἶναι, οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ γενόμενον. γενέσθαι γοῦν οὐδὲν ἂν οὔτ' ἐξ ὄντος οὔτ' ἐκ μὴ ὄντος. εἰ γὰρ τὸ ὄν μεταπέσοι, οὐκ ἂν ἔτ' εἶναι τὸ ὄν, ὥσπερ γ' εἰ καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν γένοιτο, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι εἴη μὴ ὄν. [11] οὐδὲ μὴν οὐκ ἐξ ὄντος⁵⁴ ἂν γενέσθαι. εἰ μὲν γὰρ μὴ ἔστι τὸ μὴ ὄν, οὐδὲν ἂν ἐκ μηδενὸς ἂν γενέσθαι· εἰ δ' ἔστι τὸ μὴ ὄν, δι' ἅπερ οὐδ' ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος, διὰ ταῦτ' ἂν οὐδ' ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος γενέσθαι.</p> <p>[12] εἰ οὖν ἀνάγκη μὲν, εἴπερ ἔστι τι, ἦτοι ἀγένητον ἢ γενόμενον εἶναι, ταῦτα δὲ <ἀδύνατα>,⁵⁵ ἀδύνατον τι καὶ εἶναι.</p>	<p>and that in which it is). With it not being anywhere, he says that it does not even exist, following Zeno's argument about place.</p> <p>[10] So he says that it is not ungenerated for these reasons, and it is not generated either. For nothing is generated either from what-is or from what-is-not; if what-is were to change, it would no longer be what-is, just as if what-is-not was in fact generated, it no longer would be what-is-not. [11] Nor again would it not be generated from what-is. For if what-is-not is not, nothing would be generated from nothing: but if what-is-not is, it isn't generated from what-is-not for the same reasons that it isn't generated from what-is.</p> <p>[12] If, then, it is necessary for it to be either ungenerated or generated if it in fact is—but these things are impossible—it is also impossible for anything to be.</p>
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1.3 Gorgias' second borrowed argument, nothing is (either one or many)

<p>[13] ἔτι εἴπερ ἔστιν, ἐν ἡ πλείω, φησίν, ἐστίν· εἰ δὲ μήτε ἐν μήτε πολλά, οὐδὲν ἂν εἴη. καὶ ἐν μὲν <οὐκ ἂν εἶ>ναι ὅτι ἀσώματον ἂν εἴη, τὸ <δ' ἀσώματον οὐδ' ἐν> <ἐστι μὴ> ἔχον μέγε<θος ὡς ἐν> τῷ τοῦ Ζήνωνος λόγῳ. ἐνὸς δὲ <μὴ> ὄντος οὐδ' ἂν <ὅλως> εἶναι οὐδέν· μὴ <γὰρ ὄντος ἐνός>, μηδὲ πολλά <ἂν εἴη>. εἰ δὲ μήτε <ἐν, φησιν>, μήτε πολλά ἐστίν, οὐδὲν ἔστιν.⁵⁶</p>	<p>[13] Furthermore, if in fact it is, he says, it is one or more. But if it is neither one nor many, nothing would be. And it couldn't be one because it would be bodiless, and what is bodiless is nothing because it doesn't have any magnitude, as in Zeno's argument. And with one not being, nothing could be at all: for with one not being, many wouldn't be either. But if it is neither one, he says, nor many, nothing is.</p>
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DK)" (though I'm not sure if *lectio difficilior* is the right term since it is nowhere in the manuscripts). Buchheim, Cassin, Graham, and LM go with the manuscripts.

⁵³ Following R here. L has οὐδέν.

⁵⁴ The manuscripts have οὐδ' ἐξ ὄντος, but this doesn't make sense with the flow of the argument (this one has already been ruled out, and now they should be moving on to ruling out that it comes from what-is-not). The two main options people have taken are inserting <μὴ> (so οὐδ' ἐκ <μὴ> ὄντος, this is what Ioli does) or changing οὐδ' to οὐκ. I don't have strong feelings, but the latter seems slightly more conservative.

⁵⁵ Others instead print <ἀδύνατον>, which I take it comes to about the same thing.

⁵⁶ Following Ioli's reconstruction for now.

1.4 Another borrowed argument? Nothing moves

<p>[14] οὐδ' ἂν κινηθῆναι φησιν οὐδέν. εἰ γὰρ κινηθεῖ, ἢ οὐκ ἂν ἔτ' ἢ ὡσαύτως ἔχον, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν οὐκ ὄν εἶη, τὸ δ' οὐκ ὄν γεγονός εἶη. [15] ἔτι δὲ εἰ κινεῖται καὶ ἐν μεταφέρεται, οὐ συνεχές ὄν διήρηται⁵⁷ τὸ ὄν οὐτ' ἔστι⁵⁸ ταύτη· ὥστ' εἰ πάντη κινεῖται, πάντη διήρηται. [16] εἰ δ' οὕτως, πάντη οὐκ ἔστιν. ἐκλιπὲς γὰρ ταύτη, φησίν, ἢ διήρηται, τοῦ ὄντος, ἀντὶ τοῦ κενοῦ τὸ διηρησθαι λέγων, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς Λευκίππου καλουμένοις λόγοις γέγραπται.</p>	<p>[14] He says that nothing is moved either. For if it were moved, it either would or wouldn't still be the same, but on the one hand it would not be, and on the other what-is-not would have come to be. [15] Yet if it is moved, and as one thing is transported, then what-is, having been divided, is not continuous nor is it in that location: so that if it is moved in every way, it is divided in every way. [16] If this is so, it is not in every way. For, he says, insofar as it is divided it lacks being, using 'divided'—the same term written in the so-called arguments of Leucippus—instead of 'void'.</p>
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2.1 Summary of the argument: nothing can be recognized

<p>[17] εἰ μὲν οὖν οὐδέν, τὰς ἀποδείξεις λέγειν <εἶναι ἄγνωστα> ἅπαντα. δεῖν γὰρ τὰ φρονούμενα εἶναι, καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν, εἴπερ μὴ ἔστι, μηδὲ φρονεῖσθαι. [18] εἰ δ' οὕτως, οὐδέν ἂν εἶναι ψεῦδος, [οὐδεῖς]⁵⁹ φησίν, οὐδ' εἰ ἐν τῷ πελάγει φαίη ἀμιλλᾶσθαι ἄρματα· πάντα γὰρ ἂν ταῦτα⁶⁰ εἶη.</p>	<p>[17] If, then, nothing is, the demonstrations say that all things are unrecognizable. For what's thought must be, and what-is-not, since it is not, must not even to be thought. [18] And if that's the case, nothing would be false, he says, not even if someone were to say that chariots are competing on the sea; all things would be the same.</p>
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2.2 Elaboration of the argument: nothing can be recognized

<p>[19] καὶ γὰρ τὰ ὁρώμενα καὶ ἀκουόμενα διὰ τοῦτο ἔστιν, ὅτι⁶¹ φρονεῖται ἕκαστα</p>	<p>[19] For both what is seen and what is heard are, for the following reason: that</p>
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⁵⁷ Apelt adds <ἢ δὲ διήρηται>. Ioli and LM follow.

⁵⁸ Manuscripts have οὐτετι. LM and Ioli go with οὐκ ἔστιν.

⁵⁹ Following Ioli. LR have εἶναι ψεῦδος οὐδεῖς φησίν οὐδ' εἰ. Diels offers a similar solution: εἶναι ψεῦδος, οὐδ' εἰ, φησίν, [οὐδ' εἰ]. Buchheim prints εἴποι ψεῦδος οὐδεῖς, φησίν, οὐδ' εἰ.

⁶⁰ R has ταῦτα, though I think I would understand the point similarly either way (either [a] all things would be the same [with respect to their truth] or [b] all these things would be [true]).

⁶¹ Diels adds <ὁράται καὶ ἀκούεται, καὶ ὁμοίως τὰ φρονούμενα ἔστιν, ὅτι>, presumably in comparison with Sextus. It is not at all an unreasonable addition, but the more paleographically sound move here seems to be to leave it out as Ioli does.

<p>αὐτῶν· εἰ δὲ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἢ ὁρῶμεν ἔστιν, οὕτω μᾶλλον ἢ ὁρῶμεν ἢ <ᾰ> διανοοῦμεθα.⁶² [20] καὶ γὰρ ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ πολλά ἂν ταῦτα ἴδοιεν, καὶ ἐνταῦθα πολλά ἂν ταῦτα διανοηθεῖμεν. τὸ οὖν μᾶλλον δὴ τοιάδ' ἐστὶ.⁶³ ποῖα δὲ τάληθῆ, ἄδηλον. ὥστε καὶ εἰ ἔστιν, ἡμῖν γε ἄγνωστ' ἂν εἶναι τὰ πράγματα.</p>	<p>each of them is thought. And if not for this reason, then, instead, just as what we see no more <i>is</i>, so what we see is more than what we have in mind. [20] For, in fact, just as many people might see the same things there, so too many of us might have the same thing in mind here. The ‘more’ is of this sort, but which sort are true is unclear. As a result, even if it is, then things can’t be recognized, at least not by us.</p>
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3.1 Summary of the argument: nothing can be communicated

<p>[21] εἰ δὲ καὶ γνωστά, πῶς ἂν τις, φησί, δηλώσειεν ἄλλω; ὁ γὰρ εἶδε, πῶς ἂν τις, φησί, τοῦτο εἴποι λόγῳ; ἢ πῶς ἂν ἐκεῖνο δῆλον ἀκούσαντι γίγνοιτο, μὴ ἰδόντι;</p>	<p>[21] But if things are in fact recognizable, he says, how could someone reveal them to another? How could someone, he says, say what they see⁶⁴ with speech? Or how could that become clear to someone listening to it if he does not see it?</p>
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3.2 First argument: you can’t say what you recognize

<p>ὥσπερ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἡ ὄψις τοὺς φθόγγους γινώσκει, οὕτως οὐδὲ ἡ ἀκοὴ τὰ χρώματα ἀκούει, ἀλλὰ φθόγγους· καὶ</p>	<p>For just as sight doesn’t recognize sounds, hearing also doesn’t hear colors, only</p>
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⁶² This follows LM’s conservative impulse to stick with the manuscripts, even when the sense is not clear and there is likely to be some corruption in the text. Ioli’s reconstruction is quite reasonable and well-defended in her commentary, but inevitably relies on some level of speculation and, unlike most of Ioli’s decisions, comparison with Sextus §81. Her reconstruction is as follows: εἰ δὲ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἢ ἀκούομεν ἢ ᾰ ὁρῶμεν ἔστιν, οὕτως <οὐ> μᾶλλον ἢ ὁρῶμεν ἢ <ᾰ> διανοοῦμεθα. “And if not for this reason then, instead, just as what <we hear> is no more <than what> we see, so what we see is <no> more than <what> we have in mind.” Less explicable from a paleographical standpoint, it seems to me, is the idea of removing something from the οὕτω clause rather than adding something to the ὥσπερ clause. This is Diels’ solution, followed by Caston: εἰ δὲ μὴ διὰ τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἢ ὁρῶμεν ἔστιν, οὕτω <οὐδὲν> μᾶλλον ἢ [ὁρῶμεν ἢ] διανοοῦμεθα. “And if not for this reason then, instead, just as what we see no more is, so what we have in mind <no> more is [than what we see].”

⁶³ This is the reading of the more reliable L. The sense is hard to follow here, so many posit that this section is somehow corrupt. There is a gap in R, so some speculate about filling in that gap. Ioli prints the following given an intriguing parallel with a similar passage in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Γ: οὐθὲν μᾶλλον τάδε ἢ τάδε ἔστιν. “It is no more this way than that way”. The *Metaphysics* passage is Γ 5, 1009b9–11: ποῖα οὖν τούτων ἀληθῆ ἢ ψευδῆ, ἄδηλον· οὐθὲν γὰρ μᾶλλον τάδε ἢ τάδε ἀληθῆ. She suggests that the author is either assimilating Gorgias to passages in Aristotle that they know well (passages that, like this one, at least according to Ioli, are in conversation with Protagorean relativism) or the Γ passage is picking up on Gorgias’ arguments.

⁶⁴ Ioli and LM both translate ὁ γὰρ εἶδε as “what he sees”. “What they know” is another possible translation.

λέγει ὁ λέγων, ἀλλ' οὐ χρῶμα οὐδὲ πρᾶγμα.	sounds, and the speaker speaks, but not a color or a thing.
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3.3 Second argument: speech cannot communicate what you don't recognize

[22] ὁ οὖν τις μὴ ἐννοεῖ, πῶς αἰτεῖ ⁶⁵ παρ' ἄλλου λόγῳ ἢ σημεῖῳ τινὶ ἑτέρου ⁶⁶ τοῦ πράγματος ἐννοήσειεν, ⁶⁷ ἀλλ' ἢ ἐὰν μὲν χρῶμα, ἰδὼν, ἐὰν δὲ <ψόφος, ἀκο>ύσας; ἀρχὴν γὰρ οὐ <ψόφον> λέγει <ὁ λέ>γων οὐδὲ χρῶμα, ἀλλὰ λόγον. ⁶⁸	[22] How does someone ask for what they don't have in mind from someone else's speech, or how would they get it in mind from a sign of something different from the thing? They could only do so by seeing it if it's a color or by hearing it if it's a noise. For, in the first place, the person who speaks speaks neither a noise nor a color, but a speech.
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3.4 Third argument: speaker and hearer cannot have the same thing in mind

ὥστ' οὐδὲ διανοεῖσθαι χρῶμα ἔστιν, ἀλλ' ὄρᾶν, οὐδὲ ψόφον, ἀλλ' ἀκούειν. [23] εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐνδέχεται, γινώσκει τε καὶ ἃ ἂν ἀναγινώσκει <ὁ> λέγων, ⁶⁹ ἀλλὰ πῶς ὁ ἀκούων τὸ αὐτὸ ἐννοήσει; οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ταῦτὸ ἅμα ἐν πλείοσι καὶ χωρὶς οὖσιν εἶναι· δύο γὰρ ἂν εἴη τὸ ἓν. [24] εἰ δὲ καὶ εἴη, φησὶν, ἐν πλείοσι καὶ ταυτόν, οὐδὲν κωλύει μὴ ὅμοιον φαίνεσθαι αὐτοῖς, μὴ πάντῃ ὁμοίοις ἐκείνοις οὖσι καὶ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ· εἰ <γὰρ> ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ εἴησαν, <εἷς ἂν> ⁷⁰ ἀλλ' οὐ δύο εἶεν. [25] φαίνεται δὲ οὐδ' αὐτὸς αὐτῷ ὅμοια αἰσθανόμενος ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ χρόνῳ, ἀλλ' ἕτερα τῇ ἀκοῇ καὶ τῇ ὄψει, καὶ νῦν τε καὶ πάλαι διαφόρως. ὥστε σχολῇ ἄλλω γ' ἂν ⁷¹ ταῦτὸ αἰσθητό τις.	As a result, it's not even possible to have a color in mind, but only to see one, nor to have a noise in mind, but only to hear one. [23] But even if this is possible, and the one speaking both recognizes and is certain, how will the one hearing have the same thing in mind? It's not possible for the same thing to be in multiple separate things at the same time; then the one would be two. [24] And, he says, even if it were possible for it to be in separate things and be the same, nothing prevents it from appearing differently to them, since they are not entirely similar and in the same condition (if they were in the same condition, they would be one rather than two). [25] The same person doesn't even turn out to
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⁶⁵ Diels and Ioli accept Apelt's correction to αὐτὸ. LM stick with the manuscripts.

⁶⁶ Diels and Ioli accept Apelt's correction to ἑτέρῳ. LM stick with the manuscripts.

⁶⁷ LM and Diels emend to the future: ἐννοήσει.

⁶⁸ Here's a place to note a potentially corrupt location in the manuscripts.

⁶⁹ I'm following Ioli here. Diels has a clever emendation. He prints: εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐνδέχεται γινώσκειν τε καὶ ἃ ἂν γινώσκη λέγειν "if it is possible to know and to say what one knows..." Diels' text is in a way cleaner from a logical perspective, but I think Ioli is right that we can reasonably stick closer to the manuscripts here.

⁷⁰ Again, following Ioli. The manuscripts have εἰ τι (ἐν R / ἐν L) τοιούτου εἴησαν.

⁷¹ The manuscripts have πᾶν. Following Ioli here, though LM also have a nice solution: πᾶν <ἂν>.

	perceive similar things to themselves at the same time, but rather different things with hearing and with sight, and differently now and in the past. As a result, someone could hardly perceive the same thing as someone else.
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3.5 Recap of the argument: nothing can be communicated

[26] οὕτως οὖν <εἰ> ἐστὶ γνωστόν, ⁷² οὐδεὶς ἂν αὐτὸ ἑτέρῳ δηλώσειεν, διὰ τε τὸ μὴ εἶναι τὰ πράγματα λόγους, καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς [ἕτερον] ἑτέρῳ ταῦτὸν ἐννοεῖ.	[26] So, in this way, if it is knowable, no one could reveal it to another, both on account of things not being speech and because no one has the same thing in mind as another.
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⁷² Following Ioli. The manuscripts read οὕτως οὐκ ἐστὶν ἕν· (ἐστὶ R / ἕνεστι L) γνωστόν.