THERE can be no doubt that the late dialogues of Plato are more difficult in content and style than their predecessors. The displacement of Socrates from his role as principal interlocutor by a series of strangers from Elea, Locri, and Athens, respectively, is accompanied by an increased ponderousness of language, a greater proliferation of technical detail, and the consequent diminution of the erotic playfulness and Attic urbanity that mark the earlier dialogues. The initial predominance of sunlight and lucidity, even in conversations that take place at night such as the *Symposium* and the *Republic*, and notwithstanding the continuous irony of the main speaker, is replaced by chiaroscuro and baroque ornamentation on the one hand and the substitution of professorial discourse for dramatic dialogue on the other.

It is true that Socrates returns to prominence in the *Philebus*, traditionally acknowledged to be a late dialogue, but this is the exception that proves the rule. Having been subjected to the punishment of silent audition by Timaeus and the Eleatic Stranger and to the retrospective dialectical gymnastics of the old Parmenides, the Socrates of the *Philebus* is like a disembodied phantom of his previous incarnation. The dialogue between Socrates and historically anonymous youths takes place in an unknown dramatic setting; it has neither a beginning nor an end but exists as a headless and limbless torso of fluctuating dimensions, mysterious transitions, and linguistic obscurity. After his Odyssean wanderings and encounters with wise strangers who seem to rob him of speech, Socrates returns from a metaphorical Hades into the sunlight, but as a talking ghost who is about to be transformed for one last appearance as the Athenian Stranger (as Aristotle seems to identify him; see *Politics* II, 1265a10).

The *Statesman*, although not the last of Plato’s productions, is prominent among the late dialogues for its obscurity. Much of the conversation is de-
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voted to a minute and seemingly tedious analysis of the art of weaving, selected by the Stranger as a paradigm of the royal art of politics. The Stranger employs diaeresis—the art of division and collection in accordance with kinds—in order to arrive at a definition of the statesman’s art, but with a cumbersomeness and tendency to error that testifies either to a heavy-handed playfulness or a technical incompetence for which we were unprepared by his previous exhibition in the *Sophist*.

Having taken us through a long and puzzling diaeresis, the Stranger identifies it as a mistake, which he will rectify by telling a myth: conceptual analysis is to be rescued from disgrace (268d2–3) by a bizarre fairy tale of the reversal of the cosmic revolution and the age of autochthonous mortals. The myth turns out, on the Stranger’s own testimony, to have erred on the essential point and must itself be replaced by a series of difficult, sometimes even eccentric, topics, ranging from the nature of paradigms and the art of measurement to the discussion of weaving and correlative analyses of tools, possessions, and craftsmen associated with the art of clothesmaking. By an act of rhetorical legerdemain, the Stranger somehow gathers together the threads of his tangled web into a conventional, one could even say pious, conclusion that might have been established at the outset, without our having been subjected to the starts and stops of the error-laden middle.

Our initial survey of the peculiarities of the *Statesman* allows us to doubt the adequacy of those interpretations that see the dialogue as a technical exercise in definition. It would be more accurate to take the dialogue as a demonstration of the inappropriateness of diaeresis to the study of human affairs. From this standpoint, the shift from Socrates to the Eleatic Stranger takes on a richer and deeper significance than is imputed to it by those who see it as Plato’s way of announcing a new stage in his thought. To anticipate, the Stranger evidently agrees with Socrates on a number of fundamental points. For example, the concluding thesis that the city must be woven together from the two opposing natures of courageous and temperate human beings, who if allowed to flourish separately decay into madness on the one hand and the lethargy of the cripple on the other (310d6–e3), is anticipated by Socrates in the *Republic* (VI. 503b7–504a1), where he indicates the need to mix together the quick and the steady in the souls of the guardians of the just city.

There are, however, two critical points of difference between Socrates and the Stranger. The Stranger exhibits no interest whatsoever in Eros, whereas Socrates claims to understand nothing else. The word *eros* appears just once in the *Statesman*, at 307ε6, where the Stranger refers to the inappropriate desire of the temperate natures for peace. The erotic dimension of existence, which
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is pivotal for Socrates in the construction of the beautiful city of the Republic, is represented in the diaereses of the Statesman only indirectly, in the form of the breeding and nurture of herd animals, among whom human beings are included.

The second point of difference is related to the first; it is perhaps most immediately visible as a difference in pedagogical style. Socrates is fastidious in the choice of his youthful interlocutors. His manner of interrogation is not only playful and coquettish but is rooted in a serious concern with the ethos and the intelligence of the youth, as well as in an ambiguous interest in his physical appearance and the distinction of his family. The Stranger, however, asks only that his interlocutors cause him no pain and be docile or "obedient to the rein." Otherwise he prefers monologue (Sophist 217d1–3).

The Stranger is more dogmatic than Socrates; he fills the void left by a disregard of Eros with a proliferation of technical doctrine. We cannot, of course, take Socrates literally when he tells us that he knows nothing but Eros, or only that he knows nothing. The Republic, to cite the outstanding example, is a continuous exposition of Socrates' detailed mastery of the Greek literary tradition, as well as of his high competence in mathematics and science. Furthermore, the dialogue is not aporetic but contains a circumstantial account of the manner of constructing the just city and educating philosopher-kings. Nevertheless, there is a discernible difference between Socrates and the Stranger that goes beyond questions of erotic interest and discursive playfulness. When Socrates introduces the most difficult section of the conversation in the Republic, devoted to the Idea of the Good, the divided line, and the nature of philosophical dialectic, he makes it clear that he is taking a "shorter way" that accommodates to the youth and intellectual capacities of Adeimantus and Glaucon (VI. 504b1–8 and 506c2–507a6). The Stranger exhibits no such reticence in his analysis of nonbeing and false assertions in the Sophist. The situation is more complicated in the Statesman, but again, whereas the Stranger seems to be error-prone and sometimes even to lose his way, he never suggests that he is withholding the truth or accommodating it to the undeveloped understanding of Young Socrates.

In addition, the Stranger not only shares Socrates' admiration for the method of diaeresis but goes beyond him in applying this method to human affairs, whereas Socrates employs it, or recommends its employment, for the articulation of formal structure (Republic VI. 510b4–9; Phaedrus 265d3–266b5; Philebus 16c5–17a5). Socrates furthermore recommends the method of diaeresis and praises its merits, but he never actually presents us with an extended example of its employment. The only two such examples in the Platonic corpus are assigned to the Stranger in the Sophist and the States-
These examples, or rather sets of examples, are extremely ambiguous and only marginally effective in achieving their stated goal; and they apply, to repeat, to human types rather than to pure forms. Nevertheless, whether successfully or otherwise, they distinguish the Stranger's practice in the dialogues from that of Socrates.

The Stranger is a man of techne in an extended sense as Socrates is not. He reminds us of a professor who is full of his own learning and the originality of his doctrines and who expounds these doctrines to young and old alike, regardless of their personal attributes. This is of course an exaggeration, but it points us in the right direction. What is not at all an exaggeration is the fact that the Stranger's approach to the techne of politics makes fully visible an ambiguity that is implicit in the Socratic teaching: the problem of the relation between knowing and making.

Again it is necessary to anticipate a point that will be developed more thoroughly below. Nowhere in Plato do we find the Aristotelian tripartition of the sciences into the theoretical, practical, and productive. In Plato, the distinction is always between the theoretical or gnostic arts on the one hand, represented most characteristically by arithmetic and logistics, and the practico-productive arts on the other, of which architecture serves as the paradigm in the Statesman. In Aristotle, the productive arts result in the genesis of an artifact that is distinct from the act of production and is the end or purpose of that act. The practical arts are activities in which the act is its own end or purpose; the examples are ethics and politics.

Since Plato does not distinguish between practice and production, it looks very much as though politics is a productive art, or, in other words, as though the city and hence its citizens are artifacts. And, in fact, although his interlocutors speak of the nature of the city, as well as of the diverse natures of individual human types, nowhere in the Platonic corpus is it stated that man is by nature the political animal. In the Statesman, the artifactual status of the city is underlined by the central paradigm of weaving. The art of the weaver produces clothing to defend the body against the rigors of nature. If it is permissible to speak of life in accordance with nature, we must also recognize that nature seems to be divided against herself and that human existence is the locus of this division.

Socrates uses the expression "art of politics" (techne politike) on two occasions. The first is in the Gorgias (521d6–8), where he says that he is virtually the only living Athenian who practices "the genuine political techne." As the context shows, he means by this techne his usual practice of interrogating his fellow citizens on the question of their manner of life, and not at all the art of governing the city. The same passage makes explicit that
Socrates regards his art of politics as equivalent to the medicine of the soul (521e3ff), or to private rather than public practice. The second use occurs in the *Protagoras* (318e5–319a5), where Socrates applies the term to the art of the famous sophist, an art described by Protagoras himself as that of giving good counsel in the home and in the city, and which Socrates plainly identifies, here and elsewhere, as rhetoric in the pejorative sense of the term.

In a slightly paradoxical formulation, we can say that Socrates does not attribute technical production to the *techne* of politics. The term *techne* means here a kind of wisdom rather than the productive activity of the craftsman or demiurge. Nonetheless, the language he uses to describe the production of the just city in the *Republic* is filled with metaphors derived from the productive arts. To restrict ourselves to one example, Socrates says that the philosopher will be a good demiurge “of temperance, justice, and all the demotic virtues” (VI. 500d4–9); in the same context, he refers to the need to paint the city in accordance with the divine paradigm, of which the discursive version in the dialogue is a mere image (VI. 500d10–e4; cf. 501a2–b7). In the same vein, in an earlier passage he establishes that “we were making [*epoioumen*] the paradigm in speech of a good city” (V. 472d9–e2).

These passages and others like them suggest that the philosopher studies nature not simply to imitate it, but to produce the demotic or political virtues, as demiurges produce artifacts, but not wisdom or philosophical virtue, which are not artifacts. Otherwise put, the diverse human natures are the raw materials out of which the city is constructed. It is not the human being but the citizen who is a work of art. Even the philosopher, to the extent that he or she is a guardian of the good city, must be produced by the education of music, gymnastics, and, eventually, mathematics, an education that is carefully codified by the original lawgiver. In the *Statesman*, this suggestion is carried much farther and becomes virtually explicit in the detailed comparison of politics to weaving.

The Stranger's conception of the political *techne* is thus practico-productive in a sense quite different from the Aristotelian notion of *phronēsis* or sound judgment; so too the city is not in accord with nature for the Stranger in the same sense as it is for Aristotle. And the technical predilection exhibited by the Stranger takes him beyond the hints and metaphors of the Socratic formulation of the disjunction within human existence between theory and practice. A very similar point obtains with respect to the method of diaeresis. Whereas the Stranger repeats Socrates' general description of the art as classification in accordance with kinds, his own use is manifestly a prototype of what is today called conceptual analysis; more precisely, diaeresis
is employed not to sort out the formal elements of abstract structure, but to construct new classes or concepts.

In this vein, it is instructive to compare the stated intentions of the main speakers in the Republic and the Statesman. According to Socrates, the main intention of the conversation in the Republic is to defend justice (V. 472b3–5) and more particularly to assist the potential philosopher in undergoing a "revolution of the soul" (VII. 521c6: τῆς ψυχῆς περιαγώγη) as the necessary preliminary to a return into the cave, as political existence is represented there. In the Statesman, the Stranger says that the purpose of the conversation has been to administer a training in dialectic to all concerned, not simply with respect to the art of politics but in all cases (285d4–7). The intention of the Stranger is to provide technical training in dialectic, not to effect a revolution in the souls of his auditors. From this standpoint one could say that the Statesman is a more theoretical book than the Republic, although it makes more explicit the practico-productive nature of politics than does its predecessor.

With the preceding remarks on Eros and techne in mind, let us reconsider the question of the dramatic relationship between Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger. At the beginning of the Sophist, Socrates asks Theodorus whether the Stranger is not a kind of elenctic god who has come to Athens in human disguise "to observe and refute us because of our weakness in discussions" (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις: 216b3–6). He prefaces this question with a reference to Homer, who speaks in particular of gods of strangers who observe the hybris and lawlessness of mankind (216a5–b3). At 229a3ff, the Stranger develops at some length the thesis that the art of punishment is suited to the correction of hybris or evil, whereas ignorance is addressed by teaching. There are different types of teaching that correspond to the types of ignorance; the greatest and most authoritative form of teaching is the art of elenctic (230d6–8).

These passages provide us with a textual basis for the suggestion that Plato invents the Eleatic Stranger for the sake of indicating his own refutation or punishment of his former teacher. Some who make this suggestion connect the discursive punishment of Socrates in the Sophist and Statesman with his trial and punishment by the city of Athens, which are described in the dramatically related dialogues Euthyphron, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo. We could strengthen this suggestion by observing that when Socrates was himself a young man, he was subjected to a punitive exercise in dialectical gymnastics by the old Parmenides, the Stranger’s teacher (Parmenides 135d3ff). It would be in keeping with Platonic irony to subject the old Socrates to a renewal of his original punishment by Parmenides’ student, a punishment that is delivered obliquely but significantly through the mediation of a boy named Young Socrates.
The imaginative reader might go a step farther and suggest that the Stranger suppresses Eros by *techne*, thereby fulfilling in speech what the Athenians are about to fulfill in deed, namely, the punishment of Socrates for corrupting the young, exactly as predicted in the *Gorgias* by Callicles, who links the charge of pederasty to the philosopher's inability to defend himself against political accusations (484c5–486d1). In sum, are we to assume that Plato in the last period of his philosophical development came to reject the erotic rhetoric of his teacher, and with it the doctrine of the Ideas as the objects of philosophical Eros, in favor of new and more powerful technical elaborations of discoveries introduced but not perfected by Socrates?

This preliminary survey of the peculiarities of the *Statesman* is intended to introduce the reader to an aspect of Plato that is rarely noticed and that contradicts the traditional oversimplifications of Platonism by friend and foe alike. The Eleatic Stranger represents neither the pure mathematicism admired by the great scientist-thinkers of the Renaissance nor the denigration of production and the celebration of an unchanging and friendly nature that is anathema to the twentieth-century descendants of Nietzsche. And he certainly cannot be explained as a prototypical version of the post-Fregean philosopher of language. The Stranger is neither an ancient nor a modern, if we use those terms to designate a rigid and total opposition of fundamental orientations. He is an expression of the inseparability of apparently contradictory philosophical doctrines.

To make this assertion more precise, we can say that the Stranger not only champions diaeresis as a prototypical *mathesis universalis* but shows its shortcomings by a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* that implicates him in the obscurities of mythical discourse rather than in the clarity and distinctness of eidetic intuition. The constructive powers of *techne* are employed in the attempt to defend human beings from the disjunction within nature that they themselves exemplify but which for that very reason they can never master. The Stranger anticipates Nietzsche's famous characterization of the human being as the not yet fully constructed animal, without forgetting that to be partially constructed is already to possess a nature.

It is true that the Stranger concludes his dialectical exercise with what today would be called the message of a reactionary conservatism. The very attempt to preserve human nature by spinning the web of politics leads not to freedom but to the bondage of common beliefs, honors, and opinions (310e5–11); in other words, the Stranger's political doctrine is scarcely different from the views of Socrates in the *Republic* or the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*. The human animal cannot finally escape its herdlike nature but must be guided by philosophical shepherds or their surrogates. But this is not because the cosmos is bound by transcendent Ideas, the noetic apprehension
of which provides us with an eternal paradigm. It is rather because there are no such transcendent bonds that protect human beings from the dissolution of cyclical change that we must spin our own bonds. Underneath the pious rhetoric of the Stranger, which surfaces most fully in the conclusion of the dialogue, is a clear perception of the tragedy of human existence, which does not cease to be tragic simply because, if we view it from a sufficiently high perspective, it becomes a comedy.

The Eleatic Stranger comes to Athens with a modification of the Socratic teaching: erotic playfulness is an irrelevant diversion to the serious business of technical expertise. But just as the deep seriousness of the founders of modernity in their effort to emancipate the human race from the discontinuities of nature has culminated in the *absurdisme* of postmodernist discontinuity, so it would seem that, at least within the Platonic cosmos, Socrates has the last laugh if not the last word. In carrying out his effort to punish Socrates, the Stranger comes closer and closer to Socratic doctrine, until finally, despite all differences in character and rhetoric, one can scarcely distinguish between the contents of their speeches.

It may seem frivolous to suggest that the *Statesman* is an elaborate Platonic joke, but the suggestion is in no way intended to suppress the serious philosophical arguments of the dialogue. The joke is on those, whether philologists or ontologists, who lack the wit to appreciate Plato's elegance or the playful seriousness that is required to penetrate the initially tedious details of the *Statesman* in order to enter the presence of its enigmatic author.

**Opening Scene: 257a1–258b3**

The main conversation of the *Theaetetus* opens with Socrates asking Theodorus, the professor of geometry, if he has encountered any unusually gifted students. Theodorus begins the *Sophist* with a speech in which he refers to his agreement yesterday to a subsequent meeting with Socrates, but announces a surprise; he is accompanied by the Stranger from Elea. The *Statesman* opens with Socrates expressing his gratitude to Theodorus for these introductions. It is a bit odd that Socrates requires the mediation of a stranger (Theodorus is from Cyrene) in order to be brought into contact with the gifted young Athenian; the oddness disappears when we understand that Theaetetus, although he has heard about Socrates' conversations with other talented youths, has never himself been moved to seek out the philosopher's company. This raises a question about the Eros of Theaetetus. Apparently his physical ugliness, in which he resembles Socrates, has contributed to isolating him from erotic encounters. But what of his soul? Whereas Socrates is extremely
pleased to have met Theaetetus, the young man gives no sign that he derives the same pleasure from his encounter with Socrates. I do not mean by this that the topics of conversation are uninteresting to him, or even that he does not respond with excitement at various points of the discussion. The reverse is the case, as we can tell from his frequent oaths and statements of perplexity. But excitement and perplexity at problems of philosophy are not necessarily sources of pleasure to young mathematicians.

In the case of the Eleatic Stranger, the situation is more marked. Again Socrates says that he is very grateful to meet the Stranger, whom he compares to a god in the *Sophist*. This could mean either that Socrates accepts his punishment or that he is grateful to have learned that the Stranger's refutation was unsuccessful. The Stranger never says that he is very grateful to Theodorus for the introduction to Socrates. He responds politely about his duties to his hosts but seems to take Socrates' compliment as his due. Otherwise stated, the Stranger is willing to exhibit his wisdom to Socrates by means of a rather mechanical-appearing discussion with two other persons, in the *Sophist* with Theaetetus, who looks like Socrates, and in the *Statesman* with Young Socrates, who bears the philosopher's name. He does not seem to have any interest in conversing with Socrates. And curiously enough, Socrates, who is presented in the *Theaetetus* (169b5) as sick with the desire to dispute with everyone he encounters, makes no effort to engage the Stranger in conversation. Instead, he suggests that the Stranger expound the Eleatic teaching with the assistance of Theaetetus (*Sophist* 217d5ff).

Why does Plato decline to present us with a conversation between Socrates and the Stranger? This is a particular version of the general question why we have no account in the dialogues of a conversation between two mature philosophers; instead, we are allowed to witness the exercise to which Parmenides subjects the youthful Socrates. Some have explained the absence of a conversation between two mature thinkers of the highest order as a sign of Plato's esotericism. Without rejecting that suggestion, I nevertheless wonder whether it does not prevent us from considering a deeper question. In what sense does one thinker of the highest rank ever seriously listen to another? Do Aristotle's writings, for example, reflect a fair-minded, open, or, as it would be put today, "objective" conversation with his teacher? Despite his expressed respect for his own teacher, father Parmenides, does not the Stranger rebuke him by accusing him of having spoken "carelessly" (*eukolos*) about beings? (*ta onta: Sophist* 242c4–6). I suspect that Plato's attitude toward other philosophers is very much like that of the Stranger toward all of his predecessors. Fair-mindedness and objectivity are (sometimes) the traits of scholars, not of thinkers of the highest rank.
Philosophers educate nonphilosophers; they punish other philosophers for their mistakes. The connection between education and punishment is brought out in the opening exchange between Socrates and Theodorus as follows. Socrates says that he owes Theodorus a debt of gratitude for his acquaintance with Theaetetus and the Stranger. Theodorus replies that Socrates will soon owe him three times as much, when his companions have finished their work "for you" (apergasontai soi) on the statesman and the philosopher. Theodorus does not count as part of the debt the conversation in the *Theaetetus*, which was conducted by Socrates and led to no ergon other than aporetic speech. Since Theodorus has already heard what the Stranger has to say, the two conversations in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* are for the benefit of Socrates.

Socrates replies that he cannot believe what he has heard from the man who is best at calculation (logismous) and geometry. Theodorus has miscalculated by attributing equal worth or dignity (tēs isēs aksias) to three human types "who differ more in honor [tēi timêi] than is in accord with the analogy of your art" (257a1–b3). *Analogia* is a ratio or proportion: \(a:b::c:d\). Theodorus has implied that it is equally gratifying to hear about the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. Since there are only three terms, the analogy may be this: the sophist is to the statesman as the statesman is to the philosopher (with \(b = c\)). There is no need for the proportion to be one of equality unless the statesman is equal to the philosopher. It is therefore unclear why Socrates refers to *analogia* in his ironical punishment of Theodorus. Furthermore, Theodorus followed the Stranger’s instructions in abstracting from the honor due to the three types, since these conversations are presumably exercises in diaeresis, which disregards honor and is concerned exclusively with community of family (*Sophist* 227a1off).

The serious content in Socrates’ statement is his tacit rejection of the diaeretic method as an adequate means for presenting the nature of the three human types. He himself does not employ diaeresis in this way, but only in the analysis of formal structure. One of the peculiarities of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* is that the Stranger employs diaeresis on human beings and that despite his apparent sobriety, these diaereses are extremely comical. This will be made explicit at 266b1off, where the method classifies human beings with pigs and the statesman with the swineherd, a result identified by the Stranger himself as a joke. It is hard to say whether the Stranger is intentionally satirizing the diaeretic method of Socrates or whether his application of it to human beings is a sign of his theoretical madness. Perhaps he is attempting to advance beyond his teacher Parmenides by assimilating the way of doksa (in other words, the study of genesis and, in particular, of political existence within
genesis) into the way of truth by an appropriation of the Socratic instruments of diaeresis and myth-telling.

In any event, Theodorus acknowledges his error, the first of many to be encountered in this dialogue. In so doing, however, he makes another, unnoticed error. Theodorus does not see that Socrates is wrong to deny the applicability of proportion to persons or types of unequal honor. The error is instead to treat all three as of equal worth. Theodorus indicates his displeasure by swearing—he refers to the Cyrenian god Ammon, the Libyan Zeus—thereby descending from geometry to politics. Theodorus says that Socrates has spoken justly and in accord with memory (mnemonikos) in punishing him for his error in calculation (peri tous logismous). The allusion to memory presumably means that Socrates has correctly remembered the difference between mathematics and the estimation of human beings (257b5–7). Logismoi is used by Aristotle in connection with boulesis or deliberation, and so with phronesis or practical intelligence, which, as we shall see, is the main theme of this dialogue. Just as proportions can be used to express inequality of honor, so too calculation extends from numbers to human beings. This suggests that it may be possible to employ diaeresis in the study of human nature, provided we do not abstract from inequality of honor, as does the Stranger.

Theodorus again playfully indicates his irritation by warning Socrates that he will take his revenge, in other words, equalize the honor due to each, on another occasion. He then turns to the Stranger and urges him not to stop gratifying them because of fatigue, but to carry out the exposition of the statesman and philosopher in whatever order he chooses (257b8–c5). Theodorus did not seem to be enjoying himself in the Theaetetus, where he refers to his discomfort and lack of ability to engage in Socratic conversation, an act he compares to wrestling (169a6ff). He was also upset at the need to criticize his old friend Protagoras (162a4ff). But since the Stranger does not wish to wrestle with him, Theodorus can enjoy listening to his conversation with young men on topics that are not of central importance to him. He can concentrate on the technical nature of the Stranger's use of diaeresis.

The Stranger is not fatigued; no doubt he enjoys displaying his wisdom. In any event, he underlines the necessity of continuing the discussion but suggests that he shift from Theaetetus to the young man’s sungumnastes or fellow-exerciser (257c2–8). Theodorus authorizes the shift in interlocutors: "since they are young, they will more easily bear the entire burden if they are given a rest" (257c9–10). This exchange reminds us that the Stranger does not claim merely to be displaying the Eleatic teaching but to be training his interlocutors, and through them his adult audience, in method.
So too in the *Parmenides* (135d3ff), the old philosopher refers to his interro-
gation of Socrates as a kind of gymnastics. We should bear in mind that doctrinal
exposition and methodological gymnastics are not necessarily compatible, unless
the method is the doctrine. Again, the choice of interlocutor is based not upon his
individual nature but upon the desire to avoid fatigue.

Socrates then endorses Theodorus's recommendation while transform-
ing its basis. This is also his last speech in the dialogue (257d1–258a6). He is
indeed interested in observing the respective natures of the two youths. One
looks like him and the other bears his name, which fact, Socrates ironically
adds, suggests a certain relationship. The point is that we need to know
whether the young men resemble Socrates' soul. If he is present only in name
or only through a physical resemblance, then he is not present at all. We are
reminded of the invisible presence of Plato in his *Republic* through the per-
sonae of his brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, whose differing natures
make an important contribution to the substance of the conversation. Al-
though the issue could be verified only by a close analysis of the responses of
the two youths, it does not appear from the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*
that the differences between Theaetetus and the Young Socrates play a significant
role. The mode of training employed by the Stranger abstracts from these
differences, just as mathematics abstracts from human life.

This being so, one may well wonder what Socrates learns from the two
conversations conducted by the Stranger. He did not after all say that he was
interested in hearing the Stranger's doctrine, but only that one should strive
to become acquainted with one's "relatives" (*sungenneis*) through discourse
(258a2–3). Perhaps he was disappointed by what he heard yesterday con-
cerning the nature of the sophist. However this may be, Socrates, despite his
portrait of the philosopher in the *Theaetetus*, does not abstract from human
life; at least he does not do so as a teacher. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates spoke
with the young mathematician, and in the *Sophist* he listened to his interro-
gation by the Stranger. In the *Statesman*, he will listen to the interrogation of
Young Socrates, whom he does not know at all, by the Stranger, and suggests
that he will interrogate Young Socrates later (258a6). We may wonder what
will be the topic of this proposed conversation.

If the pattern established by the three dialogues of our trilogy is to be
continued, not only must Socrates interrogate Young Socrates, but it is un-
clear with whom the Stranger will expound the nature of the philosopher.
Presumably it is of no interest to the Stranger with whom he discusses this
topic. But it is never suggested that he do so with the old Socrates. In short,
not only is the last discussion not presented, but it is entirely unclear who could have presented it, given the dramatic structure of the trilogy. The shift in interlocutors is agreeable to both the Stranger and Young Socrates. The Stranger then decides to discuss the statesman rather than the philosopher, and we are ready for the main conversation (258a7–b3).