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The Name and Its Significance: An Examination of Names in Aristotle's and Plato's Philosophy of Language

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The Name and Its Significance: An Examination of Names in Aristotle's and Plato's Philosophy

of Language

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"The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose."
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Philosophical Investigations, **§127**

οὐ γὰρ μόνον περὶ τῆς ὕλης δεῖ γνωρίζειν τὸν φυσικὸν ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὸν λόγον, καὶ μᾶλλον (1037a15-17).
For the one who studies nature must know not only about the material but also about what is disclosed in speech, and even more so.
Aristotle
Metaphysics **(Trans. Sachs)**

"Like everything metaphysical the harmony between thought and reality is to be found in the grammar of the language."
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Zettel, **§55**

In the early 20th century, philosophy underwent a "linguistic turn," in which philosophy, humanities, and even sciences made a redoubled focus on language itself. This turn was quite comprehensive, focusing on nearly every aspect of language such as meaning, reference, truth and falsity, logic, and the connection of language and reality. This renewed focus garnered a significant amount of attention and thought in the 20th century by some of its most prominent thinkers of both the analytic and even continental traditions. In the analytic tradition, Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus*, saw language as the logical limit of our known world, out of which we cannot think, much less speak.[1] In the continental tradition, Martin Heidegger famously conceived of language as the "House of Being," meaning that it stands at the very foundation of how we conceive of our world around us and is the home in which we live.[2] Language is perhaps the foremost medium through which one not only interacts with other humans, but also frames and even conceives of the world. While the 20th century linguistic turn ushered in a renewed focus on philosophy of language, these thinkers were not the first to consider philosophical questions on language.

The earliest Greek thinkers and philosophers themselves were concerned with fundamental questions of language.[3] While the early 7th to 4th century Greeks did not have an abstract word for language in the sense that we moderns do, they nevertheless questioned one of the most integral parts of language itself: names.[4] The earliest Pre-Socratics and even Sophists questioned aspects of language, such as the significance of names and the relationship between

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus-Logico Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (New York: The Humanities Press Inc., 1961), 5.62

[2] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, trans. David Krell (New York, NY: Harper Collins Press, 1993) 213.

[3] Paraskevi Kotzia and Maria Chrit, "Ancient Philosophers on Language," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*, 124.

[4] By modern, abstract notion of language, I mean one in which language is viewed as the totality of words, expressions, and modes of expression. The Greeks themselves did not have an abstract idea of language in its totality, as we do today. The closest we get to a concept of language among the Greeks closest to our own is found in Aristotle's idea of λέξις; see *Poetics* 1450β.

names and reality.[5] These ancient arguments gained renewed significance when Plato

incorporated them into his own philosophy of names in the *Cratylus*.[6] However, Aristotle's

works, most notably his *De Interpretatione*, contain radical differences in key aspects of Plato's

philosophy of names. This paper brings some of the critical differences of the two philosophers

on names to light. Specifically, I give an analysis of Aristotle's philosophy of language,

especially for his concept of name (ὄνομα) from the first chapters of *De Interpretatione*,

demonstrates a departure from elements of Platonic philosophy of names in the *Cratylus*

regarding the origins of names, the significance of etymologies, and the ontological significance

of words.[7] Regardless of whether or not Aristotle specifically had the *Cratylus* in mind when

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[5] Andreas Graeser, "On Language, Thought and Reality in Ancient Greek Philosophy," Dialectica: International Journal of Philosophy and Official Organ of the ESAP = Revue Internationale de Philosophie et Organe Officiel de l'ESAP XXXI (1977): 360; One of the words the Pre-Socratics questioned was the Greek word λόγος and, through this questioning, examined the relationship of discourse, speech, and language to the mind, world, knowledge, or being (See Graham [2010]). The Pre-Socratics, Heraclitus most prominently in this regard, questioned what the meaning of λόγος is (See Heraclitus DK 1, 2, 31, 39, 50, 72). A full, nuanced account of λόγος merits its own thesis on account of its multi-varied meanings and uses. However, the focus of this thesis will primarily be on names (ὀνόματα). λόγος itself never takes on an abstract meaning of "language," as we understand it today. λόγος can refer to "discourse," "statement," "word," "reason," "cosmos," "thinking," "expression," "wisdom," or "definition," among other meanings. While the argument can be made that λόγος means "language," the primary focus of this thesis is strictly with regard to names (ὀνόματα). However, it is important to note that, with this plethora of possible meanings, λόγος is used in different contexts to convey different ideas, so one definition for such a multifaceted word would be quite inadequate. In Plato and Aristotle, we see similar employment of λόγος in different contexts without a universal meaning. Aristotle, in *De Interpretatione*, the *Prior Analytics*, and the *Posterior Analytics*, λόγος is a statement, composed of names (ὀνόματα) and verbs (ῥήματα), that is a meaningful form of expression/speech (σημαντικός) with λόγοι being a more general form of statement whereas the propositions of the demonstrative sciences (προτάσεις) are only a subtype of λόγος (See *De Int.* 16b-17a, *An. Pr.* 24a, *An. Post.* 72a-b). Similarly, in the *Poetics*, a λόγος is a compound (συνθετή) phrase/sentence, composed of words with independent meanings (*Poet.* 1457a). However, in the *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, λόγος is also something particular to the human soul, traditionally translated as "reason" or, possibly, "capacity for speech" (*Met.* IX.2.1046a-b, *NE* I.13.1101a-b). In the *Phaedo*, Socrates famously tells how he sought intellectual investigations beyond the senses by taking refuge (καταφυγόντα) in λόγοι (*Phaedo* 99e-100a). In the *Sophist*, λόγος refers to statements/discourse that is necessarily composed of nouns (ὀνόματα) and verbs (ῥήματα) (*Sophist* 262a-b). The meaning of λόγος, in short, is quite varied for how each thinker employs it in certain contexts; however, in the *Cratylus* and *De Interpretatione*, Aristotle and Plato share the notion that a λόγος is a complex statement that can express truth or falsity (*Cratylus* 385b-c, *De Int.* 16b-17a). Moss (2014) provides an excellent intertextual analysis of the meanings and nuances of λόγος in Plato and Aristotle.

[6] Ludovic De Cuypere and Klaas Willems, "Meaning and Reference in Aristotle's Concept of the Linguistic Sign," Foundations of Science 13 (January 11, 2008): 308.

[7] I would be remiss if I did not state the most evident difficulty in writing, analyzing, and presenting Platonic philosophy: his dialogic form. In the *Seventh Letter*, in which Plato speaks in his own voice, he is incredibly direct in asserting that he will never be a writer who dogmatically lists certain positions or points since the only real understanding of the subject in question can only result from prolonged contemplation, exposure, and questioning of

writing his *De Interpertatione* is irrelevant, for their diametrically opposing positions on these

aforementioned areas are quite striking. In addition, these differences, as I will show, are also

indicative of Aristotle's overall philosophical disagreements with Plato, particularly his

modification and criticisms of the Platonic theory of forms and his emphasis on studying

empirical phenomena.

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Chapter I: Origin of Names

§I.1.1: Plato on the Origin of Names in the *Cratylus*

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Plato's *Cratylus* is subtitled περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος or the "correctness concerning

names."[8] The dialogue's primary arguments question how names acquire supposed "correct

status" in language. This notion of correctness (ὀρθότητος), although not as pertinent in

philosophy of language today, was an important question both during and prior to Plato's life.

Plato's predecessors, ranging from philosophers such as Democritus, Heraclitus, and Parmenides

to the sophists such as Gorgias and Protagoras, all comment on issues in names regarding its

connection to reality.[9] Their foremost question was whether names are something natural (φύσει)

or established strictly by law/custom (νόμῳ) (383a4-383b7).[10] Socrates' interlocutors

Hermogenes and Cratylus embody the two diametrically opposed arguments in favor of

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the subject (341c-d). This understanding of how proper philosophical contemplation occurs therefore informs us why he writes in a dialogic form. Merely reading and memorizing dogmatic statements alone neither provides the intellectual contemplation nor the satisfaction from proper philosophy. As a result, for this thesis, whenever I write of Socrates, his interlocutors, or Plato holding certain positions, I refer to their positions within certain contexts in the *Cratylus* itself. Since Plato writes in a dialogical form without he himself being present, there is a critical quandary regarding interpretation: is Plato's position Socrates' and what are Plato's *actual* positions? For more on this issue of Platonic Anonymity and Plato's voice in the dialogues, please see Edelstein (1962), Plass (1964), and Cohn (2001). For this thesis, I will be considering the philosophical positions that Plato presents across the entire dialogue and its intellectual progression. In accordance with scholars such as Sedley (1998) and Trivigno (2012), I will be examining the *Cratylus*' philosophical arguments as serious and neither facetious nor parodical.
[8]Francesco Ademollo, ed., *The Cratylus of Plato: A Commentary / [by] Francesco Ademollo* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Pr., 2011) 1.
[9] De Cuypere and Willems, "Meaning and Reference in Aristotle's Concept of the Linguistic Sign," (2008), 309.
[10]Ibid.; Rachel Barney, *Names and Nature in Plato's « Cratylus »*, Studies in Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2001): 50.

conventionality (νόμῳ) and naturalism (φύσει) on this question, respectively. The purpose of this section will be to provide an overview of how Plato considers both arguments on names and ultimately arrives at an undetermined conclusion in the *Cratylus*. This framing will allow us to more exactly ascertain Aristotle's radical differences on names in language.

The *Cratylus* opens with Socrates and Hermogenes' discussion concerning the conventionality of names. Hermogenes argues:

> ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ ὅτι ἄν τίς τῳ θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόν: καὶ ἂν αὖθίς γε ἕτερον μεταθῆται, ἐκεῖνο δὲ μηκέτι καλῇ, οὐδὲν ἧττον τὸ ὕστερον ὀρθῶς ἔχειν τοῦ προτέρου, ὥσπερ τοῖς οἰκέταις ἡμεῖς μετατιθέμεθα οὐδὲν ἧττον τοῦτ᾽ εἶναι ὀρθὸν τὸ μετατεθὲν τοῦ πρότερον κειμένου: οὐ γὰρ φύσει ἑκάστῳ πεφυκέναι ὄνομα οὐδὲν οὐδενί, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ καὶ ἔθει τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων (384d2-7).

> I believe that any name you give a thing is its correct name. If you change its name and give it another, the new one is as correct as the old. For example, we give names to our domestic slaves, the new ones are as correct as the old. No name belongs to a particular thing by nature (φύσει) but only because of the rules (νόμῳ) and usage of those who establish the usage and call it by the name (384d2-7).[11]

Hermogenes' opening argument sets forth the primary dichotomous focus of the dialogue: whether names are by nature (φύσει) or by law/custom (νόμῳ). In this case, Hermogenes sets forth his view that words are merely arbitrarily designated to specific referents with no underlying meaning in language. To this end, he even further cites how, since there exist a multiplicity of languages and even differing Greek dialects, names must be relative and therefore agreed upon strictly by agreement or custom (νόμῳ) (385e). Hermogenes' argument suggests that any person can attribute whatever name they want in language to any referent, thus creating

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[11] All translations of the *Cratylus* are from G.M.A. Grube.

a private language.[12] If I were to call a dog "X" or a house "C," then such would be correct according to Hermogenes' thesis since I could call any entity by any name by my own law/custom (385a6).[13] In a more collective sense, names may be agreed upon by a larger community, thus forming a convention of usage (συνθήκη) (384d1). Therefore, names, for Hermogenes, are merely the result of an agreement or convention, thereby offering no sense of intrinsic correctness or natural meanings.[14] In response, Socrates is quick to advocate for the naturalism argument. Instead of names being completely arbitrary, Socrates analogizes that just as there are both virtuous/evil people, so too must there be a natural dichotomy of correct and incorrect words (386d). When Hermogenes concedes this point, this gives way to Socrates' subsequent naturalism counter argument.

Socrates critiques the conventionalist argument thoroughly. Some suggest that it is indicative of Plato's aversion to the implied relativism of Hermogenes' claims.[15] Socrates suggests that naming itself is like a craft and just as a person who "cuts" something uses the proper instrument "to cut in accord with the nature (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν) of cutting" (387ª1-5). Since any craftsman, such as a weaver or a driller, requires a proper tool to fulfill the nature of the action, so too does naming require a proper, natural tool to be correct (387d-388c). Socrates continues in suggesting that a "name...is a tool (ὄργανον) for giving instruction and for dividing being," just as a weaver's shuttle divides "warp and woof" (388b10-c2). Since proper names fundamentally distinguish the true being and nature of a given referent, names cannot therefore

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[12] David N. Sedley, *Plato's « Cratylus »*, Cambridge Studies in the Dialogues of Plato (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Pr., 2003): 53.

[13] Richard J. Ketchum, "Names, Forms and Conventionalism. *Cratylus* 383-395," *Phronesis: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy* XXIV (1979):134-35.

[14] For an alternative view, see Weingartner (1970).

[15] Barney, *Names and Nature in the Cratylus*, 29.

be arbitrary.[16] On the contrary, just as a craftsman strives to encapsulate something naturally into the being of the work, so too must a name be properly formulated in accordance with the nature of its referent (389c). These names, Socrates continues, were the result of the original "rule-setters" (νομοθέται) whose actions encoded the essence of the referent into the structure of the words themselves. This argument on the "rule-setters," however, is entirely contingent upon the premise that there is a kind of natural significance to names.[17] Socrates notes the key task that these rule-setters in language performed:

> καὶ Κρατύλος ἀληθῆ λέγει λέγων φύσει [390ε] τὰ ὀνόματα εἶναι τοῖς πράγμασι, καὶ οὐ πάντα δημιουργὸν ὀνομάτων εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀποβλέποντα εἰς τὸ τῇ φύσει ὄνομα ὂν ἑκάστῳ καὶ δυνάμενον αὐτοῦ τὸ εἶδος τιθέναι εἴς τε τὰ γράμματα καὶ τὰς συλλαβάς (390d5-390e2).

> Cratylus is right in saying that things have natural names (τὰ ὀνόματα εἶναι τοῖς πράγμασι), and that not everyone is a craftsman of names, but only someone who looks to the natural name of each thing and is able to put its form (τὸ εἶδος) into letters and syllables (390d5-390e2).

This passage provides a two-fold clarification. First, it reveals that the original "rule-setters" of the name looked to the form of the referent, whether sensible or immaterial, to encode it within the structure of the word itself in its constituent letters (γράμματα) and syllables (συλλαβάς).[18] Second, this passage reveals how Socrates' own refutation of Hermogenes is no different than Cratylus' argument.[19] This concession to Cratylus indicates that Socrates has essentially been detailing

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[16] Palmer, *Names, Reference and Correctness in Plato's Cratylus*" 99.

[17] Richard Robinson, "The Theory of Names in Plato's Cratylus," in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. 9, no. 32 (2) (1955): 226.

[18] Sedley, David N. "An Introduction to Plato's Theory of Forms," in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, vol. 78 (July 19, 2016).

[19] Nancy H. Demand, "The Nomothetes of the Cratylus," *Phronesis: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy* XX (1975): 107.

Cratylus' own naturalism arguments during these previous exchanges.[20] Following this concession, the longest section of the dialogue, from 390e-427d, details Socrates support of the naturalism argument by analyzing names of the heroes and the gods in the earliest texts of Homer and Hesiod, in addition to other common Greek words like man (ἄνθρωπος), hero (ἥρως), and being (οὐσία). We will return to this section in a subsequent chapter, for its etymological analyses highlight the one of the foremost differences in Aristotle and Plato's view on the significance of onomastic roots. For our purposes, it is foremost to see how Socrates considers names, both proper like Astyanax and common like ἄνθρωπος, to embody true imitations and representations of referents' essences (427c). If the name is indicative of the referent's being (οὐσία), then it is therefore the proper, true tool (ὄργανον) in language.[21] For example, the name for the Greek word *name*, ὄνομα, is correct according to Plato because ὄνομα refers to the adjective ὀνομαστόν (421a). This adjective, ὀνομαστόν, is a compression of the phrase, "ὄν οὗ μάσμα ἐστίν," or "being of which there is a search" (421a-b). Ὄνομα is therefore correct because it denotes what a name does and this true meaning is encoded into its constituent letters and syllables. Following this section, Cratylus fully agrees and concurs with Socrates's previous naturalistic account of language, going so far as to call his account "entirely satisfactory" (428e2). Although it may seem like Socrates and Cratylus have provided a comprehensive refutation of Hermogenes' argument, the dialogue does not end here.

Near the end of the dialogue, Socrates and Cratylus' discussion reveals the foremost flaw in the naturalism thesis. Specifically, if these primordial name-givers set forth names into language which had not already existed, would their actions, at those historical moments, not therefore be

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[20] Bernard Williams, "Cratylus' Theory of Names and Its Refutation," in *Language*, ed. Stephen Everson, vol. 3, Companions to Ancient Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pr., 1994), 28.
[21] John V. Luce, "Plato on Truth and Falsity in Names," *Classical Quarterly* XIX (1969): 225.

indicative of a conventionalist theory of names (438b)? This insight raises a paradoxical point,

since it means that, while the οὐσία of the original referent was encoded into the name, the name

was nevertheless first set forth and agreed upon by a convention. Socrates' provides the last

thought on this paradoxical situation in the whole dialogue, noting:

> Since we agree on these points, Cratylus, I take your silence as a
> sign of agreement, both convention and usage must contribute
> something to expressing what we mean when we speak [...] I myself
> prefer the view that names should be as much like the things as
> possible, but I fear that defending this view is like hauling a ship up
> a sticky ramp, as Hermogenes suggested, and that we have to make
> use of this worthless thing, convention, in the correctness of names
> (435b3-5, 435c1-5).

This passage serves as the conclusion of the *Cratylus* on the question of onomastic origins,

therefore ending the argument without any conclusive last word.[22] Though Socrates reluctantly

concedes to the necessity of the conventionality argument, he seems to cling to his naturalism

thesis.[23] As a result, Socrates holds that there is a twofold criteria for names: they must be

structurally similar to the referents in its constitution and must be externally agreed upon by

convention.[24] Although the majority of this dialogue is aimed at ascertaining a more natural

understanding of names, the dialogue's end hereafter (438c-440e) shifts and concludes with the

relationship of names and knowledge. Since the conventionalism argument puts all names in

perpetual flux and ever shifting with time, names are therefore improper for studying things

which are unchanging and permanent. As a result, Plato seems to believe that this issue of

onomastic origins and correctness has turned into an epistemological question; specifically, if

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[22] Barney, *Name and Nature in Plato's Cratylus*, 130; for an alternative interpretation, see Kretzmann (1970).
[23] Barney, *Name and Nature in Plato's Cratylus,* 130; Ronald Levinson, "Language, Plato, and Logic," *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter* (January 1, 1955): 3.
[24] Ibid, 130; Williams, "Cratylus' Theory of Names and its Refutation," 92.

names are not reliable for knowledge of essences and forms, then what is?[25] Since words may

not be truly indicative of the essences and forms of their referents, the interlocutors conclude by

agreeing that the forms themselves should be what is studied as opposed to the names since

forms are inherently unchanging and everlasting (438a-440s).[26]

Plato's final argument in the *Cratylus* thus seems to be that since the origins of names are

necessarily determined by convention to a certain degree, they cannot be relied upon to ascertain

true natures or essences.[27] Therefore, though some names may be indicative of a true essence of

its referent in its etymological components, thereby supporting the naturalism thesis, Plato

contends that the forms of the beings themselves are what ought to be studied, not names.[28]

§I.2.1: Aristotle on the Origin of Names in *De Interpretatione*

Although Aristotle does not refer to the *Cratylus*, his emphasis on the strict

conventionality of onomastic origins, in the opening chapters of *De Interpretatione*, marks a

departure from Plato's contended origin of names. Whereas the *Cratylus* considers both the

naturalism and conventionalism argument equally, with the dialogue ultimately concluding with

an inconclusive synthesis, Aristotle dismisses any supposed naturalism of words, instead

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[25] Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, 159.

[26] Brian Calvert, "Forms and Flux in Plato's Cratylus," Phronesis: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy XV (1970): 35; J.V. Luce, "Plato on Truth and Falsity in Names," 231; An issue that Plato does not seem to address in the *Cratylus* is whether it is possible to arrive at knowledge of forms without the use of language as a guide. In his *Seventh Letter*, Plato contends that there are three *necessary* aspects through which knowledge of something and, consequently, its form is achieved, which, in order, are name (ὄνομα), account/definition (λόγος), and then the image of it (εἴδωλον) (342a-b). However, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates and the interlocutors agree that the soul is able to investigate and gain knowledge of the forms but there is no mention of names, definitions, or images being a necessary component of that knowledge (79b-81a). Nevertheless, the account of the philosopher 's soul in these passages of the *Phaedo* imply the necessity of language and discourse as the means through which one may think (82c-85a).

[27] Levinson, "Language, Plato, and Logic," 3.

[28] Unfortunately, Plato does not address, in the *Cratylus*, what the form of the name itself is. Socrates, however, does assert that ὄνομα is an example of a word which is true by encoding a compressed statement which clarifies what a name *is* and *what it does*. As we read previously, ὄνομα is the compressed statement "ὂν οὗ μάσμα ἐστίν," meaning "being of which there is a search" (421a). This statement is unfortunately the closest that the dialogue comes to investigating whether the name of name itself (ὄνομα) is an example of a proper name and what that form of name itself would be.

adopting a strict conventionality (κατὰ συνθήκην). Moreover, unlike Plato, who perceives name as an embodiment of a form set forth originally by brilliant name-giver, Aristotle ascribes the origin of names in language to human agreement resulting from spoken utterances manifesting the inner states of the soul, thereby removing any abstract idea of forms from the origin of names.

To begin, Aristotle deals with the origin of language in his second chapter of *De Interpretatione* in his definition of a name (ὄνομα). Specifically, he writes:

> Ὄνομα μὲν οὖν ἐστι φωνὴ σημαντικὴ **κατὰ συνθήκην** ἄνευ χρόνου, ἧς μηδὲν μέρος ἐστὶ σημαντικὸν κεχωρισμένον (16a20-1).

> A name (ὄνομα) is a sound (φωνὴ) that is significant **according to agreement (κατὰ συνήκην)** without (indication of) time, of which no part is significant when having been divided.[29]

This simple phrase "according to agreement" dismisses Plato's arguments in the *Cratylus* with one swift stroke by adhering to strict conventionalism. Moreover, Aristotle does not even consider the possibility of there being a supposed "naturalness" in the construction of names in language, whether in the whole word or in the parts of the word itself. Specifically, Aristotle distinguishes between simple and compound names, writing:

> οὐ μὴν οὐδ' ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἁπλοῖς ὀνόμασιν, οὕτως ἔχει καὶ ἐν τοῖς πεπλεγμένοις • ἐν ἐκείνοις μὲν γὰρ οὐδαμῶς τὸ μέρος σημαντικόν, ἐν δὲ τούτοις βούλεται μέν, ἀλλ' οὐδενὸς κεχωρισμένον, οἷον ἐν τῷ ἐπακτροκέλης τὸ κέλης (*De Interpretatione*, 16a23-26).

> Yet there is a difference between simple and composite nouns; for in the former the part is in no way significant, in the latter it contributes to the meaning of the whole, although it has not an independent meaning. Thus in the word 'pirate-boat'

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[29] Translation of this passage is my own; all bolded phrases and words in these sections are my own edits.

(ἐπακτροκέλης) the word 'boat' (κέλης) has no meaning except as part of the whole word.[30]

Compound words, as Aristotle suggests, are formed with existing words that have been established by convention. Unlike Socrates' and Cratylus' naturalism argument, there is nothing intrinsically true that corresponds to a form in the roots of simple words or in the constituent letters. Even the words "pirate" and "boat" in the compound word "pirate-boat" are only meaningful in the sense of the word "pirate-boat" when used together. The simple words have inherently different meanings than the compound word, yet there is nothing significant or meaningful about a word beyond the simple. These simple words are established by convention. Since there is nothing significant in the word's constituent parts, Aristotle, unlike Plato, does not think that investigating word roots will be fruitful in an investigation of meanings. Aristotle's focus instead shifts towards how names become established by convention and how people name things in the first place. Concerning convention, Aristotle elaborates further on the meaning of κατὰ συνθήκην:

> τὸ δὲ κατὰ συνθήκην, ὅτι φύσει τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐδέν ἐστιν, ἀλλ᾽ ὅταν γένηται σύμβολον · ἐπεὶ δηλοῦσὶ γέ τι καὶ οἱ ἀγράμματοι ψόφοι, οἷον θηρίων, ὧν οὐδέν ἐστιν ὄνομα.
>
> The (notion) according to agreement is such that **there is nothing (from) names that is "by nature" (φύσει), but (it is a name) only whenever it becomes a symbol**; the inarticulate (ἀγράμματοι) noises (ψόφοι), the sort of which the beasts (make), designate/indicate (δηλοῦσὶ), but it is not a name (ὄνομα).[31]

Aristotle makes two key points in these passages. First, he contends that words only have a meaning when they become a unified σύμβολον or symbol, agreed upon by others. This

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[30] Unless otherwise stated, assume that translations of *De Interpretatione* are by J.L. Ackrill.
[31] Translation is my own. While I primarily use Akrill's translation, I translate certain passages in order to draw attention to specific meanings of the words in the text or to maintain parallelism with other translations.

σύμβολον serves as a conventional sign in conveying ideas, not necessarily in a one-to-one

correspondence nor in mirroring reality, but by obeying certain rules.[32] Second, Aristotle, unlike

Plato, subtly indicates that there is a specific criterion necessary for something to be a name.

There are utterances (ψόφοι) which can indicate (δηλοῦσι) and make things known, but this is

not what a name (ὄνομα) makes known. We will return to this latter point in the subsequent

chapters, for this distinction of "inarticulate" and "articulate" sounds in *De Interpretatione* is

supplemented in the biological texts. This distinction, corroborated by the biological texts, will

serve as a refutation to Plato's understanding of the elements of names such as letters, syllables,

and etymologies. For the time being, however, we shall focus on the former point on σύμβολον.

Aristotle's understanding of σύμβολον here is not restricted merely to *De Interpretatione*, for he

defines the relation between σύμβολον and ὄνομα similarly across his corpus:

> "but we use words (ὀνόμασιν) as symbols (συμβόλοις) in the place
> of **πραγμάτων**" (*Sophistical Refutations*, 165a7-8).[33]
>
> "for it (a proposition/λόγος) is composed out of names (ὀνομάτων),
> and each symbol (σύμβολόν) is of names (ὀνομάτων)" (*On Sense
> and Sensibility*, 437a15-16).[34]

Aristotle thus views the name as a written and spoken form of the σύμβολον. Moreover, it is

important to note that Aristotle views the concept of sign (σημεῖον) as interchangeable with

symbol (σύμβολον).[35] In *De Interpretatione* itself, we can see how Aristotle refers to names as

symbols (σύμβολα) and signs (σημεῖα)(16a3-9; 16a15-19).[36] This will become important as we

discuss Aristotle's understanding of the symbol (σύμβολον) and its formation by the soul.

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[32] Anita Kasabova and Vladimir Marinov, "Aristotle on Verbal Communication: The First Chapters of De Interpretatione," *Empedocles: European Journal for the Philosophy of Communication* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 250.
[33] Translation of this is my own; Kasabova and Marinov, "Aristotle on verbal communication: The first chapters of De Interpretatione," 241.
[34] Translation is my own.
[35] Hans Arens, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Its Tradition* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1967): 27.
[36] Rodmon Cedric King, *Semantics and Mental Representation in Aristotle's « Peri Hermeneias »*(Rochester, NY: University of Rochester, 2012): 84.

To summarize Aristotle's views, Aristotle conceives of the name (ὄνομα) as a symbol (σύμβολον), agreed upon by convention (κατὰ συνθήκην), and with no part of itself being significant (σημαντικὸν) when broken down to its parts, unless in the case of a compound word, as we have previously seen. While Aristotle views the name as a spoken and written symbol (σύμβολον) agreed upon by convention, he views the origin of the symbol in language as a result of an affection of the soul (πάθημα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ), or something either external or internal affecting the soul. The opening passage of *De Interpretatione* provides further clarity on this point:

> ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα,
> καὶ τὰ γραφόμενα τῶν ἐν τῇ φωνῇ. καὶ ὥσπερ οὐδὲ γράμματα πᾶσι
> τὰ αὐτά. οὐδέ φωναὶ αἱ αὐταί · ὧν μέντοι ταῦτα σημεῖα πρώτων,
> ταὐτὰ[37] πᾶσι παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ ὧν ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα
> πράγματα ἤδη ταὐτά. περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων εἴρηται ἐν τοῖς περὶ
> ψυχῆς· ἄλλης γὰρ πραγματείας.

> Now spoken sounds are symbols (σύμβολα) of affections in the soul (ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων), and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs (σημεῖα) of – affections of the soul (παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς) are the same for all (ταὐτὰ πᾶσι); and what these affections are likenesses of – actual things (πράγματα) – are also the same. These matters have been discussed in the work on the soul and do not belong to the present subject (*De Interpretatione*, 16a3-9).

This opening passage is arguably the most famous of the whole treatise.[38] Kretzmann goes so far as to call it the "most influential text in the history of semantics."[39] While it is famous, it is

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[38] A study of this singular passage alone and its scholarly interpretations merits an entire dissertation, for some view it as Aristotle's theory of linguistics (Kretzmann [1976], Walz [2006]), others as Aristotle's theory of meaning and signification (Modrak [2001], Irwin [1982]); Di Mattei (2006) provides a good overview of development of the ancient and modern interpretations of this key passage. Arens (1984) also extensively covers the ancient, medieval, and early modern interpretations of this passage, in addition to the early chapters of *De Interpretatione.*

[39] Norman Kretzmann, "Aristotle on Spoken Sound Significant by Convention," in *Ancient Logic and Its Modern Interpretations: Proceedings of the Buffalo Symposium on Modernist Interpretations of Ancient Logic, 21 and 22 April, 1972*, ed. John Corcoran, Synthese Historical Library (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1974), 3.

nevertheless incredibly brief.[40] As such, it is quite "rich" yet simultaneously "puzzling."[41] Its

brevity, however, provides a dense amount to unpack in Aristotle's understanding of the origin

of language and semantics. Specifically, while Aristotle contends that names are arbitrarily

imposed by convention, their referents are the vocalizations (ἐν τῇ φωνῇ) caused by the

affections (παθήματα) upon the soul (ψυχῇ). This affection is something that is the same for all

people(ταὐτὰ πᾶσι) while the vocalization and writing signifying the name would be what is

inherently different. This connection to the soul and the internal is quite remarkable, for Plato,

nowhere in the *Cratylus*, draws such a connection between names and thoughts or names and

soul.[42] As we saw previously, the names are never discussed in the *Cratylus* in relation to any

internal processes but only in relation to the forms or the beings they refer (421a). Nevertheless,

Aristotle's allusion to περὶ ψυχῆς, or *De Anima*, is quite problematic for modern interpretations

and arguably the most difficult passage in *De Interpretatione*, since many scholars have sought

to draw parallels to *De Anima* itself.[43] Looking within *De Interpretatione*, we can see that

Aristotle views the affections of the soul as impressions of things in the world (πράγματα). In the

former sense, Aristotle views the souls' affection from a πράγμα as an inherent likeness

(ὁμοίωμα) of that very πράγμα. This is another key point of departure from Plato. Whereas there

is a consensus in the *Cratylus* that names are imitations (ἀπομιμούμενοι) of the referent,

Aristotle contends that the only kind of "imitation" is that of the affection of similar "likenesses"

(ὁμοιώματα) upon the soul (427c-d). This affection and state of the soul, as previously stated,

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[40] J. L. Ackrill, *Categories and de Interpretatione* (Clarendon Press, 1975): 113.

[41] King, "Semantics and Mental Representation in Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias,*" 77.

[42] Robinson, "The Theory of Names in Plato's *Cratylus*", 227.

[43] An analysis of the exact connection between Aristotle's conception of παθήαμτα in *On Interpretation* and *De Anima* could merit a thesis in its own right. Understanding the relationship of the παθήματα to the soul, especially in *De Anima*, would provide greater clarity on Aristotle's understanding of the soul's processes; for a detailed look at the overlap of both texts, in addition to Aristotle's *De Memoria*, I recommend Modrak (2001) *op. cit.,* King (2012) *op. cit.*, and Noriega-Olmos' *Aristotle's Psychology of Signification, a Commentary of De Interpretatione 16a3-18*.

seems to be what is universal for all people (ταὐτὰ πᾶσι) while the conventional symbol and thought are what differs.[44] Whatever one's language may be, Aristotle contends that these impressions of the world all affect and impress upon the soul in the same way, albeit actualized in different linguistic manners.[45] However, Aristotle does not restrict affections of the soul strictly to external phenomena, for he connects παθήματα to thoughts (νοήματα) as well. Specifically, he writes:

> Ἔστι δέ, ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ὁτὲ μὲν νόημα ἄνευ τοῦ ἀληθεύειν ἢ ψεύδεσθαι, ὁτὲ δὲ ἤδη ᾧ ἀνάγκη τούτων ὑπάρχειν θάτερον, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ (*De Interpretatione*, 16a10-12).
>
> As there are in the mind thoughts which do not involve truth or falsity, and also those which must be either true or false, so it is in speech.

This passage directly follows the passage in which Aristotle first mentions "affections of the soul." This has led some scholars to view Aristotle as drawing a direct parallel between παθήματα and νοήματα.[46] By connecting παθήματα to νοήματα, affections of the soul ultimately refer not only to the impressions from external things on the soul, but also internal impressions, whether mental or abstract. Nevertheless, however, Aristotle stresses that the genesis of a name in language is strictly a result of agreement.[47] Aristotle does not hold that certain phonemes or utterances are intrinsically connected to some essence or higher form.[48] Across languages, names of the same referent will ultimately refer to the same *being*.

[44] Blake Edward Hestir, "Aristotle's Conception of Truth: An Alternative View," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51, no. 2 (2013):196-197.
[45] Arens, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and its Tradition,* 29.
[46] Kasabova and Marinov, "Aristotle on Verbal Communication: The First Chapters of *De Interpretatione"* 245; David Charles. *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 81.
[47] Ibid., 243.
[48] M. T. Larkin, *Language in the Philosophy of Aristotle, LXXII*, Janua Linguarum Ser. Minor (The Hague: Mouton, 1971): 22.

In tracing Aristotle's understanding of ὄνομα, we can more succinctly approach

Aristotle's theory of signification with this diagram:

πράγματα (Things in the World) & νοητά (Thinkable Things)	→	παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς Affections of the Soul (Internal/External)	→	σύμβολα (Symbols as Spoken Words)	→	ὀνόματα (Written Word [τὰ γραφόμενα] {these can also be spoken})
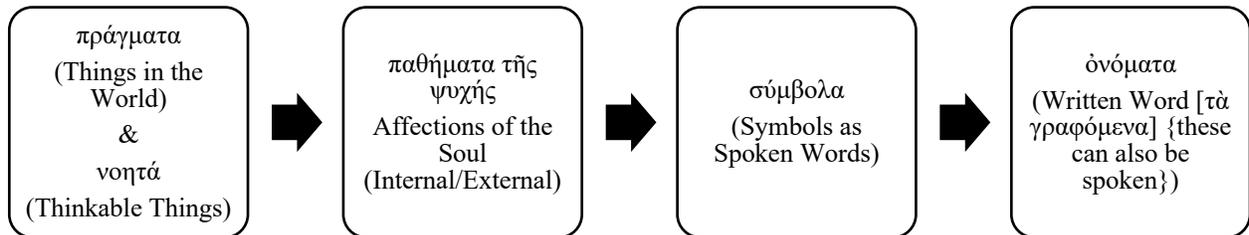
By looking at Aristotle's theory of signification in this way, we can more directly

contrast Plato and Aristotle's understandings of onomastic origins. Whereas Plato contends that

the name, if it is not to be merely a conventional agreement, bears its originary meaning from a

primordial name-giver or form, Aristotle traces the origin of name's original imposition into

language to the "affections of the soul." For example, given the multiplicity of names for

concepts, both physical and mental, across different languages with words such as "apple" or

"anxiety," Aristotle would contend that these varying significations have the same affection in

the human soul as its primary source.

I.3.1 Summary of Chapter I

Instead of ascribing the origin of words to some mystical name-giver or supposed

naturalness, Aristotle describes words solely in relation to the "affections of the soul" which then

become actualized in speech and agreed upon by convention. This places the emphasis of origin

strictly on human affairs as opposed to some greater entity or causality. Aristotle's answer to the

question of "correctness of name" (ὀρθότης τῶν ὀνομάτων) is that such a names can never arise

universally on account of the multiplicity of languages and the strict conventionalism of words, both spoken and written.[49] Instead of looking to the forms themselves for clarity on the names, Aristotle instead looks to the human soul and emphasizes that it is strictly how worldly phenomena (πράγματα & νοήματα) act upon the soul that gives rise to language itself. However, this shift in Aristotle seems remarkably similar to Plato's conclusion in the *Cratylus* that ultimately asserts the forms are the beings to be studied since they are universal and unchanging as opposed to names. Nevertheless, this juxtaposition of both Plato and Aristotle's thoughts on the origin of language, though contrary, highlights this fundamental departure which Aristotle makes from the more ideal elements of Platonic philosophy.

Chapter II: The Elements of Names

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[49] Arens. *Aristotle's Theory of Language and its Tradition*, 28

II.1.1: Plato on the Correctness of Letters and Syllables

The most extensive portion of the *Cratylus* details a thorough investigation into the

nature of etymologies of names in addition to their constituent syllables, and letters (390e-

427d).[50] Plato puts forth arguments in the *Cratylus* which suggest that names themselves can be

naturally significant when we look to their constituent etymologies and, beyond this, to the

onomatopoetic meaning of a primary, non-compound word's constituent sounds and letters.

Specifically, Socrates and Cratylus cause Hermogenes to concede that, unlike the strict

conventionalism for which he initially advocates, names cannot be formed by mere

happenstance. In this first section of chapter II, we will investigate how Socrates' interlocutors

in the *Cratylus* advance a twofold theory of natural names which suggests that the constituent

letters/syllables and etymologies of words can be used to ascertain whether or not the word in the

language is correct or not.

Despite being the most elementary units composing words, letters themselves, Plato

suggests, maintain an individual meaning that contributes to the overall nature of the word itself.

The meaning of the letter and its accompanying phoneme maintain an onomatopoetic being that

captures of the essence of the referent in the primary name.[51] By primary name, I mean ones

which are the integral words used in compound words and beyond which there can be no further

deconstruction unless in the form of its integral letters and syllables (422a)[52]. These primary

names, at least the true ones, are therefore "expertly" crafted by the name-givers and require

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[50] Numerous scholars in the past, as Barney (1998) well notes, past have found the etymological section of the *Cratylus* (390e-427d) to be either facetious or parodic, ultimately detracting from any perceived philosophical significance of these sections. I will be following the interpretations of Sedley (1998) and Trivigno (2012) which consider this parodic reasoning to be unsatisfactory and, instead, find the etymological sections to be fully serious in tone and worthy of philosophical consideration through both a comparison to Plato's other dialogues and a refutation of the supposed "comedic" or "parodic" elements of this section.

[51] Ludwig C.H. Chen, "Onomatopoeia in the *Cratylus*," *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 16, no. 2 (1982): 90

[52] David Sedley, *Plato's* Cratylus, 150.

thorough investigation to ascertain their essence.[53] For these names, Socrates asserts that the name-givers encoded the form (εἶδος) of the referent into its constituent syllables (συλλαβαί) and letters (γράμματα)(390ᵃ). Analogously, Socrates suggests that just as a painter finds the correct colors with which to capture his or her subject, so too did the original name-giver in language consult the correct individual letters in order to capture the nature of the referent in the individual letters (424e). This kind of analogous thinking hearkens back to Socrates' shuttle simile wherein he contends that just as a shuttle is used for its proper task of weaving, so too is the name used for the proper naming task (387d-388b). Just as a weaver uses the appropriate fabric with the shuttle for making garments, the name-giver encodes the name with the proper letters necessary to represent its εἶδος intrinsically.[54] The correctness of the individual letter, therefore, is predicated on how the original name-givers understood that there was an intrinsic onomatopoetic essence inherent in the letters themselves. Letters such as lambda (λ), rho (ρ), and nu (ν), in addition to the other Greek letters, are used to represent varying meanings in their words in which they are used (426c-427d). By breaking down various primary names into their constituent letters, Socrates believes that they can then ascertain exactly how the ancient name-givers encoded ideas through the appropriate letters with their voices into the primary name (423c-425b). On account of the many examples that Socrates employs in this section, I have organized the overall argument with the following chart, which helps categorize and frame what Socrates and Hermogenes mean on this point:

Letter	Examples	Intrinsic Meaning of the Letter

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[53] David Sedley, "Etymologies in Plato's *Cratylus*," 141.
[54] Ibid., 88-89.

Rho (ρ)	ῥοή (river) ῥεῖν (to flow) τρόμος (trembling) τρέχειν (to run) κρουειν (to strike) θραύειν (to shatter) ἐρείκειν (to pound) θρύπτειν (to break) κερματίζειν (to cut up)	Captures idea of motion and flowing in addition to action(426d-e)
Lambda (λ)	ὀλισθάνειν (to slip/glide) λεῖα (smooth) λιπαρόν (greasy/sleek) κολλῶδες (viscous)	Resembles the gliding and smoothness of the tongue in forming the sound "λ" (427b1-5).
Nu (ν)	ἔνδον (within) ἐντός (inside)	Since "ν is an "inward sound," it is used for indicating things inside (427b8-c1).

These letters, the motions used to indicate them, and their inherent phoneme are what therefore constitute their intrinsic meaning. As a result, letters are *onomatopoetically* and *mimetically* similar to an idea that is then encoded into a word expressive of that idea in some degree.[55]This intrinsic onomatopoeia and mimesis is not restricted to individual letters, however, for Socrates and Hermogenes also include compound syllables and diphthongs as similarly expressing some idea in their referents. One of these compound syllables is the Greek letter psi (ψ) [combination of pi (π) and sigma (σ)]in the word ψυχρός (cold/chilly) with the psi (ψ) indicating the expulsion of breath associated with shivering (427a). These considerations of letters and compound syllables in these sections serve the purpose of demonstrating how exactly the name-givers were able to encode the exact form (εἶδος) into the name (ὄνομα) itself, thereby allowing the mere utterance of the name to impart an exact delineation of the *being* (οὐσία) of the referent (423e).[56]

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[55] Sean Driscoll, "Linguistic Mimesis in Plato's *Cratylus*," 116
[56] Gail Fine, "Plato on Naming," 298; Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, 150.

The primary name, however, can only be examined once it has been either extricated as an element from a compound word or as an etymology of word. Socrates contends that the Greek word for name itself, ὄνομα, is a kind of compressed statement, specifically a condensed form of a phrase. Ὄνομα itself, Socrates suggests, is the condensed phrase ὂν οὗ μάσμα ἐστίν or "a being of which there is a search" (421a9-10). The constituent elements in the condensed phrase thereafter could be likewise broken down into its parts as well. Recognizing the possible infinite regress, however, Socrates suggests that they only approach the names that are elements of others (στοιχεῖα τῶν ἄλλων) (422a1-5). Only then is it germane to investigate the nature of letters and primary names. It is interesting to note that before even discussing the nature of letters and primary names, Socrates and Hermogenes first dissect words for their etymologies as a first criteria of correctness.[57] As we shall see, this first criterion of correctness will prove the most exhaustive in the whole dialogue.

II.1.2 Etymologies in Plato's *Cratylus*

The interlocutors find that the letters and syllables, with their encoded meanings, are what the original name-givers employed in the formation of the primary names. However, a primary name can only be ascertained, let alone analyzed, when it has been reduced to a primary name by dissecting compound words or etymologies. It should be noted that Plato does not use the word etymology (ἐτυμολογία) in either the *Cratylus* or any of his extant dialogues. The earliest usage occurs roughly seventy years after Plato's death by Philo of Alexandria.[58] Nevertheless, this investigation into an extensive amount of subjects and words reveal what etymological investigations, especially among sophists in 5th—4th century B.C.E., consisted.[59]

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[57] Norman Kretzmann, "Plato on the Correctness of Names," 134.
[58] A Greek-English Lexicon, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), s.v. "ἐτυμολογία."
[59] Ineke Sluiter, "Ancient Etymology: A Tool for Thinking," 16.

Moreover, we will be following the tradition of other scholars who similarly refer to this section as the etymological section. Before Socrates and Hermogenes even discuss letters and syllables, they first discuss the nature of etymologies in words, which, they believe, are correct only when the etymology is indicative of the referent's essence (397a-c). As with the section on letters, I have provided a chart which details some of the words Socrates and Hermogenes analyze in their discourse:

Greek Word	Contended Etymologies	Meaning of the Etymology
Ζεύς Zeus [396a-b]	δι᾽ ὃν ζῆν	cause of life (114) [Literally: one account of whom to live]
ἥρως hero [398d]	ἔρως	Love (Since heroes are demigods and therefore born from the *love/lust* between humans and gods)
Ἀστυάναξ (Astyanax) [392b-e]	ἄστυ + ἄναξ	Master of the city[60]
ἄνθρωπος (man) [399c]	ἀναθρῶν ἃ ὄπωπε	one who observes closely what he has seen (118)
Ψύχη (soul/spirit) [399d-400c]	ἣ φύσιν ὀχεῖ καὶ ἔχει→ φυσέχην	Nature-sustainer (118)
Φρόνησις (wisdom) (411d-e)	Φορᾶς ῥοῦ νόησις	understanding is of flow and motion"
Νόησις (understanding/intelligence) (411d)	Νέου ἕσις	an aiming at the new

In the chart, I sought to capture the broad scope of the kinds of names which Socrates and Hermogenes investigate: divinities (θεοί), daemons (δαίμονες), heroes (ἥρωαι), and then humans or human virtues or attributes (ἄνθρωποι) (397d). The terms provided above are by no means, therefore, exhaustive of Socrates and Hermogenes' full discourse. Their investigations analyze a rather comprehensive list of names, covering the names of the Homeric heroes (e.g. Astyanax and Hector), gods (e.g. Zeus and Poseidon), elements (e.g. fire, air, water, earth,), virtues

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[60] Scamandrius, the son of Hector in the *Iliad*, had the aptly chosen nickname Astyanax since Hector was the greatest warrior hero of Troy. The name Astyanax is the correct name in this case since it encapsulates *who* Scamandrius is.

(courage, justice, wisdom), and additional philosophical terminology (390e-421c).[61] That being

said, this chart provides a cursory overview of how Socrates' interlocutors, and Plato by

extension, understand what an etymological analysis requires. Following the etymological

section, Cratylus and Socrates discuss whether it is possible for some names to be more correct

than others, leading them both to the more important question of how much conventionalism

attributes to the meaning of words (431a-440e). Cratylus' objects to Socrates that there are some

names that are less correct than others insofar as there are primary names, such as σκληρός

meaning "hard" which do not, by their constituent letters such as lamda (λ), embody the very

idea to which they refer (434b-e). Socrates reluctantly concedes that this entire previous

naturalism argument of names would ultimately be unsatisfactory since it seems necessary that

agreement and convention must have some role in word veracity:

> I myself prefer the view that names should be as much like things
> as possible, but I fear that defending this view is like hauling a ship
> up a sticky ramp, as Hermogenes suggested, and that we have to
> make use of this worthless thing, convention, in the correctness of
> names (*Cratylus* 435c1-5).

The dialogue ends without a singular conclusion since the final conversations between Socrates

and Cratylus question the worth of studying names at all.[62] Instead, Socrates contends that the

study of the form (εἶδος) to which the name corresponds is what should be investigated since it is

better to learn from the original than a mere imitation or representation of something (438e-

439b). Since names must change over time due to the shifting nature of conventions and usage,

their imitation of the form, not matter how accurate, would therefore shift and possibly become

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[61] Sedley (1998) provides a comprehensive list and speculation on the meaning behind Plato's rather extensive categories and lists of terms. He suggests that this survey of etymologies and meanings provides insight into how Plato partitions philosophy across his corpus in dialogues such as in the *Sophist* and *Timaeus*.
[62] Cohen (1962) *op. cit.* would suggest that this would be in line with Plato's rather deliberate aporetic conclusions such as the *Charmides* and *Lysis*, among other dialogues.

false over time. Socrates therefore views names as being inherently unreliable since they can possibly deceive language users on the correct nature of the referent.[63] Despite the thoroughness in this etymological argument for the naturalism thesis, Socrates' interlocutors, become conflicted between the two theses, ultimately concluding the dialogue by stating that they should merely study the forms to which the words refer since they are inherently unchanging and knowable. As a result, forms are immune to the vicissitudes of linguistic convention.[64] Although we will investigate this idea in more detail in chapter three, it is important to note here that Socrates nevertheless clings to a hope for the naturalism thesis in spite of Cratylus' objections and this shift towards the forms themselves.

§II.2.1 Aristotle on the Biological Basis of Noise, Voice, and Speech Production

As we found in the previous chapter, Aristotle explicitly asserts that names (ὀνόματα) are merely sounds (φωναί) that are significant according to agreement (κατὰ συνήκην) without any part of themselves being significant when having been divided (*De Int.* 16a23-26). Whereas Socrates' interlocutors in the *Cratylus* argue that there are intrinsic meanings behind specific etymologies, letters, and even phonemes, Aristotle dismisses such notions with one Alexandrian stroke in *De Interpretatione*.[65] While Aristotle scarcely develops this point further in *De Interpretatione* itself, his overall sentiment in those brief passages parallels similar observations on words found in his biological texts, particularly his *De Partibus Animalium* and *Historia Animalium*. The purpose of this section will be to focus on Aristotle's views on the elements of words themselves in his biological texts. More specifically, Aristotle puts forth, in *De Partibus*

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[63] J.V. Luce, "Plato on Truth and Falsity in Names," 231; also see *Theaetetus* 155e-157c.
[64] Ibid., 231; J.L. Ackrill, "Language and Reality in Plato's *Cratylus*," in *Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 52.
[65] *De Interpretatione*, 16a20-25.

Animalium and *Historia Animalium,* a twofold argument that contends, first, that all letters or utterances are merely a consequence of our anatomy; and second, that the ability to produce speech is merely a biological attribute, with humans having the highest abilities to express their reason through language, thereby communicating in a manner far more advanced than any other animal.[66] If the ability to produce speech is merely biological and our languages are all conventional, then this removes any sort of mystic, primordial, or divine quality in the nature of our words, letters, or etymologies. In studying these twofold arguments, we can better approach another fundamental difference in the philosophies of language of Plato and Aristotle: studying biological phenomena on behalf of philosophical questions.

§II.2.2 Letters in Language as a Result of Anatomy

To begin, whereas Socrates and Cratylus view specific letter/phoneme connections as having a natural meaning to them, thereby explaining their inclusion in the makeup of a word, Aristotle would dismiss such a notion.[67] Instead, Aristotle suggests that all words, no matter how elementary the utterance's syllables or individual phonemes, are merely a result of the biological limitations of our tongue, mouth, facial muscles, and respiratory systems. Therefore, any meaning associated with such a letter/phoneme would only be so according to a convention. As we found previously, Aristotle states that all humans have the *capacity* for discourse (διάλεκτον/λόγος); however, this capacity manifests itself across the multiplicity of languages. In *Partibus Animalium*, Aristotle writes:

> "Now vocal speech (λόγος ὁ διὰ τῆς φωνῆς) consists of
> combinations of the various letters or sounds, some of which are
> produced by an impact of the tongue, others by closing the lips;
> and if the lips were not supple, or if the tongue were other than it

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[66] Larkin, *Language in the Philosophy of Aristotle*, 19.
[67] *Cratylus*, 389d-391a.

is, the greater part of these could not possibly be produced (660a2-7)".[68]

What is interesting to note here is that Aristotle's classification of vocalized letters and their production roughly corresponds to the modern linguistic classifications of letter formation, for example, dentals (tongue-teeth), labial (tongue-lips), and palatal (tongue-palate) letters.[69] With such a finite oral anatomy, humans are therefore quite limited in the sounds we can possibly make. In addition to a pliable tongue and solid teeth, Aristotle also notes that humans are unique in having some of the softest lips of any animal (*PA* 659b25-30). Unlike other animals whose lips are primarily for the protection of the teeth, human lips serve the higher function of clear, articulated speech by allowing for easy separation, movement, and formation with the lips (*PA* 629b35-630a5).

In addition to oral anatomy, humans also require a dynamic respiratory system, through which the inhaling and exhaling of air through the vocal chords directly produces the vibrations and sounds that become voice.[70] Sound can be produced by simply striking two objects together to produce vibrations; however, Aristotle specifies that the capacity to emit voice (φωνή) is specifically a quality only of animate beings with lungs, windpipes, pharynxes, and all the other respiratory organs (*HA* 535b13-15; *DA* 420b). With the abilities to breathe and produce sound through the vocal cords, and maneuver the lips and tongue at will, humans possess the unique ability of articulation (διάρθρωσις; lit: "through jointedness") with which to form specific sounds and utterances corresponding to other ideas.[71] The combinations of those finite "articulations" allow for the ability to convey complex ideas through language.[72]

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[68] Peck, *Partibus Animalium,* 199.
[69] Smyth, *Greek Grammar* 11.
[70] Zirin, "Aristotle's Biology of Language," 334.
[71] Ibid., 336.
[72] Zirin, "Inarticulate Noises," 24.

Since nature always acts according to a specific, realized end (τέλος) according to Aristotle, it was not merely by accident that humans have the most well-developed abilities for vocal communication or speech relative to all other animals (Phys. 199a-200b).[73] Instead, Aristotle argues that the amalgamation of advantageous organs, systems, and a capacity for communication unlike any other animal causes human language. As a result, Aristotle therefore removes any notion of divinities, name-givers, or ancient peoples in ascertaining the genesis of names, ascribing its development merely to biological phenomena. Although humans naturally have the anatomy for articulating finite letters and noises, that fact does not imply that these sounds would have any intrinsic, semantic meaning. There are only a certain number of specific sounds which we can make with our respiratory and oral anatomy, which, if such limitations were removed, would allow for an infinite variety of sounds to be produced.[74] Just as Aristotle contends that names (ὀνόματα) have no meaning apart from their unity and agreed-upon meaning, so too does he assert that the finite letters, which we can vocalize, maintain no intrinsic meaning.[75] Aristotle ascribes this lack of intrinsic meaning to the great diversity of languages.

The physiological limitations from which humans can produce articulated sound provide the basis not only for human language itself, but also the great multiplicity of languages. Aristotle notes that humans are quite unusual compared to other animals in that:

> καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι φωνὴν μὲν τὴν αὐτὴν ἀφιᾶσι, διάλεκτον δ᾽ οὐ τὴν αὐτήν (HA 536b19-20).

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[73] Larkin, *Language in the Philosophy of Aristotle*, 19.

[74] Qiu, "Aristotle's Definition of Language," §1.1-2.2; Zirin, "Aristotle's Biology of Language"; Aristotle's view here seems akin to to the position in modern phonology and linguistics of phonotactics. Phonotactics understands languages, such as English with its twenty-six letters, as having a predefined restriction of its phonemes. Such a phonotactical constraint therefore causes a limit to the understandable phonemes in the language. Any coincidental use of letters or their combinatory syllables in seemingly similar words is not natural, but ultimately resultant of our limited, phonotactical alphabets. Aristotle appears to think that our anatomy is what defines our ability to speak certain phonemes, much like an alphabet in a language marking off what specific sounds are meaningful. As a result, such phonemes are not intrinsically meaningful but merely become so when they are predefined as meaningful in a language. For more on this in modern linguistics, see Goldrick (2004).

[75] *De Int.* 16a23-26.

> Men have the same voice the world over, but different varieties of speech.[76]

All humans have a capacity for expression with a voice but our language is inherently local, thereby giving rise to its great diversity. Aristotle similarly expresses this sentiment in his *Problems*, questioning why humans have such diverse forms of discourse and languages while there seem to be no animals with any sort of equal diversity.[77] Whereas certain animals can only indicate with two or perhaps three different tones, humans have the abilities of complex expression, actualizing in the near unlimited variations of letters and, by extension, languages across the world.[78]

This thinking in the biological texts mirrors his thoughts in *De Interpretatione* quite strikingly. Just as humans have the same experiences in mental processes and affections in the soul (παθήματα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ), so too do humans have a universal *ability* to produce a voice, both of which culminate in languages unique and diverse to their communities.[79] Although humans may have the same affections in the soul (παθήματα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ), the symbol which various people use for that mental impression nevertheless varies across all different language.[80] The mere fact that humans have a universal anatomy or mental experiences does not ultimately imply that there would be a preordained meaning in each letter, phoneme, or word. If there is to be an "intrinsic" meaning in words, it ultimately rests not with its constituent letters, syllables, and phonemes, but in the universality of the human affections of the soul upon which phenomena act.

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[76] Peck, 83.
[77] *Problemata*, X. 38-39.
[78] Ibid., X. 39.
[79] See *De Int.* 16a-b.
[80] Modrak, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Meaning*, 221.

From these passages, we can see how Aristotle is much more cognizant of the great multiplicity of languages. This cognizance informs how he views the inherent conventionality of words and, consequently, its lack of a supposed universal, divine meaning in a Platonic sense. Letters and syllables result from the biological organs, with any supposed intrinsic meaning being a mere consequence of conventional agreement by local communities.[81] Aristotle would therefore view Plato's suggested onomatopoetic theory of letters to be a mere result of convention.

In essence, Aristotle's physiological insights on the production of letters demystify the onomatopoetic theories Plato establishes in the *Cratylus*, in effect dismissing any notion of a natural, preordained, or intrinsic meanings in letters, syllables, and etymologies. Aristotle looks at human communication holistically as the most advanced form of communication on a spectrum with other animals.[82] Although we have now seen how Aristotle classifies human language, we must view how Aristotle views human anatomy and abilities when compared to other animals. In the final section of this chapter, we will see how Aristotle further demystifies human language by placing humans on a spectrum with other animals in terms of sound (ψόφος), voice (φωνή), and speech (διάλεκτον) production.

II.2.3 Discourse as a Biological Classification

In the first book of *Historia Animalium*, Aristotle first classifies the lowest-form of animals with regard to speech to be the noise-emitting (ψοφητικά) animals. Aristotle treats the ability to produce noise (ψοφός), voice (φωνή), and even discourse (διάλεκτον) as merely a series of biological classifications:

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[81] *Poetics* XX. 1456b.
[82] Zirin, "Aristotle's Biology of Language," 326-327; Qiu, "Aristotle's Definition of Language," §2.1; this point is corroborated later in this chapter with a passage from the *Politics* on page 35.

καὶ τὰ μὲν ψοφητικά, τὰ δὲ ἄφωνα, τὰ δὲ φωνήεντα, καὶ τούτων τὰ
μὲν διάλεκτον ἔχει τὰ δὲ ἀγράμματα, καὶ τὰ μὲν κωτίλα τὰ δὲ
σιγηλὰ, τὰ δ' ᾠδικὰ τὰ δ᾽ἄνῳδα · πάντων δὲ κοινὸν τὸ περὶ τὰς
ὀχείς μάλιστα ᾄδειν καὶ λαλεῖν (*HA*, 488a32-488b2).

And some are sound-producing (ψοφητικά), others are without-
voice (ἄφωνα), others are endowed with voice (φωνήεντα), and
there are some that have the capacity for discourse (διάλεκτον ἔχει
but others are inarticulate (ἀγράμματα), and some are chattering
and others are silent; some are melodic and others are not;_ ― [83]

This opening immediately sets up a biological hierarchy, with the lower animals being only

sound-producing (ψοφητικά), the more advanced animals having the ability to produce voice

(φωνήεντα), and the highest animals, humans alone, having the capacity of discourse (διάλεκτον

ἔχει). Aristotle attributes this classification to the anatomical limits inherent in certain animals.

Specifically, he clarifies:

φωνὴ καὶ ψόφος ἕτερόν ἐστι, καὶ τρίτον τούτων διάλεκτος. φωνεῖ
μὲν οὖν οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων μορίων οὐδέν πλὴν τῷ φάρυγγι · διὸ ὅσα
μὴ ἔχει πνεύμονα οὐδὲ φθέγγεται · διάλεκτος δ᾽ ἡ τῆς φωνῆς ἐστι τῇ
γλώττῃ διάρθρωσις. τὰ μὲν οὖν φωνήεντα ἡ φωνὴ καὶ ὁ λάρυγξ
ἀφίησιν, τὰ δ᾽ ἄφωνα ἡ γλῶττα καὶ τὰ χείλη · ἐξ ὧν ἡ διάλεκτός ἐστιν
(*HA*, 535ᵃ28-535b3).

Voice (φωνὴ) differs from sound (ψόφος), and speech (διάλεκτος)
from both. Now the only part of the body with which any animal can
utter a voice is the pharynx; hence those that have no lung have no
voice either. Speech (διάλεκτος) is the articulation (διάρθρωσις) of
the voice by means of the tongue (γλώττη). Now vowel sounds are
produced by the voice and the larynx; consonantal sounds by the
tongue and the lips; and of these speech consists.[84]

There are some animals that produce sound (ψόφος) (lowest), some that produce voice (φωνή),

and others that can engage in discourse (διάλεκτον). An animal's classification in this scheme

depends on its powers of expression. For instance, Aristotle provides specific examples of

animal species that fall into each of these categories. For animals which only have the anatomy

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[83] Translation of this is section is my own.
[84] Translation by Peck.

to produce sound (ψόφος) but not voice (lowest form), Aristotle states that insects fit these

criteria since they have neither "voice nor speech" on account lacking a pharynx, windpipe, and

respiratory system required for a voice (φωνή) (*HA* 535b4-9; *DA* 420b15-30). Instead, insects

can buzz, like bees and flies, or emit noise like the cicada (*HA* 535b4-9). Above this rank are the

animals with the abilities to produce sound and voice. Among various mammals, Aristotle lists

dolphins as a foremost animal that can produce both sound (ψόφος) and voice (φωνή). Dolphins

possess both lungs and a windpipe but do not have a free-moving tongue with which to articulate

anything in discourse or speech (διάλεκτον) (535b30).[85] While these animals may have tongues

that they can control, Aristotle notes that they are much more fastened down and solid compared

to human tongues (*PA* 660b3, 660a31). Interestingly, Aristotle lists birds as being above the

dolphins and mammals, citing them as one of the most similar and perhaps closest species to

humans in speech abilities. Birds have a voice and a tongue with which to articulate and even

seemingly communicate to other birds during mating seasons with their songs (HA 536a20-26).

Moreover, birds, Aristotle thinks, communicate with each other during times other than breeding,

such as before fighting and when in peril (535a20-32). Despite the abilities of birds, humans are

unique with our possession of speech which, consequently, implies the possession of a voice (*HA*

536b3-4).

      However, Aristotle's Greek is quite perplexing on this issue. For Aristotle seems to imply

that birds or, rather, any being with the proper anatomy of a tongue, windpipe, and lungs can

communicate if it has the proper *spirit* (πνεῦμα) with which to do so as well (*HA* 535b3-5; *DA*

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[85]Although biology today informs us that dolphins can communicate with one another in the water via echolocation, among other means, Aristotle does not seem to think that dolphins can communicate with their speech anatomy in the same ways which birds, humans, or other higher species can.

420b5).[86] However, πνεῦμα, in addition to meaning *spirit*, also means *breath*.[87] An animal can produce such noises only if it has not only the spirit, or animating force with which to act, but also the breath with which to operate its respiratory organs. For example, while corpses may have all the anatomy with which to produce speech, they cannot do so if there is not a spirit or breath with which to do so. However, a reasonable question arises regarding the distinctness of human speech: what distinguishes it from other forms of animal communication? From these passages, it almost seems like birds can communicate with one another like humans. However, Aristotle explicitly notes that human communication is quite different and is possessed only by humans (διάλεκτον…ἴδιον τουτ᾽ ἀνρθώπου ἐστίν)(*HA* 536b2-3). The main distinction between the animals, in addition to physiological and anatomical differences seems to extend to functional or applicative differences in expression as well.[88]

Just as there is a natural hierarchy among the animals able to produce (ψόφος), voice (φωνή), and speech (διάλεκτον), so too is there a hierarchy established on a functional basis. By functional, I mean that Aristotle distinguishes these animals by what they are able to communicate with their abilities to produce noise. This is clarified explicitly in an extended passage not in his biological texts but in the *Politics*:

> And why man is a political animal in a greater measure than any bee or any gregarious animal is clear. For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech (λόγον). The mere voice (φωνή), it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have sensations of what is painful and pleasant and to indicate those sensations to one another), but speech (λόγος) is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man in distinction from the

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[86] Zanatta, "Voice as Difference in Aristotelian Zoology," 2.
[87] A Greek-English Lexicon, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), s.v. "πνεῦμα."
[88] Wen Qiu, "Aristotle's Definition of Language."

> other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state (1253a9-17).[89]

Instead of using διάλεκτον to indicate human speech, as he does in *Historia Animalium*, Aristotle instead uses λόγος instead. This seems to raise a problem in interpretation. Specifically, does Aristotle view διάλεκτον or λόγος as the unique feature of human language? I answer that Aristotle seems to use διάλεκτον and λόγος rather interchangeably in these contexts.[90] However, Aristotle nevertheless seems to privilege humans having λόγος rather than any other being. This διάλεκτον or λόγος for humans is far more advanced than the mere animal abilities of voice since human communication can do more than merely indicate pain or pleasure with groans or moans, respectively. Human λογός/διάλεκτον extends beyond the mere indication of physical sensation, which animals are bound to have as their primary faculty.[91] The human ability to communicate qualities like justice and injustice, right and wrong, and other abstract ideas, in addition to sensations allows humans to surpass the limits that all animals have in their linguistic abilities. In *Generation of Animals*, Aristotle summarizes this idea:

> For nature (φύσις) has given them (humans) this faculty in an exceptional degree because they alone among the animals use the voice (φωνήν) for rational speech (τοῦ δὲ λόγου) of which the voice (φωνήν) is the "material" (*GA* 786b20-22).[92]

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[89] *Aristotle*. ed. W. D. Ross, Aristotle's Politica. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1957; Also see *De Anima* III.3 (427a-426b).

[90] διάλεκτον, etymologically, is an abstract noun formed from the added suffix -τον to its root verb διαλέγομαι. This root verb διαλέγομαι is a compound verb formed from the words δία (through; on account of) and λέγω (to speak; to say). Communicating διάλεκτον would therefore literally mean communicating "through the act of speaking or saying." While λόγος has perhaps one of the widest semantic meanings in Greek philosophy with meanings ranging from "statement, explanation, and account," to "reasoning, reflection, and cosmos," among many others, it unequivocally takes its roots from the Greek verb λέγω, whose middle/passive form comprises the word διαλέγομαι. On account of these etymological similarities and the way in which Aristotle employs both διάλεκτον and λόγος rather synonymously in passages *Historia Animalium, Partibus Animalium,* and *Politics*, I contend that Aristotle uses the two synonymously in these relevant passages.

[91] See *De Anima,* II.3 (414a-415b).

[92] *Generation of Animals*, translated by Peck, pg. 543.

As a result, we can demonstrate the hierarchical nature of Aristotle's division of the biological abilities of sound, voice, and speech-production:

(διάλεκτον/λόγος) Beings with the ability of discourse [humans]

(φωνήεντα) Beings Endowed with Voice [mammals]

(ψοφητικά) Sound-Producing [e.g. Insects and Fish]

(ἄφωνα) Voice/Sound-Less Beings [e.g. Plants, Rocks]
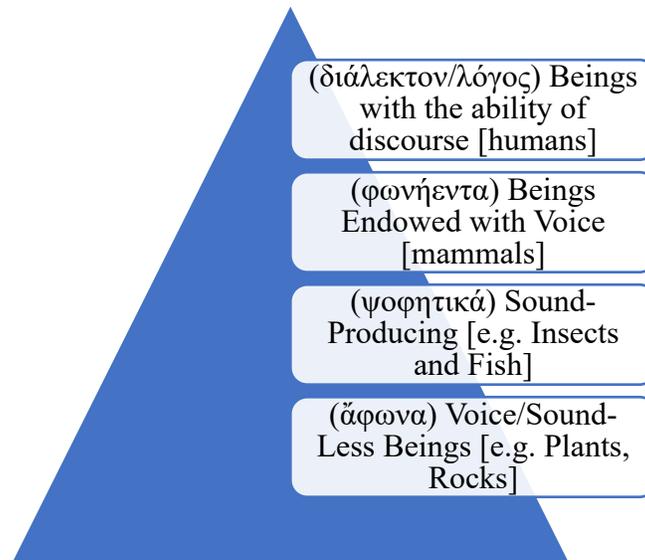
With this chart, we can ultimately see how Aristotle views humans, animals, and all beings on a spectrum, distinguished by the complexities of their sound, voice, or speech-producing capacities.[93]

§II.3.1 Summary of Chapter II

By looking at both Plato and Aristotle's understanding of the constituent elements of names, we can see an overarching thematic difference in both thinkers' respective philosophies. More specifically, Plato ultimately concludes the *Cratylus* by ascribing the only true, correct knowledge of names to be learned from studying the forms of things themselves. In addition, Plato's extended focus throughout the dialogue on the primordial name-givers, naturalism of etymologies, and onomatopoetic meaning of letters seem to imply his ascription of onomastic origins to a mythical cause of meaning in language and thus a more ideal sense of names. Aristotle's biological focus on names, on the contrary, provides a more demythologized account

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[93] Zirin, "Aristotle's Biology of Language," 326.

of human language, specifically by placing humans on a spectrum with the animals and other beings.[94] Names, similarly, are resultant of biological processes and convention (κατὰ συνθήκην). However, names are used for the sake of rational expression (λόγος), and serves to achieve this end of reason, the highest and most distinguished human end that no other animal shares. As a result, we find in Aristotle an overture that focuses more primarily on such philosophical questions issues in terms of human experiences and more empirical phenomena, as opposed to a more mythic, extra-ordinary explanations of ideas.

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[94] Ibid., 326.

Chapter III: Ontology of Names

Up to this point, we have seen how Plato and Aristotle differ with regard to the origin and the supposed structure of names, both which have highlighted fundamental differences in their own philosophies. In this final chapter, we will see the different ways Aristotle and Plato understand the ontological significance of names and how this difference provides clarity on how both thinkers conceive of the relationship of names and knowledge epistemologically. In this chapter, we will see how Aristotle and Plato treat names in an ontological sense. That is, we shall be investigating how Plato conceives of names in light of his theory of forms and how Aristotle's understanding of being shapes his own view of names. Thereafter, we will be able to ascertain how each thinker understands the relationship between knowledge and naming , for each thinker's ontological understanding of names is inherently intertwined with their respective epistemology of names. Understanding how each thinker conceives of names ontologically will then clarify the exact kinds of knowledge which names can provide.

§III.1.1 Plato's Turn from Names to Forms Epistemologically and Ontologically in the

Conclusion of the *Cratylus*

As we found in chapter II, Plato shifts the *Cratylus* from a discussion of names to an examination of why the forms ought to be studied instead of names. In this section, we will explore this point by examining Plato's epistemological understanding of names and forms. We can then connect Plato's epistemology in the *Cratylus* to a parallel discussion on epistemology in the *Republic*: the analogy of the Divided Line.

In the previous chapter, we discussed how Socrates ultimately concedes to Hermogenes

that, despite his extensive arguments to the contrary, conventionalism must have some import on

the nature of names (435b-c). What follows this concession is Socrates raising a question

concerning whether names have any utility at all in investigations (435c-d). While Cratylus

contends that knowledge of a name necessarily entails knowledge of its referent, Socrates

opposes Cratylus' view (Ibid.). To Cratylus, the perfect encapsulation of the form in the name's

constituent letters and syllables would provide all the clarity necessary for understanding the

referent, as they found in the etymological section of the dialogue.[95] Socrates provides a

threefold refutation of Cratylus' adherence to naturalism since conventionalism must maintain

some role in name formation. Understanding these refutations will lead us directly into Plato's

epistemology and the Divided Line:

> **I.)** Names, even those handed down by the name-givers, may be incorrect.
> **II.)** These names are *only likenesses* of the forms they reference and are therefore imperfect.[96]
> **III.)** If knowledge of the names provides us a complete understanding of the form, then why does the etymology of ἐπιστήμη not reflect the unchanging nature of perfect knowledge ?

I.) For this first point, Socrates demonstrates that, evidently, these name-givers had to

look to the perfect form to encode it into the word; this process could have happened incorrectly,

thereby causing a sequence of events whereby each subsequent word stemming from or built

upon a primary word would then be incorrect (438a-b). Even if the name-givers had perfectly

represented the εἶδος in the name, the centuries of morphological changes would cause their

original meanings to become opaque and even false.[97] Moreover, Cratylus operates on the

[95] Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, 169; Ademollo, *The Cratylus of Plato: A Commentary*, 427.
[96] Trivigno, "Etymology and the Power of Names in Plato's *Cratylus*" 47.
[97] Sedley, "Etymologies in the *Cratylus*," 148.

assumption that names are the foremost way of learning about forms and inquiring into

phenomena; however, Socrates notes that, regardless of how primordial these name-givers were,

they still, at some point, had to look to a form for reference:[98]

> SO: What names did he learn or discover those things from? After all, the first names had not yet been given. Yet it's impossible, on our b̶ view, to learn or discover things except by learning their names from others or discovering them for ourselves?
>
> CR You have a point there, Socrates.
>
> SO: So, if things cannot be learned except from their names, how can we possibly claim that the name-givers or rule-setters had knowledge before any names had been given for them to know?
>
> CR: I think the truest account of the matter, Socrates, is that a more than human power gave the first names to things, so that they are necessarily correct (438b-c).

Cratylus tries to save his position by contending that the gods or some "more than human power"

first granted names to humans. However, he ultimately has to concede that Socrates is correct to

look to forms because even this extemporaneous appeal to the gods cannot resolve the greater

issue between the conventionalism and the naturalism theses (438c-d). If the gods were

supposedly the ones who set forth perfect names that fully embodied the form of their referents,

then there would be no room for conventionalism, which would make the names contingent upon

circumstance. As a result, Cratylus' own admission on the possible error of the name-givers

undermines his naturalism thesis.[99] Moreover, this admission of the possible fallibility of

likeness of the forms leads, ultimately, to Socrates' second rebuttal: names are only *likenesses*

and therefore inferior to the original form.

  II.) Regarding this second point, Socrates states the following:

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[98] Rumsey, "Plato in the *Cratylus* on Speaking, Learning, and Language," 398.
[99] Ibid., 398.

SOCRATES: So if it's really the case that one can learn about things through names and that one can also learn about them through themselves, which would be the better and clearer way to learn about them? Is it better to learn from the likeness both whether it itself is a good likeness and also the truth it is a likeness of? **Or is it better to learn from the truth both the truth itself and also whether the likeness of it is properly made?**

CRATYLUS: **I think it is certainly better to learn from the truth** (438e-439a).[100]

Regardless of the supposed accuracy with which the name-setters captured the form in the name's letters and syllables, the name, regardless of whether it is correct, is still merely an *imitation* of the form and, therefore, inferior to the referent's form.[101] Plato ultimately then views the name as but a "proxy" for the original referent.[102] Socrates asserts that they must necessarily go to the forms themselves since names seem to change like a kind of "vortex" (δίνην) or storm, subject to the shifting vicissitudes of time. Since true knowledge is always of what is eternal, names only provide a kind of knowledge akin to perceptions, possibly contradicting themselves and changing over the course of time, thereby making them an ultimately inferior means of acquiring knowledge than the form.[103]

III.) For the last refutation, Socrates contends that knowledge itself cannot be through names on account of the nature of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) itself. To this end, Socrates, interestingly, appeals to an etymological argument, much like earlier in the dialogue:

SOCRATES: Of those we discussed, let's reconsider the name 'ἐπιστήμη' ('knowledge') first and see how ambiguous it is. It seems to signify that it stops (ἵστησιν) the movement of our soul towards (ἐπί) things, rather than that it accompanies them in their

[100] Cratylus, translated by Grube (154); bolded words are my own additions.
[101] Luce, "Plato on Truth and Falsity in Names," 225.
[102] Fine, "Plato on Names," 298.
[103] Michael W. Riley, *Plato's « Cratylus »: Argument, Form, and Structure*, vol. 168, Value Inquiry Book Series. Studies in the History of Western Philosophy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 104.

> movement [...]I think one could find many other names from which one could conclude that the name-giver intended to signify not that things were moving and being swept along, but the opposite, that they were at rest (437a, 437c).

If the etymology of the word would provide the exact, perfect knowledge of the form that exactly corresponds to its perfection, then Cratylus' argument would be true. However, even the etymology of the name for knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) does not accurately reflect the unchanging nature of true knowledge but indicates its very opposite.[104] It may seem odd that, despite refuting Cratylus' naturalism thesis, Socrates is applying a naturalistic argument by citing etymologies; however, Socrates only dismisses etymologies *insofar* as they are used as the *sole* source of knowledge. He believes that they can nevertheless clarify the thought-processes with which these name-setters put forth the original names, thereby providing clarity about and direction toward the form itself.[105] Since an investigation of a name already leads back to the form of the very referent, it behooves one to study the form itself since the name could have been encoded improperly into language or has changed fundamentally over time due to conventional differences.

With each one of these refutations, we see a repetitive pattern emerge which ultimately leads back to the same source: forms. The unchanging nature of forms ensures their endurance beyond the vicissitudes of a name's conventionality, the possible human error of the name-setters, and rules any name to be a mere imitation. Plato's repetitive insistence on the forms as

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[104] True knowledge is of things which are universal, eternal, and unchanging as we have found in the dialogue. If Cratylus' understanding of etymologies is correct, then ἐπιστήμη would therefore have an etymology whose meaning would correspond to such an idea. However, as Socrates correctly notes, the ἐπιστήμη is a compound word from the preposition ἐπί (at or to)and verb ἵστημι (to stand or to set). In Greek, there exists a separate word ἐφιστήμι, the literal meaning of this word being "to stand upon" or to "set upon." Knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) according to this understanding of the compound, would be the active setting of the mind upon something as knowledge. However, as Trivigno, *op. cit.*, notes, this description is not only ambiguous, but also is indicative of a contradiction between the nature of the form of something and its constituent etymologies.
[105] Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, 161.

the best sources for knowledge in the *Cratylus* corresponds to his most famous discussion of epistemology and kinds of knowledge: the Analogy of the Divided Line.[106] In this next section, we will see how the Divided Line and the *Cratylus* contain evident similarities in their epistemologies. The ontological inferiority of names, as we will soon ascertain, parallels Plato's view of the epistemological inferiority of names to the forms.

III.1.2 Names and Plato's Divided Line

Plato's concluding understanding of names and knowledge in the *Cratylus* is strikingly similar to how he conceives of images in his analogy of the Divided Line in Book VI of the *Republic*. More specifically, names, on account their ontological inferiority to forms and their transitoriness, make them no different than imagination (εἰκασία) on the divided line.

To understand the Divided Line in context, we must first understand Plato's preceding analogy in the *Republic*: the analogy of the sun. Socrates and Glaucon discuss the nature of sensual knowledge, specifically sight when Socrates suggests:

> SO: Sight may be present in the eyes, and the one who has it may try to use it, and colors may be present in things, but unless a third kind of thing is present, which is naturally adapted for this very purpose, you know that sight will see nothing, and the colors will remain unseen.
> GL: What kind of thing do you mean?
> SO: I mean what you call light.
> GL: You're right.
> SO: Then it isn't an insignificant kind of link that connects the sense of sight and the power to be seen – it is a more valuable link than any other linked things have got, if indeed light is something valuable (*Rep.* VI.507e-508a).[107]

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[106] Edward Halper, "Aristotle on Knowledge of Nature," *The Review of Metaphysics* 37, no. 4 (1984): 812.
[107] All translations of the *Republic* are by G.M.A Grube.

Just as the sun illuminates the world for the senses, so too do the forms, specifically the "Form of the Good," illuminate the world of intelligible beings.[108] The Form of the Good is what enables people to gain knowledge of beings while it is, itself, an attainable form of knowledge (*Rep*. 508e). The Form of the Good's ability to separate, distinguish, and make the intelligible, sensible world familiar to us as knowledge implies the Form of the Good's superiority to all other kinds of knowledge since all other things are and are known through it.[109] After comparing the sun to the Form of the Good, Socrates proceeds to apply this epistemological thinking into his divided line analogy:

> SO: Understand, then, that, as we said, there are these two things, one sovereign of the intelligible kind and place, the other of the visible [...] In any case, you have two kinds of things, visible and intelligible.
> GL: Right.
> SO: It is like a line divided into two unequal section. Then divide each section – namely, that of the visible and that of the intelligible – in the same ratio as the line. In terms now of relative clarity and opacity, one subsection of the visible consists of images. And by images I mean, first ,shadows [...] and everything of that sort, if you understand (509d-510a).

Utilizing the analogy of the sun, Plato establishes a hierarchy of the kinds of knowledge in order of superiority. The visible things immediate to the senses are below the intelligible things immediate to the mind. Plato then breaks down this twofold division further with two subcategories for both visible and intelligible things. For the intelligible world, Plato contends that understanding (νόησις) is the very highest, while thinking (διάνοια) is second.[110] In the visible section below, Plato splits, in order of superiority, both belief (πίστις) and images (εἰκασία) apart.[111] Using this

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[108] Robert J. Fogelino, "Three Platonic Analogies," *The Philosophical Review* 80, no. 3 (1971): 372.
[109] Ibid., 374.
[110] Nicholas D. Smith, "Plato's Divided Line," *Ancient Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (April 1, 1996): 28.
[111] Robert Hahn, "A Note on Plato's Divided Line*," Journal of the History of Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (1983): 236.

information, we can therefore compare the hierarchy of knowledge espoused both here in the

Republic and in the *Cratylus* as well:

Analogy of the Divided Line	Understanding (νόησις)
	Thinking (διάνοια)
	Belief (πίστις)
	Images (εἰκασία)
Hierarchy of Knowledge in the *Cratylus*	The Forms (εἰδότες)
	Perishable, Changing Things & Names

[112]

With these diagrams, we can ultimately see how the progression of the *Cratylus* seems to ascend

the divided line epistemologically as well.[113] Socrates first examines the opinions on names with

Hermogenes and Cratylus' views of names. Thereafter, he turns his inquiry to understanding and

thinking through the names before finally ascertaining the very forms on which names depend.

The *Cratylus* almost follows the exact progression of the divided line on account of how the

dialogue develops in these ways.[114] In the Divided Line, we see a more complete vision of

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[112] The exact proportions and ratios of the total line that each section of the Divided Line is to occupy is still scholarly contested; although my diagram is not in accordance with strict proportions, I mainly wanted to emphasize Plato's focus on the inequality of the line with understanding and thinking occupying the greatest percentage of the diagram. For more insight on the exact proportions of the Divided Line, see Brumbaugh (1952), Hahn (1983), and Smith (1996).

[113] Michael W. Riley, *Plato's « Cratylus »: Argument, Form, and Structure*, vol. 168, Value Inquiry Book Series. Studies in the History of Western Philosophy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 117.

[114] Riley *op. cit.* provides an excellent, thorough commentary on how the structure of the arguments in the *Cratylus* follows the exact progression of the Divided Line's epistemology. While Riley's arguments and points are rather convincing, there have been few other scholars either to comment or object to Riley's findings.

Platonic epistemology with Plato suggesting four kinds of knowledge and not simply the twofold view of particular and universal knowledge we find in the *Cratylus*.[115]

Moreover, in the two higher sections of the divided line, Smith suggests that these are predicated on knowledge as "the cognitive power at work" whereas the lower levels are predicated merely on vision and opinion.[116] In the sense of the divided line, names, much like in the *Cratylus*, are only visible signs indicative of other beings, much like an image of a shadow is dependent on the tree which casts it. Moreover, much like opinions, whose correctness stems from convention or individual thinking, names are similarly predicated upon such an everchanging modality. Names are therefore only at the bottom of this epistemological and cognitive ladder, thereby being mere images.[117] Of course, names can point to a referent that partakes in the form of the being itself; however, since the name must necessarily accord with convention names are but a stepping-stone to the real, eternal knowledge of the forms themselves through νοήσις.[118] As a result, Plato's attitude on the epistemological value of names is quite dismissive, especially at the conclusion of the *Cratylus*, for Socrates, in his penultimate remark to Cratylus, states:

> ὑδὲ πάνυ νοῦν ἔχοντος ἀνθρώπου ἐπιτρέψαντα ὀνόμασιν αὐτὸν καὶ
> τὴν αὑτοῦ ψυχὴν θεραπεύειν, πεπιστευκότα ἐκείνοις καὶ τοῖς
> θεμένοις αὐτά, διισχυρίζεσθαι ὥς τι εἰδότα (440c2-3)

> But surely no one with any understanding will commit himself or
> the cultivation of his soul to names, or trust them and their givers to
> the point of firmly stating that he knows something.

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[115] Robert S. Brumbaugh, "Plato's Divided Line," *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 5, no. 4 (June 1952): 530.
[116] Smith, "Plato's Divided Line," 46.
[117] Hahn, "A Note on Plato's Divided Line," 236.
[118] Larkin, *Language in the Philosophy of Aristotle*, 17.

Scorates' sentiment here is nearly identical with Plato's remarks on names and epistemology in the *Seventh Letter*, remarking that those using names will never acquire a full knowledge of any form or essence on account of the inherent "deficiency of language" (διὰ τὸ τῶν λόγων ἀσθενές) (342e).[119] Much like Wittgenstein at the end of his *Tractatus*, Plato's arguments on names all seem to culminate with the idea that, once one has ascertained true knowledge of the forms to which names point, one will then "throw away the ladder [the name] after he has climbed up it."[120]

III.1.3 Summary of Plato's Epistemological and Ontological Dismissal of Names

With the conclusion of his *Cratylus*, we can more thoroughly ascertain how Plato dismisses names in both an ontological sense and in an epistemological sense. Plato sees the forms as the pinnacle of being with true, eternal knowledge only possible of them, thereby making the name, a likeness of a form, superfluous since it is inherently imperfect.

As we will soon see, Aristotle not only conceives of names in a differing ontological manner by focusing on their inherent οὐσία, but also contends that names are an integral part of scientific knowledge on account of their role in the formation of sentences, certain kinds of which make up a proposition or premise in syllogisms. In the following section, we will develop how Aristotle considers names. However, before we examine Aristotle's view on names in scientific demonstrations, we will first contextualize how Aristotle understands and diverges from Plato with regard to the ontological importance of names.

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[119] Radding, Jonah. "Translation of Plato's Seventh Letter." *Plato at Syracuse: Essays on Plato in Western Greece with a New Translation of the Seventh Letter by Jonah Radding* (Parnassus Press – Fonte Aretus, 2019), 50.
[120] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans by David Pears and Brian McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922) 6.54.

§II.2.1 Aristotle on the Multiplicity of Names

Aristotle's departure from Plato regarding the ontology of names occurs in the way he understands forms and knowledge. Famously, Aristotle offers a summary of Plato's position at the conclusion of the *Cratylus* in the first book of his *Metaphysics*. In this section of chapter III, we will see how Aristotle's understanding of being fundamentally informs his ontological understanding of names and, consequently, his epistemological views on names. To this end, we will first examine how Aristotle understands the connection between name and being in contrast to Plato. Aristotle's ontology of names will lead us directly into his own epistemology of names. As a result, we can then gain a better sense of how Aristotle, much like we saw in chapters one and two, offers a more grounded view of names.

To begin, Aristotle actually provides a summary of the situation Socrates faces at the end of the *Cratylus* in the sixth chapter of the first book of the *Metaphysics*. Regarding Plato, Aristotle writes:

> For having become acquainted from youth first with Cratylus and the Heraclitean teachings that all sensible things are always in flux and that there is no knowledge of them, he also conceived these things that way later on. [...] Socrates...was the first to be skilled at thinking about definitions, [and] Plato, when he adopted this, took it up as applying to other things and not to sensible ones, because of this: it was impossible that there be any common definition of any perceptible thing since they were always changing. So he called this other sort of beings forms, and said the perceptible things were apart from these and all spoken derivatively from these, for the many things with the same names as the forms were results of participation (987a-987b).[121]

For Plato, everything fundamentally participates in *being like* or *seeming like* its perfect form but is nevertheless separate from it. Although Aristotle here seems to discuss the Platonic theory of

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[121] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Sante Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2002), 14-15. All translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in this thesis are from Joe Sachs.

forms with regard to physical phenomena, his insights nevertheless reflect the conclusions of the *Cratylus* as well. There, Plato treats words in a manner strikingly similar to physical phenomena in claiming that they are particular and therefore imperfect. After briefly summarizing Plato, Aristotle diverts from Plato in suggesting that the form fundamentally exists in every being and not simply as some abstract entity (*Met*. A.991b). Similarly, in the *Physics*, Aristotle notes that forms and ideas such as the beautiful, the good, or the just are wrongfully abstracted to the world of the purely ideal (*Phys*. 194a). Moreover, Aristotle notes that in each particular material thing, there is in fact a form inherent within that thing. This idea, that a form is apparent in the manifestation of every particular, material phenomena also coincides with his idea of telos (τέλος) (*Phys*. 198^α).[122] Since the form is the perfect actualization of a something, its τέλος fundamentally acts towards that end in every being (*Phys*. 198b). Now that we have distinguished how Aristotle conceives of form and matter as being inherently inextricable from each other in anything as one, we can thereby then apply this understanding to Aristotle's understanding of words in *De Interpretatione* and *Metaphysics*.

III.2.2 Aristotle on Names Being Thinghoods (οὐσίαι) Restricted in Being by Definitions (ὁρισμοί)

As we saw in chapter 1, Aristotle understands a name (ὄνομα), in *De Interpretatione*, to be a symbol for an affection in the soul (πάθημα ἐν τῇ φωνῇ) that is fundamentally the same impression of a phenomena for all people (ταὐτὰ πᾶσι). This affection in the soul actualizes in words and languages differently across localities.[123] Ontologically, Aristotle understands names quite similarly, for he contends that although there are infinitely many ways to express

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[122] Jacob Rosen, "Essence and End in Aristotle," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 46 (2014): 73.
[123] *De Int.* 16a3-9.

something such as a "apple," the referent to which all such different names of apple refer is what is universal (*Met.* Γ.1006a). Whether you refer to apple as *Apfel*, *pomme*, *malum*, or μῆλον, the *affection* of the soul is the same for all. Moreover, each of these words refer to the same *being*. The reason why each of these words refer to the same being is because they all have the same definition. Aristotle notes that definition is an inherent necessity in words since, without definition, it would be impossible for there to be any communication because we would have no idea what we meant when using words (*Met*. Γ.1006b). It is important that we note, however, what we mean by "definition." Definition is translated from the Greek ὁρισμός which is an abstract nominal form of the verb ὁρίζω, meaning to restrict or bound.[124] A definition of a being allows for a finite meaning to be unveiled with the utterance or articulation (λόγος) of the name (ὄνομα) and, with this restriction in being, ultimately reveal the thinghood (οὐσία).[125] A name (ὄνομα) is therefore an articulation (λόγος) with a definition (ὁρισμός). In not only his *Metaphysics*, but also in his logical *Posterior Analytics* and *Topics*, Aristotle contends that these definitions are a necessity for the sciences and must be unambiguous and universal (*An. Post.* I.4, *Top*. I.15).[126] However, not every kind of word is similarly defined since we have varying kinds of words in language such as adjectives, conjunctions, modifiers, and verbs among many others. In the *Metaphysics*, definitions *only* extend to referents which are thinghoods (οὐσίαι) in the world or simple names (Z.1030b4-6). We therefore need to answer then *why* the definition extends merely to names of these primary thinghoods in language. To answer this, we must proceed to how Aristotle conceives of the relationship between being and language as a whole.

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[124] Liddell, Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "ὁρισμός."
[125] For all my translations of οὐσία in Aristotle, I will be following Sachs' translation as "thinghood" which better captures the Greek of οὐσία than the traditional translation "substance."
[126] Larkin, *Language in the Philosophy of Aristotle*, 70; Modrak, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Meaning,* 147.

III.2.3 Thinghoods (οὐσιαί) are only one of the Categories (κατηγορίαι) of Being

Famously, Aristotle contends that τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς or that "being is said in many ways," but what exactly does this mean?[127] This may be read, at least in part, as Aristotle asserting that other philosophers or thinkers have discussed being in a multivaried way and that he is merely citing the ἔνδοξα of past thinkers.[128] However, in these contexts, Aristotle is asserting that being is evidently *"signified"* through the multivaried ways in which we speak.[129] Aristotle's Greek provides a clearer explanation. For example:

> καθ᾽ αὑτὰ δὲ εἶναι λέγεται ὅσαπερ σημαίνει τὰ σχήματα τῆς **κατηγορίας· ὁσαχῶς γὰρ λέγεται, τοσαυταχῶς τὸ εἶναι σημαίνει.** ἐπεὶ οὖν τῶν [25] κατηγορουμένων τὰ μὲν τί ἐστι σημαίνει, τὰ δὲ ποιόν, τὰ δὲ ποσόν, τὰ δὲ πρός τι, τὰ δὲ ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν, τὰ δὲ πού, τὰ δὲ ποτέ, ἑκάστῳ τούτων τὸ εἶναι ταὐτὸ σημαίνει (*Met.* Δ.7.23-27).

> But just as many things are said to be in their own right as are meant by the **modes of predication; for in as many ways as these are said, in so many ways does *to be* have meaning**. Since, then, of things predicated, some signify what a thing is, others of what sort it is, others how much it is, others to what is related, others what it is doing or having dones to it, others where it is, and others when it is, being means the same thing as each one of these.[130]

Being is therefore signified in as many ways as there are "modes of predication." It is critical to note that Sachs translates κατηγορίας as "modes of predication." Κατηγορία, literally meaning "accusation," is a nominal form of the compound Greek verb, κατηγορέω, whose constituent prefix κατα and verb ἀγορέυω literally mean "to speak against" or, in logical works, "to

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[127] See *Metaphysics* Γ.2.1003a-b, E.2.1026a-b, Z.1.1028a, and I.1.1052a.
[128] Modrak, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Meaning* 132-133.
[129] Jurgis (George) Brakas, "Saying, Meaning and Signifying: Aristotle's λέγεται πολλαχῶς," (*The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*: 2003), 328.
[130] Bolded words are my own formatting.

predicate upon."[131, 132] Whenever we communicate anything through any kind of word, we fundamentally do so in a way that predicates being onto the referent in one of these ways of attributing being, regardless of the word being an adjective, article, noun, or verb. These "ways" of attributing being are present not only here in the *Metaphysics*, but also are more exhaustively stated in Aristotle's *Categories*[133]:

> τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων ἕκαστον ἤτοι οὐσίαν
> σημαίνει ἢ ποσὸν ἢ ποιὸν ἢ πρός τι ἢ ποὺ ἢ ποτὲ ἢ κεῖσθαι ἢ ἔχειν
> ἢ ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν (*Cat*. 1b25).
>
> Expressions which are in no way composite signify substance
> (οὐσία), quantity (ποσὸν), quality (ποιὸν), relation (πρός τι), place
> (ποὺ), time (ποτὲ), position (κεῖσθαι), state, action (ποιεῖν) ,or
> affection (πάσχειν).[134]

Although the *Categories* is a work of logic in the *Organon*, we find ample evidence that Aristotle similarly understands being as predicated in as many ways as there are categories (*Met*. Δ.7).[135] Nevertheless, despite the multiplicity of these categories of being, Aristotle emphasizes that they are not at all equal. In fact, Aristotle asserts, in both the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics*, that thinghood (οὐσία) is evidently foremost among all of these categories since without the presence of thinghood, it would be impossible to conceive of any of the other categories by themselves:

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[131] Liddell,Scott, and Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon,* s.v. "κατηγορία."

[132] Martin Heidegger also notes that each category (κατηγορία) represents a kind of "showing" of its own kind of being with respect to "Being." See Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008): 130.

[133] Aristotle can sometimes be inconsistent with the exact number of categories since, in *Categories* 1b25 and *Topica* 103b20, Aristotle lists these ten. However, in *Metaphysics* N.1028b Aristotle only lists three of them while in *Metaphysics* Z.1028a only four. However, in these contexts, it seems that Aristotle is only listing them in passing and his Greek seems to reflect that he means that being is meant in every conceivable manner of attribution through the categories. Therefore, we can apply a work from the *Organon*, such as the *Categories*, to the discussion in the *Metaphysics* of the categories of being. For more on the categories across Aristotle's corpus, see "Being According to the Figures of the Categories" in Franz Brentano's *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle.*

[134] Aristotle, *Categoriae*, in *Basic Works of Aristotle*, translated by E.M Edghill, edited by Richard McKeon.

[135] L. M. De Rijk, *The Place of the Categories of Being in Aristotle's Philosophy*, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1952), 40.

> Τὰ δ᾽ ἄλλα πάντα ἤτοι καθ᾽ ὑποκειμένων λέγεται τῶν πρώτων
> οὐσιῶν ἢ ἐν ὑποκειμέναις αὐταῖς ἐστίν [...] Ἔτι αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι
> διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι (15) καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα κατὰ
> τούτων κατηγορεῖσθαι ἢ ἐν ταύταις εἶναι διὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα οὐσίαι
> λέγονται. (*Cat*. 2a34-36;2b15-18).
>
> Everything except primary substance (οὐσία) is either predicable of
> a primary substance of present in a primary substance [...] Moreover,
> primary substances are most properly called substances in virtue of
> the fact that they are the entities which underlie everything else.[136]

The category of thinghood (οὐσία) fundamentally underlies each utterance. Aristotle uses the example of the adjective "white" to demonstrate that every quality (ποιόν), for instance, shows that the idea of "whiteness" cannot be understood without reference to a kind of underlying surface or thinghood of another being.[137] Other words such as three, adjacent, night, and running all correspond to the categories of quantity, relation, time, and action, for example, and all necessitate the present of a thinghood. We can therefore understand the categories of being in a hierarchy with all categories being evidently dependent on thinghood (οὐσία):
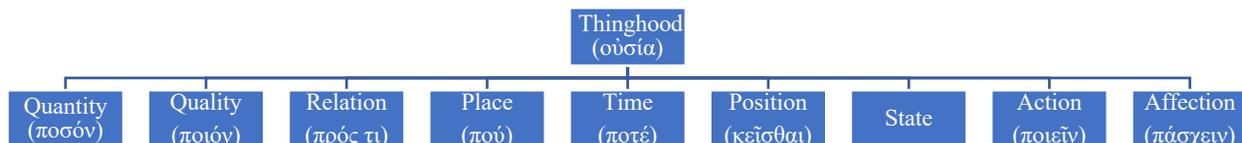
Having understood Arisotle's conception of thinghood as a name whose articulation (λόγος) is a definition (ὁρισμός) restricting its being, thereby revealing both the matter and the form of the name, we can proceed to understand how Aristotle conceives of the connection between names and knowledge.

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[136] Aristotle, *Categories*, trans. by E.M. Edghill.
[137] *Metaphysics* Z.1031a.

III.2.4 The Primacy of Thinghood

Aristotle repeatedly notes that being is ascertained foremost through thinghood

(οὐσία).[138] Similarly, Aristotle notes that thinghood is foremost in knowledge as well.

Thinghood, therefore, is something foremost both ontologically and epistemologically.

Referencing the other categories of being, Aristotle explicitly notes:

> and we believe that we know each thing most of all when we know
> **what it is** – a human being or fire – rather than of what sort or how
> much or where it is, since we know even each of these things
> themselves only when we know what an amount or a sort is
> (Z.1028a38-1028b3).

When we know the name of a primary thinghood such as "apple," "cat," or "pencil," we

evidently have a definition whose restriction answers the question τί ἐστί or "what is it?"[139] In

addition to knowing what something is through its thinghood (οὐσία), Aristotle also believes

that asking what the being of something (τί τὸ ὄν) is akin to asking, "what is thinghood"

(τίς ἡ οὐσία)?[140] In addition to what something is, Aristotle contends that names, in their very

definition, express "what-it-is-for-something-to-be" or a τὸ τὶ ἦν εἶναι, traditionally translated as

"essence."[141] With these two components, the name of an οὐσία therefore informs us not only

what something it, but also formally what it means for the referent to be what it is. We cannot

have a name of something such as an apple, water bottle, or bread without the very thinghood

being manifest primarily. Adjectives such as "blue," "lazy," or "ugly" cannot be understood

without reference to some definite οὐσία. The name, ultimately, is a kind of instantiation of the

underlying thinghood to which it refers.[142]

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[138] *Metaphysics* Γ.1003a, Γ.1007a, Δ.1017b, Z.1028a, Z.1028b, Z.1041a, and H.1042a among others.
[139] Modrak, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Meaning*, 153.
[140] *Met.* Z. 1028b.
[141] *Posterior Analytics*, II.7.92b; Donald Scott Carson, "Being and Truth: Elements of Aristotle's Philosophy of Language", 72.
[142] De Rijk, *Aristotle: Semantics and Ontology*, vol. I, 131.

Since a name is a definitive οὐσία, restricted in being, and is foremost among the senses of being, the thinghood of something, to which the name refers, is therefore foremost in our knowledge since it is expressive of *what something is (Met.* Z.1028a-b)*.* As we will soon see, names are also indispensable component of propositions in logic, the framework upon which demonstrative knowledge via syllogisms is conveyed, expressed, and understood. Aristotle expresses this in the *Metaphysics* quite explicitly:

> ὥστε, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς συλλογισμοῖς, πάντων ἀρχὴ ἡ οὐσία: ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ τί ἐστιν οἱ συλλογισμοί εἰσιν, ἐνταῦθα δὲ αἱ γενέσεις (Z.10.1034a31-34).

> Therefore, just as in demonstrative reasoning (syllogisms), thinghood (οὐσία) is the source of everything; for syllogisms come from what something is, while here generations do.

Syllogisms, constructed of propositions, require names in their subjects and constructions for scientific knowledge. Before we can understand how names (ὀνόματα) are essential for propositions and, consequently, scientific knowledge, we must first clarify in what scientific knowledge consists. Aristotle asserts, in his *Nicomachean Ethics* for example, that scientific knowledge is merely one of the five "virtues of thought:" ἐπιστήμη ("scientific knowledge"), τεχνή ("craft knowledge"), φρονήσις ("prudence"), σοφία ("wisdom"), and understanding (νοῦς).[143] In *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle explains scientific knowledge in this way:

> Our contention now is that we do at any rate obtain knowledge by demonstration. By demonstration (ἀποδείψεως) I mean a syllogism (συλλογισμόν) which produces scientific knowledge (ἐπιστημονικόν), in other words one which enables us to know (ἐπιστάμεθα) by the mere fact that we grasp it. Now if knowledge is such as we have assumed, demonstrative knowledge

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[143] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. with introduction, notes, and glossary by Terence Irwin, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1139b-1142a.

(ἀποδεικτικήν ἐπιστήμην), must proceed from premises which are
true, primary, immediate, better known than, prior to, and causative
of the conclusion.[144]

Scientific knowledge is therefore a demonstrative kind of knowledge: proven, necessary, and

true by the implementation of truthful premises. These premises, in a syllogism, fundamentally

reveal an aspect of a subject by *showing* it in its demonstration through its premises.[145]

Now that we have ascertained how Aristotle understands scientific knowledge, we can now

investigate the role of names in the most integral component of scientific knowledge: premises.

III.2.5 The Role of Names in Aristotle's Demonstrative, Scientific Knowledge

To understand the role of names in the Aristotlelian science, we must examine their role

as Aristotle understands them in *De Interpretatione*. In *De Interpretatione,* Aristotle lists both

the name (ὄνομα) and the verb (ῥῆμα) as the two components inherent in a sentence or

articulation (λόγος) (*De Int.* 16a-16b). A sentence (λόγος), according to Aristotle, consists:

Λόγος δέ ἐστι φωνὴ σημαντική, ἧς τῶν μερῶν τι σημαντικόν ἐστι
κεχωρισμένον, ὡς φάσις ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ὡς κατάφασις. (16b27-30).

A sentence is a significant portion of speech, some parts of which
have an independent meaning, that is to say, as an utterance,
though not as the expression of any positive judgment
(κατάφασις).[146]

The constituent elements of sentences (λόγοι), names (ὀνόματα) and verbs (ῥήματα), both

maintain their own separate meaning as we found previously; however, Aristotle also adds that

names and verbs are mere φάσεις (expressions or "sayables"), which do not have the ability

apparent in statements: "positive judgment" (κατάφασις). Moreover, statements are a broad

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[144] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. by Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 31.
[145] Richard Tierney, "Aristotle's Scientific Demonstrations as Expositions of Essence," Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 20 (2001): 152.
[146] Translation by E.M. Edghill.

categories of compound forms of expression, with premises only being one kind of subtype of

since there are differing kinds of sentences in other studies such as rhetoric and poetry (*De Int.*

17a). From here, we can begin to focus more on what makes a proposition (λόγος ἀποφαντικός)

a unique kind of sentence.

A statement becomes a proposition (λόγος ἀποφαντικός) when it is either affirmative

(κατάφασις) or negative (ἀπόφασις) of something (Ibid.,17a9-11). In order to become

affirmatory or negatory, these statements must have an existential import, whether in claiming

that something is or is not the case.[147] Premises (προτάσεις), in Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*,

maintain the very same function as do propositions (λόγοι ἀποφαντικοί). Aristotle states this

quite explicitly at the opening of the *Prior Analytics*:

> Πρῶτον εἰπεῖν περὶ τί καὶ τίνος ἐστὶν ἡ σκέψις, ὅτι περὶ ἀπόδειξιν
> καὶ ἐπιστήμης ἀποδεικτικῆς· εἶτα διορίσαι τί ἐστι πρότασις καὶ τί
> ὅρος καὶ τί συλλογισμός, καὶ ποῖοςτέλειος καὶ ποῖος ἀτελής [...]
> **Πρότασις μὲν οὖν ἐστι λόγος καταφατικὸς ἢ ἀποφατικός τινος
> κατά τινος** (*An. Pr* 24a10-13; 24a16).

> Our first duty is to state the scope of our inquiry, and to what
> science it pertains: that it is concerned with demonstration, and
> pertains to a demonstrative science. Next we must define the
> meaning of 'premiss' and 'term' and 'syllogism,' and distinguish
> between a perfect and an imperfect syllogism [...] **A premiss is an
> affirmative (καταφατικὸς) or negative (ἀποφατικός) statement
> of something about some subject.[148]**

We do not need to discuss the minutiae of Aristotelian syllogisms in detail any further, for we

have, in essence, seen how names are an essential element in the premises (προτάσεις) which are

the elements inherent in the syllogisms for demonstrative knowledge (*An. Post.* I.3). We should

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[147] De Rijk, *Aristotle: Semantics and Ontology*, vol. 1, 131.
[148] Aristotle, *Prior* Analytics, translated by Hugh Tredennick, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 199. Bolded text is my own edit.

note, however, that Aristotle asserts explicitly that proper, scientific demonstrative knowledge can only occur proceed when the premises are all true (*An. Post.* I.2).

Chapter IV: Conclusion

§IV.1 The Role of Names in Plato's Philosophy

In the previous chapters, we have seen how an understanding of names informs us of Plato's and Aristotle's differences as thinkers with regard to the origin of names, elements of names, and epistemology/ontology of names. Names provide us with a means through which not only to see their differences in their kinds of inquiry, but also, most importantly, in their fundamental differences in philosophical inquiry itself. In this conclusion, I will be examining the role and priority of names in each's own understanding of proper philosophical inquiry. In doing so, I will be able to demonstrate each's views on philosophy itself.

Although Plato and Aristotle recognize the necessity of names and even language for philosophy to occur, both have quite different conceptions of what philosophy is itself. Names are an integral component in how each thinker conceives of the method and even ends of philosophy. For Plato, questioning what a name means is the starting point for nearly every dialogue.[149]. In Aristotle, names are integral components of the first principles of philosophy, the aim to which first philosophy, the highest form of philosophy, is aimed to contemplate.

In every extant, authentic Platonic dialogue, we find that the principle focus always begins with either an interlocutor or Socrates questioning what the meaning of a term is. For argument's sake, I have included the following diagram that well clarifies this point:

Platonic Dialogue	Question	Stephanus Citation
Euthyphro	What is piety (τὸ ὅσιον)?	5d
Meno	What is virtue (ἀρετή)	70a

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[149] Please see the chart in the following paragraph.

Republic	What is justice (δικαιοσύνη)?	357d, 433a
Theaetetus	What is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη)?	146e
Sophist	What is being (τὸ ὄν)?	244b
Cratylus	What is the correctness of names (ὀρθότητα ὀνόματα)?	383a
Charmides	What is temperance (σωφροσύνη)?	159b
Laches	What is courage (ἀνδρεία)?	194e
Lysis	What is friendship (φιλία)?	212a-b

In every single one of these dialogues, questioning the name is ***the*** beginning of the philosophical dialogue, in addition to earnest wondering at the meaning and nature of the term.[150] By questioning the names through statements (λόγοι), the interlocutors, and even the readers, are able to witness the development of the ideas, opinions, and definitions expressed in the dialogue.

The dialogue exhibits Plato's view on how philosophy is truly to develop. Philosophy, for Plato, is a dynamic process that cannot be conveyed through dogmatic statements but, instead, must proceed through the exchanges of discourse. However, the dialogue is not some kind play or dramatic piece, the end of which presents his philosophical beliefs.[151] We cannot turn to the end of a Platonic dialogue to gain an answer for a question, like a mathematics textbook. Rather, his dialogues serve to show ***how*** the philosophical endeavor is to be conducted as a whole throughout the entirety of the dialogue.[152] The word and its definition become "purified" throughout the dialogue by becoming more clear and universal in meaning to the interlocutors;

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[150] Kent F. Moors, "Plato's Use of Dialogue," *The Classical World* 72, no. 2 (1978): 80.
[151] Jacob Klein, A Commentary on Plato's Meno, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1965): 4-8.
[152] Moors, "Plato's Use of Dialogue," 93.

however, the final meanings or opinions are not an end to the study of that word, but, instead are a propaedeutic for continued philosophical speculation.[153]

Philosophy must necessarily be a dynamic process of dialogical exchange on account of the ever shifting nature of language. A common motif across several dialogues, including the *Cratylus*, are admissions of the finitude of names and how they can never express the totality of their referents.[154] The written word seems like the complete and whole truth, but it, much like any image, is incomplete and quite deceptive since readers may think that they have grasped the totality of something.[155] There is no eternal kind of language that can ever capture such extra-linguistic concepts. Plato contends that no one intelligent (νοῦν ἔχων) would dare to commit things eternally to words on account of their "feebleness" (διὰ τὸ τῶν λόγων ἀσθενές)(342e). Moreover, since all writers can never convey the totality of their thought in the written word, what we read in the written word or hear spoken is only a semblance of the author's "most serious ideas" that reside in his/her soul (344c). Philosophical matters are ones which require the utmost focus and direction of the entire soul (344c-e). Therefore, the dialogue ultimately serves as the best literary form that not only questions terms in earnest, but also presences the reader into the philosophical discussion so that the interlocutor can think along the same path of reason to the depths of knowledge, hopefully, as the speakers.[156]

In addition, however, this clarifying of name and definition at the conclusion of dialogues are never the ends of philosophy. One cannot go to the last pages a dialogue to get the answers,

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[153] Daniel Werner, "The End of Plato's Phaedo and the End(s) of Philosophy," *Apeiron* 54, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 43, 54.

[154] For example, see *Charmides* 163d, *Cratylus*, *Phaedo* 99e-100a, *Phaedrus* 264e, 277e-278c, and *Protagoras* 349b-349d, among others.

[155] Charles Griswold, "Style and Philosophy: The Case of Plato's Dialogues," The Monist 63, no. No. 4 (October 1980): 541.

[156] Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*, 20; Moors, "Plato's Use of Dialogue," 92; Moor *op. cit.* (pg. 82) also provides a thorough list of both the dialogues and the exact spots textually in which we can see this progression from the realm of opinion to the path of knowledge.

much like a math textbook. On the contrary, the dialogue must be read in its entirety to reveal how the differing opinions, definitions, and meanings of certain words become "purified" throughout the dialogue's exchange, refutation, and discussion of opinions and beliefs, thereby paving the way for "deeper" philosophic contemplation.[157] The purification of language, as a result of reading the entirety of the dialogue, serves as the foundation for the reader to *continue* philosophizing. Therefore, the purified word is a propaedeutic for continued philosophizing. Plato's inclusion of *aporiai*, or contradictions, at the conclusions of dialogues such as the *Cratylus* with the conventionality-naturalism question, are also quite intentional for this same purpose: compelling the reader to continue philosophizing.[158] The dialogue is able to place such an *onus* upon the reader to continue to philosophize beyond its confines.[159]

In short, with Plato's dialogues and his statements in his *Seventh Letter*, we see how Plato believes that names, and the earnest questioning of their meanings, are the starting point for philosophical speculation but **never** the end of such thinking. There is no end, finish line, or *terminus* for philosophy. Just as language changes over the currents of time, so too must we continue to maneuver through its labyrinth to philosophize eternally.

§IV.2 The Role of Names in Aristotle's First Philosophy

Unlike Plato, who seems to have used the questioning of names as a beginning to philosophize, names seem, to Aristotle, to be a part of the ultimate ends of philosophy: first principles. In this brief section, I will be examining Aristotle's view on first philosophy, its ends, and how names are evidently a critical part of those ends in first philosophy.

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[157] Moors, "Plato's Use of Dialogue," 82, 86.
[158] Maurice H. Cohen, "The Aporias in Plato's Early Dialogues," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23, no. 2 (1962): 163; Drew A. Hyland, "Why Plato Wrote Dialogues," Philosophy & Rhetoric 1, no. 1 (1968): 39-40.
[159] Hyland, "Why Plato Wrote Dialogues," 40.

First Philosophy (πρώτη φιλοσοφία) is first insofar as it refers to the kind of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of the "separate and motionless" being responsible for all other beings in the world (*Met.* Γ.1.1003a, E.1.1025b-1026b). Since philosophy is a kind of knowledge, it must have first principles, like any of the other kinds of knowledge (*Met.* Γ.1005a-b). Across his logical and biological works, Aristotle stresses the necessity of defining the first principles from which all future conclusions are found (*Post. An.* 71b, *Phys.* 184a).[160] With these principles, we are thereby able to proceed from the most immediate, well-known things to the lesser-known things with certainty (*Phys.* 184a, *Met.* A.1.982b). However, first philosophy itself is inherently unlike all other kinds of science or inquiry.

The first philosopher's focus, according to Aristotle, is the study of being *qua* being or being *as a study of* being or being through the lens of being (*Met.* Γ.1003a). All other studies or kinds of knowledge focus on a certain part of being and already presuppose the being of what they are studying (Ibid.). For example, mathematics is akin to being *qua* number since it presupposes the being of its numbers and only examines being through the lens of number. Similarly, biology would be being *qua* life since it presupposes the being of living things and examines the world through living things. Studying being *qua* being is the first philosopher's study since it investigates the "source" and the "elements" of all being which is found in a study of the thinghood (οὐσία) of independent beings (Γ.2.1004b16-17; Γ.3.1005a).[161] Since knowledge of the causes of things is the most satisfactory and complete form of knowledge, understanding the cause of all being would therefore provide the highest form of knowledge (A.2.982b). However, unlike all other sciences, first philosophy is one which is not demonstrative since its questions are beyond all demonstrable means; however, this does not

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[160] Terence Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 3.
[161] Larkin, *Language in the Philosophy of Aristotle*. 81-82.

mean that first philosophy is beyond the realm of possible knowledge.[162] There are two ways of acquiring knowledge according to Aristotle the *Metaphysics*:

> And yet all learning is by means of things or some of which are already known, whether it is by means of demonstration or by way of definitions [...] So it is clear that it belongs to the philosopher and the one who studies all thinghood, insofar as it is by nature, to investigate also about the starting points of demonstrative reasoning" (*Met.* A.9.992b31-33, Γ.3.1005b).

Unlike the natural sciences, first philosophy is concerned with ascertaining the principles that underlie all being, the causes of being, and the principles that are common to all inquiries. The Principle of Non-Contradiction is the foremost example of this kind of principle, since it is both indemonstrable, inherent in every form of inquiry, and is always assumed whenever one is saying, writing, asserting, or even thinking anything (*Met.* Γ.1005a-1006b). Formulating, thinking through, and understanding principles such as the Principle of Non-Contradiction belong to the task of the philosopher because it ultimately exists both as a cause of why things are independent, and applicable to being *qua* being (*Met.* Γ.1003a-1004a). These principles are a unity composed of the words of our language into a singular account (λόγος) or definition (ὁρισμός).[163] As we saw in chapter III, Aristotle sees names as an integral component for definitions and statements (λόγοι) in logical contexts; however, he seems to similarly view names as necessary parts in the definitions and articulations of principles for first philosophy (*Met.* Z.12.1038a).[164] If names were not an integral part of first philosophy, why else would Aristotle have devoted the entirety of book Δ of the *Metaphysics* clarifying terms and much of book Z discussing the nature of λόγος and ὁρισμός (*Met.* Z.4.1029b-17.1041b).[165]

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[162] Terence Irwin, "Aristotle's Discovery of Metaphysics," *The Review of Metaphysics* 31, no. 2 (1977): 218.
[163] Modrak, *Aristotle's Theory of Language and Meaning*, 148.
[164] See *De Int.* 16a-17b and *An. Pr.* 24a10-13; 24a16.
[165] Larkin, *Language in the Philosophy of Aristotle*, 11.

Names provide insight into the diametrically opposing nature of both Aristotle and Plato's conceptions of philosophy. For Plato, questioning names is only the first step of any philosophical inquiry while, for Aristotle, clarifying and defining names and principles are an essential aspect of the *ends* of philosophy, particularly first philosophy. Both thinkers present two worldviews and methodologies with which to question, understand, and think about all things, with their differing ideas of names leading us to each's views. With such an enduring legacy into the medieval, Renaissance, modern, and now post-modern period, Aristotle and Plato are perhaps two of history's greatest thinkers. In this way, I think Dante was correct to place Plato and Aristotle as foremost among all the virtuous pagan philosophers in Limbo standing above them all, since their philosophies and insights into humanity maintain a brilliance and originality rarely seen in recorded human history.[166] As with all subjects of inquiries, with regard to language and the world, the ancients always have the first, and sometimes final, word.

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[166] See *Inferno*, Canto IV.

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