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GORGIAS' revising of ancient epistemology: *on non-being* by GORGIAS and its paraphrases [1]

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Abstract: The philosophical nature of the two versions of paraphrasing the Gorgias' treatise *On Non-Being* — the skeptical version by Sextus Empiricus and the peripatetic version by an anonymous author — are discussed. The paper gives a comparative analysis of the arguments upheld by the informants enunciating Gorgias' thoughts, demonstrates the range of philosophical problems, which Gorgias considered, judging by the narratives of his speech, and shows how both versions add to and clarify each other in terms of philosophical issues. The work provides insights as to how Gorgias modernizes and transforms the initial attitudes of Parmenides, shifting the reasoning plan: from how thought can be directed to an object and the qualities of this object to how thought can be directed to the non-existent. Accordingly, the problems of intentionality in the Gorgias' teaching are considered as well as the privileged status of any of mental states, the nature of word or speech as an autonomous way to develop knowledge about external objects, the issue of meaning as a reference, and inter-subjectivity in cognition. A conclusion is reached that giving preference to one of the paraphrasing versions considerably impoverishes our understanding of the Gorgias' teaching, while the joint analysis of both versions demonstrates the engagement of the sophistic issues, raised by Gorgias, in the general philosophic and, particularly, epistemological paradigm of the ancient as well as modern philosophy.

Keywords: Gorgias, Parmenides, argumentation, argumentative structure, ancient epistemology.

Two versions of Gorgias' speech *On Non-Being or On Nature* (further on referred to as *ONB*) are known. The first survived in the treatise *Against the Logicians* (*AM* VII 65–87) by Sextus Empiricus), the second survived as part of *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia* (further on referred to as *MXG*) (V–VI. 979a11–980b21) by an anonymous Peripatetic author. The two versions not only present Gorgias' arguments differently but also were assessed differently by scholars in terms of the authenticity and the details of its narrative and philosophical content. Discussions as to which of the two paraphrases is preferable for the best interpretation of the Gorgias'

me-ontology have lasted for nearly a century, with both versions having their adherents.

The advocates of Sextus' version, which was most popular in the first half of the XXth century, put an emphasis on the rhetorical element of Gorgias' speech because they see Gorgias as a rhetorician and sophist in the pejorative meaning of the word rather than as a philosopher, underlining the nihilistic and subjectivist nature of his ideas. The followers of the Anonymous version, actively discussed in the second half of the last century, delineate more formal philosophical vs. linguistic approaches and suggest various "exculpatory" philosophical interpretations of Gorgias' teachings. One can get the impression that such a difference of sympathies stems from the sources on which each of the interpretations is based. To all appearances, however, they were formed spontaneously, due to particular historical-and-philosophical traditions and until recently were not indicative of a conscientious scholars' viewpoints.

The paper compares the epistemic sections of the paraphrases and highlights philosophical problems that are either implicit in the Gorgias' arguments or are brought in by the narrator or, in some cases, the translator. In our opinion, the fact that Gorgias was perhaps the first to pinpoint and formulate quite serous epistemic issues, and his narrators were able to discern them and interpret within the philosophical context, important for each of them, skeptical and peripatetic accordingly, signifies, firstly, the equal status of both paraphrases – it is impossible to state that one of them is more rhetoric and another – more philosophical, and secondly, that Gorgias is not nearly a nihilist and mocker, but a serious philosopher, whose contribution to the ancient epistemology cannot be disregarded.

As is well known, three sections, or structural arguments, are given by Gorgias in the treatise: nothing exists (non-existence); everything that exists cannot be known; even if such knowledge can be developed, its content cannot be communicated. The first section, accordingly, is ontological and represents Gorgias' me-ontology; the other two sections are epistemic. The text of the treatise contains a lot of references to prior, pre-Socratic philosophical thought.

Aristotle is considered the first historian of philosophy, who drew a line under pre-Socratic and Plato's contemplations about the first beginnings and causes, and embarked on building up his own philosophical teaching on this foundation. Regarding Gorgias, it is fair to say that his reasoning, on the one hand, drew a line under pre-Socratic teachings about interconnections between thinking, existence and language, and on the other – revised the arguments used by them.

It is hardly surprising that the first part of Gorgias' reasoning is often considered separately from the other two: the ontological and two epistemic parts are quite autonomous. In the first section, it is important for Gorgias to demonstrate the existence of non-existent, therefore, casting doubts on the Eleatic method.[2] Criticism of the Eleatic method continues in two epistemic sections.[3] Parmenides sees the principal ability of the existent to be dwelled on and verbalized as the main criterion of the veracity of our knowledge about existence; while Gorgias proves that regardless of the being in question under the content of the first section of its speech – existent, non-existent, or both together – it is possible to neither truly conceive, nor correctly express neither existent, nor non-existent, and it forms the grounds for the narrative of impossibility of knowledge.

Let us look into epistemic sections (arguments) and outline in the most general terms the principles and their argument order, observed by our informants narrating Gorgias' thoughts. Let us also show how both versions add to and precise each other in regards to paraphrasing the Gorgias' philosophical agenda. We believe, however, that each of the narrators concurrently points and comments, along with Gorgias' thoughts, the key insights of ancient epistemology, which Gorgias realized and which were relevant for pre-Plato discourse. It is, in its turn, important for understanding, to what extent we can basically

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[2] For the most detailed consideration of this part of the treatise see Kerferd (1955).

[3] The epistemic sections of the Gorgias' speech have repeatedly been in the focus of research. The most important conclusions for understanding ancient epistemology were reached in Mourelatos (1987), Striker (1996), and Caston (2002),

talk about competence of ancient epistemology before Plato. In our opinion, even such a comparison shows in the first approximation that isolated reading of the survived versions, much less abandoning one in favour of another, will markedly emasculate any interpretation of Gorgias' teaching. The structure of the paper is as follows: first, we table the argument order and their comparison by different versions; then give comments on the Table content.

Table 1. Comparison of the argument orders in *MXG* and *AM*

Argument order	MXG	AM
I	I argument, ontological, reasoning that the existent is identical to the non-existent, which forms the basis for subsequent arguments	
II	II argument, epistemic — reasoning possible co-dependence of thinking, being and developing knowledge	
Thesis (Claim)	If x can be thought (known), then x necessarily exists, and if x does not exist, then x cannot be thought.	If x can be thought (known), then x does not exist, and then, if x exists, it cannot be thought.
1	Argument on actuality (the state of things) and non-distinction of falsehood and truth (an intentional argument)	
(1)[4]	980a |9–10| If there are no things existent, all evidence is false: from the necessary existence of the thing thought is it concluded as per argument from the contraposition that it is impossible to think about things that truly do not exist. MaB implies ~Ba~M[5]	VII |77| If things thought do not exist, than existence cannot be thought of. Ma~B implies B~M
(2)	–	|78| Explanation with an example similarly to conceivable of white (if an object with predicate of white is thought of, then whiteness is thought together with the predicate of white, "things thought is white"), and similarly,

		existence is not thought, if non-existence is typical for things thought (the law of contraposition).
(3)	980a11–13 1) Substantiating the thesis "things not thought are not (factually) the existence", built on assuming absence of false and as a consequence – inability to establish true existence (the case of chariots fighting on the sea). 2) – (An argument about existence of things thought in different types depending on the thinking subjects is specially analyzed below, in III.2).	VII |79| 1) Substantiating the thesis "things thought are not the existence": refuting transition of things in actual existence as they are thought (the case of a flying man and chariots fighting on the sea). 2) All things thought exist in different types, whoever thought them (everyone thinks in one's own way – an implicit reference to the Protagoras' homo mensura).
(4)	–	VII |80| Addition: In its turn, a lot of non-existent can be thought; An argument from the contraposition: if it is intrinsic for the existent to be thought, it is intrinsic for

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[4] Numbers in round brackets marks conditional steps of argument.

[5] We wrote arguments formally in both versions to show clearly that in both cases such Gorgias' reasoning, which is based on the contraposition law, is rigorous (regardless of which version gives the authentic paraphrasing of his own exact language. We use the following notation for the terms used: M – some object can be thought, B – Being (cf. Caston, 2002).

		the non-existent not to be thought (the example of Scylla and Chimera). MaB implies ~Ba~M
2	A categorical argument: discerning and autonomy of different ways of comprehending (perception and thinking) (an epistemological argument)	
(5)	980a |14–15| Evidently, things heard etc. can be known, but exists not as a result of development of knowledge, as well as – by analogy – things thought do not acquire existence as a result of knowing them (conceivable) (excluding subjective idealism –"things seen do not acquire existence because we see them" (980a |14|)).	|81–82| Each way of perception has its own criterion (things visible can be seen, things audible can be heard, but not vice versa, things visible can be heard, etc.), and they are not substitutes. The same concerns things thought: even if they are not perceived visually and are not audible, they all have their own criteria.
(6)	980a |16–19| Autonomy of different ways of perception and think implies inability to establish, which of them enable a privileged access to true knowledge about things (true development of knowledge), therefore, the possibility of knowing things does not stem from external (irrespective of senses) existence of things (otherwise, the way of knowing things would be	|82| Overturning (5) the example with chariots on the sea from the absence of supporting thinkable with factual and indicating absurdity: someone thinks something absurd, does not actually see it but still (only thinking it) believes that it is so.

	unessential: think, hear or see, since the results of these processes would be identical).	A general conclusion on II: Things existent cannot be thought and apprehended (οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὂν φρονεῖται καὶ καταλαμβάνεται).
	A general conclusion on II: Even if there are things existent – they are unknowable (ἄγνωστα εἶναι τὰ πράγματα).	
III	III argument, epistemic – properties and functions of word / language	
1	Evidence of impossibility to communicate the content of knowledge:	
a	through the nature of word	
(7)	980a |20|–980b |1–2| Overturning that knowledge is communication with words. Just as eyesight does not distinguish sounds and audition hears no colours, so a speaker pronounces words rather than colours or things.	|83|–|84| The existent is external reality (substance), it is visible, heard, and generally perceived with senses; besides, visible from this filed is perceived through eyesight and audible things – through hearing, and not vice versa. Can knowledge about these fields of the existent be communicated with words?
(8)	980b |4–7| If something is not thought of by somebody, then it is impossible to make sure that somebody thinks of exactly this object. Particularly, expressing it with words.	|84|–|85| An argument on categorical difference of word from any other things existent: Word is neither substance (=external reality), nor thing existent, i.e., word is not eminently the existence, it does not have a

	When a word is pronounced, it's not a sound (= produced by the thing) or colour (= of the thing) that is pronounced but a word (=indicating a sound or a colour of the thing), so it is impossible to think of color but only see it, like sound can only be heard. The conclusion: Word cannot be a knowledge-development mediator between the one who has developed knowledge and the one who does not know yet since word communicates it is nature (possesses its own essence).	phenomenal nature, and it emerges due to external things similarly to senses (colour, taste). The conclusion: words do not communicate things in existence, they communicate another reality.
1	Evidence of impossibility to communicate the content of knowledge:	
6	Through the law of contradiction	Through the way of word existence
(9)	980b |8–10| If a listener is told of a thing, he will not think of the same as the speaker. Substantiation: the same thing (knowledge about a thing) cannot be in the same relation in two different places (i.e. in two different minds).	–
(10)	–	|86| – |87|

		Even assuming that word exists as a substrate (existent, phenomenal things), their colours or sounds do not make each other's nature clear; likewise, word differs from other substrates and does not express an array of other substrates. Word does not indicate a thing directly (there must be an intermediary between a word as a pronounced set of sounds and a thing, for example, the meaning of a word (compare with stoic lekton). Different substrates do not make each other's nature clear.
2	Evidence that two different subjects cannot think of the same thing (through the law of contradiction) (the issue of inter- and intra-subjectivity)	(absent in AM as a separate argument, and only briefly mentioned in I.1)
(11)	980b |11–14| Even if two people can think of the same thing, it will not seem similar to them because they themselves are not fully similar and are not in the same place, otherwise they would be one rather than two.	–

(12)	980b |15–17| A person perceives the same objects in a different way in the same time, for instance, seeing and hearing an object, or discerning an object now and prior. Therefore, even one (each) person himself perceives everything in a different way, a fortiori – differently from another person.	–
Conclusion	980b |18–20| Thus, nothing exists but if something could be known, nobody would be able to communicate it, because things are not words, and so nobody can think the same as any other person. These aporiai are given already by the ancients, and should be studied starting from early philosophers.	|87| If these aporiai are accepted, the criterion eludes. Since there are no things in existence and by nature they cannot be known or communicated, there is no criterion of true knowing.

The Table shows that the general order of presenting epistemic arguments in the two survived versions differs insignificantly; however, the discrepancy in representation of arguments in the substantive part is considerable.

The first – ontological – part of the Gorgias' speech (not included in the Table) consistently analyses the preceding philosophical arguments that gave particular substantiations of the principles of existence. The epistemic sections have a similar approach and Gorgias focuses his attention, first of all, on the arguments of

Parmenides and Protagoras[6], in the context of which possible co-dependence of existence, thinking and development of knowledge is discussed. We see the following difference between the Gorgias' approach and his predecessors. Parmenides reasons exclusively about the qualities of thinking and conceivable of objects, emphasizing that veracity is connected only to intelligibility, indicated by the verb νοεῖν used by Parmenides (B 8.34-36 DK). Gorgias replaces νοεῖν with the verb φρονείν, setting a broader context for cognitive abilities since Gorgias conveys thinkable and knowable as τὰ φρονούμενα. This seemingly insignificant amendment brings the entire reasoning beyond the limits of the Eleatic method but at the same time gives a block of problems typical for it.

As follows from the standard interpretation of Parmenides' fragments[7], thinking always turns to the existent, τὸ ἐὸν. It is reasonable, however to ask a question, which things in existence are assumed exactly. According to B 8.34 DK, thought and its content are identical: "And the same is to be thought/known and is wherefore the thinking (ταὐτὸν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὔνεκεν ἔστι νόημα). For not without what-is, to which it stands committed, will you find thinking".[8] If so, then what is the source of the content of thinking? Is it external to thinking, or internal, or anything else? To answer these questions, let's assume an obvious point of view, at the first glance, that speech reflects the content of our thinking and construct

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[6] See a discussion of Protagoras' approach in the context of Gorgias' reasoning in Caston (2002, p. 217-218).

[7] The standard interpretation in the second half of the XXth cent. was based on the meanings of the verb to be and a common belief that Parmenides had used this verb in B 2.3 and B 2.5 DK subjectlessly (and without a predicate which is essential for some subsequent interpretations). Accordingly, the above fragments become "ἡ μὲν ὅπως __ ἔστιν __ τε καὶ ὡς __οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι, … ἡ δ' ὡς __ οὐκ ἔστι __ τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι __ μὴ εἶναι", with omissions on the place of subjects and predicates of the verb to be absent in the ancient Greek. It is considered that the aim of the poem is to make the listener reconstruct what truly exists, i.e. put the necessary subject and predicate in the omissions at verbs; different interpreters most often use existence as the subject of a statement (see Owen, 1960; Curd, 2004; Mourelatos, 2008).

[8] We used the translation by A.Mourelatos (2008, p. 257).

a similar hypothetic situation, where word rather than thought is the key object — a situation quite acceptable in the sophistic train of thought. Our artificially constructed case, similar to Parmenides' reasoning but in the sophistic problematic framework, let's formulate it as "word and what the word is about are identical", clearly shows the issue of the source of the content of thought. Unlike supposedly acceptable Parmenides' phraseology, it demonstrates that such line of reasoning has a flaw. It is clear that word and what it indicates *are not identical*: a word only designates a thing but it is not this thing. If, however, reasoning is about thought, an impression is created that thought does not indicate its content, but it itself is the content and cannot *be directed* to things external to it and its nature, first of all, it concerns sensual things. Thus, we can formulate the basic problem, to which the epistemic sections of the Gorgias' speech answer: whether thought can have some external existent thing as its content, i.e. be directed to something, and whether the existent is independent from thinking or is a consequence of thinking.[9]

Next, following the Parmenides' line of reasoning, let's move to the thesis that "all thinkable *necessarily* exists" and it is from this point the epistemic section of the Gorgias' speech starts in *MXG* 980a |9– 10|, not forgetting about the Gorgias' amendment and understanding thinkable (or knowable) as τὰ φρονούμενα. The fact that the word belongs to the Gorgias' vocabulary is confirmed by its use in both versions of the paraphrasing, including the Sextus' quotation marker "…Gogrias says (φησὶν ὁ Γοργίας)" (*AM* VII |77|).

For Parmenides, with his strict, cure-all principle of contradiction,[10] it is easy to state that any existent should be considered as the same;

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[9] Not so much intentionality of thinking in itself as orientation of thinking towards *non-existent* was important for ancient philosophers. Discussions of the ability to think of non-existent (such as impossible objects Scylla or Chimera, absent states of things "a person flies", "chariots fighting at the sea", etc.) originated with Gorgias and Zeno of Citium, and were developed by Plato and Aristotle. For example, Caston (1998) shows how Aristotle developed his answer to the problem against the general background of the emerging issue in the Antiquity.

[10] As rightly mentioned by Scolnicov (2003, p. 13 – 14), it is senseless for Parmenides of Elea (not the Platonian) to point that the principle of non-

Gorgias, however, shows that it is an overhasty step and the issue is much more serious than a demand to discern and do not mix the ways of knowing typical for intelligible and sensible worlds, especially when Parmenides himself uses the world of phenomena to substantiate *a contrario* his concept on conceivable of the existent. Unlike Parmenides' noethic veracity, it concerns any mental essence, "thing in mind" rather than a refined essence, reached by thinking as a result of true cognition.[11] The point is that as soon as you claim that conceivable is the criterion of existence of something, and the veracity of the comprehended is guaranteed through thinking, you embark upon a very slippery slope of a number of reservations, as a result of which it turns out that you assume "thinking" to be only a particular procedure, "existent" – only what possesses a very limited set of extremely specific predicates. You would need to establish a correlation between thinkable and its predicates, however, it is not easy to compile the set of predicates, it requires an incredibly complex evidentiary and substantiating base, and the outcome is that this option does not suit people because only God can think in a

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contradiction does not work with regard to phenomenal things because controversial properties in them are considered in *different relations*. It would be a total violation of the general scheme of Parmenides, *ignoratio elenchi*: in his understanding, any relativist interpretation of anything existent is impossible. It is the basic principle, and if not accepted, the remaining construct collapses.

[11] Therein, B 16 DK, as the entire section on "Doxas", brings an additional block of issues for understanding the comparing the thoughts of Gorgias and Parmenides. B 16 DK says: "For such as is the state of mixture at each moment of the much-wandering limbs, even such thoughts (νόος) occur to men. For it is the same [condition] that the nature of the limbs apprehends (φρονέει) among men, both all and each. For thoughts is "the full" (τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα)" (the fragment is quoted in translation by Mourelatos (2008, p. 259)). We see how Parmenides' thought shifts from thinking to comprehension at large and back, and how he makes thinking (or comprehension at large) dependent on the state of a body. Several interpretations can be suggested for this fragment: from references to the ancient perception theory to the theory of emerging errors in cognition due to body intervention and its sensations, etc., but the fact that his fragment appears in paraphrasing the "false" part of the poem, immediately puts in question whether Parmenides seriously considered any of those possibilities of cognition (About some interpretations and translations of B 16 DK see: Mourelatos, 2008, p. 253–259). Parmenides does it, accepts it, but not Gorgias?

proposed way. What remains to people — continue being enmeshed in contradictions or shift to the way of thinking that becomes totally unproductive in terms of the tools that human beings are equipped with to interact with the environment? Protagoras attempted to show the role of sensual perceptions through *homo mensura,* but it did not clarify the status of thinking. The Gorgias' concept of τὰ φρονούμενα expands the field of thinking to *human,* including *objects of thought,* and even simply *what is thought of,* which, on top of it, means something comprehensible to the widest extent, with both senses and rational mind, comprising even such means of representations as dreams, fancies or illusions. Thus, Gorgias, unlike Parmenides' cure-all existence, allows relativist understanding for thinkable things in existence because many would agree to accept existence of different intelligible entities, centaurs and other fantasies, any false statements on the grounds that they exist in some relative sense, not "for-real".

Thus, we come to defining two issues essential for the ancient epistemology, which, however, do not seem something obvious or specific for the Antiquity outside the Gorgias' phraseology of epistemic problems. First, such concepts as "thing in mind", "mental essence" should suggest that there are issues related to subjective idealism. Indeed, the title thesis in *MXG* "all τὰ φρονούμενα (thing in mind) necessarily exist" can be understood that if cognitive abilities perceive some thing, it guarantees its existence, fully in line with the Berkeley's principle – "Esse est percipi aut percipere". Some old interpretations of Gorgias, starting with Hegel, directly claim that *MXG* is based on the principles of subjective idealism, and Gorgias considers even such objects that exist only in consciousness and only in it (compare chariots fighting in the sea)[12]. Considering Gorgias' reasoning as *reductio ad absurdum,* and carefully following the logic of his arguments, such interpretation is excluded, Gorgias clearly refutes this thesis (see II.2.(6) in the Table): he admits that Parmenides is wrong and thinking is not limited to only the rights on which Parmenides insists, but in case of such admission we must

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[12] A brief analysis and refuting of those interpretations can be found in Caston (2002, p. 213, n. 31).

sacrifice not only the false – after all, if everything is thought, then falsehood does not exist, but also the true – since any false would become true, but few would believe in such "genuineness" (MXG 980a11–13, AM VII.79). In other words, common sense, embedded in the concept of τὰ φρονούμενα, does not lose its criterial function. It suffices, however, to take a shorter route and look at a direct statement about it in *MXG* 980a|14|: "visible does not gain existence because we see it", which directly renounces here a possibility of a subjective-idealistic position. If objects that can be thought exists not only in mind, i.e. exist not by virtue of or due to thinking, but in some other, concomitant way, and the entire spectrum of object existence is assumed, from truly existent to material and illusory, it means that, and at the very least does not exclude that thought in the end can be directed to something.

Therefore, we can now formulate the second problem: interpretation of τὰ φρονούμενα brings us to the concept of intentionality [13]. Thinking always must be about something, i.e. it cannot be empty, and it should have particular content. For Parmenides the content of thinking is always the same — thinkable existent, by no means differentiated further. We would have to specially substantiate Parmenides' intentionality of thinking, because it is unclear, to what extent it is fair to say that such thinking indeed possesses content, and Parmenides' νόημα is related to insights into the direction and actual (factual) content of thinking. As for Gorgias' *thinkable things* (τὰ φρονούμενα), evidently, there is no need to prove that they are intentional objects, and likewise substantiate that they relate to something. If, however, existence is limited to only thinking, all things existent turn to be mental objects. At the same time, the type of thinking is not essential — noetic, genuine according to Parmenides, or as phronesis, ordinary, not excluding relations with the phenomenal world, but also not losing connection with common sense. If things in existence are thinkable, they are mental objects and especially, following Parmenides, are recognized that they do not

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[13] Overall, discussing the intentionality issue we were guided by how the problem is set up by Perler (2002).

exist in any other way, an inevitable question emerges: the mind itself generates objects of its thinking or takes them somewhere, from some external source. The Gorgias' things thinkable get another level of a validity check – mental objects relate to something, and, being "twins" of phenomenal existent things, are directed to and relate to them, while the extra-mental objects themselves exist even prior to our acts of cognition. Parmenides equates the veracity status of mental objects to the status of "flying Theaetetus", with the only difference that the latter can be casted aside as false because it would not pass the check of common sense and the actual state of things: nobody, thinking of the flying Theaetetus, begins to believe that people can fly, even if such object exists exclusively in our thinking, is not distorted with sensory perceptions, did not emerge, will not die and so on. In other words, the mind itself that generates such objects serves the criterion in the test of truth for these mental objects, but the objectivity principles require the criterion to be some source, which is external to the tested things. At the first glance, softening the requirements to thinkable and allowing intentionality, i.e., their relation to external objects, Gorgias solves the criterion problem and performs the test, but Gorgias' arguments show that it does not solve the problem, and, on the contrary, aggravates it.

At the same time, it is also possible to talk about internationality in interpretation of Gorgias' epistemic sections in a softer sense, transferring the issue into the interpretational context: intentional interpretation means that it refers to any objects that can be thought and perceived in any way, somehow be engaged in cognitive processes, presence of knowledge is either accepted or denied; epistemic interpretation raises a question whether any of cognitive abilities has a privileged access to the reality, while the knowledge, acquired as a result, is differentiated as true and false. Interpretation of the II epistemological section *ONB* is built upon exactly this differentiation (see the Table), and here we rely on the approach of Caston (2002), who suggests to discern two Gorgias' arguments in the second part, designating them as the intentional and epistemological arguments. The specifics of the intentional argument is that it does not mention any particular type of a mental state,

through which knowledge is developed; it is only essential how it relates to existence (or non-existence) of an object, regardless of whether the object relates to any actual state of things and whether conclusions about it are true or false. The epistemological argument clarifies if any of our mental states (vision, hearing, thinking or speech) has a privileged status with regard to all others and guarantees if not true, than at least a more accurate development of knowledge (Caston, 2002, p.21, 224). Overall, it means that already the basic Gorgias' terminology creates a lot of problems, typical not only for the Antiquity but also for the modern epistemology.

The epistemological part of *OHC* has two sections, II and III epistemic arguments in the general numbering of the argument steps, counting the I ontological part. The general structure is given in the Table. Next, let's briefly characterize the basic problematic fields presented in both versions of the paraphrasing in the context of the above-mentioned questions and highlight the specifics of each version.

Section II.1. considers the relation of thinking and existence and defines the issue of interpreting the initial thesis in the context of the overall reasoning: whether the solution of the issue can be reduced to the standpoint of subjective idealism, i.e. assume that thinking about a thing, in the Gorgias' opinion, precedes its existence. The Table demonstrates that *MXG* reasoning is shorter. Sextus formulates the initial thesis as *Ma~B implies Ba~M,* and moves to considering the option that *MaB implies ~Ba~M* as one of the assumptions only in the forth step of the argument, while the Anonym right away reduces the entire first epistemic argument exactly to this point (see argument steps (1) and (4) in the Table). Otherwise, the meaning of this block of reasoning is generally identical in both versions, including the examples given.

In the *MXG* version, it is possible to talk about the epistemic argument already in the step (3) in II.1: 980a11–13 raises an issue of a criterion as the way to discern truth from falsehood. Although Gorgias does not say here, which of the mental states leads to the true, and which to false development of knowledge, transferring the

discussion in the context of true and false sets a principally different layout rather than simply orientation of thinking to the object of cognition. Everything becomes known either as true, or as false. A person sees the world and makes judgments about it. These judgments can align with established facts or can be contrarily to the reality, i.e. be false, as in the case of flying chariots. Since false aligns with unreliable facts, non-existent, then in accord with the Eleatic arguments it becomes clear that if falsehood *is non-existence*, then it is impossible to lie, false becomes non-expressible, and accordingly, all expressible becomes true.[14] This, in its turn, makes all things not only true but also, under the truth criterion — identical, although it is evident that these things differ by ways of comprehending. Apart from the obvious referencing to the Eleatic methods of problem setting, the section also contains clear references to the Protagoras' agenda that "human is measures" and "nobody can lie and contradict the other". The first thesis is most clear in Sextus, step [(3) 2)] "thinkable exists in different types, no matter how and who thinks them", while the second forms the grounds to build up the entire step of the argument.

Section II. 2. is identical in both versions, and contains a categorical argument,[15] criticizing the nature of linguistic meaning as a reference that develops a thought about distinguishing things by ways of comprehending, and moves directly to the proof that ways of comprehending (mental conditions) cannot be reduced to each other in principle. One can read the Parmenides' thesis about the privileged status of thinking as the basis of the argument, which, however, is refuted through relating thinking and other mental conditions. First of all, the point is put into question that external existence of a thing, independent from any mental state whatsoever, guarantees its

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[14] Plato raised the same issues in the *Sophist* when attempting to give a definition of a sophist based on what the latter does. In fact, the issue was reduced to the attempt to define false, i.e., say something *true about false*. The discussion plan and similar examples (a flying person, etc.) shows a close correlation between Plato's reasoning and Gorgias' *ONB*.

[15] The argument from categories is discussed in Mourelatos (1987).

comprehension. On the one hand, thing, independent from a particular sense, does not emerge and is not formed with this sense in the process of cognition, which means that it can be comprehended through other, independent ways. On the other hand, however, it exactly creates a problem: autonomy of senses and mental states, their non-reducibility to each other does not allow to consider that the result of cognition is correct. Otherwise, it would not be important, which method is used to develop knowledge about things — thinking, hearing or seeing — the results of these processes would be identical. Inner confidence in one's rightness in the course of thinking a particular thing without substantiation with external facts is equally insufficient. The latter argument is outlined in *AM*.

Section III also evidently illustrates a common problem for both paraphrasing – understanding the essence of word. III.1 discusses the nature of word and refutes a popular supposition that word, or speech is a mediator between sensitive and rational fields. Both narrators agree that word cannot serve as a mediator between external objects and the content of the knowledge about them. Speech has its own autonomous cognitive status and is yet another way of developing knowledge along with other cognitive abilities. Both narrators also agree that words are formed the same way as other senses — through impact from external objects.[16]

There is an important difference between the two sections: *MXG* translated reasoning into a subjective area and focuses on what happens when objects are thought, pronounced or comprehended

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[16] Let's point out that the range of problems raised in this section is closely connected to the Aristotle's perception theory as formulated in *DA* III.2 (425b25 onwards), – about communicating forms from an object of perception to a subject "without matter", and, accordingly, about the principles of correlation of things, perception and thinking stemming from them (the concept of representation as perceived without matter, 432a5). Caston (1998) shows that these issues are closely linked to the intentionality issue. In this case, this section of Gorgias' reasoning requires separate consideration in comparison with the Aristotle's position in *De anima*, especially because both the peripatetic version - *MXG* and the Sextus' version, oriented towards the stoic agenda, are in either case determined by the Aristotelian context.

using organs of senses by *somebody*, while Sextus continues reasoning about discerning *things* by ways of comprehending and looks at things in existence, building on a stoic concept of "external reality" (τὸ ἐκτὸς ὑποκείμενον). His reasoning focuses on whether word is such *external reality*, a standalone substrate, or it emerges thanks to these substrates, as a response to an impact from outside, received from such a substrate.

Rather than demonstrating the categorical difference between words and other means of comprehension (which is typical for *MXG),* it is important for Sextus to show that there is some dependence between word and an external object. He draws attention that word is the most distinct among all other "senses". For example, compared to visible, word does not indicate a thing directly as a seen image of a thing and the thing itself, and it is not directly connected to a thing. It can exist "in isolation" from a thing, pronounces separately, and it is exactly this specifics of word that is misleading, forcing to think that it is a *consequence* of thinking. In fact, it is not word that explains an external object, but an external object explains word.

Putting such emphases in its narrative, Sextus actively relies on the stoic agenda. The autonomy of word assumes a particular mediator between word and thing, close to what we understand to be meaning, or what stoics used to call *lekton*, and concept (undefined thought) in the Middle Ages, and so on. Sextus authored a frequently quoted fragment about the stoic concept of designative as verbalization of a designated thing (τὸ λεκτόν), where he uses the "external reality" concept. As Sextus writes (*AM* VIII.2, 11–12), stoics believed that "three [elements] get connected: designated, designative and an object". An object is what is outside (τὸ ἐκτὸς ὑποκείμενον), designative is a word, or sound designation of a thing, and these two elements are material. Designated is a thing itself as it is established in our mind, and precisely because of it we are able to relate an external object and the relevant word, i.e. what transforms a combination of sounds into a meaningful expression, gives meaning to words. Thus, it is the Sextus' paraphrasing of Gorgias that raises

the issue of reference as a relation between thing, word and meaning, which is totally absent as such in the Antonym's narrative.

The Anonym broaches a problem differently. A listener can be told about a thing but he will not get knowledge about it, not even because of the autonomy of speech as a cognitive ability, but due to the law of contradiction. It is the phrasing of the law of contradiction in the narrative by the Anonym that goes under the name of Gorgias, long before Plato and Aristotle: "the same cannot be simultaneously present in many and separate [persons]; since in this case one would become two" (*MXG* 980b10). It's very tempting to state that Gorgias was to first to phrase this law, except for a consensus among scholars that the Anonym himself belonged to the Peripatetic school, and in this case the use of the law in the narrative is rather an explanation of the argument due to adherence to the school, especially because there are no references to the law in the Sextus' version.

Section III.2 in the structure of arguments is present in an expanded form only in the Anonym' narrative and it focuses on inter-subjectivity of cognition. One cannot say, however, that this point is fully absent in the Sextus' version: he introduces an important reservation in the reasoning in section II.1. that all thinkable exists in different forms, regardless of who and how thinks them, although Sextus does not consider this argument in detail. Only the Anonym gives such analysis, which, like the previous argument, is based on the law of contradiction, and this time the Anonym applies it to inter-subjective cognition as well as to an individual. The meaning of the argument is that the same knowledge cannot be in the same relation in the minds of two different people, otherwise they would be the same person instead of two. To the same degree, this requirement is applicable to a person: the same person does not maintain one's equivalence in time, or space, or categorically — he either sees the same object, or hears it, etc. Gorgias essentially anticipates the phrasing of the skeptic relativity trop *(P*. I. 38–40), that later will be used by Sextus widely, so it is particularly intriguing, why Sextus himself did not give this part of reasoning in his version.

Therefore, it would be safe to assume that even as first approximation both version of Gorgias' paraphrasing are equal in terms of their philosophical value. It is impossible to state that any of them observed exclusively rhetoric or sophistry, while the other focuses only on philosophical problems. They consistently and similarly represent the Gorgias' philosophical content. At the same time, they add to each other, one version contains parts and examples that are absent in another, and judging by indirect factors, one can assume that parts that are missing in different version, nevertheless, were included in the original version. It's another matter that substantively both narratives give different interpretations of arguments; for example, as we saw, the peripatetic version from the Anonym builds its argumentation upon the law on contradiction, while the Sextus' version is based on discussions between skeptics, stoics and epicureans typical for the Hellenistic period. It, however, does not impact the overall philosophical nature of the entire range of problems, and on the contrary, shows the engagement of the *sophistic* agenda in the general *philosophical* paradigm, and at the same time — its acceptability and significance for further (particularly, modern) epistemological discussions.

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