FROM CAUSES TO FORMS:
THE PHAEDO AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF PLATONIC METAPHYSICS

by

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Abstract

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Plato believed that Forms were causes. Why? Philosophers since Aristotle have contended that Forms cannot be causes in any legitimate sense, and have downplayed the Forms’ alleged causal status in making sense of Platonic metaphysics. I show that Forms are causes in a distinctive, pre-Aristotelian sense, and that this sort of causality is fundamental to what Forms are.

I begin with a new account of what a cause is for Plato, based on *Phaedo* 96–107: the cause of something’s $F$-ness is that thing which has been added to it, such that it is now $F$ – what I call the “ingredient cause” (e.g., the ingredient cause of this coffee’s sweetness is the sweetener which was added to it). This would have been an intuitive model of causation for Plato, familiar from Anaxagoras and the Hippocratic writers. Furthermore, all of the *Phaedo’s* peculiar causal principles can be derived from this definition (e.g., that a cause of $F$-ness cannot itself be un-$F$).

Forms are explicitly identified as universal (ingredient) causes at *Phaedo* 100. I demonstrate that this is because, for Plato, universal causes are, fundamentally, what Forms are. First, I show that universal causes correspond to various “proto-Forms”, e.g., Socratic definitions. Second, I show that the *Phaedo* is a series of hypothetical arguments, all starting from the assumption that there are universal causes, from which different canonical features of the Forms are derived, e.g., imperceptibility at 65, eternality and unchangingness at 78–80.

This interpretation illuminates the Forms’ most contentious features. Self-Predication – the thesis that each Form of $F$-ness “is $F$” – is a consequence of the Forms’ being causes, since
any ingredient cause of F-ness must itself be F. Furthermore, the Phaedo indicates that a cause of F-ness “is F” specifically in that the definition of F-ness is true of it. This interpretation also illuminates the semantic innovations made in the Parmenides, Sophist, and Aristotle’s Categories.

Separation – typically understood as the thesis that Forms are not “in” their participants – would seem to run afoul of my interpretation, since ingredient causes are “added to” things. In the Phaedo, however, to be separate is rather to be unqualifiedly what one is. Separate Forms are thus analogous to maximally determinable properties (e.g., ‘is shaped’, vis-à-vis ‘is square’), and in this sense their separation can be seen to derive from their being universal causes.
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Platonic metaphysics is distinguished by its recognition of “Forms” – entities which, unlike ordinary perceptible objects, are imperceptible, eternal, unchanging, uniform, and transcendent. Plato also believed Forms were causes. Why?

Philosophers since Aristotle have challenged this claim, arguing that Forms cannot be causes in any legitimate sense, and that their alleged causal role can be performed by other things. Correspondingly, philosophers interested in elucidating Platonic metaphysics have tended to downplay the Forms’ alleged causal status and instead emphasize their status as objects of knowledge, or linguistic referents, or evaluative standards.

This dissertation opposes this tendency. I show that there is a legitimate sense in which Forms are causes, and that this sort of causality is fundamental to what Forms are. I contend that, alongside the other arguments for Forms, there is also a causal argument, which shows all the Forms’ canonical features to derive from their status as causes (and in many cases explaining these features better than any other argument has been able). Thus, in answering the question of why Plato believed Forms were causes, we will discover a new explanation of why Plato believed in Forms full stop, and of what Forms, fundamentally, are.

And indeed, we should welcome a new account of what led Plato to believe in Forms. This is because, in many ways, the closest thing there is to a standard account falls short.

The standard story since Aristotle has been as follows: Plato, like Socrates, thought there was such a thing as knowledge. Yet Plato also, and unlike Socrates, thought sensible things were ever in flux, such that there could be no knowledge of them. Therefore, for Plato,
knowledge must be of unchanging, intelligible things, separate from the sensible world. Thus, whereas Socrates believed in immanent universals or definitions as the objects of knowledge, Plato came to believe in Forms.

The standard story is partially right, no doubt. Yet there are at least three reasons we should hope it is not the whole story.

In essence, the standard story imputes to Plato the following inference:

1. There is knowledge
2. There can be no knowledge of sensible things
∴ There are Forms

As the first mark against it, the standard story’s argument would seem inadequate, in that the argument’s two premisses entail only some of the Forms’ canonical features. It makes sense that the objects of knowledge would be eternal and unchanging, given the absolute infallibility of knowledge; and it makes sense that its objects would be imperceptible, given that there can be no knowledge of sensible things. Yet why should these objects be self-predicative or separate, as Forms are said to be? There seems no good reason. Strength, for instance, is the object of the gymnastic expert’s knowledge; yet in order to be such it need not itself “be strong” (whatever that might mean). Similarly, even if we grant that there can be no knowledge of sensible things, that does not mean that there cannot be knowledge of intelligible things which are somehow “in” sensibles, and cognized through a process of induction or abstraction. Thus, as the argument stands, it undergenerates the features characteristic of Forms: its premisses entail only that there are imperceptible, eternal, unchanging entities, and not the purported conclusion that there are (self-predicative and separate) Forms. Which is not to say that Plato never argues invalidly; he surely does. But we are looking for an explanation of what led Plato to believe in Forms, and this ought to provide at least an ostensible basis for all their distinctive features. Yet the standard story fails to do even that.

Secondly, the standard story’s argument would seem unsatisfying, in that its second premiss is one which none but the most hard-line Heraclitean would accept. Which is, again, not to say that Plato is never unsound (or Heraclitean) in his reasoning; he surely is. The point is that the standard story, in attempting to account for Plato’s radical metaphysical doctrine of Forms, does so only by ascribing to him an even more radical metaphysical doctrine about

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Indeed, it is doubtful whether Plato even accepted it, that is, the extreme form of Heracliteanism necessary to license his separation of the objects of knowledge; cf. Irwin (1977) and Fine (1993, 54–57).
sensible things. In this regard, the standard story is an *obscurum per obscurius* and we should hope for better from a proper explanation of what led Plato to believe in Forms.

Lastly, though the standard story purports to show how Plato’s belief in Forms developed out of Socrates’ search for definitions, this connection is not borne out by its underlying argument. The premiss which Plato ultimately inherits from Socrates is simply the claim that there is knowledge. Yet Socrates was neither the first nor the only figure in antiquity to defend this claim and the rest of the argument is insensitive to the particular sort of entity which Socrates took (or rather, which Plato took Socrates to take) the objects of knowledge to be. That is, on the standard story, the fact that Socrates thought the objects of knowledge to be specifically definitions or universals is inconsequential to Plato’s eventual belief in Forms – despite the standard story’s aspirations to the contrary. Yet all the evidence from the dialogues suggests a line of continuity from Socratic definitions to Platonic Forms. A good explanation of what led Plato to believe in Forms will, we should expect, trace this line out more clearly.

Hence the need for a new story. What we want is a story which can account for all the Forms’ features, while still grounding them in relatively uncontroversial premisses, and which at the same time elucidates their Socratic provenance. And we can find such a story, I believe, by shifting our focus from the Forms’ epistemological role as the objects of knowledge to their

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6 Or, at best, an *obscurum per obscurius* by fiat, as at *Metaphysics* A.6 987a32, where Aristotle accounts for Plato’s Heracliteanism by noting simply that he was exposed to this view “in his youth” (*ἐκ νέου*).

7 A similar objection might be raised against the first premiss, at least by those who are at all sceptically inclined. In addition, even if the first premiss is granted, the argument faces the general accusation that it is drawing metaphysical conclusions from epistemological premisses. But both these complaints strike me as more modern than ancient in flavour; for Plato, the existence of knowledge would have been as uncontroversial an assumption as any, and epistemological considerations often guide his metaphysical beliefs.

8 Indeed, he seems to have spent a lot of time inveighing against others’ claims to knowledge, and disavowing his own.

9 A related oddity in the standard story is that the form of Heracliteanism which Plato clearly does accept (see n. 6 above) – roughly, the compresence of opposites in sensible things – is a form of Heracliteanism which the Socrates of the “early” dialogues would also accept. (For instance, in the *Hippias Major* Socrates shows that paradigmatically beautiful things (such as girls and gold) are also ugly; and in the *Laches* Socrates shows that paradigmatically courageous properties (such as standing firm in battle and endurance) are sometimes not courageous.) Thus it is unclear how the standard story can claim that Plato but not Socrates accepted its argument’s second premiss.

10 To be clear, I do not intend any of the preceding remarks to suggest that the standard story is false. Epistemological arguments for the existence of Forms pervade the dialogues, and often carry the greatest conviction (cf. *Republic* V 476e–480a and *Timaeus* 51c–52b, for instance). My point is just that the epistemological argument cannot be the whole story – that other considerations must be brought in if we wish to account for Plato’s belief in Forms in its entirety.

11 To clarify, by “Socratic provenance” I do not mean their origins in the actual beliefs of the historical Socrates, but rather their origins in what Plato took to be Socrates’ beliefs, i.e., their origins in the beliefs of the Socrates of the “early” dialogues.
metaphysical role as causes.¹²

Here, in brief, is how I think this new story should go: Plato inherited from Socrates (and from others before him, as we will see) the idea that there are causes of a certain sort – as I will call them, "ultimate universal causes".¹³ Plato then, on his own, thought through the implications of there being such causes, and inferred that ultimate universal causes are imperceptible, eternal, unchanging, self-predicative, and separate. That is, for Plato, to believe in ultimate universal causes is to believe in Forms.¹⁴ In short, I impute to Plato the following inference:

1. There are ultimate universal causes

∴ There are Forms

This is what I call the “causal argument” for Forms.

Much must be said before this story will seem persuasive. I must, for instance, clarify how the few features which characterize ultimate universal causes suffice to entail the full panoply of features which characterize the Forms. I must explain why the idea that there are ultimate universal causes is a reasonable premiss to start from. I must show precisely how this idea relates to the metaphysical underpinnings of Socrates’ thought. And I must proffer some evidence that Plato actually argued in this way in his work.

These tasks will be shouldered by the main text of this dissertation; I present a summary of my claims at the end of this introduction. First, I wish to address a more urgent question facing the proposed causal argument: If the preceding story about what led Plato to believe in Forms truly is so compelling, why hasn’t anyone else thought to tell it before?¹⁵

¹²I am hardly the first to suggest a shift to a metaphysical argument for Forms. Yet the prominent versions of this argument ground Plato’s belief in Forms simply in an underlying commitment to “realism” or “antinominalism” (cf. White (1974) for the former position, and Penner (1987) and Gerson (2012) for the latter). I agree that Plato held such a commitment, and that it was indeed pivotal to his thought, but I do not believe that this commitment alone is sufficient to account for all the metaphysical peculiarities of Forms. Even if we grant, following Terry Penner, that “since the Forms are the first abstract objects to appear on the scene of Western philosophy at all, it would not have occurred to Plato that it would be necessary to argue against any species of anti-metaphysician other than a nominalist” (Penner (1987), x–xi), we still ought to be able to explain why Plato ended up believing in the particular form of antinominalism that he did. This dissertation is an attempt to put more meat on these antinominalist bones, by cashing out Plato’s general commitment to antinominalism in terms of a specific commitment to the reality of a certain sort of cause. In this regard, my position is very close to the argument put forth by R. E. Allen in Allen (1970, 120–125); yet I move beyond Allen by developing a detailed theory of what a cause is for Plato, which I then use to derive the other features of the Forms.

¹³This idea is not obscure; as we will see in more detail further on, it is just the idea that there is one and the same thing by which all the many $F$ things are $F$, for a number of different property values `$F$'.

¹⁴Taken de re, of course. Taken de dicto, ‘ultimate universal causes’ are a minimal conception of ‘Forms’, specifying only some of the Forms’ features (e.g., that they are universals, and that they are causes) and remaining silent about all the rest, such that it is perfectly possible to believe there are ultimate universal causes without believing that there are Forms (and even while believing that there are not Forms).

¹⁵In fact, some have; R. E. Allen, for instance (see n. ² above), as well as Paul Natorp (though with much
As I see it, the reason this story has thus far been neglected is because the Forms’ status as causes has thus far been pervasively misunderstood. No one doubts that Plato himself thought the Forms to be causes; but from as early on as Aristotle, readers of Plato have struggled to identify the sort of cause he could be thinking of, such that the Forms would be a likely candidate. And if it is not even understood what sort of cause the Forms are, then all the less will it be thought that the Forms might just be a fuller specification of such a cause.

Thus, I begin by defining what a cause is for Plato – or rather, a cause in the sense in which Forms are supposed to be causes. The locus classicus in this regard is the *Phaedo*, and specifically, Socrates’ final argument for the immortality of the soul at 96–107 (hereafter the “Aitia Argument”). This argument consists in a search for “the cause” (ἡ αἰτία, 95e9), and midway through identifies the Forms as such a cause (100c4–7). Thus, if we can clarify the sense of ‘cause’ in play here, this should reveal the sort of cause we are after.

Various interpretations of the Aitia Argument’s concept of ‘cause’ have been put forth over the years. The first major turning point in contemporary scholarship was Gregory Vlastos’s article ‘Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*’⁴. Before Vlastos, all that seemed clear was that the Aitia Argument was not talking about causes in any familiar sense. Certainly, it is not after the efficient cause, or that whose motion brings about some effect; the Forms simply do not have the capacity to act on ordinary things in this way. Yet neither does the Aitia Argument seem to be looking exclusively for any of the other three causes in Aristotle’s canonical quartet – the material, the formal, or the final cause.⁵ If anything, the argument appears to jumble these various causes together and use them interchangeably, as if they were all one.⁶ Vlastos dispelled this air of confusion.⁷ On his interpretation, the sort of cause which the Aitia Argument is after, and which the Forms are meant to be, is not any of the causes we are accustomed to speaking about, but something else entirely. It is, in his words, the

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⁵ Further away still is the Aitia Argument’s concept of cause from contemporary philosophical understandings of causation; cf. the range of views canvassed in Schaffer (2014).
⁶ Crombie (1963, 169) is a good representative of the state of scholarship pre-Vlastos: “There is no doubt that the use of the notion of aitia in [the Aitia Argument] is very crude, and that quite different topics are jumbled together... It would be possible to say therefore that this section of the *Phaedo* is simply a nest of confusion.”
⁷ Though in articulating his position he was careful to acknowledge his debt to others, especially Shorey (1933); cf. Vlastos (1969, 291 n. 2 and 292 nn. 4 and 5).
“logical” cause, or that which specifies the logical conditions which one must satisfy in order
to instantiate some given property.²⁰ As such, in response to the question ‘Why is \(x\) \(F\)?’, the
logical cause specifies not who or what made it \(F\), but rather what about \(x\) makes it \(F\). For
example, the logical cause of a square drawn in the sand is not Socrates (who drew it) nor
the staff (with which we drew it) but rather the fact that the figure in the sand has four equal
sides and four equal angles. This is what makes it a square rather than any other shape.²¹

Vlastos’s article has received much criticism since its publication, but the essence of his
view is still endorsed today. At the heart of his interpretation is the idea that the Aitia Argu-
ment’s focus is not so much on what we mean by a “cause” but rather on something closer
to what we would call an “explanation” or a “definition” – the necessary and sufficient con-
ditions for the property in question. This idea is still found in much of the recent scholarship
on the Aitia Argument, even in interpretations which otherwise conflict.²² And yet, for all its
plausibility, this idea is severely flawed.

One problem is that, if explanations are all the Aitia Argument is after, it is hard to see
why such explanations should be reified as Forms. That is, the Forms’ status as logical causes
does not explain their weighty ontological status – the fact that they are clearly intended, not
as mere conceptual definitions, but as objective, mind-independent entities. We may think to
excuse this fallacious inference as a point of Platonic prejudice,²³ but that will not do if we
wish to view the Forms’ causal status as fundamental to what they are, as I do here.

This first problem affects only an approach like mine. A second problem, however, is a
problem for all – or at least, for any interpretation concerned to account fully for the way
in which causes are supposed to function in the Aitia Argument. Here is why: The Aitia
Argument investigates “the cause” in order to prove the immortality of the soul. This proof
works by situating the soul, which is the cause of life in the body, within a general theory of
causation. As we discover, one part of the general theory endorsed by the argument is the
following principle:

\[
\text{NOT OPPOSITELY QUALIFIED}
\]

a cause of \(F\)-ness cannot itself be un-\(F\), for any pair of opposites ‘\(F\)’ and ‘un-\(F\)’

Therefore, the soul, as a cause of life, cannot itself be dead. Therefore, the soul is deathless,
or immortal.

²⁰For Vlastos, this means they are not rightly called “causes” at all, but rather “reasons”, since he believes the
word ‘cause’ should be (and is, in English) reserved for efficient causes. I am not convinced that the term should
be (or is) thus restricted, and will not do so here.
²²See, for example, Bailey (2014), Ebrey (2014), Politis (2010), Sharma (2009), and Denyer (2007); refer to n. 8
on p. 2 for more detailed references.
The problem is that, if all the Aitia Argument means by a ‘cause’ is an explanation, there would be little reason to accept the above principle. Indeed, the principle barely makes sense; what, for instance, could it mean to say that the explanation of hotness cannot itself be cold? Explanations are not sufficiently thing-like to license this principle. Yet, without this principle, the Aitia Argument’s proof falls apart.

Thus, although Vlastos was right to suggest that the Aitia Argument seeks a particular and not immediately obvious sort of cause, he and others like him are wrong to suggest that it seeks logical causes or explanations. A different analysis is needed.

The best alternative in this regard is still to be found in David Sedley’s pivotal article ‘Platonic Causes’. Relating the Aitia Argument’s use of ‘αἰτία’ to the term’s more basic adjectival meaning, Sedley characterizes the cause of something as the “thing responsible for” it, which might be anything from a physical stuff to a soul or a Form. That is, a Platonic cause, according to Sedley, is categorically neutral, just so long as it is a real entity of some sort. In other words, for Sedley, a cause is no mere explanation but a thing – which, as we just saw, is precisely the kind of analysis we are after.

However, Sedley must still account for the Aitia Argument’s general principle that a cause of (or “thing responsible for”) F-ness cannot itself be un-F. Sedley attempts such an explanation, and highlights the ubiquity of the principle throughout the Platonic corpus, but openly admits in the end to being perplexed. Instead, as a second-best alternative, he offers an explanation of its positive counterpart, the principle that a cause of F-ness must itself be F, or that “like causes like”. This principle, says Sedley, is explained by Plato’s adherence to the “transmission theory of causation”, according to which the thing responsible for something’s F-ness must itself be F because it must have some F-ness to transmit to its effect. For example, the thing responsible for something’s hotness must itself be hot because it must have some heat to transmit to its effect, as a fireplace transmits its heat to my hands. However, though this way of thinking makes good sense in cases of heating and cooling and perhaps some other properties, it is hard to see how it could be a plausible general theory of causation – even just for the properties at issue in the Aitia Argument. Are we really to believe that the thing responsible for something’s bigness is some superlatively big thing, which transmits some of its bigness to its effect? Or that the thing responsible for something’s oddness is some supremely odd thing, so odd that it has oddness to spare?
Therefore, though I agree the “like causes like” principle is germane to this discussion, I do not think it, or anything else in the Aitia Argument, is to be explained by the transmission theory of causation. What we need, rather, is a different conception of causation – one which holds on to the idea that a cause is a real entity, but does not view a cause as transmitting something of its own to its effect. This is where my analysis comes in.

* 

To begin with, a diagnosis: As I see it, efforts to elucidate the Aitia Argument’s concept of ‘cause’ have been thwarted by the assumption, held by nearly all interpreters, that Plato is in this argument introducing a new sort of cause, distinct from how everyone had been conceiving of causation before him.²⁸ Perhaps this is the “logical” cause, or the “paradigmatic” cause, or some nascent version of the formal cause – whatever it is, the assumption is always that it represents a radical break from the “physical” causes of Plato’s predecessors. Yet this assumption has obscured an alternative reading of the argument’s dialectic: one which sees Plato as in fact adopting an existing model of causation and simply applying it more rigorously and extending it to new cases – that is, an interpretation which sees Plato as refining a familiar sort of cause, rather than proposing a wholly new one. This, I contend, is how we should read the text.

What, then, is the sort of cause at issue? As I see it, Plato thought that whenever an ordinary thing comes to manifest some property, this is because there is some other thing which has been added to it, as an ingredient is added to a mixture. Thus, the cause of something’s _F_-ness is that other thing, which has been added to it, such that it is now _F_. This is what I call an “ingredient cause”.²⁹

The notion of an ingredient cause should not seem foreign. Explanations like ‘this coffee is creamy because milk has been added to it’ and ‘this coffee is sweet because sugar has been added to it’ still strike us as perfectly natural. To Plato, ingredient causation would have been even more familiar. It is, for instance, the conception of causation at work in Anaxagoras, according to whom everything we see is a mixture of elemental quasi-stuffs, and macroscopic changes in the mixtures are caused by microscopic changes in the preponderance of certain quasi-stuffs over others. It is also the conception of causation employed by the Hippocratic


²⁹ Note that, in this regard, my interpretation is a synthesis of Vlastos’s and Sedley’s. With Vlastos, I agree that the ‘cause’ of _x_’s _F_-ness specifies what about _x_ makes it _F_. Yet I disagree that Plato ever thought of this as a matter of specifying _conditions_ necessary and sufficient for instantiating _F_-ness; this is an all-too-modern way of thinking. Conversely, with Sedley, I agree that a cause is a _real entity_. But more specifically, it is an entity along the lines of an ingredient.
medical writers, according to whom bodies have present in them various “powers”, and observable changes in the body are brought about by adding more of a certain power and thus offsetting the prior balance.

Now, for those familiar with the text of the Aitia Argument, it may seem incredible to suggest that Plato is working with the same model of causation as his predecessors, given that Socrates in the dialogue explicitly distances himself from these predecessors, including Anaxagoras by name. Yet my claim is not that Plato saw nothing wrong with the causal theorizing of his predecessors. My claim is merely that he held on to the same causal model, according to which the cause of something’s F-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now F. This is what is common to Plato and his predecessors, and it still leaves plenty of room for Plato to contest the particular things that Anaxagoras and others thought to identify as such causes. For example, whereas his predecessors thought that a person becomes bigger by the addition (or ingestion) of food, Plato insists that it is by the addition of (or its participation in) the *Form of Bigness*. In this way, while the specific things that Plato and his predecessors picked out as causes were different, the sort of cause they were seeking was the same.

Yet even for those unfamiliar with the Aitia Argument, it may seem incredible to suggest that Plato believed all properties are to be accounted for by an ingredient cause. Could Plato truly have thought that a person is musical by the presence of some musical ingredient in her? That a group will become odd in number when the ingredient oddness is added to it? That a horse appears small because of smallness as an added ingredient in it? To which my response is: Yes, Plato could truly have thought that. But not because he was a lousy philosopher. After all, Plato was correct to think there must be *something* accounting for any property an ordinary thing manifests. And he was correct to think that properties like beauty, bigness,

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³⁰For more on the parallel between Plato and Anaxagoras, cf. Brentlinger (1974), Furley (1976), and Furley (2003); and on the parallel to the Hippocratic writers, cf. von Staden (1998) and Moline (1991, Chapter 4). I discuss these historical precedents further in §1.3.2.

³¹It may seem surprising, or even preposterous, that I have here assimilated participation in Forms to a process of addition. Yet this is precisely what we find Plato doing in the *Phaedo*, as I highlight in §1.3.2.

³²Admittedly, Socrates does show concern for a different sort of cause at *Phaedo* 97c–99c, in his commendation of teleological explanations, or explanations in terms of what is best. Yet the relation between this stretch of text and the rest of the Aitia Argument is a vexed issue (on which cf. Kanayama (2006), Wiggins (1986), and Bedu-Addo (1979)). For what it’s worth, I see 97c–99d as more of an interlude, and detachable from the rest of the argument’s causal theorizing. I say more about the relationship between ingredient and teleological causes in §1.4.

³³As we will see, I do not actually claim that Plato intended his analysis to apply to everything we would classify as a property, but only to what we would class as accidental properties (and in fact, only a subset of these, limited to properties which are opposites). Yet for Plato to extend his analysis even this far seems counterintuitive, as the following examples show.

³⁴Cf. the popular Presocratic tenet (in Parmenides, Empedocles, and others) that nothing comes to be from nothing, or what is not.
and life will not be explained by some corporeal ingredient in them. What Plato concluded from this was that there must be other, incorporeal ingredients out there. Granted, we might find it more intuitive to conclude that these properties must be accounted for by an entirely different sort of cause (a formal cause, say). That is no indication that Plato would have found it equally intuitive. Indeed, given the ubiquity of the ingredient causal model in his time, it is only natural that Plato would have thought to extend the model further, rather than renouncing it for something completely new.

Most significantly, however, by seeing Plato as seeking out the ingredient cause, we can actually make sense of the peculiar causal theorizing that we find in the *Phaedo*. Furthermore, once we flesh out the notion of an ingredient cause, we will see that a direct line can be drawn from ingredient causes to Forms, with Forms as fuller specifications of such causes. And this, at last, will allow us to spell out the aforementioned causal argument for Forms.

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This is enough by way of introduction. Here is the plan for the chapters to follow.

In Chapter 1, “The theory of causation in the *Phaedo*”, I set out my account of the ingredient cause. I orient the discussion around the Aitia Argument’s three famous causal principles, and demonstrate that my definition of the ingredient cause accounts for them all – including the principle which so eluded Vlastos and Sedley, that a cause of F-ness cannot itself be un-F. In addition, I elaborate on the use of this causal model in Anaxagoras and the Hippocratic writers, and show how ingredient causation can be seen to prefigure other, more familiar kinds of causation.

In Chapter 2, “The theory of predication in the *Phaedo*”, I explore the Aitia Argument’s related discussion of how causation is mirrored in language. Insofar as the *Phaedo* is thought to present a theory of predication, it is typically assumed to offer an unsophisticated and flawed theory. I, however, believe that this is because the literature has overlooked two key features of the text: first, that Plato systematically distinguishes between cases in which the “name”

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³⁵Cf. Socrates’ refutation of Hippias’s claim that the cause of beauty is gold at *Hippias Major* 289d–291c.

³⁶I am not the first to suggest that Plato earnestly viewed all properties as ingredients; cf., for example, Denyer (1983) and Brentlinger (1972, 66–69). Interestingly, Wittgenstein also seems to have understood Plato in this way; in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, we find: “...(compare Plato’s conception of properties as ingredients of a thing)” (Wittgenstein [1984], §71). The same thought is recorded in Alice Ambrose’s lecture notes from 1932–1933: “Plato’s talk of looking for the essence of things was very like talk of looking for the ingredients in a mixture, as though qualities were ingredients of things” (Ambrose [1974], §31). Wittgenstein elaborates on this idea in *The Blue Book*, though without mentioning Plato by name: “The idea of a general concept being a common property of its particular instances connects up with other primitive, too simple, ideas of the structure of language. It is comparable to the idea that properties are ingredients of the things which have the properties; e.g. that beauty is an ingredient of all beautiful things as alcohol is of beer and wine, and that we therefore could have pure beauty, unadulterated by anything that is beautiful” (Wittgenstein [1998], 17). (I owe my discovery of these passages to Schulte [2013].)
(ἀνώμα) of F-ness, and those in which an “eponym” (ἐπωνυμία) of F-ness, is rightly applied to x; and second, that Plato explicitly indicates that when the name of F-ness is rightly applied to x, the definition of F-ness is true of x, and when an eponym of F-ness is rightly applied to x, the definition is not true of it. These two observations will allow us to show that the Phaedo in fact contains a sophisticated theory of predication, based on a well-founded distinction between derivative and nonderivative predication – a theory which, moreover, illuminates the later semantic innovations of the Parmenides, the Sophist, and Aristotle’s Categories.

These initial chapters thus lay the theoretical foundations for the causal argument for Forms I wish ultimately to defend. I set out this argument starting in Chapter 3, “The hypothesis of ultimate universal causes”, which examines the Aitia Argument’s identification of Forms as causes in the broader context of the Phaedo. I begin by clarifying the sort of (ingredient) cause that Forms are supposed to be – they are what I call “ultimate universal causes”. I then argue that the identification of Forms as ultimate universal causes should be read as a constitutive claim – Forms are identified as such causes because that, for Plato, is fundamentally what Forms are. I defend this interpretation on three fronts: First, I present evidence from the “early” dialogues which suggests that the conceptual precursors of the Forms are none other than ultimate universal causes; this will show why it makes sense to understand Forms as ultimate universal causes at all. Following this, I discuss further evidence from within the Aitia Argument and defend my interpretation against potential textual objections; this will show why the argument’s Forms can be understood as ultimate universal causes. Finally, I look at some of the Phaedo’s other arguments and demonstrate that they, too, start from the hypothesis that there are Forms, and that in each of these arguments the hypothesis must be understood as the claim that there are ultimate universal causes. This will show that the Aitia Argument’s Forms are meant to be understood as ultimate universal causes. Furthermore, as a result of this investigation, we will see how three of the Forms’ canonical features – imperceptibility, eternality, and unchangingness – are a consequence of their being ultimate universal causes.

The final two chapters tackle the Forms’ other, more contentious features, and demonstrate how the causal argument illuminates these, too. Chapter 4 examines the feature of “Self-Predication”, according to which each Form of F-ness “is F”. This, I show, is a direct consequence of the causal framework developed in the preceding chapters. According to the theory of predication defended in Chapter 2, something is a cause of F-ness only if F-ness is truly predicated of it. Thus, any cause of F-ness is F. Furthermore, our theory of predication tells us, more specifically, that something is a cause of F-ness only if the definition of F-ness is true of it. Therefore, since (according to Chapter 3) every Form of F-ness is a cause of F-ness, every Form of F-ness “is F”, and “is F” in that the definition of F-ness is true of it. This chapter
lays out the details of this interpretation, demonstrates its superiority over the alternatives, and challenges the assumptions in the literature which might seem to present barriers to it.

Chapter 5 then examines the feature of “Separation”, according to which Forms are not “in” their participants. This feature would at first seem to run afoul of the Forms’ being ingredient causes, which, recall, make other things $F$ by being added to them. That is, it would seem on my account that all causes are in the things they affect, or immanent. Yet the *Phaedo* is clearly committed to the existence of both separate Forms “themselves by themselves” and immanent Forms “in us”, and clearly recognizes both to be causes. This chapter explains how this could be so. Drawing on evidence from earlier in the dialogue, I demonstrate that the *Phaedo* adopts a conception of separation according to which for something to be separate (i.e., itself by itself) is for it to be unqualifiedly what it is. A separate soul is soul pure and simple, untainted by the body’s nature and desires; the separate Form of Beauty is beauty pure and simple, unqualified by any physical or perceptible factors. An immanent soul, in contrast, is a soul controlled and constricted by the body’s habits, interests, and values; an immanent Form of Beauty, similarly, is beauty limited and restricted by its corporeal manifestation. In this regard, separate Forms can be seen as analogous to what contemporary philosophers classify as maximally determinable properties (e.g., being shaped), and immanent Forms analogous to their determinates (e.g., being triangular, or being scalene). This parallel then helps spell out an interpretation according to which separate Forms can be seen as veritably “added to” their participants, and thereby causes. At the same time, this interpretation will illuminate certain problems with the causal argument for separate Forms – problems which correspond to the actual problems raised against separate Forms in later texts.

Thus, what we will have before us in the end is an argument which grounds Plato’s recognition of Forms (that is, entities which are imperceptible, eternal, unchanging, self-predicative, and separate) in a more basic belief, inherited from Socrates and others before him, in a certain sort of cause (namely, ultimate universal ingredient causes) – an argument which, moreover, corresponds to the actual moves we find Plato making in the *Phaedo*, and which illuminates the theoretical refinements we find Plato making later on.

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I will close with some brief methodological remarks.

I presuppose a conventional stylometric ordering of the dialogues, which places the *Phaedo*, our focus, around the middle of the Platonic corpus, roughly contemporaneous with the *Republic* and the *Symposium*, after the *Meno* and other definitional dialogues, and before the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*.³⁷ However, all I conclude from this ordering is that the theoriz-

³⁷The evidence for this ordering is exhaustively examined in Brandwood (1999); for a briefer presentation of
ing which occurs in earlier dialogues is available for reflection and development in later ones. I do not presuppose any of the common associations between this ordering and the supposed “development” of Platonic metaphysics; indeed, much of what I will have to say will directly challenge this orthodoxy, showing there to be a high degree of theoretical continuity across the dialogues and a progressive refinement of the same basic metaphysical commitments.

As far as possible, I have tried to be sensitive to the polyphonic texture of the Platonic corpus. I do not assume that the words of any speaker in the dialogues can be taken verbatim as representative of Plato’s own thoughts. Yet I do not believe that we as readers are thereby totally cut off from Plato’s thoughts, either. The careful reader of the dialogues, like the careful reader of any text, can see the author through his words. I will at times throughout this dissertation directly quote Socrates or other characters as indication of Plato’s view; however, even though I may fail to indicate it, this is always an informed decision, based on my overall reading of the surrounding text.

Except where otherwise noted, all translations from the Greek are my own. I am, however, indebted to the many fine translations of others, in particular, for the Phaedo, those of G. M. A. Grube in Cooper and Hutchinson (1997), Alex Long and David Sedley in Sedley and Long (2010), and David Gallop in Gallop (1975).
Chapter 1

The theory of causation in the *Phaedo*

The argument at *Phaedo* 96–107 consists in a search for “the cause” (ἡ αἰτία), and it is immediately apparent that Plato is conceiving of causation in an odd manner. We are told, for example, that eating is not a cause of growth; that dividing something in two is not a cause of its becoming two; and that the only cause of beauty is the Form of the Beautiful. It is not merely that these remarks sound odd to us; they would have sounded just as odd to Plato’s contemporaries. One thus gets the impression that Plato’s conception of causation is hopelessly idiosyncratic, if not outright confused.

This chapter argues that things are not as they seem, and that behind these odd remarks is a credible conception of causation, which Plato had good reason to work with. I propose that Plato conceived of the cause of something’s $F$-ness as that thing which has been added to it such that it is now $F$ – what I call the “ingredient cause” ($§1.3$). This conception, unlike its alternatives in the scholarly literature, can account for all of the text’s famous causal principles ($§1.4$). Furthermore, this conception would have been familiar to Plato from Anaxagoras and the Hippocratic writers; Plato simply took their causal model to its logical extreme ($§1.3.3$). And although this conception does not characterize everything we (or the Greeks) would call a “cause”, it can be seen to prefigure these other kinds of causation; thus it was reasonable for Plato to restrict his investigation to the ingredient cause ($§1.5$).

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A clarificatory note before we begin: In its common ancient Greek usage, “αἱτία” admits of several possible English translations: “cause”, “explanation”, “thing responsible for”, or even “that because of which”. Our question is not which of these many translations comes closest to its sense in the *Phaedo*. As we will see, Plato has a particular sort of αἱτία in mind, and as such, “αἱτία” in the *Phaedo* has a narrower sense than any of its usual translations. In what follows, I adopt the following convention to distinguish between these senses: “cause” refers
to the common meaning of “\(\alpha\iota\tau\iota\alpha\)" (and should be heard along with its other translations), whereas “aitia” refers to the specific kind of \(\alpha\iota\tau\iota\alpha\) Plato has in mind in the \textit{Phaedo}.

### 1.1 The three aitia principles

I am hardly the first to ask what a cause is for Plato. Indeed, it might seem that this is an already settled issue. For decades, commentators have recognized three general rules concerning causes which Plato intimates over the course of \textit{Phaedo} 96–107, and which may be thought to provide an answer to our question.¹ I will refer to these rules as the three “aitia principles”, and the argument in which they appear as the “Aitia Argument”. These rules have received numerous formulations over the years,² but for the purposes of our discussion I will define them as follows:

- **NO OPPOSITE AITIAI**
  the same thing cannot be caused by both of a pair of opposites.³

- **NO AITIAI OF OPPOSITES**
  the same thing cannot be a cause of both of a pair of opposites.⁴

- **NOT OPPOSITELY QUALIFIED**
  a cause of \(F\)-ness cannot itself be un-\(F\).⁵

For ease of reference, I will refer to these principles, respectively, as NOA, NAO, and NOQ.⁶

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¹This trend began in Cresswell (1971) and Burge (1977, pp. 4–5), and has become standard fare in treatments of \textit{Phaedo} 96–107 ever since. However, it is worthwhile to note that these “rules” are not presented as such, but derived from single remarks, each of which is presented as a particular criticism of a particular example, and none of which is repeated, paraphrased, or referred to elsewhere in the argument. (See footnotes ²–⁵ for the relevant lines of text.) Because of this, it may seem that these remarks give voice to nothing more than three specific prohibitions. I, however, am not of this opinion, and follow recent commentators in generalizing these remarks into more widely applicable principles.

²Some of the more recent highlights include the concise and elegant presentation of Sedley (1998, 121), and the more detailed and careful analysis of Hankinson (1998, pp. 89–94).

³Derived from 976e–b3: "Nor can I any longer be persuaded, if someone divides a one, that division is the aitia of their having become two in this case. For this aitia of becoming two is opposite to what it was before: before, it was because they were brought near one another and one was \textit{added} to the other, but now it is because one is brought apart and \textit{separated} from the other."

⁴Derived from 101a5–9: "You’d meet with some opposing argument were you to say that someone was both bigger and smaller by a head: first of all, that the bigger person will be bigger by the same thing."

⁵Where ‘\(F\)-ness’ and ‘un-\(F\)-ness’ refer to a pair of opposite properties, of a piece with the “pair of opposites” in the first two principles. (For further clarification on the meaning of ‘opposites’, see the discussion on p. 21 ff. below.) This rule is derived from 101a9–b2, the continuation of the passage quoted in the previous footnote: "[You’d meet with some opposing argument were you to say that someone was both bigger and smaller by a head:] ... secondly, that the bigger person will be bigger by a head, which is itself small, and this is surely monstrous, that anyone be big by \textit{something small}.”

⁶Pronounced, for what it’s worth, as “Noah”, “now”, and “knock.”
Initially, these may seem like agreeable causal principles. If, for example, both higher taxes and lower taxes were shown to correlate with economic growth, this would rightly be taken as good indication that neither in itself truly causes growth, in accordance with noa. Similarly, if wealth is seen to make some people virtuous and magnanimous and to make others vicious and corrupt, this is good reason to say that wealth does not truly cause virtue or vice, in accordance with nao. Finally, in accordance with noq, if we were searching for what caused something to become hot, it would be counterintuitive to cite something that was itself cold. Thus the three principles are not without intuitive appeal.

Yet with a bit more reflection, the principles start to seem suspect. For example, it seems perfectly accurate to claim, in violation of noa, that heat is a cause of both hardness (in clay) and softness (in wax). Similarly, it seems right to say, in violation of nao, that the opposites of fasting and gorging are both causes of unhealthiness in the body. And finally, we may claim, in violation of noq, that a hard wooden meat tenderizer causes a cut of beef to become soft – and moreover, that it does so precisely in virtue of its being hard (a squishy, pliable tenderizer just wouldn’t do the job). Thus none of the three principles seems to hold true of all the things we commonly identify as causes.

Therefore, if we wish to uphold the aitia principles as true, we must assume that the principles are meant to be limited in scope – most plausibly, by being taken to refer only to causes of a particular kind. I will call such a cause an “aitia”. Our task, then, is to give an account of what an aitia is. And this means that we must venture beyond the aitia principles themselves; for, left as they stand, the principles indicate only what Plato thinks may qualify as an aitia. They amount to a list of features to which any properly identified aitia will conform. The principles on their own do not illuminate what an aitia is, and demand further explanation: For instance, why does Plato subscribe to these principles? What makes them hang together? Are any of the principles reducible to the others? And how might they be independently justified? In short, what is the basic concept of ‘aitia’ standing behind and motivating the three aitia principles?

Providing an answer to these questions is the task of this chapter.

1.1.1 Against the ‘necessary and sufficient’ view

Providing an answer to these questions has also been the aim of much of the recent scholarship on the Aitia Argument. The prevalent answer, though it appears in various forms, is that an aitia is that which is necessary and sufficient for its effect. This answer is appealing
because it identifies a restricted sense of ‘cause’ which is both familiar and capable of accounting for much of the Phaedo’s peculiar causal reasoning. Nonetheless, upon closer inspection, it proves inadequate.\(^9\)

First, many of the aitiai which Socrates accepts in the Aitia Argument are not in fact necessary for their effects: threeness is an aitia of oddness (1049a–b), but there are clearly other ways of being odd than by being three; fever is an aitia of sickness (105c2–4), but there are clearly other ways of being sick than by running a fever.\(^10\)

More critically, however, the ‘necessary and sufficient’ view accounts for only two of the three aitiai principles: since aitiai must be necessary, both of a pair of opposites cannot be aitiai of the same effect (thus NOA); and since aitiai must be sufficient, the same thing cannot be an aitia of both of a pair of opposites (thus NAO).\(^11\) That is, the view does not account for the third principle, NOQ, that an aitia of F-ness cannot itself be un-F.\(^12\)

The problem here is not merely one of interpretive incompleteness. NOQ is, in fact, the principle we should be most concerned to account for. Not only is it the least intuitive of the three; more significantly, it is crucial to the final proof of the immortality of the soul, and indeed, the only one of the principles which that proof employs.\(^13\)

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\(^9\) Sedley (1998), 121 already recognized as much, but his arguments seem not to have taken hold, given the various proponents of the ‘necessary and sufficient’ view that have appeared since his article.

\(^10\) It is sometimes argued, especially by proponents of the ‘necessary and sufficient’ view, that these examples (the so-called “subtler” answers) are not aitiai at all, and thus no real counterexamples to the claim that an aitia is which is necessary and sufficient for its effect. (See, for example, Bailey (2014), 25–26; Ebrey (2014), and Denyer (2007), 93–94; but cf. Sedley (1998), 121.) Admittedly, these examples are never explicitly referred to as “aitiai” (the last occurrence of the term in the Aitia Argument is at 101c4); nonetheless, I believe they are rightly treated as such. My full reasons for thinking so will emerge over the course of this chapter; for the present moment it will suffice to note that, if the subtler answers were not aitiai, then the soul would not be an aitia of life, and yet it was precisely for the sake of proving the immortality of the soul that Socrates embarked on his investigation into the aitia (105e7–9; cf. 106a7–9). This investigation would be a non sequitur were the soul not itself an aitia.

\(^11\) This is why, we might note, it will not do to refine the ‘necessary and sufficient’ view so as to define aitiai, à la Mackie (1969), as INUS conditions, or “Insufficient but Necessary parts of a condition which is itself Unnecessary but Sufficient” for their effects. This definition would allow for the aitiai listed above (threeness as an aitia of oddness, etc.), but only at the cost of stripping it of its ability to account for NOA or NAO – which is supposed to be key evidence in support of the ‘necessary and sufficient’ view.

\(^12\) Some commentators get around this problem by simply neglecting to mention that there is this third principle, as Politis (2010); or by acknowledging it but only in a footnote, as Ebrey (2014, n. 22); or by inaccurately paraphrasing the principle such that it can be incorporated into their account, as Kelsey (2004, 9–10).

\(^13\) 105c8–e7. This proof goes as follows: The soul is the cause of life in the body. A cause of F-ness cannot itself be un-F (i.e., NOQ). Therefore, the soul, as a cause of life, cannot itself be dead. Therefore, the soul is deathless, or immortal.
of noq, we stand to lose our grip on the Aitia Argument as a whole\textsuperscript{14}

What we need, then, is an account which does not shy away from noq but rather treats it as the aitia principle to be explained first and foremost.\textsuperscript{15} This is the sort of account I will provide in what follows.

1.2 Opposites, coming-to-be, & property acquisition

Our task, to reiterate, is to define the basic concept of ‘aitia’ standing behind the three aitia principles (and in particular noq). Let us begin by observing a peculiar feature of the aitia principles: their application is limited to cases which involve opposites. For instance, if a (putative) aitia is not (putatively) an aitia of some opposite, then NAO and NOQ have nothing to rule out.\textsuperscript{16} Yet in both Greek and in English, it is common to speak of causes of things which are not (obviously) opposites – the cause of a rainstorm, or of a homicide, for instance.\textsuperscript{17} Why, then, are the aitia principles limited in this way?\textsuperscript{18} As I argue in this section, the answer lies in the simple (though all too frequently neglected) fact that the Aitia Argument does not aim to provide a comprehensive account of causation, but rather concerns itself with only the cause

\textsuperscript{14}A further (but I think related) problem with the ‘necessary and sufficient’ view is that it does a poor job of explaining Socrates’ positive proposal that the forms are causes; as Bailey (2014 21 n. 20) acknowledges: “In a sense there is an explanatory gap between [the view that a cause must be necessary and sufficient for its effect] and [the view that an ordinary thing is F if and only if the F itself makes it F]. The former gives some reason for thinking that there is one and only one cause of some sensible thing being beautiful; but it gives no reason for why, as [the latter view] affirms, this unique cause is the Form of Beauty.”

\textsuperscript{15}Some such accounts do exist, and attempt to explain noq by reference to the “transmission theory of causation”, or the principle that “like causes like”, or the principle that “the cause is greater than its effect” (see Dancy (2004 301 ff.), Hankinson (1998 91–92), Sedley (1998 123–124), Makin (1990–1991 137 n. 9, 143), Bostock (1986 155–156), Annas (1984 316), Lloyd (1976 146–148), and Burge (1974 5)). According to this way of thinking about causation, the reason why the cause of something’s F-ness must itself be F is because a cause of F-ness must have some F-ness to transmit to its effect. For example, the cause of something’s hotness must itself be hot, because it must have some heat to transmit, as a fireplace transmits heat to my hands. This line of reasoning makes good sense in some cases; yet it is hard to see how it could be a plausible general theory. (As I remarked in the Introduction, are we really to believe that (Plato thought that) the cause of something’s bigness is some superlatively big thing, which transmits some of its bigness to its effect?) Which is not to say that the transmission theory of causation is not germane to our topic; indeed, I agree that it is central to Plato’s thinking in the Phaedo. My point is rather that the transmission theory itself stands in further need of clarification and justification, just as do the aitia principles. (Cf. Makin (1990–1991 139): “What is wanted ... is some appeal to concerns with which we can engage independently of any particular model of causality, but which seem to offer an underpinning for, and hence an explanation of, [the principle that like causes like].”) Thus another way to think of the question of this chapter would be: What is the basic concept of ‘aitia’ standing behind and motivating the transmission theory of causation and the principle that “like causes like” (that is, which makes this way of thinking about causation generally plausible)?

\textsuperscript{16}Similarly, if the aitia itself has no opposite, then N0A has nothing to prohibit. This case, however, is less important to our present considerations.

\textsuperscript{17}For the rainstorm example, cf. Aristotle Physics II.8, 198b18. For the homicide example, cf. Herodotus 4.200.4 (τοὺς αἰτίους τοῦ φόνου τοῦ Ἀριστέρου).

\textsuperscript{18}Cf. Annas (1984 316): “Surely it must be an odd account of explanation that limits it to terms with opposites.”
of "coming-to-be".

To the careful reader of the *Phaedo* this observation should come as no surprise. At the very start of the Aitia Argument, Plato limits the scope of the ensuing discussion and establishes its topic, not as causes *simpliciter*, but as a particular subset of causes. At 95e10, Socrates announces this topic to be “the cause of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be” (περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς τὴν αἰτίαν), a specification which he reiterates thrice over, at 96a9–10, 97b5–6, and 97c7. Therefore, given that the Aitia Argument is limited to cases of coming- and ceasing-to-be, we should expect the aitia principles to be limited in some way as well.

The problem, of course, is that these limitations do not seem to correspond: the aitia principles are limited to opposites, but the Aitia Argument is limited to coming-to-be. And at first blush, it may not seem that coming-to-be has anything to do with opposites. After all, we commonly speak of many things besides opposites coming into being: the birth of a child, or the construction of a house, for instance. Therefore, it may seem that the Aitia Argument changes its topic without explanation or warrant: whereas it begins by speaking of the cause of coming-to-be, it ends up with an account of the cause of opposites.

However, I believe this apparent shift in focus can be quite sensibly accounted for. In fact, it is not even the first place in the *Phaedo* where it happens. In the Cyclical Argument, too, we find Plato beginning with an expressed interest in coming-to-be and ending with a more specific interest in opposites. Specifically, whereas the announced topic of the argument is “everything *that has a coming-to-be*” (ὅσα περὶ ἔχει γένεσιν περὶ πάντων, 70d9), this topic is immediately restricted to things which come to be opposites; as the passage continues:

“Everything that has a coming-to-be ... comes to be in this way: the opposites from nowhere other than their opposites – all those, that is, that actually have an opposite...

Everything that has an opposite necessarily comes to be from nowhere other than its opposite.” (70d9–e6)

¹⁹To be sure, in all three of these reiterations, Socrates speaks not only of the cause of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be, but also of the cause of being (διὰ τί ἔστι; δι’ ὅτι ἔστι; τὴν αἰτίαν ὅπῃ ἔστι). This addition, along with the later examples of causes in the argument, has led some commentators to doubt that Plato is sincerely committed to his originally announced topic, or to explaining coming-to-be at all (cf. Annas 1982, 318). I will address this objection in §3.4. Cf. also the response to this objection in Sharma (2009, 140–145).

²⁰From here on out, for convenience, I will speak only of “coming-to-be”, though my statements should always be understood to encompass both coming- and ceasing-to-be (which, after all, are just two sides of the same coin).

²¹Translated after Sedley and Long (2010). As Sedley notes in Sedley (2012, 149, n. 3), this restriction is not contradicted by Socrates’ statement at 71a9–10, as it is sometimes held to be. Properly construed, that line reads: “all opposite things come to be in this way, from opposites.” (Cf. Grube’s translation in Cooper and Hutchinson (1997): “all things come to be in this way, opposites from opposites.”) Also note that, despite appearances, the claim of this passage is not inconsistent with *noo*. When Socrates says that “everything that has an opposite necessarily comes to be from nowhere other than its opposite”, he does not mean that if some *x* comes to be *F*, then what *caused* *x* to become *F* is something which is un-*F*, or un-*F*-ness (this would be to assume a causal interpretation of the “from”). Rather, what he means is that if *x* comes to be *F*, then, before it came to be *F*, it
To be sure, Plato is careful to avoid suggesting that all coming-to-be is to and from opposites. Rather, he is signaling his interest in a particular subset of coming-to-be: the coming-to-be of opposites. Perhaps, then, if we can discover what explains the connection between coming-to-be and opposites within the context of the Cyclical Argument, then we may be able to account for the connection in the Aitia Argument in precisely the same way.²²

* Before we get to that, however, I wish to forestall a worry about the Cyclical Argument itself – namely, that its thesis, that the coming-to-be of any opposite will be from its opposite, is false.²³ At the very least, the thesis seems problematic on several commonplace interpretations of ‘opposite’. For instance, we may sensibly think that the Cyclical Argument’s “opposites” are meant to be polar contraries: different items on opposite ends of a single scale or in a single range, such as big and small, hot and cold, or good and bad.²⁴ This interpretation certainly fits well with the particular examples we find throughout the Cyclical Argument,²⁵ and yet, if this interpretation is indeed correct, the thesis of the Cyclical Argument seems quite clearly false. It is not the case, for example, that everyone who has become rich was previously poor; they may simply have been of modest means, somewhere between wealth and poverty.²⁶

Alternatively, we might suppose that the Cyclical Argument’s “opposites” are meant to be contradictories: exclusive and exhaustive pairs, like rich and non-rich. In this case, the Cyclical Argument’s thesis at least seems true: if someone has become rich, they most certainly came to be so from not being rich; otherwise, we would not say that they “came to be.” However, this interpretation fits ill with all of the argument’s actual examples, which, as we have just seen, are not contradictories but polar contraries. Even more significantly, this interpretation makes it difficult to see why Socrates would repeatedly speak as if the Cyclical Argument’s thesis, by being restricted to the coming-to-be of opposites, has a limited scope in any sense. As we saw above, the Cyclical Argument’s thesis is not meant to encompass all instances of

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²²This affinity between the Aitia Argument and the Cyclical Argument is reinforced by the interjection into the Aitia Argument at 103a–b, which raises a point of apparent disagreement with the Cyclical Argument, and explicitly notes that this point of contrast was established “earlier in our discussion” (ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἡμῖν λόγοις, 103a5–6).

²³This worry is expressed succinctly in Frede (1978, 32).

²⁴As such, polar contraries are exclusive but not exhaustive: things on these scales cannot be both, but can be neither. I adopt this definition, and the general framework of what follows, from Sedley (2012, 152).

²⁵Which include, in addition to the examples just listed: beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, strong and weak, fast and slow, separate and together, asleep and awake, and alive and dead.

²⁶This objection is adapted from Frede (1978, 32); a similar point is made by Sedley (2012, 153) with reference to good and bad.
coming-to-be, but only the coming-to-be of things “that actually have an opposite” (70e2). Yet if ‘opposite’ means ‘contradictory’, then this is no restriction whatsoever, since every property (and not just some particular subset of properties) has a contradictory.

These are good reasons to resist these interpretations, but they are not refutations of the Cyclical Argument itself – that is, as long as an alternative interpretation of ‘opposite’ is still available to us. And indeed, David Sedley has recently defended just such an alternative, interpreting the Cyclical Argument’s “opposites” as “converse contraries”, which he defines as follows:

**Converse Contraries Definition of ‘Opposites’**

F-ness and un-F-ness are opposites (i.e., converse contraries) ↔

1. F-ness and un-F-ness are contraries and
2. x is F compared with y ↔ y is un-F compared with x

For example, bigness and smallness are opposites according to this definition, since bigness and smallness are contraries, and one thing is bigger than another if and only if that thing is smaller than it. Indeed, most polar contraries will qualify as opposites on this definition. However, by not identifying opposites with polar contraries, the converse contraries definition avoids interpreting the Cyclical Argument’s thesis as the implausible claim that the coming-to-be of any polar contrary is from its polar contrary. Instead, it glosses it as the credible claim that the coming-to-be of any converse contrary is from its converse contrary. For example, whereas it is false that everyone who comes to be rich was previously poor, it is true that everyone who comes to be richer (i.e., rich compared with their prior self) was previously poorer (i.e., poor compared with their present self).

For these reasons, I believe we should adopt the converse contraries interpretation of the Cyclical Argument’s thesis, and in what follows I will be doing just that, and extending this reading to the interpretation of ‘opposites’ within the Aitia Argument as well. For ease of locution, I will still speak mainly in terms of “opposites”, but from here on out “opposites”

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²⁷ There are further problems with the contradictories interpretation as well; see Sedley (2012, 153–154). ²⁸ Sedley (2012, 155).

²⁹ Where “contraries” are defined as “different items on a single scale or in a single range” which are incompatible but not exhaustive (that is, “things on that scale or range cannot be both, but can be neither”) (see Sedley (2012, 152)). (Polar contraries, recall, are contraries at opposite ends of a single scale; for example, ‘hot’ and ‘lukewarm’ are contraries, whereas ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ are polar contraries.) This condition of the converse contraries definition is to rule out a symmetric property like equality (which satisfies the definition’s second condition) from qualifying as an opposite to itself (see Sedley (2012, 155 n. 9)).

³⁰ This feature of the converse contraries definition is reflected in Socrates’ repeated use of the comparative forms of his chosen opposites (for example, ‘bigger’ and ‘smaller’, rather than ‘big’ and ‘small’; cf. 70e6–8). Furthermore, the converse contraries definition has the virtue of including ‘double’ and ‘half’ as among its opposites, as they are treated explicitly at Republic V 479b3–4, and implicitly at Phaedo 101b6–7. The polar contraries interpretation, in contrast, cannot explain how this pair is a pair of opposites.
(and thus the property pair $F$-ness and un-$F$-ness) should be understood more precisely as converse contraries.

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So, to return to our earlier question: Why does the Cyclical Argument focus on the coming-to-be of opposites? The answer, as I see it, is that Plato restricts the discussion in this way because he is specifically interested in changes which can be classified as property acquisitions. That is, Plato wishes to confine his discussion to the analysis of cases wherein a persisting object is said to lose one property and take on some other, and thereby sets aside cases wherein a new object is itself said to come into existence (like the birth of a child or the construction of a house). In other words, or so I wish to suggest, the Cyclical Argument is limited as it is because Plato is adopting a general model of coming-to-be which analyzes it into three principles: a persisting object, a property which it gains, and a property which it lost.

What does property acquisition have to do with opposites? Clearly, the set of properties which a persisting object can acquire far exceeds the set of opposites, and not all cases of property acquisition are explicitly changes to and from opposites. A banana may come to be yellow from being green, an infant may grow to be 9 pounds from being 8 pounds, a philosopher may come to be in Syracuse from being in Athens. All of these are properties acquired by their respective objects, but none of them are opposites, either to each other or to anything else. Nonetheless, all these changes can be reconceived in line with the Cyclical Argument’s model: the banana comes to be more yellow from being less yellow, the infant comes to be heavier from being lighter, the philosopher comes to be nearer to Syracuse from being farther away. Therefore, it seems that, at least at some level of generality, property acquisition is indeed to and from opposites, even if it is not so at every level of specificity. And it is in this regard that the Cyclical Argument’s explicit focus on the coming-to-be of opposites betrays its implicit adherence to the property acquisition model of change.

Aristotle, of course, assumes the same general model in his account of coming-to-be in Physics I. Indeed, Aristotle applies the model far more ambitiously, since he seems to believe

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31 Sedley (2012, 162–163) draws specific attention to this point.
32 Cf. esp. Physics I.5. Also note that although the principles of Aristotle’s account are standardly translated as “contraries”, the Greek term is the same as the one translated as “opposites” in the Phaedo ἐναντία. All the same, the standard Aristotelian translation is apt, since Aristotle wants to say that all change is to and from ἐναντία or an intermediate state (that is, a state intermediate between the ἐναντία) – and this statement makes sense only if ἐναντία here are interpreted as polar contraries. (For example, the Aristotelian analysis claims that everyone who comes to be rich was previously poor or in a state between wealth and poverty.) However, this claim, that all change is to and from polar contraries or an intermediate state, is the same in content as the Cyclical Argument’s thesis that all change is to and from ἐναντία full stop, since ἐναντία there are converse contraries, which by definition include contraries and their intermediaries. (That is, the Platonic analysis claims that everyone who comes to be richer was previously poorer – which amounts to the same thing as the Aristotelian analysis.) Which is to say, the Physics follows the spirit of the Cyclical Argument, if not its letter.
that it can be applied, at least on some level, to all coming-to-be – not only to cases in which an opposite property is obviously acquired, such as changes in quality, but also to less obvious cases, such as changes in quantity or place, and even (at least on some interpretations of the Physics) to substantial changes, or unqualified coming-to-be.

Why, then, is Plato motivated to adopt the property acquisition model of change? The explanation is not hard to come by. The entire Phaedo, after all, is an extended philosophical investigation of one particular property acquisition – a series of speeches and arguments explaining what it means for someone (and in particular, for Socrates) to become dead. Thus, by investigating property acquisition in general, Plato aims to discover something about the particular instance of property acquisition which is death.

From our perspective, of course, death may seem to fall outside the property acquisition model – that is, it may seem like an example of unqualified ceasing-to-be, and indeed, like the paradigmatic example of a substance going out of existence. However, this is decidedly not how Plato sees it. Early in the dialogue, death is explicitly defined as “the separation (ἀπαλλαγή) of the soul from the body” (64c4–5). Given this definition, death is therefore just a matter of the dissociation between the body and the soul, and given the identification of a person with their soul, this means that ‘being dead’ will be a property which a person stands to gain (or lose, given Plato’s commitment to metempsychosis). And this means that death is fittingly treated as a case of a persisting object losing one property and taking on another – as indeed it is treated, in the Cyclical Argument and the Aitia Argument alike.

Therefore, it seems that, in the Cyclical Argument, the connection between coming-to-be and opposites is accounted for by Plato’s particular interest in cases of property acquisition, those changes in which a persisting object acquires a property which it didn’t have before. And so, what I now wish to propose is that the same may hold true for the Aitia Argument: that the transition from its announced topic of the cause of coming-to-be to its eventual preoccupation with the cause of opposites is also to be accounted for by Plato’s specific concern with properties that a persisting object can stand to gain or lose. In other words, I am sug-

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³³Physics V.2, 226a24–26: “...It remains that there is motion/change (κίνησις) only with respect to quality, quantity, and place; for in each of these categories there is a pair of contraries (ἐναντίωσις).” This, despite the fact that Aristotle explicitly states in Categories 6 that “a quantity has no contrary” (5b11) – because a change in quantity (and, presumably, also in place) can still be treated as a change between opposite extremes (or as he explains at 226a31–32, as motion toward and away from “complete magnitude” (τὸ τέλειον μέγεθος)). Cf. the helpful discussion in Bogen (1992).

³⁴Roughly speaking, by analyzing these cases as matter transitioning from formlessness to formedness. Plato never ventures in the Phaedo to consider how the property acquisition model might be applied to such changes, but nothing he does say would prohibit him from accepting Aristotle’s analysis.

³⁵The relevance of this definition to the Cyclical Argument’s concerns is emphasized at 71b6, where the processes of “separation and combination” (διακρίνεσθαι καὶ συγκρίνεσθαι) are specifically mentioned as examples of transitions between opposites.
gesting that in the Aitia Argument, Plato is specifically seeking only the cause of property acquisition— that is, what accounts for a persisting object taking on a property which it previously lacked. This is what Socrates means by “the cause of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be”, and this is why the aitia principles are limited to cases which involve opposites.

This, at any rate, is my answer to the question raised at the start of this section: Plato is interested only in the causes of opposites because he is interested only in the causes of property acquisitions. However, even if we grant that the aitia principles are intended to apply only to cases of property acquisition, this is still not enough to put all of the putative counterexamples to the principles to rest: heat still seems like a legitimate cause of both the acquired opposite properties of hardness (in clay) and softness (in wax); the opposites of fasting and gorging both still seem like causes of the body’s acquiring the property of unhealthiness; a hard meat tenderizer still seems like it causes a cut of beef to gain the property of softness. Therefore, it seems that the scope of the aitia principles must be limited even further: that they are meant to apply exclusively, not only to causes of property acquisition, but also to a very particular kind of cause of property acquisition. And so, we must now clarify just what this particular kind of cause is.

1.3 Ingredient causation

1.3.1 The definition of ‘aitia’

Let me begin by setting out, in schematic fashion, how I believe Plato is conceiving of the aitia, the particular sort of cause he is concerned with. Consider the following example of a property acquisition: Socrates was previously pale, and is now dark, or tan. In other words, Socrates has come to be dark. Now, the aitia of Socrates’ darkness is what accounts for Socrates’ present darkness. And in the context of the Aitia Argument, I believe that this question should be understood as asking, more specifically: What has changed about or in Socrates, such that he has come to be dark?

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³⁶This need not be seen as a baffling leap: as Rieber (2002) has argued, in wholly contemporary terms, our concept of causation can be analyzed in terms of property acquisition: "In central cases of direction causation, to believe that A caused B to be F is to believe that B acquired the property F from A" (56).

³⁷Another way to put this point is that what Socrates means by "the cause of coming-to-be" is the cause of coming-to-be F. (That is, ‘coming-to-be’ here allows a predicative complement). In this regard, the point can be seen as analogous to the one made by Lesley Brown (in Brown (1999) and elsewhere) about the “complete” use of ‘is’ in the Sophist and other dialogues.

³⁸Even if this proposal seems dubious, it must at least be granted that nothing in the Aitia Argument explicitly contradicts it; all its examples of aitiai are aitiai of a property which its object can stand to lose: Simmias’s bigness, a body’s sickness, Socrates’ being in Athens, and so on. (See also n. 48 below.)

³⁹And, incidentally, has done so according to the Cyclical Argument’s analysis, from a prior state of paleness.

⁴⁰An aitia, recall, is an answer to a διὰ τί question.
In other words, I am suggesting that Plato believes that the aitia of some property acquisition is to be found by focusing on the persisting object of the change and asking what has changed about or in it (rather than, say, looking at the causal history of the object and asking what has happened to it). And although this is not the only way we may think of to account for Socrates’ present darkness, it is, I believe, a perfectly sensible way of doing so. Intuitively, dark Socrates now has something that pale Socrates previously lacked. Plato simply believes that there must be some addition which underlies this transition, and intuitively, it is this new addition that has made dark Socrates dark, whatever that new addition may be. Otherwise, without this addition, Socrates would just be identical to pale Socrates — that is, he would not be dark at all. This, I submit, is the aitia of Socrates’ darkness: what was added to Socrates in his transition from being pale to being dark.

Clearly, this is a very particular way of accounting for Socrates’ darkness. And yet, even from our present-day perspective, it is still a recognizable sort of cause. If we were to ask today why Socrates became tan, one perfectly acceptable answer would be: an increase in the production of melanin in his body — since, as modern biochemistry has shown us, it is an additional quantity of melanin that differentiates the tan from the pale. This is not to deny that other explanations of Socrates’ darkness are also available (for example, ‘exposure to uv radiation’, or ‘an afternoon spent sunbathing on the shores of the Piraeus’). It is simply to state that these are not the sort of causes that Plato is interested in, or that he intends to pick out with his use of ‘aitia’.

In other words, I am suggesting that, in the Aitia Argument, Plato is seeking to discover only those causes which are causes in the sense in which we would say melanin is a cause of darkness in the body: that is, causes that are internal to the object in question and that have, in some sense, been added to it — or what I will call “ingredient causes”.

Here, then, is a more general statement of the view just advanced: Whenever something becomes $F$, it does so because something has been added to it, and this something is to be identified as the aitia of its $F$-ness. Call this the “additive model” of property acquisition.

\[\text{Admittedly, it might also be the case that pale Socrates had something that dark Socrates now lacks: that just as dark Socrates gained something, so too did pale Socrates lose something. Indeed, it is at least conceivable that dark Socrates gained nothing, and that the change is wholly explicable by pale Socrates’ losing something he had. For now, I wish merely to acknowledge this concern; it will be discussed in detail in §3.4.}\]

\[\text{The moniker “ingredient cause” is intended to recall a culinary context, and many illustrative examples of ingredient causes can be drawn from the world of food, as, for instance, caramel sauce becomes salted caramel sauce by the addition of salt, or iced tea becomes sweet iced tea by the addition of sugar.}\]

\[\text{Where, recall, $F$-ness is an opposite, or rather, a converse contrary, according to the definition presented in §1.2 above.}\]

\[\text{Note that this process of “addition” need not (and ultimately, should not) be construed in crassly physicalist terms. That is, that which is added need not be identified as some new matter or stuff (or chemical compound, in the case of tanning). The addition can be (and in some cases must be) identified rather as something more abstract, in the way that, for example, a slab of marble gains the form of a statue. In other words, “that which}\]
Yet what of those cases in which something just is, and does not become, F? Can the aitia of its F-ness be similarly specified? Plato clearly believes it can, as he speaks of aitiai in cases of both property acquisition and property instantiation. Indeed, Plato does not seem to view the two cases as importantly different, and freely alternates between them throughout the Aitia Argument, with no apparent change in analysis. For instance, at 96c–97b, Socrates rapidly switches between acquisition and instantiation cases. Later on, at 100c–e, Socrates similarly alternates between describing the beautiful itself as that by which the many beautiful things are beautiful and that by which they become beautiful. And most significantly, one of the Aitia Argument’s central examples, the explanation of Simmias’s bigness at 102b–d, concerns the instantiation, rather than the acquisition, of a property — why Simmias is, rather than becomes, big. Thus our definition of aitia cannot be limited to cases in which a property has been acquired; it must also be able to account for cases in which a property is instantiated.

However, it is not hard to see why Plato would treat the two cases as similar. For observe: even when Socrates is asking why something is F, this F-ness is always still a property which the object could have acquired, or possibly did acquire at some point in the past. In all the Phaedo’s examples, whether they be acquisitions or instantiations, the properties being explained are properties which their objects can stand to lose. Thus, for all the cases at issue, if x is F, it is possible for x not to be F. Therefore, even if x did not at any point become F, its F-ness can still be explained as if it did. Thus the additive model can be used to explain the aitia of property instantiations as well.

is added to something” should be read simply as that which something has, where the things that something “has” will include not only physical or material constituents and parts, but also features and characteristics more generally. The use of ‘addition’ in this model and its associated definitions is meant only to emphasize that these things are things that the object in question can gain or lose, and things that in some sense belong internally to it.

Specifically, Socrates starts off by asking what makes a person become big (96c7–d6), then immediately proceeds to the question of why a person (or a horse) is big (96d8–e1), then reverts to asking what has been added to these ten things to make them more numerous (96e2–3), then switches to the question of why a two-cubit length is big (96e3–4), and concludes by considering the cause of these things’ coming-to-be two (96e7–97b3).

Are”, at 100c4 and d1; “becomes”, at 100e3 and d8 (at least according to one manuscript). 100d5 also speaks of that which makes (ποιεῖ) a beautiful thing beautiful, which, I suppose, could be taken either way.

Indeed, Socrates explicitly states at several points that he is seeking the cause of “being”, or of why something is (what it is): at 96a10 (ἄφθιτος ἐστιν), 97b6 (ὅτι’ ἔστιν ἐστιν), and 97c7 (τῶν ἀφθινῶν ἀφθινῶν ἐστι). That is, what we would consider its nonessential properties. (I am deliberately avoiding the terminology of essence and accident not only because it is anachronistic, but more significantly because I do not think Plato believed ordinary things to have essences in any robust sense; cf. Mann (2000).)

Here it is crucial to note that although the Phaedo does include examples of properties which their objects cannot stand to lose (hotness vis-à-vis fire, oddness vis-à-vis three), it is never concerned to explain these properties, or to specify the aitia of them (pace Fine (1987), 381) (though cf. n. 51 op. cit.). It is only concerned, rather, to explain the hotness of a body (ἐν τῷ σώματι, 97b6), and the oddness of a certain number of things (ἀριθμῷ, 105b4) – and these are objects which can stand to lose their respective properties. (This is admittedly a contentious reading of ἀριθμῷ, which could also be translated simply as “number”; however, see the remarks in Menn (2010, 41–42) on the proper construal of number terms in the Aitia Argument, which support my reading.)
Therefore, in line with this model, we can define ‘aitia’ (or the ingredient cause) as follows:

**DEFINITION OF ‘AITIA’**

an aitia of something’s $F$-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now $F$

The ultimate confirmation of this definition will be its ability to account for the three aitia principles with which we began our discussion in §1.1. This will be demonstrated in §1.4.

Before we get to this, however, I wish first to highlight the definition’s textual and historical basis.

### 1.3.2 Textual support

An aitia of $F$-ness, according to our definition, makes something $F$ by being added to it. And in fact, additive language is pervasive throughout the Aitia Argument.

The argument presents two basic ways of specifying an aitia: “safe” answers (100c–101e), such as that hotness makes things hot; and “subtler” answers (103c–105c), such as that fire makes things hot. Additive language is especially prominent in its discussion of the subtler answers, which virtually defines them as things which are added to their objects. Consider the following descriptions:

“…those things that compel whatever they occupy ($κατάσχῃ$) to have, not only their own form, but also always the form of some opposite of something as well.” (104d1–3)

“...that thing which brings some opposite to whatever it comes into ($ἐφ' ὅτι ἂν αὐτὸ ἴῃ$)” (105a3–4)

“...that thing which, when it comes to be in ($ἐγγένηται$) any body, makes the body alive” (105c9–10)

The subtler answers, then, explicitly conform to our definition of ‘aitia’.

However, this correspondence would not be of much significance if our definition of ‘aitia’ did not apply to the safe answers as well. Yet Plato is explicit that it does apply to both, in the following passage:

“If you were to ask me what it is that, when it comes to be in ($ἐγγένηται$) any body, makes that body hot, I will not give you that safe and ignorant answer, that it is hotness, but a subtler one, thanks to what we now say: that it is fire. And if you were to ask what it is that, when it comes to be in ($ἐγγένηται$) any body, makes that body sick, I will not say that it is sickness, but that it is fever. And if asked what it is that, when it comes to be in ($ἐγγένηται$) any number, makes that number odd, I will not say that it is oddness, but that it is oneness. And so on for the rest.” (105b8–c6)

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50In cases of property instantiation where the aitia was never actually added to the object (i.e., cases where the object has always been $F$), this definition would need to be slightly modified to include an alternative specification of the aitia (perhaps as that which is in the object, and whose removal would make it un-$F$). For convenience, I will omit this modification in what follows, but it should always be understood as tacitly there.

51Cf. 104d5–7: “Whatever the form of the three occupies must be, not only three, but also odd.”
Even though the purpose of this passage is to recommend the subtler answers over the safe ones, this is only because the safe answers are less informative (this, I take it, is the sense in which they are “ignorant”). The safe answers are still just as legitimate as aitiai, and – as this excerpt makes clear – like the subtler answers, they are things which are added to and come to be in something else, and thereby make that thing gain some new property.

Furthermore, although this additive language is most prominent in sections like these at the tail end of the Aitia Argument, it is in fact present from the very start, and in the safe answers proper, as well. As Socrates states early on:

“Nothing makes anything beautiful other than the Beautiful itself’s presence or association or whatever its mode and means of being added (προσγενομένη) may be.” (100d4–6)

The verb I have translated here as “being added”, προσγενομένη, is significant. It is a compound verb formed from the root γίγνομαι (“to come to be”) plus the prefix πρός, which explicitly carries the meaning of “in addition to”. In the above remark, Socrates uses this verb to describe, in the most neutral language, the way in which the Beautiful itself makes other things beautiful. In other words, the Beautiful itself is something which, when it comes to be added to something else, makes that to which it is added become beautiful. Therefore, the safe answers, too, conform to our definition of ‘aitia’.

And in fact, the very same additive language appears earlier on in the Aitia Argument, in reference to the sorts of “aitiai” that Socrates ultimately rejects. Compare the following two remarks:

“Earlier I thought that it was obvious to everyone that [a human being grows] on account of eating and drinking: for whenever portions of flesh from food have been added (προσγενωταί) to other portions of flesh, and portions of bone have been added (προσεῖναι) to other portions of bone, and likewise, by the same principle, whenever kindred things have been added (προσγενηταί) to each of the others, it is then that that which was a small mass has gone on to become big, and in this way the small person becomes big.” (96c7–d5)

“...And it seemed to me even more obvious that ten was more numerous than eight on account of two being added (προσεῖναι) to it.” (96e1–3)

Therefore, from the very start, Plato conceives of the aitia as that thing which, when added to something else, makes it become thus-and-so. That is, the problem with these supposed “aitiai” is not that they do not conform to our definition; they quite clearly do. The problem,

52As Socrates says immediately before the quoted passage, “In addition to that safe answer which I gave at first, I see another kind of safety, thanks to what we are now saying” (103b6–8). So in fact, both the safe and the subtler answers are “safe” – which I take to indicate that they both identify equally legitimate aitiai.

53This verb is different from the verbs highlighted in the preceding remarks, but insignificantly so; it is a compound verb formed from the same prefix πρός (“in addition to”), but with the root εἰμί (“to be”) rather than γίγνομαι (“to come to be”).
rather, is merely one of misidentification: as it will turn out, a person becomes big by the addition of bigness, not of food; and ten is more numerous by the additional presence of numerousness, not of twoness. In other words, Socrates is always seeking the ingredient cause in the Aitia Argument; his divergence from his younger self consists not in his shifting his attention to a different kind of cause, but in correctly identifying the kind of cause he has been after from the start.

1.3.3 Historical support

Let it, then, be granted that Plato adopted the additive model of property acquisition within the Aitia Argument. Nonetheless, we may still wonder why he chose to do so.

In fact, this “choice” was not all that radical. Rather, the historical evidence suggests that Plato, in adopting the additive model, was simply adopting a familiar and well entrenched mode of explanation. It was, for instance, the model adopted by Anaxagoras. I am not referring to Anaxagoras’s identification of nous as the aitia, but rather his general analysis of coming-to-be. According to Anaxagoras, there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as coming-to-be, and what we believe to be such is really just mixture; as he says:

“Coming-to-be and perishing are customarily believed in incorrectly by the Greeks, since nothing comes to be or perishes, but rather it is mixed together from and segregated into the things that are. And thus they would be correct to call coming-to-be ‘being mixed together’ and perishing ‘being separated’.”

That is, according to Anaxagoras, all coming-to-be is a matter of already existing things being mixed together.

Of course, Anaxagoras does not see this analysis of coming-to-be as applying exclusively or even especially to cases of property acquisition. Indeed, he uses this analysis, first and foremost, to explain the coming-to-be of what we would call substances, for example, of “human beings and the other living creatures that have soul” (DK59 B4(a)). In such cases, the mixing may not seem much like addition, but rather like a number of things coming together to form something new. However, Anaxagoras does not think his analysis to be limited to such cases, and freely applies it to cases of what we would consider property acquisition, as well – and in these cases, the mixing does seem like addition. Consider, for example, his explanation of growth:

54DK59 B17, from Simplicius, Physics 163.20–24. The above translation follows most closely that of Furley (1976, 48).

55Or, perhaps more accurately, Anaxagoras does not (have the conceptual resources to) distinguish cases in which a persisting object takes on a new property from cases in which a new object itself comes into existence, and thus ends up treating both kinds of coming-to-be as a single phenomenon. This conflation was in fact pervasive throughout the pre-Socratics, and never explicitly distinguished until Aristotle (on which topic see Heidel (1906)).
"For instance, we partake of food that is simple and of one kind – bread, or water – and from this are nourished hair, vein, artery, flesh, sinews, bones, and the other parts. And so, since this is what happens, it must be granted that in the consumed food there are all the things that there are, and that from these things all things grow.” (DK59 A46, from Aëtius P 1.3.5.)

This fragment – which is clearly echoed at Phaedo 96c7–d5, quoted on p. 28 above – shows Anaxagoras adopting an additive analysis of growth (or the acquisition of bigness): hair becomes longer by the addition of portions of hair, flesh becomes bigger by the addition of portions of flesh, and so on.

Furthermore, we should not think that this additive analysis works only with growth (to which it is, admittedly, particularly well suited). As we have seen, growth is analyzed as the combination of elemental substances such as hair, flesh, and so on, which Anaxagoras believes are latent in everything, and thus available to be added to other things. Yet Anaxagoras also includes among his elemental substances a variety of opposites: the wet and the dry, the hot and the cold, the bright and the dark, and the rare and the dense. These, too, are held by Anaxagoras to be latent in everything, and thus also can be added to other things. Yet when the hot (from some food) is added to the hot (in some body), the result in this case will not be growth, but rather heating – the body will become hotter. And in this regard, Anaxagoras’s additive analysis of coming-to-be can be recognized to extend to properties quite generally – and thus, as an important precursor to Plato’s additive model of property acquisition in the Phaedo.

This parallel between Anaxagoras and Plato should not come as a surprise. Anaxagoras is discussed at length in the Aitia Argument at 97c–99c, and the affinities between his and Plato’s models of explanation and predication have long been recognized by scholars. However, there is another precursor to the Phaedo’s additive model which is not commonly emphasized in discussions of the Aitia Argument: its Hippocratic provenance. In particular, our concept of the ingredient cause has strong affinities with the Hippocratic concept of dunamis – the various “powers” inherent in things (and specifically, in bodies), which manifest themselves as observable properties, in accordance with the particular power that they are. Consider this representative passage:

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54Cf. DK59 B4(b), B12, and B15. The inclusion of the opposites among Anaxagoras’s elemental substances is emphasized by Peck (1951, 31–33), who also argues that this inclusion was not so much an original contribution of Anaxagoras’s as something he inherited from thinkers before him, and especially from the Hippocratic writers.

55Cf. in particular Brentlinger (1972), Furley (1976), and Furley (2002). I differ from these other accounts in offering an explanation of what stands behind these affinities – namely, a shared conception of causation – and by highlighting the pervasiveness of Anaxagorean/additive language throughout the Aitia Argument.

56The convergence between the Hippocratic and Platonic uses of dunamis is succinctly summarized by von Staden (1998) and Moline (1988, 84–88), both of whom take it as evidence that Plato was directly or indirectly familiar with at least some of the Hippocratic Corpus.
"In a human being are present (ἐν) salty and bitter and sweet and sharp [acidic] and harsh [sour] and insipid and countless other things having dunameis of all sorts, both in number and in strength. These things, when all mixed and mingled up with one another, are neither apparent, nor do they hurt the person. But whenever one of them is separated out and comes to be by itself, then it is apparent, and hurts the person. And thus, concerning those foods which are unsuitable to us and hurtful to the person when administered, each one is something pure, either purely bitter, or salty, or sharp, or something else pure and strong, and on account of this we are disordered by them, just as we are by the secretions in the body." (On Ancient Medicine, 14.23–33)59

That is, according to the author of On Ancient Medicine, a quality such as saltiness manifests itself in the body when salty food is consumed, ingested, and added to the body, thus offsetting its prior balance.60 In a similar vein, the author of De Victu devotes several chapters to analyzing the properties of various foods and drinks – roughly, whether they are hot or dry or cold or moist – and then connects these properties to the heating, drying, cooling, or moistening effects they have on the body.61 In other words, according to both of these analyses, observable changes or manifestations of new properties in the body are explained by the fact that something – namely, food which has those properties – has been added to it. Or, as the author of De flatibus states:

"Opposites are remedies of opposites. Indeed, medicine is addition and subtraction (πρόσθεσις καὶ ἀφαίρεσις): subtraction of what is in excess, and addition of what is wanting." (1.25–27)

That is, according to the author of this text, medicine is the addition or subtraction of opposites to or from the body, which thereby counteracts or promotes the presence of the corresponding opposites. In this way, Hippocratic medicine is guided by an additive conception of the changes it aims to bring about.

Thus the additive model of property acquisition has historical support as well. Indeed, one could reasonably read Plato in the Aitia Argument as adopting the Anaxagorean and Hippocratic model of change and extending it to properties which neither Anaxagoras nor the Hippocratics ever considered – not only to bigness, hotness, and sickness, but also to beauty, oddness, and life.

59 Some, such as Diller [1954], have suggested that On Ancient Medicine might postdate Plato, in which case my evidentiary use of it here would be without warrant; cf., however, the refutation of this suggestion in Moline [1984, 212 n. 13].

60 Cf. the discussion of this passage in Miller [1954, 189].

61 De Victu 2.39–56; cf. especially the detailed analysis of barley in 2.40. This summary of the discussion is indebted to the synopsis presented in Miller [1959, 155 ff.]
1.3.4 Acquisition by subtraction?

However, despite this textual and historical support, there is a salient difficulty which the additive model would seem to face: namely, the fact that not all property acquisitions come about via an addition. Rather, some property acquisitions require merely a subtraction. Insofar as it cannot handle such cases, the additive model would seem to be a poor analysis of change.

An example will help sharpen this point. Previously we imagined Socrates becoming dark from being pale. As we saw then, this change is plausibly explained, in accordance with additive model, by an increase in the amount of melanin in his body. But now imagine Socrates’ tan wearing off, and Socrates becoming again pale from being dark. What accounts for Socrates’ paleness in this case?

According to the additive model, there must be some new entity that was added to Socrates’ body, in virtue of which he is now pale (what we might call “leukin”). Yet the most natural – and indeed, the biochemically correct – explanation of this case is that Socrates became pale merely by a decrease in the amount of melanin in his body. That is, Socrates’ paleness seems to be adequately accounted for simply by the subtraction of the ingredient cause of his darkness. This, then, is a clear counterexample to the additive model: a case in which an object has acquired some property, and yet nothing has been added to it.

Many other such counterexamples could easily be supplied, and I do not dispute their legitimacy. Nonetheless, we should be sensitive to the fact that the recognition of privation as a principle of change was an Aristotelian innovation, which took no small amount of philosophical labour on his part to work out. Thus, the phenomenon of acquisition by subtraction, though obvious and intuitive to us, need not have been so to Plato. After all, since Parmenides, it was a familiar Presocratic tenet that nothing could come to be from nothing, or what is not, and this would rule out acquisition by subtraction from the outset. Similarly, if we look at the Phaedo’s specific historical antecedents, we see that although both Anaxagoras and the Hippocratic writers sought to explain the manifestation of certain opposite properties, they never thought to explain the manifestation of one opposite by the absence of another: rather, each property was accounted for its own specific entity.

Thus there is good reason to assume that Plato would have found an exclusively additive model to be the natural model of property acquisition. And indeed, this assumption is confirmed by many of the Aitia Argument’s specific examples, which adopt additive analyses

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⁶³That Plato was still influenced by this way of thinking in the Phaedo is at least suggested by the clear evidence that he did not (figure out how to) refute the Parmenidean principle about not-being until decidedly late in his career, in the Sophist (cf. 257b ff.).
in cases where we may more naturally expect subtractive ones. At 103c ff., for instance, we learn that something can become hot by the addition of fire, and that something becomes cold, not simply by the removal of fire (or even of hotness), but by the addition of something else, snow. Similarly, at 105c, sickness is treated not as the absence of health but as the presence of some disease, such as fever. And perhaps most notably, even dying gets assimilated to the additive model in the Aitia Argument. Whereas this would seem to be an obvious example of change by subtraction (the body losing its soul), Socrates repeatedly speaks of death as a thing which “comes to” or “approaches” and is thus added to, the body when it dies. These analyses are likely to strike us as counterintuitive, but this counterintuitiveness betrays Plato’s thoroughgoing commitment to the additive model.

Or take the example at 101a, where Socrates dismisses the commonplace explanation which holds that a bigger person is bigger than a smaller person by the bigger person’s head, and that the smaller person is smaller than the bigger person by the same head. Socrates dismisses this explanation because this would be to say that the bigger person is bigger and the smaller person smaller “by the same thing” (τῷ αὐτῷ, 101a7). Yet clearly what the commonplace explanation actually means is that the bigger person has (the extra height of) their head, whereas the smaller person lacks (the extra height of) this head. By identifying these two explanations as coming to the same thing, Plato reveals his general disregard for explanations by subtraction. Understanding and accepting this fact is key to making sense of the concept of aitia he is working with.

1.3.5 Characteristics of ingredient causes

There is, then, a wealth of evidence in favour of attributing our definition of ‘aitia’ to Plato. In the next section we will see that this definition can be seen to stand behind all three aitia principles. Before we can get to this, however, we must first draw out two further characteristics of ingredient causes.

The first is what I will call the “Perfection Lemma”:

PERFECTION LEMMA

\( a \) is an aitia of \( F \)-ness \( \implies \) \( a \) is perfectly \( F \)

Cf. 106b3: \( επ’ αἰτίαν \) \( τῇ \) and 106e4: \( επιόντος \).

The case under consideration is, apparently, one in which the smaller person only comes up to the height of the bigger person’s shoulders, and the bigger person can thus be said to exceed the smaller by (the height of) their head.

Cf. the correct analysis of bigness and smallness at 102b–102d. According to this passage, Simmias is said to be bigger than Socrates (and Socrates smaller than Simmias) because there is bigness in Simmias and smallness in Socrates. In other words, a big person is big by having bigness, whereas a small person is small, not merely by lacking bigness, but also by having something else, namely, smallness.
At first blush, this claim may seem surprising. In fact, however, it is a natural extension of our concept of the ingredient cause.

An example will help illustrate this point. Imagine that we are served some spicy ketchup at a restaurant and wish to figure out what makes the ketchup spicy. If we had the ketchup’s recipe, the answer would be easy: it would just be whichever ingredient in the recipe does not appear in the recipe for regular, non-spicy ketchup. But even without the recipe and without knowing what the particular ingredient is, we know that that ingredient must be something which is itself spicy. After all, in normal ketchup, there is nothing which is spicy. Yet in our spicy ketchup, there clearly is something which is spicy – otherwise, the ketchup would not be spicy in the first place. And this ingredient in the spicy ketchup which is itself spicy is precisely that which has been added to the spicy ketchup such that it is now spicy. Thus, the ingredient cause of the ketchup’s spiciness is itself spicy.

Yet we can say more. The sense in which the ingredient cause of the ketchup’s spiciness “is spicy” is clearly different from the sense in which the ketchup “is spicy”. For observe: We say that the ketchup is spicy, but it is not spicy through and through.\textsuperscript{\textbullet} The ketchup is also tangy (from its vinegar), sweet (from its corn syrup), and earthy (from its tomatoes), and these features do not contribute to its spiciness, and are possessed independently of its spiciness. In contrast, the ingredient cause of the ketchup’s spiciness must be spicy through and through. If it were not – that is, if it had some feature which did not contribute to its spiciness – then we could abstract away that errant feature, and define a new, more precise ingredient cause from what was left over. (For instance, it is not the sriracha in the ketchup \textit{per se} that is spicy, but rather the chili peppers in the sriracha, or even more accurately, the capsaicin in the chili peppers.) That is, the ingredient cause of the ketchup’s spiciness must contribute wholly to its spiciness – and in this regard the ingredient cause must be perfectly spicy.\textsuperscript{\textbullet} To generalize, then, we may say that an aitia of something’s $F$-ness is itself perfectly $F$, just as the Perfection Lemma states.

Textual support for the Perfection Lemma is not hard to come by. In his discussion of the subtler answers, Socrates states that any aitia of $F$-ness will be called by the name ‘$F$-ness’ “for all of time”\textsuperscript{\textbullet}\textsuperscript{\textbullet}. This is in contrast to any of the many $F$ things, which always stand to lose

\textsuperscript{\textbullet} Remember that, here as elsewhere, the property under consideration is always a property which its object can stand to lose (cf. §\textsuperscript{\textbullet}. If some object were $F$ through and through, this would no longer be the case.

\textsuperscript{\textbullet} Which is not to say that it must be only spicy, but that any other features it has must also contribute to its spiciness. That is, I do not wish my use of the word “perfectly” to suggest exclusivity or singularity (or “austerity”, in McCabe (1994)’s sense). Fire, as the ingredient cause of something’s hotness, is perfectly hot and also perfectly fiery.

\textsuperscript{\textbullet} 1032–5: “Therefore, it is true, concerning some things of this sort, that it is not only the Form itself which deserves its name for all of time, but also something else, which is not that Form, but always has that Form’s feature, whenever it exists.” Cf. the specific application of this claim at 1045–7: “Does it not seem to you that threeness should always be called both by its own name and by the name of the odd, even though the odd is not
their $F$-ness and thus no longer be said to be $F$.

Furthermore, the Perfection Lemma is not a commitment peculiar to Plato; rather, it is a consequence of the additive model itself, and also accepted by that model’s other adherents. Anaxagoras, for instance, was committed to something like it: his “aitiai”, or elements, are the pure portions or ingredients which contribute to the impure mixtures of the macroscopic physical world – pure flesh, pure bone, pure blood, and so on. The Hippocratic writers accepted something like it as well: in the passage quoted on p. 31, each of the foods which brings out some change in the body is said to be itself “something pure, either purely bitter, or salty, or sharp, or something else pure and strong.” Purity and perfection are not the same thing, of course, but this evidence is sufficient to show that even before Plato an aitia of $F$-ness was thought of as itself $F$, and as $F$ in an exceptional sense.

Of course, the introduction of the Perfection Lemma prompts an immediate follow-up: What does it mean “to be perfectly $F$”? Providing a full answer to this question is outside the scope of this chapter[7]. For now, it will suffice to note one specific consequence of the “perfectly” relation, what I will call the “Exclusion Lemma”:

**EXCLUSION LEMMA**

\[ a \text{ is perfectly } F \implies a \text{ is in no way un-}F \]

Even without knowing the full nature of the “perfectly” relation, it is not hard to see why the Exclusion Lemma holds true. Recall that, as was noted above, an aitia of $F$-ness must be $F$ through and through (this is part of what it means “to be perfectly $F$”). That is, an aitia of $F$-ness has no features which do not contribute to its $F$-ness. Yet if something has a feature which contributes to its $F$-ness, then it is thereby not un-$F$ with respect to that feature. Therefore, since an aitia of $F$-ness has only features which contribute to its $F$-ness, it is thereby un-$F$ with respect to none of them: an aitia of $F$-ness is in no way un-$F$.

Furthermore, it is clear that Plato is strongly committed to the Exclusion Lemma within the *Phaedo*. Indeed, the Exclusion Lemma is virtually the theme of the Aitia Argument from 102b to 105e, and is encapsulated neatly in the following remark:

“Take a look, then, at what I wish to make clear. It is this: not only do those opposites evidently not admit one another, but there are also those things which, though not themselves opposites of one another, always have the opposites, and these things also seem not to admit that form which is opposite to the one in them. (104b6–10)"
However, it should also be noted that, as far as our evidence indicates, the Exclusion Lemma is a principle unique to Plato. Which is not to say that any of his predecessors denied it; indeed, they would have accepted it as trivial. According to both Anaxagoras and the Hippocratic writers, that which is perfectly $F$ is not merely in no way un-$F$; it is in no way any other property. That is, before Plato, to be perfectly $F$ was to be $F$ and only $F$. (Or, we might say, it was to be purely $F$.) The Phaedo explicitly denies this way of thinking: fire, in addition to being perfectly fiery, is also hot (and perfectly hot, we might add); threeness, in addition to being perfectly three, is also odd; soul, in addition to being perfectly psychic, is also immortal and indestructible. That is, Plato seems to have adopted a new, narrower, and more defensible understanding of what it means to be perfectly $F$ – which is precisely what his thematization of the Exclusion Lemma suggests.

### 1.4 Deriving the aitia principles

We are now ready to follow through on the promises of §1.1 and demonstrate how the Aitia Argument’s three aitia principles all derive from the account of ingredient causation defended above.

To review, the principles which we will be deriving are:

- **No Opposite Aitia (NOA)**
  both of a pair of opposites cannot be aitiai of the same thing

- **No Aitiai of Opposites (NAO)**
  the same thing cannot be an aitia of both of a pair of opposites

- **Not Oppositely Qualified (NOQ)**
  an aitia of $F$-ness cannot itself be un-$F$

These principles will be derived with the help of our two lemmas:

- **Perfection Lemma**
  $a$ is an aitia of $F$-ness $\implies a$ is perfectly $F$

- **Exclusion Lemma**
  $a$ is perfectly $F$ $\implies a$ is in no way un-$F$

...which themselves were derived from the following definition:

- **Definition of ‘Aitia’**
  an aitia of something’s $F$-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now $F$
1.4.1 Deriving NOQ

Let us begin with the third of the aitia principles listed, as it is the easiest to derive. The Not Oppositely Qualified principle states that an aitia of $F$-ness cannot itself be un-$F$\textsuperscript{73}. This follows immediately from our two lemmas: According to the Perfection Lemma, something is an aitia of $F$-ness only if it is perfectly $F$; and according to the Exclusion Lemma, something is perfectly $F$ only if it is in no way un-$F$. A formalization of this proof is presented in Figure 1.3 below.

1. ASSUMPTION FOR REDUCTIO: Let $a$ be...
   
   (a) an aitia of $F$-ness,
   (b) which is itself un-$F$

2. $a$ is perfectly $F$ [\textsuperscript{74}PERFECTION LEMMA]

3. $a$ is in no way un-$F$ [\textsuperscript{75}EXCLUSION LEMMA]

4. $\perp$ \textsuperscript{[11]+[13]}

   $\therefore \sim \Diamond [a$ an aitia of $F$-ness is itself un-$F$ $]$ \textsuperscript{[12]+[15]}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.3}
\caption{Proof of Not Oppositely Qualified}
\end{figure}

This derivation of NOQ is significant because it pushes against the tendency in the literature to dismiss the principle as unsound, or simply to neglect it.\textsuperscript{74} Granted, NOQ may seem susceptible to embarrassing counterexamples. As has already been mentioned, a hard, solid meat tenderizer seems to cause a cut of beef to become soft and tender. Or, to take another example a living, breathing axe-murderer seems to cause his victims to become dead. Or, as one contemporary commentator has remarked:

...If a stone causes a window to break, we can hardly conclude that the stone was itself breaking; if a loud noise overhead causes me to look up, that is not because the loud noise was itself looking up.\textsuperscript{76}

However, such objections get off the ground only when NOQ is divorced from the ingredient causal model which Plato is working with in the Aitia Argument. As we can now see, given our definition of ‘aitia’, all these counterexamples pick out the wrong sort of cause. To wit, the meat tenderizer is not something added to the beef – it is does not, in the process of tenderizing, become part of the meat. Rather, the tenderizer is external to the beef, and thus

\textsuperscript{73}Or, more precisely, that it is not possible for an aitia of $F$-ness to be itself un-$F$ (i.e., taking the modal operator wide scope).

\textsuperscript{74}As highlighted in §1.1, esp. n. 12.

\textsuperscript{75}Adapted from Sedley (1998, 223).

\textsuperscript{76}Bostock (1986, 155).
does not even qualify as a *candidate* aitia of the beef’s softness. Likewise for the axe-murderer and the flung stone: they are external to their effects, and in no sense added to them. In other words, external causes – though they may be the meat and potatoes of causality for us – fall outside of the concept of ingredient causation at play in the *Phaedo*.

Yet even more significantly, our account makes *no* look rather sensible, for if we are asking what has been added to something such that it is *F*, it would indeed be “monstrous” (101b1) if we pointed to something about it that was un-*F* (as if one were to explain the fluffy softness of a Pomeranian by citing its hard, solid bones). Rather, we had better point to something about it that is *F*. This was the reasoning behind the Perfection Lemma, and the same reasoning underlies the Not Oppositely Qualified principle.

### 1.4.2 Deriving NAO

The No Aitiai of Opposites principle states that the same thing cannot be an aitia of opposites.\(^7\) This also follows immediately from our two lemmas: If something is the aitia of something’s *F*-ness, this means that it is perfectly *F*, and thus is in no way un-*F*. Yet if that same thing were also the aitia of something’s un-*F*-ness, it would also be perfectly un-*F*, and thus in no way be *F*; but this is a direct contradiction.\(^8\) This proof is formalized in Figure 1.2 below.

1. **ASSUMPTION FOR REDUCTIO**: Let *a* be...
   (a) an aitia of *F*-ness, and
   (b) an aitia of un-*F*-ness
2. *a* is perfectly *F* [\(\Box\) + PERFECTION LEMMA]
3. *a* is in no way un-*F* [\(\Box\) + EXCLUSION LEMMA]
4. *a* is perfectly un-*F* [\(\Box\) + PERFECTION LEMMA]
5. \(\perp\) \(\Box\) [something is an aitia of both *F*-ness and un-*F*-ness] \(\Box\) \(\Box\)

**Figure 1.2**: Proof of No Aitiai of Opposites

This derivation shows that NAO, like NOQ, follows from the two characteristics of ingredient causes highlighted in §1.3.5: that an aitia of *F*-ness is perfectly *F*, and also is in no way

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\(^7\) Or, more precisely, that it is not possible for something to be an aitia of both *F*-ness and un-*F*-ness (i.e., taking the modal operator wide scope, as with NOQ). Furthermore, this principle should be understood as qualified by ‘at the same time’. Recall, however, that some aitiai (namely, Forms) are universal in character, and can be in multiple things at once.

\(^8\) Assuming here that to be, *strictly speaking*, *F* is a way in which to be *F*, and thus inconsistent with being *in no way* *F*. The precise nature of this inconsistency will be clarified in Chapter 3, and specifically in §3.5.4.
un-\(F\). That is, our derivation shows \(\text{nao}\) to be grounded in the properties which ingredient causes do and do not instantiate. This differs from other accounts of the principle, which see it as deriving from the fact that an aitia of \(F\)-ness must specify a sufficient condition for \(F\)-ness (since a sufficient condition for \(F\)-ness cannot also be a sufficient condition for un-\(F\)-ness).\(^7\) I agree that an aitia of \(F\)-ness must be sufficient for \(F\)-ness. However, according to my account, this is a consequence of what an aitia is, rather than a part of its definition. An ingredient cause of \(F\)-ness makes that to which it is added become \(F\), and is thereby sufficient for \(F\)-ness. Getting this order of explanation right is crucial, because only in this way can we see \(\text{nao}\) and \(\text{noq}\) as deriving from the same general model of causation.

### 1.4.3 Deriving \(\text{noa}\)

Finally, the No Opposite Aitiai principle states that both of a pair of opposites cannot be aitiai of the same thing.\(^8\) This principle, in contrast, does not follow from our lemmas so immediately, and its derivation, though possible, is significantly more complicated.

Let us, then, approach this derivation by means of an example. Suppose, in violation of \(\text{noa}\), that both of a pair of opposites were aitiai of the same property. For instance, one may plausibly assume that coldness (or cooling) is an aitia of hardness (or solidification) in things like water, and that hotness (or heating) is also an aitia of hardness, though in things like clay. Initially, this supposition may seem to be in accordance with our definition of ‘aitia’: coldness, whenever added to warm, liquid water, makes that water harden and freeze; whereas hotness, whenever added to moist, unfired clay, makes that clay harden and dry. However – and this is the key move – hotness can also be added to water, and when added to solid water, it makes that water soften and melt. Hotness, then, would be an aitia of both hardness (in clay) and softness (in water). But this is prohibited by \(\text{nao}\). Therefore, by reductio, neither hotness nor coldness can be aitiai of hardness, in accordance with \(\text{noa}\).

The key to this proof lies in recognizing that any ordinary thing that admits of one of a pair of opposites will also admit of the other. This is supported by our definition of ‘aitia’: Since any ordinary thing that is \(F\) has had an aitia of \(F\)-ness added to it, it therefore can, at least in principle, have that aitia subtracted from it. Yet if that aitia is subtracted, then the thing will no longer be \(F\), and will thus be less \(F\) than it was before. And, according to the way in which Plato is conceiving of opposites (or ‘converse contraries’; cf. §1.2), to be less \(F\) is to be more un-\(F\). And according to our definition of ‘aitia’, any ordinary thing that is un-\(F\) has had an aitia of un-\(F\)-ness added to it. Therefore, whenever an ordinary thing loses an aitia of

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7 These other accounts were canvassed in §1.1, esp. n. 8.

8 Or, more precisely, that it is not possible for both \(G\)-ness and un-\(G\)-ness to be aitiai of \(F\)-ness (yet again taking the modal operator wide scope).
In the cases currently under consideration, the putative aitiai are themselves other opposites – for example, hotness and coldness as putative aitiai of hardness. In this regard, when such an aitia is added to something, that thing will become both the aitia’s own property and the property which it is an aitia of. For example, when coldness is added to water, the water will become both cold and hard, as there is now both coldness and hardness in it. Therefore, when coldness is taken away, the water will become both hot and soft (less cold and less hard). Therefore, in the process of losing the aitia of its hardness, the water acquires an aitia of softness and of hotness. It is, of course, possible that it would acquire two separate aitiai in this case: one of its softness and another of its hotness. Yet if it made sense at the start to assume that coldness was the aitia of the water’s hardness, then it should make just as much sense to suppose that hotness would be the aitia of its softness. But then hotness would be both an aitia of softness (in water) and hardness (in clay), and this is in contradiction to NAO.

A formalization of this proof, following the same basic logic but with more precise notation, is presented in Figure 1.3 below. This proof begins by assuming (for reductio) the

**Assumption for reductio:** Let...

(a) G-ness be an aitia of F-ness, and
(b) un-G-ness be an aitia of F-ness

2. Let x be some F thing, for which G-ness is the aitia of its F-ness [1a]

   (a) x is F [2]
   (b) there is G-ness in x [2]
   (c) x is G [2b]

3. Let x* be x without its G-ness

   (a) x* is un-G [3]
   (b) x* is un-F [2+3]

4. there is un-G-ness in x* [3a]

5. Assumption: un-G-ness is that which was added to x*, such that x* is un-F

6. un-G-ness is the aitia of x*’s un-F-ness [3+DEFINITION OF ‘AITIA’]

7. un-G-ness is an aitia of un-F-ness [6]

8. ⊥ [11+7+NAO]

∴ ~ ◇ [both G-ness and un-G-ness are aitiai of F-ness] [4+8]

**Figure 1.3: Proof of No Opposite Aitiai**

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*aThe oddity of this result is related to Plato’s commitment to an exclusively additive model of property acquisition, and his failure to recognize cases of property acquisition by subtraction; cf. §3.4 above.*
existence of two opposites, G-ness and un-G-ness, both of which are aitiai of another opposite, F-ness. It then posits a particular F thing, x, for which G-ness is the aitia of its F-ness. It next posits another particular thing, x*, which is x without its G-ness (or x with its G-ness taken away). Since G-ness was the aitia of x’s F-ness, we know that x* is un-F; and since x* no longer has G-ness, we know that x* is un-G, and therefore that there is un-G-ness in it.

Now, from here, it is consistent to assume that the addition of this un-G-ness is what makes x*, not only un-G, but also un-F. (Recall that we have been assuming from the start of this proof that an opposite can be an aitia of some other opposite.) Therefore, un-G-ness is an aitia of un-F-ness. Yet un-G-ness was initially assumed to be an aitia of F-ness, and according to the No Aitiai of Opposites principle, it cannot be both.

Thus, at least one of our assumptions must be overturned – either the initial assumption for reductio or the mid-proof assumption about un-G-ness. Yet if we are granting the initial assumption that some opposites can be aitiai of other opposites, it would seem ad hoc to deny the mid-proof assumption that this particular opposite is an aitia of some other particular opposite. Thus, it would not make sense to overturn the mid-proof assumption alone. Rather, we must overturn just the initial assumption, or both; either way, NOA is thereby derived.

As further evidence in its favour, this derivation of NOA also illuminates the actual example upon which the principle is based: Socrates’ denial that both addition and division can be aitiai of twoness. At first blush, these may not seem like bad explanations: addition is proposed as the aitia “when somebody adds a one to a one” (96e8) and division “when somebody divides a one” (97a6). That is, some things really do seem to become two after being added together, and others really do seem to become two after being divided. What, then, is wrong with these explanations?

In accordance with our proof, it is that any pair of things which has become two by division can, at least in principle, be added back together, thus reversing the division and thereby returning them to their prior oneness. Likewise, any pair of things which has

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82This posit is warranted by the starting assumption that G-ness is an aitia of F-ness. That is, I am taking for granted an instantiation and generalization rule for aitiai, namely: a is an aitia of F-ness if and only if there is some x such that a is the aitia of x’s F-ness. This rule is tacitly invoked in steps 3 and 4 of Figure 3.

83That x’s G-ness can be taken away from x is warranted by the Phaedo’s adherence to the additive model. Here as elsewhere, ‘F-ness’ and ‘G-ness’ refer to properties which their objects can stand to lose.

84These steps rely on another tacit assumption, invoked in steps 2 and 4, namely: x is F if and only if there is F-ness in x. This is a consequence of the additive model.

85“Addition” and “division” translate πρόσθεσις and σχίσις, which refer to the physical (rather than mathematical) processes of adding and dividing, or what might be more transparently (though less elegantly) translated as “grouping together” and “splitting apart”.

86Socrates reiterates these qualifications at 101b10–c2: “Would you not avoid saying that the addition is the cause of coming to be two, when a one is added to a one, or that division is the cause, when [a one] is divided?”

87Bailey (2014, 16) voices the objection as follows: “Many readers, on encountering for the first time [Socrates’ dismissal of addition and division as causes of twoness], reasonably respond: why should not the process of addition account for the fact that some pairs are two in number, while the process of division accounts for yet others? What is wrong with holding that addition and division cause pairhood indifferently?”
become two by addition can, at least in principle, be divided back apart, thus reversing the addition and making them again one. Thus, insofar as both addition and division are held to be aitiai of twoness, they will also each be aitiai of oneness – a contradictory result, which reveals them to be truly aitiai of neither.⁸⁸

Nonetheless, some have contended that Plato is not ultimately committed to ΝΟΑ – that the principle, when it appears, is merely provisional, and later withdrawn once the Phaedo’s account is fully fleshed out. The essence of the argument is this: Initially, Socrates states that we should “dismiss addition and division and other such subtleties (τὰς ἄλλας τὰς τοιαύτας κομψείας)” (101c7–8), and instead cling to the so-called “safe” answer that the many F things are F by F-ness. Yet at 103c–105c, Socrates develops his so-called “subler” answers (κομψοτέραν, 105c2), which show that F-ness is not the only aitia of F-ness, and some of these subtleties have been thought to contradict ΝΟΑ. In particular, at 105c4, Socrates identifies fever as an aitia of sickness; but then hypothermia, which is presumably fever’s opposite, should also count as an aitia of sickness.⁹⁰ So it may be that whereas opposite aitiai are dismissed at the start of the Aitia Argument, they are integrated back in by the end.⁹²

Our analysis, however, suggests otherwise. The identification of fever as an aitia of sickness does not overturn ΝΟΑ, because fever and hypothermia are not in fact opposites, at least according to our converse contraries definition. To wit, someone with a body temperature of 103°F is feverish in comparison with someone with a temperature of 98.6°F, but that does not entail that the latter is hypothermic in comparison with the former. Rather, the latter is simply of an appropriate body temperature and healthy. The actual opposites in this case are simply hotness and coldness, of which fever and hypothermia are the extreme limits. And hotness and coldness, of course, are not aitiai of sickness, just as ΝΟΑ entails, since hotness makes hypothermic people healthy, as coldness does for the feverish.⁹¹

Therefore, we need not assume that ΝΟΑ is dropped as an aitia principle at any point in the Aitia Argument. And indeed, we should not assume this, either, since as this section has shown, ΝΟΑ follows from the very same concept of ‘aitia’ as do ΝΑΟ and ΝΟΩ.

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⁸⁸I am here treating ‘oneness’ and ‘twoness’ as opposites, which is not, strictly speaking, accurate, but is, I think, admissible in this case. (The example could just as well be run with ‘many’ – the proper opposite of ‘one’ – in place of ‘two’.)

⁸⁹Cf. Gallop (1975, 211). See Kanayama (2003, 73) for further discussion of (and some arguments against) this counterexample.

⁹⁰Furthermore, when we look at the ultimate endpoint of the Aitia Argument – the final proof of the immortality of the soul – we see that, whereas ΝΑΟ and ΝΟΩ are essential elements of this proof, ΝΟΑ does not figure in it at all (if one can even speak of an “opposite of soul” to begin with).

⁹¹An analogous response could be offered against the putative counterexample to ΝΟΑ at Republic IV 421d–422a, where it is argued that both craftsmen and their products are made worse by the “opposites” of poverty and wealth. Richness and poorness are the genuine opposites in this case, and poverty and wealth their extreme limits. Thus poverty and wealth can both be accepted as aitiai of badness, without violation of ΝΟΑ.
1.5 Ingredient causes & other causes

These derivations confirm our definition, and prove that what a cause is for Plato is an ingredient cause. Furthermore, our definition was not ad hoc, posited merely for the purpose of making sense of the aitia principles. As we saw in §1.3.1 and §1.3.3, the ingredient cause is both independently plausible (to us) and historically familiar (to Plato). In closing, I wish to suggest that Plato was moreover warranted in privileging this sort of cause, by showing that ingredient causation prefigures the other kinds of causation we speak of. To this end, I will relate the ingredient cause to each of Aristotle’s canonical four: the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final cause.

We saw in §1.4.1 that external or efficient causes – though our own etiological paradigm – fall outside the Phaedo’s concept of aitia, since they are not added to their effects. However, there is reason to think that the full specification of an external or efficient cause will inevitably make reference to the ingredient cause. For example, if at a bar I received a Negroni which was too bitter, I might naturally say that the bartender made it so. The bartender, of course, was not the ingredient cause of the Negroni’s bitterness. That would be the Campari, the bitter component of a Negroni; the reason my cocktail was too bitter is because it had more Campari in it than usual, or than it should. However, it was the bartender who put too much Campari in the drink; this is why the bartender is the efficient cause of the bitterness. In this way, the efficient cause of something’s F-ness could be thought of as that which brings about the ingredient cause of that thing’s F-ness.

Similarly, final causes, and teleological explanations more generally, might also be thought to inevitably make reference to the ingredient cause. For example, if someone were to ask why the Martini I am drinking is dirty, I might respond with the teleological explanation that olive juice is good (or, perhaps more realistically, that olive juice is good in Martinis). Here I am indicating that olive juice, when added to Martinis, makes Martinis good – that is, that olive juice is an ingredient cause of goodness. Yet olive juice, of course, is also the ingredient cause of the Martini’s dirtiness – that which has been added to the Martini such that it is now dirty. Thus, in my teleological explanation of the Martini’s dirtiness, I am indicating

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92Cf. Fine (1982: 388): “Plato focuses on forms because he believes we cannot adequately specify [efficient] causes until we understand that properties are forms. He has not changed course, away from [efficient] causes; he is taking a longer, more laborious route to a destination that includes them – a route that includes, perfectly appropriately, an analysis of events and properties. This reflects no neglect or misunderstanding of [efficient] causes; only an insistence on some necessary preliminaries.”

93Following Henry (2013), I take teleological explanations for Plato to be, fundamentally, instances of “optimality reasoning”: reasoning that explains why things are the way they are by appeal to the fact that this way of their being is “best” or “better”. That is, teleological explanation for Plato is not so much about purposes or ends (as we are accustomed to thinking about it from Aristotle) as it is about goodness more generally. Cf. the discussion of teleological explanations at Phaedo 97b8–98a2.
that the ingredient cause of the Martini’s dirtiness is also an ingredient cause of the Martini’s goodness. To generalize, then, the final cause of something’s F-ness could be thought of as specifying that the ingredient cause of its F-ness is also an ingredient cause of its goodness.⁹⁴

What, then, about material and formal causes? In a sense, ingredient causes are neither and both. Ingredient causes cannot be reduced simply to either material or formal causes, because ingredient causation only makes sense before there is a robust form–matter distinction on the scene – that is, when every perceptible thing is viewed as a mixture of ingredients, rather than as an underlying substance instantiating various properties. In other words, ingredient causes are more like Anaxagorean quasi-stuffs than Aristotelian things, and in this regard elude simple reduction to either matter or form. In some cases, the ingredient cause will seem to us like a material cause (‘this coffee is milky because milk has been added to it’); in other cases, it will seem to us like a formal cause (‘Simmias is big on account of the Form of Bigness’). This is because, at the time Plato was writing, these two categories had still yet to be distinguished and conceptually thematized. We ultimately owe this distinction to Aristotle, of course; yet Plato deserves credit for getting us to the point where the distinction could be made – namely, by extending the more basic ingredient causal model of his predecessors to properties which they never thought to account for, and thereby demonstrating the limits of accounting for all properties in the same way.

In this way, we need not think that Plato is simply being revisionist about what is and is not a “cause”. Rather, he is directing our attention to a sort of causation which prefigures all the others.⁹⁵ Admittedly, by focusing solely on the question of identifying the ingredient cause, Plato neglects the further questions of what brought that ingredient cause about, why that ingredient cause is good, and whether this “ingredient” is better treated as a material constituent or a formal property. Nonetheless, the former question must be dealt with first,

⁹⁴Pakaluk (2010, 656) defends a similar interpretation of the relation between teleological explanations and the aitia, in interpreting the relation between Socrates’ first and second ‘voyage’ in the Aitia Argument: “Why is Socrates sitting in prison? The ‘hazardous’ explanation, the ‘first voyage’, would appeal (Plato tells us) to those considerations of justice, and of what would work out for the best, that led Socrates to refuse Crito’s offer to escape and decide to remain in prison. In comparison a ‘safe’ explanation [the ‘second voyage’, a specification of the aitia] might be something like this: Socrates is sitting in prison because sitting in prison is what he is doing. It would be an appeal to something like the formal content of his decision, not his purposes in making a decision with that content.”

⁹⁵Indeed, in highlighting its particular sense of “aitia”, Plato can be seen to be emphasizing the original meaning of the word: its legal sense of the person “responsible” or “to blame” for an offense, which is analogous to the way in which the aitia of something’s F-ness is that which is ultimately responsible for its F-ness, that to which its F-ness must ultimately be attributed. (Though this may, admittedly, more properly be said to be the sense of ὃ αἴτιος or ἀῖτιον, the masculine and neuter substantive adjectives from which aitia is derived. Frede (1980, 222–223) contends that, in contrast, ‘aĩtia’ is, strictly speaking, “an account of the αὶτιον”: “the accusation, what somebody is charged with having done such that he is responsible for what happened as a result.” Frede also contends that Plato observes this distinction of meaning in his use of αῖτιον and aĩtia in the Phaedo; yet compare the reservations noted in Sedley (1998, 115, fn. 1).
insofar as its answer is presupposed by the others. Thus it is reasonable for Plato to restrict his investigation as he does.

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⁹⁶This is why we need not accuse Plato of “changing the subject” over the course of Phaedo 96–107, pace Annas [1982]. Although it may seem as if Socrates is initially interested to investigate the efficient aitiai of coming-to-be and passing-away, and yet ends up providing only the formal aitiai of being, the focal nature of its sought-after aitia reveals this move, not as switching, but rather as tightening the original question. Cf. n. 92 above.
Appendix to Chapter 1

1.A Ingredient causation & the compresence of opposites

Plato disparages the sensible world for several reasons, and perhaps his foremost complaint has to do with the “compresence of opposites” found therein: his claim that ordinary perceptible objects are, in some sense, both $F$ and un-$F$. This is in contrast to intelligible objects (paradigmatically Forms), which are only ever $F$ and never also un-$F$. So, whereas the Form of Beauty is only ever beautiful and never also ugly, any ordinary object that is perceived to be beautiful – a beautiful boy, say – is also in some way ugly. Thus is the sensible world written off as a confused muddle, and are we exhorted to turn our thoughts to the intelligible world instead.

The compresence of opposites is part and parcel of Plato’s metaphysics, and any explication of his metaphysics must account for it. I shall now highlight how the compresence of opposites is also part and parcel of the theory of ingredient causation I have just laid out. This will serve as both a clarification of Plato’s commitment to the compresence of opposites, and as further confirmation of Plato’s commitment to the theory of ingredient causation.

Following a recent trend in the literature, I adopt a modal reading of the compresence of opposites: ordinary perceptible objects are both $F$ and un-$F$ in that any ordinary perceptible object which is $F$ can be un-$F$. This feature is exemplified by objects which are simultaneously $F$ and un-$F$, like the finger which at once appears both big and small. Yet the point is that all perceptible objects share this capacity, even if they do not all or always display it.

On this reading, the compresence of opposites in the sensible world can be seen as a corollary of the theory of ingredient causation. According to this theory, recall, any ordinary $F$ object is $F$ in virtue of an ingredient cause of $F$-ness, which has been added to it. The

\footnote{Cf. Harte (2008, 211) and Kelsey (2006, 105), who attributes the original thought to Sarah Broadie (in his n. 26). The modal reading is preferable not only because anything stronger would seem false (cf., again, Harte (2008, 211)); it also seems to be what Plato intended. Cf. Socrates’ remark at Phaedo 74b7–9: “Do not equal sticks and stones sometimes, while remaining the same, appear equal in one way and unequal in another?” The “sometimes” in this question suggests that equal sticks and stones do not always appear equal and unequal; yet it is taken as sufficiently problematic that they sometimes do, i.e., that they can appear equal and unequal.}

\footnote{Cf. Republic VII 523e.}
compresence of opposites states merely that any such object could also have added to it an ingredient cause of un-\(F\)-ness. And this is accurate. On the theory of ingredient causation, ordinary perceptible objects are like mixtures, capable of receiving all manner of ingredient causes. Clearly, then, an ordinary \(F\) object could have an ingredient cause of un-\(F\)-ness added to it and thus be un-\(F\)\(^{99}\). So, too, can an ordinary perceptible object have both an ingredient cause of \(F\)-ness and an ingredient cause of un-\(F\)-ness added to it, such that it is both \(F\) and un-\(F\)\(^{100}\).

More significantly, however, the theory of ingredient causation clarifies why Plato would have taken the compresence of opposites as a distinguishing mark of the sensible world, a point of contrast between perceptible and imperceptible objects. As was established in §3.5, the ingredient causes in virtue of which ordinary perceptible objects manifest their various properties are entities which by their very nature escape the compresence of opposites. By the Perfection Lemma, an ingredient cause of \(F\)-ness is something which is perfectly \(F\), and thus, by the Exclusion Lemma, in no way un-\(F\). In other words, the theory of ingredient causation is built upon a distinction between two basic sorts of entities: ordinary perceptible objects, which can be both \(F\) and un-\(F\); and the ingredient causes in those objects, which are perfectly one property and in no way its opposite. And as we will see in the chapters to follow, ingredient causes are taken by Plato (for separate reasons) to be imperceptible and intelligible, paradigm objects of thought and knowledge, and, ultimately, Forms. Thus it makes sense that the compresence of opposites would persist as a hallmark of Platonic metaphysics, as we have come to think of it.

\(^{99}\)Cf. Phaedo 102e3–5, where Socrates says, “I, for example, do admit and withstand smallness and, while still being this same person who I am, am small.”

\(^{100}\)Cf. Phaedo 102b4–6: “Whenever you say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, don’t you mean that at that time both bigness and smallness are in Simmias?”
Chapter 2

The theory of predication in the *Phaedo*

The argument at *Phaedo* 96–107 consists in a search for “the cause”. To discover this cause, Socrates states that his method will “take refuge in words and look into the truth of things in them.”¹ Thus, in addition to its insights into causation, we should expect to find in the argument some insights into how causation is mirrored in language – a theory of predication alongside its theory of causation.²

Insofar as the *Phaedo* is recognized as containing a theory of predication, it is typically assumed to present an unsophisticated and flawed theory.³ Yet this is because the literature has overlooked two key features of the text: first, that Plato systematically distinguishes between cases in which the “name” (ὄνομα) of a property, and those in which an “eponym” (ἐπωνυμία) of that property, is rightly applied to a subject; and second, that Plato explicitly indicates that when the name of a property is rightly applied to a subject, the definition of the property is true of it, and when an eponym of a property is rightly applied to a subject, the definition is not true of it.

These two observations reveal that the *Phaedo* contains a sophisticated theory of predication, based on a well-founded distinction between derivative and nonderivative predication – a theory which, moreover, illuminates the later semantic innovations of the *Parmenides*, the *Sophist*, and Aristotle’s *Categories*. In addition, this theory will allow us to follow through on the promises of §1.3.5 and define precisely what it means for a cause of *F*-ness “to be perfectly *F*” – a definition which will be of central importance to our subsequent analysis of the Forms.

¹ἔδοξε δὴ μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν.
²This thesis is argued persuasively by van Eck (1994), to whose interpretation this chapter is much indebted. Code (1986, 428), for instance, accuses Plato in the *Phaedo* of “conflat[ing] the statement that largeness is largeness with the statement that largeness is large.” White (1981, Chapters 1–4) (and cf. White (1984)) argues that the theory of predication in the *Phaedo* commits Plato to a doctrine of particular essences which, in fact, makes Forms redundant.
2.1 Preliminaries

The theory of predication in the *Phaedo* seeks to answer the question, When is it the case that a property $F$-ness is truly predicated of an object $x$? The first things to clarify are the domains of these two variables, ‘$F$-ness’ and ‘$x$’.

The range of relevant properties is, I believe, restricted to opposites. At any rate, none of the predications discussed in the *Phaedo* involves a property which is not an opposite. We should not assume the text’s theory of predication is any more general. Thus, in what follows ‘$F$-ness’ will always refer to an opposite, and ‘un-$F$-ness’ to the opposite of $F$-ness.

The range of relevant objects divides into two basic types: ordinary perceptible objects (which stand to gain or lose the properties at issue) and the ingredient causes in those things (which are responsible for the former’s acquisition of those properties). Ingredient causes can be further divided into “Forms” and “bearers”. For example, Simmias is an ordinary perceptible object, who can be either healthy or sick; the ingredient cause of his sickness can be specified either as the Form of Sickness or as fever, a bearer of sickness. The *Phaedo*’s theory of predication explains why sickness is truly predicated both of Simmias, of fever, and of the Form of Sickness.

For ease of reference, I will refer to ordinary perceptible objects as “ordinary things” and ingredient causes simply as “causes”. Thus, we may characterize the theory of predication’s domain of objects as so:

- ordinary things (e.g., Simmias, Socrates, this body)
- causes
  - bearers (e.g., fever vis-à-vis sickness, fire vis-à-vis hotness, soul vis-à-vis life)
  - Forms (e.g., the Form of Sickness, the Form of Hotness, the Form of Life)

We need not worry at present about how, or if, these objects differ ontologically. For the moment it will suffice to remember that, in what follows, ‘$x$’ may refer to either an ordinary thing, a bearer, or a Form.

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*Where “opposites” should be understood as per the “converse contraries” definition on p. 48 above, according to which $F$-ness and un-$F$-ness are opposites iff: $F$-ness and un-$F$-ness are contraries, and $x$ is $F$ compared with $y$ iff $y$ is un-$F$ compared with $x$."

*In this regard, the *Phaedo*’s theory of predication mirrors its theory of causation, whose range of relevant properties is likewise restricted; cf. §3.2.*

*In this regard, the *Phaedo*’s theory of predication does not mirrors its theory of causation, whose range of relevant objects is restricted to ordinary perceptible objects. In the above example, the theory of causation would explain only why Simmias is sick, not why fever or the Form of Sickness is sick.*

*In §3.3 we will see that the Form of $F$-ness is $F$-ness *simpliciter*, whereas a bearer of $F$-ness is a specific type of $F$-ness. In §3.4 I will suggest that the relationship between Forms and bearers may be helpfully understood as a determinable–determinate relation.*
Thus, the theory of predication in the Phaedo should not be mistaken for an ordinary theory of predication. The predications it accounts for involve a more restricted range of properties, and a broader range of objects, than we might otherwise suspect. These features do, of course, limit the theory’s ultimate explanatory power; yet they are crucial to appreciating the explanatory power it does have.

### 2.2 A distinction in predication

How, then, does the Phaedo’s theory of predication answer the question of when F-ness can be truly predicated of x?

Its leading contention is that F-ness can be truly predicated of x in two markedly distinct ways. The distinction, as it appears in the text, is between “having an eponym” (ἐπωνυμία), and “having the name” (ὄνομα), of F-ness. That is, in any case in which F-ness is truly predicated of x, either an eponym of F-ness or the name of F-ness is rightly applied to x. For ease of reference, let us abbreviate these two kinds of predication as “Having” and “Being” (taking a cue from Alan Code):

- an eponym of F-ness is rightly applied to $x \equiv_{det} x$ Has F-ness
- the name of F-ness is rightly applied to $x \equiv_{det} x$ Is F-ness

Thus we can set forth the following basic principle:

**Predication Principle (Basic)**

$F$-ness is truly predicated of $x$ $\iff$ ($x$ Has $F$-ness $\lor$ $x$ Is $F$-ness)

The bulk of this chapter is devoted to clarifying what these two kinds of predication are.

As a first step forward, we may note that the kind of predication involved in any given case directly corresponds to the kind of object of which $F$-ness is being predicated: eponyms of $F$-ness are always and only rightly applied to ordinary things, and names of $F$-ness are always and only rightly applied to bearers and Forms of $F$-ness. This, at any rate, is what the text seems to indicate. If we look at all the occurrences of “eponym” in the Aitia Argument, we find that the word is applied without exception to ordinary things:

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8This much is uncontroversial. There is less consensus on exactly what these two ways are. Typically, it is assumed that Plato is distinguishing between what we would call “essential” and “accidental” predication (cf., e.g., Gallop[1973, 192]). I will be avoiding this terminology, which, because anachronistic, risks prejudicing our interpretation in ways which are unrepresentative of Plato himself. Rather, I will be approaching the distinction on the dialogue’s own terms, and interpreting in light of Plato’s own vocabulary.

9In Code[1986]. A detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between the theory of predication I identify in the Phaedo and Code’s “logic of being and having” is presented in §2.9.1 and §2.10.
“Each of the Forms exists, and the other things, by taking part in them, have an eponym (ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει) of these very Forms.” (102b1–3)¹⁰

“Therefore, this is how Simmias has the eponym (ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει) to be both big and small, being in between the two.” (102c10–11)

“Previously, my friend, we were talking about the things that have the opposites, giving them the eponym (ἐπωνομάζοντες τῇ ἐπωνυμίᾳ) of those opposites, but now we are talking about those opposites themselves, from whose presence in them the named things have their eponym (ἐχει τήν ἐπωνυμίαν).” (103b6–c)¹¹

And if we bring up all the occurrences of “name” in the argument, we find that it is used exclusively of Forms and bearers:

“Therefore, it is true, concerning some things of this sort, that it is not only the Form itself which deserves its name (ἀξιοῦσθαι τοῦ αὑτοῦ ὀνόματος) for all of time, but also something else, which is not that Form, but always has that Form’s feature, whenever it exists.” (103e2–5)

“The Odd, I suppose, must always be given this name (τούτων τοῦ ὀνόματος τυγχάνειν) that we are now speaking, mustn’t it?” (103e6–7)

“Is there also something else, which is not the same as the Odd but which nevertheless must always be called “odd”, in addition to its own name (μετὰ τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ ὀνόματος), on account of its being naturally such as to never be deprived of the Odd?” (103e9–104a3)

“Consider the case of threeness. Does it not seem to you that threeness should always be called both by its own name and by the name of the Odd (τῷ τε αὑτῆς ὀνόματι ἀεὶ προσαγορευτέα εἶναι καὶ τῷ τοῦ περιττοῦ), even though the Odd is not the same as threeness?” (104a5–7)

Thus we can put forth the following preliminary characterizations of Having and Being.¹²

**EPONYMY**

( F-ness is truly predicated of x & x is an ordinary thing ) \(\iff\) x Has F-ness

**ONOMY**

( F-ness is truly predicated of x & ( x is a bearer of F-ness ∨ x is a Form of F-ness ) ) \(\iff\) x Is F-ness

¹⁰Note that ordinary things are the only things which are said to “take part”, or “participate”, in the Forms; bearers, notably, are never described in the language of participation. Yet this makes sense, since participation is used in the Aitia Argument to explain properties which their objects can stand to lose, and the properties of bearers are not like that; cf. n. ⁴⁹ on p. ²⁶ and n. ⁸ above.

¹¹The context makes clear that “the things that have the opposites” are those things which have, but stand to lose, their opposite properties – that is, ordinary things.

¹²Note that this linguistic division of labour is respected elsewhere in Plato, too; cf., for example, Parmenides 133c8–d5, where ἐπονομάζομεθα is used of ordinary things (namely, “us”), while ὀνομάζεται is used of the Forms in us. Note also 133d3, where the Forms in us are said to “have the same name” as the Forms themselves (ταῦτα ὀμώνυμα ὄντα ἑκεῖνα).

¹³Note that this principle tells us nothing about the proper analysis of cases in which G-ness is truly predicated of a Form or F-ness, i.e., nonsynonymous predications of Forms such as ‘the Beautiful itself is divine’. As we will see in § ⁴.⁸ (and further on in § ⁴.⁵–⁶), the omission of this detail will prove to be a crucial shortcoming of the Phaedo’s predicational theory, which Plato tries to correct for later in his career.
2.3 Eponymy

So what is it for something to “have an eponym” of F-ness, and how does it differ from “having the name”? The Phaedo, unfortunately, does not shed light on this question, and simply makes use of the terms without further clarification of their meanings. However, ‘eponym’ is also used in various other dialogues and in a variety of cases, from which we can construct a rough and ready definition. This section will canvass this textual evidence. The upshot will be that what it is to have an eponym, according to Plato, is to be labelled in a way that is both linguistically and ontologically derivative – “linguistically”, because the label itself is a derived form of some other name, and “ontologically”, because the label is applied to its object in virtue of some other thing, standing in some appropriate relation to that object.¹⁴

2.3.1 Eponymy and proper names

The original and basic meaning of ‘eponym’ (ἐπωνυμία) in Greek comes from its use in connection with the proper names of people and places. To have an eponym in this regard is simply to be named after someone else, or to be a “namesake”, as we would put it. For example, the goddess Urania has an eponym of her father, Uranus (cf. Symposium 180d8); ‘Athens’ and ‘Athenian’ are eponyms of their patron goddess Athena (cf. Laws I 626d4); and the island of Atlantis and the surrounding Atlantic Sea have eponyms of the god Atlas, who was their original possessor (cf. Critias 114a6).

There is an obvious pattern here. In all these cases, the proper name of the namesake is linguistically and ontologically derivative of the proper name of its “name-source” (that which the namesake is named after). It is linguistically derivative because the proper name of the namesake is a modified form of the proper name of the name-source (as ‘Urania’ to ‘Uranus’, and ‘Atlanitic’ to ‘Atlas’).¹⁵ It is ontologically derivative because the namesake has its proper name in virtue of some significant relation it stands in to the name-source (in our three examples, it is the name-source’s child, ward, and possession, respectively).

This basic model of eponymy can quite easily be extended to cases beyond the proper names of people and places. For instance, the art of music has an eponym of the Muses, the

¹⁴Bestor [1978, 197–199] canvasses much the same evidence, though with slightly different emphasis. His point is that “many relationships can and do underwrite the eponym relation” (Bestor [1978, 196]), such that we cannot impute to Plato any specific relation holding between Forms and participants based merely on the fact that the latter are eponymously called after the former (a claim with which I agree). Yet Bestor also observes that eponymous predication in general is “a distinctly indirect relation” (Bestor [1978, 192]) – which is just what I mean by ‘derivative’ – and that “not just anything can be named after some named item, [but] only those things ‘appropriately’ related to it” (Bestor [1978, 193]) – which is just what I mean by ‘ontologically derivative’.

¹⁵Obviously the modifications are slightly different (and more morphologically predictable) in the original Greek; what I should really say is that it is ‘Οὐρανία’ from ‘Οὐρανός’, and ‘Ἀτλαντικός’ from ‘Ἄτλας’.
goddesses to whom this art belongs (cf. *Alcibiades* 108d1). Even though this example involves an art rather than a person or place, the proper name of the art is classified as an eponym, since it is similarly derivative of its name-source, both linguistically ('music' from 'Muses') and ontologically (music is the Muses’ art). Plato’s use of eponymy elsewhere seems simply to extend this basic model further, to even more abstract and less obvious cases.

### 2.3.2 Eponymy and etymology

A second and closely related sense of ‘eponym’ in Plato comes from its use in etymology. Whereas the basic use of ‘eponym’, as we just saw, concerned the relatively concrete relations holding between the proper names of a namesake and its name-source, the etymological use concerns something more abstract: the relation holding between a word and the nature to which it refers.

The *locus classicus* for etymological eponymy is the *Cratylus*, which contains countless occurrences of ‘eponym’ and its cognates in this sense. The dialogue ultimately provides etymologies of everything from common nouns to adjectives and verbs, yet it is notable that it begins by discussing the correctness of *proper names*: of people (‘Skamandrios’ or ‘Astyanax’ for Hector’s son; 392c10–d3), of places (‘Xanthos’ or ‘Skamandros’ for the Trojan river, ‘Murine’ or ‘Batieia’ for the hill; 391e4–6, 392a7–b1), and of animal species (‘chalkis’ or ‘cumindis’ for the bird; 392a6–7). That is, the *Cratylus*’s discussion of etymology starts from precisely the same sort of cases to which the basic model of eponymy applies. The difference is that in the examples considered there is no linguistic link between the proper name of the namesake and the proper name of its name-source. (For example, neither ‘Skamandrios’ nor ‘Astyanax’ is a modified form of ‘Hector’.) Instead, the *Cratylus* indicates that the proper name of the namesake derives from the *nature* of its name-source: because Hector is himself ‘lord’ (*anax*) of his ‘city’ (*astu*), his son is rightly called ‘Astyanax’, and in this sense Astyanax can be said to have an eponym of Hector.

Thus we have a new etymological model, in which eponymy occurs via a semantic link to the name-source’s nature, rather than a phonetic link to its proper name. This then becomes the model for the rest of the *Cratylus*’s analysis. As Socrates demonstrates through a veritable myriad of examples, everything is a namesake of its own nature, and its proper eponym is the one derived from and thus revelatory of this nature. Thus, as explained at 393a4–b4, Hector himself is rightly called ‘Hector’, since ‘hektōr’ means possessor, or roughly the same thing as ‘anax’, thus reflecting his own nature as lord and king. In this way, the eponym ‘Hector’ is ontologically derivative of Hector’s nature; this is the case with all the *Cratylus*’s etymologies. Linguistically, the eponym ‘Hector’ is unchanged from Hector’s nature (since
‘hektōr’ just means possessor), but in the majority of cases an eponym of this sort will be linguistically derivative as well. To take but one of the Cratylus’s countless examples, the eponym ‘psychē’ (‘soul’) is said to derive linguistically from ‘phusechē’ (‘nature-sustainer’), which reflects the soul’s nature, which is to sustain (echei) nature (phusis).

Thus, in the Cratylus, eponyms are names or words which are ontologically and (generally also) linguistically derived from the nature of their bearers.

2.3.3 Eponymy and collection

The etymological use of ‘eponym’ leads naturally into the other ways in which Plato uses the term. For instance, in various later dialogues, ‘eponym’ appears in connection with collection and division, where it is used to describe the name given to a collected kind and to a divided species.

In the Sophist, for example, the Eleatic Visitor speaks of finding an appropriate “eponym” for the parts or species of various kinds: disputation (225c3), debating (225d4), education (229d6), knowledge (257c11), the different (257d9), and appearance-making (267b1). This is because, as the Visitor indicates, each real division of a kind is “worthy of an eponym” (229d6) and “has its own individual eponym (ἐπωνυμιάν τινὰ ἑαυτῆς ἰδίαν)” (257c11–12). Conversely, at Timaeus 83c1–3, we learn that kinds also have their own collective eponyms: as we are told, a variety of differently coloured elements in the body are all called by the eponym ‘bile’ (χολὴν ἐπωνόμασαν), and this is because “someone was able to look at a plurality of unlike things and see in them a single kind, deserving of an eponym.” Similarly, at Philebus 18c6, Theuth is said to have given the eponym ‘letter’ (στοιχεῖον ἐπωνόμασε) to the collected kind encompassing vowels, liquids, nasals, sibilants, and stops. What he discovered, we are told, is “that one link that somehow makes them all one” (18c8–d1).

As in the etymological use of ‘eponym’, the name-source of each of these eponyms is a nature. Yet whereas in the etymological cases the name-source was an individual nature, in these cases it is a shared nature, common to all the members of the kind or species under consideration. Thus, by extending eponymy to cases of collection and division, Plato recognized

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¹⁶The Cratylus includes a few other such examples, at 394c2–6: ‘Archopolis’ (ruler-of-a-city), as the eponym of a king; ‘Polemarchus’ (war-lord) for a general; and ‘Acesimbrotus’ (healer-of-mortals) for a doctor.

¹⁷At 395b5–6, we are specifically told that the eponym ‘Atreus’ is “somewhat distorted and obscure”, since it could derive from the stubbornness (ateires), the boldness (atrestos), or the destructiveness (atēros) of Atreus’s nature.

¹⁸This etymological use of ‘eponym’ is not unique to the Cratylus; at Phaedrus 238c3–4, Socrates claims that erōs “takes its eponym and is called ‘erōs’ ” from the force (rhōmē) with which it is driven to take pleasure in beauty.

¹⁹83c1–3: τις ὢν δυνατὸς εἰς πολλὰ μὲν καὶ ἀνόμοια βλέπειν, ὡρὰν δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐν γένος ἐνὸς ἄξιον ἐπωνυμίας πᾶσιν.
an even more general sense in which things can be derivatively named.²⁰

2.3.4 Eponymy and properties

Yet the concept of eponymy in Plato extends further. In several places, eponymy language is also used to describe the general properties or qualities of things, as distinct from their own intrinsic natures.

For example, at Timaeus 65b4–6, Timaeus declares that they have now “pretty well summed up those common properties (παθήματα) that affect the whole body, as well as the eponyms applied to the agents which bring those properties about.” As is evident from the preceding discussion, the “eponyms” he is here referring to are property adjectives such as ‘hot’, ‘cold’, ‘hard’, and ‘soft’.

In what sense are these adjectives “eponyms”? Consider Timaeus’s analysis of ‘hot’, at 61d5–62a5. This passage seeks to explain why we call fire ‘hot’, and the conclusion it comes to is that it is the “nature” (φύσις, 62a1) of fire which “yields the property and the name which we now, reasonably, call ‘hot’” (62a4–5). Why does the nature of fire yield this property? Because fire’s sharp, angular shape is such as to “divide our bodies and cut them up into small pieces” (62a2–3). And why does the nature of fire yield this name? Because, as Timaeus insinuates, the name ‘hot’ (thermon) is etymologically derived from ‘to cut up’ (kermatizein). Thus ‘hot’ derives, ontologically and linguistically, from the nature of fire. Thus ‘hot’ is appropriately described as an eponym.

A similar use of ‘eponym’ is found at Phaedrus 238a3–5, where Socrates remarks that “the form of hubris which happens to stand out [in someone] supplies its eponym to the one who has it.” His point is as follows: Hubris is, generally, an uncontrollable and unreasoning appetite, but manifests itself in various forms with various names. Thus, when the appetite is specifically for food, the appetite is called ‘gluttony’ (‘gastrimargia’ – literally, belly-madness). In addition, “the person who has this appetite is called the same” (238b1) – presumably, a ‘glutton’, or ‘gluttonous’.

Thus, in this example an eponym is given, not only to the specific form of hubris itself, but

²⁰There is no indication of linguistic derivation in these cases, but this could be accounted for simply by the paucity of examples; at any rate, nothing stands in the way of assuming that at least some such eponyms would be linguistically derived, too. The eponym ‘physics’ (phusike), for example, which is given to a particular branch of knowledge, is linguistically derived from its subject matter of nature (physis).

²¹As it is defined as 238a1–2, hubris is when “appetite rules in us and drags us without reasoning toward pleasure.” Note in addition that Socrates says explicitly that this rule is “given the eponym” (ἐπωνομάσθη) of ‘hubris’ (238a2) – a use of ‘eponym’ which is similar to the use we saw in §2.3.3 in connection with collection and division, as designating the shared nature of a collected kind.

²²238a3–4: “But hubris has many names, being multilimbed and multiformed” (ὑβρις δὲ δὴ πολυώνυμον – πολυμελές γὰρ καὶ πολυμερές).
also to the person who exemplifies this form. In the latter case, the name-source is a nature, but it is neither an individual nor shared nature of the namesake itself, but rather the nature of something the namesake happens to have – of one of the namesake’s properties. Similarly, at *Sophist* 251a8, the Eleatic Visitor remarks that a person is “given various eponyms” (πόλλ’ ἄττα ἐπονομάζοντες) when we assign to them properties such as colours, shapes, sizes, vices, and virtues. And at *Theaetetus* 185c4–7, Socrates remarks that we “give the eponyms” (ἐπονομάζεις) of ‘is’ and ‘is not’ and other similar predicates to “what is common to all” – that is, the common nature which they all instantiate.

Yet perhaps the best exemplification of this use of ‘eponym’ is at *Parmenides* 130e5–131a2, where it is explicitly connected with the doctrine of Forms. As Parmenides summarizes the young Socrates’ view:

“Is it your view that, as you say, there are certain Forms, and the other things have their eponyms (τὰς ἐπωνυμίας αὐτῶν ἴσχειν) by participating in them – as, for example, they come to be ‘like’ by participating in likeness, ‘big’ by participating in bigness, and ‘just’ and ‘beautiful’ by participating in justice and beauty?”

The eponyms of this passage are property adjectives: ‘like’, ‘big’, ‘just’, and ‘beautiful’. And as the passage reveals, these labels derive, both linguistically and ontologically, from their corresponding Form – linguistically, because the label is a modified form of the Form’s own name (as ‘just’ is to ‘justice’); and ontologically, because the label is given in virtue of its bearer standing in the participation relation to the Form. Thus it makes sense for Plato to describe the labels explicitly as “eponyms”.

### 2.4 Having

Therefore, although the *Phaedo* never comes out and states it, eponymy has a well defined meaning in Plato: to have an eponym is to be labelled in a way that is linguistically and ontologically derivative. This suggests that the *Phaedo*’s distinction between Having and Being is, fundamentally, one between derivative and nonderivative predication.

It is not difficult to see how to cash this out in the terms of the *Phaedo*. If we look at the various examples of Has predication in the Aitia Argument, we see that they always hold true, not in virtue of their explicit subject alone, but also in virtue of something else, to which the explicit subject is related. Thus the explicit subject is appropriately described as derivatively “named after” this other thing.

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²³Theaetetus’s subsequent comment at 185c9–d₁ indicates that these other predicates include ‘like’, ‘unlike’, ‘same’, ‘different’, ‘one’, other numbers, ‘odd’, and ‘even’.

²⁴Cf. *Phaedrus* 250e₃, where ordinary beautiful things are collectively described as “the eponym of [the beautiful itself] down here”.

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There are various “other things” in virtue of which Has predications are said to hold true. Sometimes it is a Form itself, in which the explicit subject of the predication “shares” or “participates”, as at 100c4–6:

“It seems to me that if anything other than the Beautiful itself is beautiful, then it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful; and I say this for all things.”

In other cases Has predication is explained in virtue of a Form which is said to be “in” the explicit subject, as at 102b5:

“Whenever you say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, don’t you mean that at that time both bigness and smallness are in Simmias?”

And in yet other cases Has predication is explained in virtue of a bearer, which “occupies” the explicit subject, as at 104d5:

“Surely you think that whatever threeness occupies must be not only three but also odd.”

There is a common thread here: whenever x Has F-ness, F-ness is predicated of x in virtue of something else, y, which is in some way related to x. This relation is specified in various ways, as “participation”, “sharing”, “immanence”, or “occupation”. Yet as I argued in §1.3.2, these relations are all additions: whether y “occupies” or is “in” or is “shared in by” x, y is added to x. Thus we can say more succinctly that when x Has F-ness, there is something else, y, which has been added to x.

Yet we can say more. We are also told that, in all these cases where F-ness is also truly predicated of x in virtue of some y, F-ness is truly predicated of that y. Beauty is truly predicated of the Beautiful itself: bigness is truly predicated of the Big in Simmias; oddness is truly predicated of threeness. Furthermore, we know from Onomy in §2.2 that any such predication will be nonderivative: if F-ness is truly predicated of x and x is a Form or a bearer of F-ness, then x Is F-ness. Therefore, we may say that for x to Have F-ness is for there to be something added to x which Is itself F-ness:

\[
\text{HAS PREDICATION} \\
x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness } \iff \exists y \ [ \ y \text{ Is } F\text{-ness } & \ y \text{ is added to } x ]
\]

This will serve as our definition of ‘Having’.

One final note: This definition clearly shows Has predication to be ontologically derivative; is it also linguistically derivative? The Phaedo does not emphasize this aspect of Has

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25 As implied by Socrates’ remark at 100c4–5 that “if anything other than the beautiful itself is beautiful.”

26 102e5–6: “That [big in us], being big, does not dare to be small.”

27 104a5–7: “Threeness should always be called … by the name of the odd.”
predication, and in some cases seems to outright deny it, using the same surface form for both name and eponym. (For example, both the Beautiful itself and ordinary beautiful things are called ‘beautiful’). Nevertheless, I believe we should assume that the eponyms applied in cases of Has predication are meant to be linguistically derivative forms, even if some of Plato’s language obscures this fact. Given his use of eponymy language elsewhere, it is hard to believe that he would use the term without intending these eponyms to be linguistically as well as ontologically derivative. And it is not hard to spell out how this would work in the *Phaedo*. After all, if something Has bigness, it is called, not ‘bigness’ (the name), but ‘big’ (the derivative eponym; cf. 100e5). The Big in Simmias, in contrast, which Is bigness, is called ‘bigness’, not ‘big’ (102b6 ff.; though cf. 102e6). Similarly, we can say that an ordinary beautiful thing is called ‘beautiful’, whereas the Beautiful itself is called ‘beauty’ (the *Phaedo*’s specific language notwithstanding).²⁸

If this interpretation seems too charitable, we need not accept it. The evidence in the *Phaedo* is too thin to attribute to Plato any definitive position on the proper linguistic form of its eponyms, and besides, the linguistic aspect of Has predication is not, for our purposes, of crucial importance. Let us thus move forward with only our account of its ontologically derivative aspect, as presented in the above definition.

### 2.5 Being

Recall our Predication Principle from §2.2:

**Predication Principle (Basic)**

\[ F\text{-ness is truly predicated of } x \iff ( x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness } \lor x \text{ Is } F\text{-ness } ) \]

Now, by combining this with our definition of ‘Having’, we can expand the Predication Principle as follows:

**Predication Principle (Expanded)**

\[ F\text{-ness is truly predicated of } x \iff \exists y [ y \text{ Is } F\text{-ness } \land ( y = x \lor y \text{ is added to } x ) ] \]

Thus all true predications trace back to a relation of Being: all true predications hold true in virtue of something which Is the predicated property, and which is either identical to or added to the explicitly stated subject. What, then, is it for something to “Be” \( F\text{-ness} \)?

As an initial response to this question, we can note that it will be the same as what it is for something “to be perfectly \( F \)”, in the terminology of Chapter 4. For observe: The \( y \) value in our definition of ‘Having’ is none other than the cause of \( x \)’s \( F\text{-ness} \). According to

²⁸As at *Parmenides* 131a2, presented on p. 54 above.
that definition, \( y \) is that which has been added to \( x \), such that \( F \)-ness is truly predicated of \( x \). According to our definition of ‘aitia’ from §1.3.4, the cause of something’s \( F \)-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now \( F \). Furthermore, just as the \( y \) in Has Predication is characterized as something which \( \text{Is} \ \ F \)-ness, the cause of \( F \)-ness was characterized in §1.3.5 as something which is perfectly \( F \). Fittingly, the things which the Aitia Argument identifies as \( F \)-ness are the very same things which it identifies as causes: Forms and bearers. So, I propose that we unite these two accounts and accept the following modified version of Chapter 1’s Perfection Lemma, what I will call the “Is Lemma”:

\[
\text{IS LEMMA} \\
\text{a is a cause of } F-text \implies \text{a is } F-text
\]

Thus, the definition of ‘Being’ to be defended in this section stands not only to round off our analysis of the \textit{Phaedo}’s theory of predication, but also to follow through on the promises of §1.3.5 and explain what it means for a cause of \( F \)-ness “to be perfectly \( F \)”.

The key text for answering this question is \textit{Phaedo} 102b4–d3. As the answer it provides is not immediately obvious, it is worthwhile to go through the text in detail. To begin, here is the passage in full:

(a) “Whenever you say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, don’t you mean that at that time both bigness and smallness are in Simmias?” — “Yes I do.”

(b) “Further, do you agree that the sentence ‘Simmias exceeds Socrates’ is not true, not as expressed in those words?

For surely it is not the nature of the case\(^{29}\) that Simmias exceeds Socrates by being Simmias, but rather, he exceeds him by the bigness he happens to have. Nor does he exceed Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness in relation to Simmias’s bigness.” — “Correct.”

“Nor, in turn, is he exceeded by Phaedo by the fact that Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has bigness in relation to Simmias’s smallness.” — “That’s right.”

“Therefore, this is how Simmias has the eponym to be both big and small, being in between the two,

(c) supplying his smallness to Phaedo’s bigness to be exceeded, and presenting to Socrates his bigness, which exceeds Socrates’ smallness.”

And he added, grinning, “I seem to be talking like a textbook, but it is as I say.”

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\(^{29}\)Has Predication: \( x \) has \( F \)-ness \iff \( \exists y [y \text{ is } F-text \& y \text{ is added to } x] \)

\(^{30}\)Definition of ‘aitia’: an aitia of something’s \( F \)-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now \( F \)

\(^{31}\)Perfection Lemma: \( a \) is an aitia of \( F \)-ness \implies \( a \) is perfectly \( F \)

\(^{32}\)This translates \( οὐ γάρ που πεφυκέναι \), following the interpretation of \( πεφυκέναι \) recommended and defended by van Eck (1994 33 and passim).
The passage, as I see it, consists of three main claims. The first, which I have labelled (A), introduces a sample case of eponymy. The example concerns Simmias, who is of intermediate height between Socrates and Phaedo, taller than the former and shorter than the latter. Because of this, both bigness and smallness are truly predicated of Simmias; thus we say ‘Simmias is big(ger than Socrates)’ and ‘Simmias is small(er than Phaedo)’.

These predications, we are told, do not hold true because of Simmias alone. They require the recognition of additional entities in Simmias – bigness and smallness – after which he is derivatively named. In other words, bigness is truly predicated of Simmias because Simmias has bigness, and mutatis mutandis for smallness.

So far so good; this does not set out anything we have not seen already. The passage’s new contributions come in its second and third claims. The second, which I have labelled (B), tells us that, despite the previously established fact that bigness is truly predicated of Simmias (that is, that the statement ‘Simmias is big(ger than Socrates)’ is true), the statement ‘Simmias exceeds Socrates’ is not true.

The true import of this claim has eluded contemporary commentators. Without exception (as far as I am aware), interpreters of this passage have treated the statement ‘Simmias exceeds Socrates’ as synonymous with, or as an equivalent paraphrase of, the statement ‘Simmias is bigger than Socrates’. That is, they treat ‘exceeds’ (ὑπερέχειν) as straightforwardly synonymous with ‘is bigger than’ (μείζω εἶναι). In other words, the standard interpretation of (B) sees it as indicating that the statement which Socrates accepted as true in (A) is also, in another sense, false. ‘Simmias is bigger than Socrates’ (and other similar statements), though true in a loose, colloquial sense, are false in a strict, more logically precise sense.

This interpretation faces some glaring difficulties, however. First of all, it does not seem obvious that Socrates actually wishes to indicate the falsity of ‘Simmias is bigger than Socrates’ and other similar statements. At the end of the passage, right before the line I have labelled (C), Socrates still accepts that “Simmias has the eponym to be both big and small”. Indeed, he explicitly takes himself to have shown what makes such predications hold true (“This is how…”).

Secondly, the standard interpretation offers no explanation for why Socrates should in (B) abruptly switch his vocabulary from “…is bigger than…” to “…exceeds…”. Given that Socrates is in this passage being self-consciously scrupulous in his use of words, this seems an unacceptable oversight.

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33Note that it is perfectly idiomatic in ancient Greek to use ‘big’ and ‘small’ to mean ‘tall’ and ‘short’ (that is, to indicate bigness and smallness in height).

34G. M. A. Grube goes so far as to translate both predicates as ‘is taller than’; cf. his translation in Grube (2002) / Cooper and Hutchinson (1997).

35Emphasized by his closing remark that he seems to be “talking like a textbook” (συγγραφικῶς ἐρεῖν).
Most significantly, however, the standard interpretation overlooks the fact that ‘exceeds’ is not simply synonymous with ‘is bigger than’ for Plato. In fact, it has a specific technical meaning in his philosophy: it is the definition of bigness. What it is to be big is to exceed (something else); exceeding is that one feature that all and only big things have in common, by which they are big. Plato states this explicitly in the *Hippias Major*, where Socrates nonchalantly remarks as an aside:

’For example, that by which all big things are big is exceeding. For it is by this that all big things are big, even if they do not appear so. If they exceed, necessarily they are big.’

This analysis is corroborated in the *Parmenides*, within the second deduction, where Parmenides characterizes bigness by its power to exceed (and smallness, conversely, by its power to be exceeded), as so:

’Nor do these two themselves – [Bigness and Smallness] – have their power to exceed and to be exceeded in relation to the One; they have it, rather, in relation to one another.’

In addition, if we permit ourselves to look at the pseudo-Platonic *On Justice* (which, after all, is at least meant to express views which are suitably similar to Plato’s own), we find the following remark:

’For example, if someone were to ask us, ‘Since a measuring-stick, the art of measurement, and a measurer decide what’s bigger and what’s smaller, what is the Bigger and the Smaller?’ We would say to them that the Bigger is what exceeds, and the Smaller is what is exceeded.’

This is not to say that ‘exceeds’ is always used in Plato with this technical meaning of the definition of bigness. However, when we are faced with an apparent contrast between ‘exceeding’ and ‘being bigger than’ (as we are in the above passage from the *Phaedo*), the technical meaning of ‘exceeds’ is all but forced upon us, as the most obvious and well attested explanation of the contrast.

---

36*Hippias Major* 294b2–4: ὥσπερ ὧ πάντα τὰ μεγάλα ἐστὶ μεγάλα, τῷ ὑπερέχοντι· τούτῳ γὰρ πάντα μεγάλα ἐστί, καὶ ἐὰν μὴ φαίηται, ὑπερέχῃ δὲ, ἀνάγκη αὐτοῖς μεγάλοις εἶναι.

37*Parmenides* 150c7–d2: οὔτε αὐτῶ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸ ἐν ἔχετον τὴν ἐν τῷ ὑπερέχειν καὶ ὑπερέχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀλλήλω. In addition, Parmenides indicates at 150c2–3 that if something is indeed big, there must be some small thing which it exceeds; at 150d5–6 that the One, because it is neither bigger nor smaller than Bigness or Smallness, must neither exceed nor be exceeded by them; and at 150e2–3 that the One, because it has neither bigness nor smallness in itself, neither exceeds nor is exceeded by itself.

38*On Justice* 373d7–e3: ὥσπερ ἂν ἤμας εἰ τῇ ἱρτε, ἐπειδὴ μέτρων καὶ μετρητική καὶ μετρητικός τὸ μεῖζον καὶ τὸ ἐλαττων διακρίνει, τὶ ὅν τὸ μὲζον καὶ τὸ ἐλαττων; εἴπομεν ἂν αὐτῷ ὅτι τὸ μὲζον ὑπερέχον, τὸ δὲ ἐλαττων ὑπερεχόμενον.

39Cf., for example, *Critias* 115e4: “The walls of the canal ... sufficiently exceeded sea-level [to allow ships to pass under].” In this instance, “exceeded” could be replaced by “were higher than” without any loss in meaning.
Thus, on my reading of the passage, when Socrates claims in (b) that ‘Simmias exceeds Socrates’ is not true, what he is actually saying is that the definition of bigness is not true of Simmias (even though, as established in (A), bigness is truly predicated of him). This should not seem controversial: Though it is true that Simmias is bigger than Socrates, what it is to be Simmias is not to exceed. Simmias is a person; he is not “an exceeding”. This is just part of what it means for Simmias to Have, rather than Be, bigness: because Simmias Has bigness, the definition of bigness is not true of him.

What, then, is the definition of bigness true of? This is what we learn from the remainder of the passage. In the claim I have labelled (c), we are told that it is Simmias’s bigness which is truly said to exceed (and, likewise, that it is Simmias’s smallness that is truly said to be exceeded). Thus, in this case, the definition of bigness is true, not of Simmias himself, but of the Big in Simmias. And this seems right: Simmias’s bigness, unlike Simmias, is an exceeding. Granted, it is a specific kind of exceeding – namely, an exceeding in terms of height – but it is an exceeding nonetheless.

We know, from our Is Lemma, that the Big in Simmias Is bigness. And as I see it, the message of this passage should be extended to all cases of Being: the definition of F-ness is true of anything which Is F-ness, and, in turn, not true of anything which Has F-ness. Thus, I propose the following characterizations of Is and Has predication:

**IS PREDICATION**
\[ x \text{ Is } F \text{-ness } \iff \text{the definition of } F \text{-ness is true of } x \]

**HAS COROLLARY**
\[ x \text{ Has } F \text{-ness } \implies \text{the definition of } F \text{-ness is not true of } x \]

The former will serve as our definition of ‘Being’; the latter will serve as a corollary of our definition of ‘Having’.

*Phaedo* 102b4–d2 is the only explicit evidence I can offer for this definition of ‘Being’. However, further support can be found in its application to bearers. According to our Is Lemma, any bearer of F-ness Is F-ness, and on our definition of ‘Being’ this claim makes good sense. Threeness, for example, Is oddness. What it is to be odd is to be indivisible without remainder by two, and what it is to be three in number is (among other things) to be indivisible without remainder by two. In other words, being three is a specific way of being odd. In this regard the definition of oddness is true of threeness.

Or take another example: Fire Is hotness. According to the *Timaeus* passage discussed in §2.3.4, what it is to be hot is to be sharp. From elsewhere in the *Timaeus* we learn that what it is to be fire is to be tetrahedral, which we are told is the “sharpest” of the four Platonic solids (56a5). In this regard, being fire is a specific way of being hot. Thus the definition of hotness
is true of fire\[^{40}\]

One last example: Fever is sickness. Clearly, being feverish is a specific way of being sick. If we say that what it is to be sick is to be out of balance, then what it is to be feverish would be to be out of balance by having an excess of fire. Thus the definition of sickness is true of fever\[^{41}\].

2.5.1 A corollary

In §1.3.5 I claimed that one consequence of a cause’s being perfectly $F$ is that it is in no way un-$F$:

**EXCLUSION LEMMA**

$$a \text{ is perfectly } F \implies a \text{ is in no way un-}F$$

If I am right that “being perfectly $F$” is equivalent to “Being $F$-ness”, we should hope that our definition of ‘Being’ will illuminate this lemma.

I believe it does. Transposing the Exclusion Lemma into the terms of our present discussion, we get:

**IS COROLLARY**

$$x \text{ Is } F\text{-ness } \implies \sim(\text{ un-}F\text{-ness is truly predicated of } x)$$

In this formulation, the Exclusion Lemma is clearly justified. With regard to the consequent, we know (by the Predication Principle) that if un-$F$-ness were truly predicated of $x$, then $x$ would either Have un-$F$-ness or Be un-$F$-ness. By the antecedent $x$ Is $F$-ness, and we know (from Onomy in §2.2) that $x$ Is $F$-ness if and only if it is a Form or a bearer of $F$-ness. Thus $x$ is a Form or a bearer. Yet we also know (from Eponymy in §2.2) that if $x$ Had un-$F$-ness then $x$ would be an ordinary thing. Thus $x$ does not Have un-$F$-ness. Therefore, if un-$F$-ness were truly predicated of $x$, $x$ would have to Be un-$F$-ness\[^{42}\].

Therefore, the Exclusion Lemma amounts to the claim that if something Is $F$-ness, then it Is not also un-$F$-ness. By our definition of ‘Being’, this is equivalent to the claim that if the definition of $F$-ness is true of something, then the definition of un-$F$-ness is not also true

\[^{40}\]We might also accept that the definition of hotness is true of air, which is the “second sharpest” body. Thus fire and air would both be hotness, consistent with ancient elemental theory. (The difference, presumably, would be that fire is dryness, whereas air is wetness.)

\[^{41}\]This example typically confuses commentators, who generally take the other examples as ordinary predicative ascriptions (i.e., three is odd, fire is hot) and thus end up having to take this example as stating that fever is sick, which is absurd (cf. Bostock (1984, 188 n. 10) and Gallop (1975, 213)). I take it as a mark in favour of my interpretation that it avoids this confusion.

\[^{42}\]Might not un-$F$-ness be truly predicated of $x$ in some way other than $x$’s Being or Having un-$F$-ness? Perhaps, but the *Phaedo’s* predicational theory offers no explanation of how this would work, which is all I mean to emphasize here.
of it. And this is manifestly so. A specific way of being indivisible without remainder by
two (i.e., something which Is oddness) will not also be a specific way of being divisible by
two (i.e., something which Is evenness). A specific way of being in balance (i.e., something
which Is health) will not also be a specific way of being out of balance (i.e., something which
Is sickness).

Thus the Exclusion Lemma follows from our definition of ‘Being’, as desired. This is why
I label it here as a “corollary”.

### 2.6 The theory of predication in the *Phaedo*

In summary, the *Phaedo* provides a dichotomous analysis of true predications:

**Predication Principle (Basic)**

\[ F \text{-ness is truly predicated of } x \iff ( x \text{ Has } F \text{-ness } \lor x \text{ Is } F \text{-ness} ) \]

...where these relations are defined as follows:

**Has Predication**

\[ x \text{ Has } F \text{-ness } \iff \exists y \ [ y \text{ Is } F \text{-ness } \land y \text{ is added to } x ] \]

**Is Predication**

\[ x \text{ Is } F \text{-ness } \iff \text{the definition of } F \text{-ness is true of } x \]

...and further characterized as so:

**Has Corollary**

\[ x \text{ Has } F \text{-ness } \implies \text{the definition of } F \text{-ness is not true of } x \]

**Is Corollary**

\[ x \text{ Is } F \text{-ness } \implies \sim( \text{un-}F \text{-ness is truly predicated of } x ) \]

...which results in the following expanded version of the initial principle:

**Predication Principle (Expanded)**

\[ F \text{-ness is truly predicated of } x \iff \exists y \ [ \text{the definition of } F \text{-ness is true of } y \land ( y = x \lor \text{y is added to } x ) ] \]

To get a flavour of how these principles and definitions work together, consider the fol-
lowing sample application of the theory, an analysis of why bigness is truly predicated of
Simmias:

1. **Fact**: bigness is truly predicated of Simmias
2. Simmias Has bigness \lor Simmias Is bigness \[ 1+\text{Predication Principle (Basic)} \]
3. **Fact**: smallness is truly predicated of Simmias
Thus, if I am correct in my analysis, the *Phaedo* contains a robust theory of predication which is much more sophisticated than is typically assumed. To further confirm that this theory is plausibly attributed to Plato, I will now highlight its affinities with other ancient theories of predication, from both within and outside the Platonic corpus.

### 2.7 The theory of predication in the *Categories*

Perhaps the most salient affinity of the *Phaedo*’s theory of predication is with the theory of predication presented by Aristotle in the *Categories*. In particular, the *Phaedo*’s distinction between Is and Has predication parallels Aristotle’s distinction between said of and in predication. As Aristotle remarks at *Categories* 2a19–31:

> “If something is said of a subject, both its name (τοὔνομα) and its definition (τὸν λόγον) are necessarily predicated of the subject... But if something is in a subject, in most cases neither the name nor the definition is predicated of the subject. In some cases nothing prevents the name from being predicated of the subject, but [in all cases] it is impossible for the definition to be predicated.”

From this passage, we can set out the following characterizations of the said of and in relations:

**Said of Predication**

\[
y \text{ said of } x \implies \text{ the definition of } y \text{ is predicated of } x
\]

**In Predication**

\[
y \text{ in } x \implies \text{ the definition of } y \text{ is not predicated of } x
\]

Substituting “...is true of...” for “...is predicated of...”, these are precisely the same as our Is Predication and Has Corollary principles, respectively.

Names also figure prominently in both philosophers’ theories. For Aristotle, when \(y\) is said of \(x\), the name of \(y\) is predicated of \(x\), just as for Plato, when \(x\) is \(F\)-ness, \(x\) has the name of \(F\)-ness. Similarly, when \(y\) is in \(x\), the name of \(y\) is not (generally) predicated of \(x\), just as for Plato, when \(x\) has \(F\)-ness, \(x\) has not the name but an eponym of \(F\)-ness. And although Aristotle does not speak of “eponyms” in the quoted passage, the rest of his account makes

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43This conclusion thus licenses the everyday assertion that ‘Simmias is big’.

44I render “said of” and “in” in small caps to represent their technical Aristotelian usage, as distinct from whatever ordinary meaning the terms might suggest.
clear that when \( y \) is in \( x \), a “paronym” (Aristotle’s word of choice for ‘derived name’) of \( y \) is in most cases predicated of \( x \).

Therefore, the Phaedo’s theory of predication can be smoothly translated into the terms of the Categories\(^4\) as so:

\[
\begin{align*}
x & \text{ Is } F\text{-ness } \iff \text{ } F\text{-ness is said of } x \\
x & \text{ Has } F\text{-ness } \iff \text{ } F\text{-ness is in } x
\end{align*}
\]

Which is not to say that the Categories’ theory of predication is not also importantly different from the Phaedo’s. We will examine these differences in § 2.10. First, let us examine some other affinities of the Phaedo’s theory within Plato’s own oeuvre.

### 2.8 The theory of predication in the Parmenides & the Sophist

For several decades it has been recognized that the Parmenides and the Sophist employ a distinction between two kinds of predication, or two uses of ‘is’.\(^5\) This is what is referred to as the “pros heauto–pros ta alla” distinction in the Parmenides, and the “kath’ hauto–pros allo” distinction in the Sophist.\(^6\) Though phrased in different language,\(^7\) the distinction in each case is that between a subject being said to be (whatever it is said to be) in relation or reference to itself, and in relation or reference to something else. If in relation to itself, then this is predication pros heauto or kath’ hauto. If in relation to something else, then

---

\(^4\) Aristotel makes the qualification of “in most cases” because his notions of ‘name’ and ‘paronym’ are based on the surface-level linguistic forms of words (e.g. bravery is a virtue; Achilles is brave), and in some rare instances there is no surface-level distinction between a word’s noun and adjective forms (e.g. white is a colour; this cat is white).

\(^5\) Which should come as no surprise, given the Phaedo’s established influence on the Categories; cf. Mann (2002, passim) (which interprets the Categories as an improvement on Plato’s theory of predication, which is more or less the theory from the Phaedo) and Shorey (1924) (which highlights the Phaedo’s influence on the Organon more generally).


\(^7\) These names are both Meinwald’s, though they mirror Plato’s own choice of words; the textual basis for these distinctions is found at Parmenides 160b2–3 and 166c2–5, and Sophist 255c12–13. The importance of the pros heauto–pros ta alla distinction to the arguments of the Parmenides has been challenged since the publication of Meinwald (1999), by, e.g., Gill and Ryan (1996 n. 90), Sayre (1993, 111–114), Turnbull (1993, 198), Rickless (2002, 102–106), and Gill (2012, 52–55); but cf. the defence of Meinwald against such objections in Peterson (2000, 44–47).

\(^8\) The difference in wording should not be of concern; as Meinwald (1992, 381) reminds us: “The circumstance that Plato uses slightly different language for the distinction in the two texts is typical of his compositional style, which generally relies on use of ordinary language in such a way as to make technical points (rather than introducing and adhering rigidly to special technical terms). I believe we should regard the occurrence of a unique pair of phrases as neither necessary nor sufficient for the operation of any one distinction.”
this is predication *pros ta alla* or *pros allo*. For example, bravery is virtuous *pros heauto* or *kath’ hauto* (i.e., in relation to itself), because bravery is itself a kind or species of virtue. In contrast, Achilles is brave *pros ta alla* or *pros allo* (in relation to something else), because Achilles himself is not a kind of bravery; rather, he is brave because there is bravery in him.

Unfortunately, Plato does not himself provide any indication of what he takes this distinction to amount to, either in the *Parmenides* or in the *Sophist*. However, based on how the distinction gets used within the dialogues, commentators have reconstructed implicit definitions of these two forms of predication. To quote Constance C. Meinwald:

“A predication of a subject in relation to itself [*pros heauto* or *kath’ hauto*] holds in virtue of a relation internal to the subject’s own nature, and can so be employed to reveal the structure of that nature. A predication in relation to the others [*pros ta alla* or *pros allo*] by contrast concerns its subject’s display of some feature, which Plato takes to be conformable in general to something other – namely the nature associated with that feature.”

These definitions themselves could be made more precise. (How exactly are natures “structured”? What does it mean to “display some feature”? How does this differ from “revealing one’s nature”, especially given the fact that natures are said to be “associated with features”?)

These issues notwithstanding, however, one clear mark of the distinction is the fact that with *pros heauto* or *kath’ hauto* predications of the form ‘A is B’, the explanation of this predication need not refer to anything other than (the nature of) A. In contrast, with *pros ta alla* or *pros allo* predications of the same form, the explanation must refer to something other than A – namely, the nature of the displayed feature B.

In this regard, the *pros heauto*–*pros ta alla* (or *kath’ hauto*–*pros allo*) distinction is one between nonderivative and derivative forms of predication, just like the Is–Has distinction from the *Phaedo*. This is not to say each distinction is precisely the same. Nevertheless, the similarities are striking, and helpful. The *Phaedo*’s characterization of the Is relation in terms of the applicability of definitions provides an illuminating gloss on what nonderivative predication entails. Conversely, thinking of derivative predication in terms of the display of

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50 Meinwald (1992: 378). Michael Frede’s clarification of the two uses of ‘is’ in the *Sophist* is looser, proceeding rather by specifying paradigm cases. Thus, he explains, the “Standardfälle” of *kath’ hauto* predication are definitions (and, possibly, specifications of the subject’s genus) (Frede (1967: 31)). In contrast, *pros allo* predications, when predicated of a Form, state what the Form is on account of the fact that it is a Form (rather than on account of the fact that it is the particular Form that it is) (Frede (1967: 33)); and when predicated of an ordinary thing, are just ordinary, garden-variety predications (since, at least according to Frede, an ordinary thing is nothing in virtue of itself, and only ever anything in virtue of participating in some Form) (Frede (1967: 34)). Meinwald follows Frede’s lead in this regard, referring to *pros heauto* predications as “tree” predications (after the genus–species tree diagrams which exemplify this relation) and *pros ta alla* predications as “ordinary” or “everyday” predications (Meinwald (1992: 379–380)).

51 To reiterate, the fact that Plato should use different terminology to mark much the same distinction in all three cases is not a concern; refer to n. 50 above.
features helps fill in the *Phaedo*’s rather hollow characterization of the Has relation in terms of addition and the mere inapplicability of definitions.

Yet the dialogues’ different distinctions do come apart, and in fact, the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist* represent a decided step forward in Plato’s thinking on these matters. Specifically, the two dialogues mark an innovation in how Plato came to conceive of derivative predication, allowing it to apply to Forms just as much as to ordinary things.

In the *Phaedo*, as we saw in §7.2, derivative (Has) predication is only ever used of ordinary things, and nonderivative (Is) predication is only ever used of Forms and bearers. Not so in the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*: Though ordinary things are likewise limited to derivative predication (they are not anything *pros heauto* or *kath’ heauto*), the Forms are recognized to enjoy derivative predication, too, in addition to nonderivative predication.

This is a welcome result. Derivative predications of Forms include claims like ‘The One is many’ (i.e., the One displays many features), ‘The Same is not the same’ (as, e.g., the Different), and ‘Motion rests’ (i.e., Motion is a stable, unchanging Form). These are predications which hold true of the Forms *qua* Forms, rather than *qua* the particular Form they are, and there is good reason to accept such predications as legitimate. Furthermore, as both the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist* emphasize, recognizing the legitimacy of derivative predications of Forms is essential to the task of unravelling various metaphysical puzzles – in the case of the *Sophist*, to resolving the Parmenidean problem of not-being, and in the case of the *Parmenides*, to resolving the problems for Forms posed in the first part of the dialogue.

To be clear, I am not claiming that Plato in the *Phaedo* thought derivative predications of Forms were illegitimate or false. Indeed, he is positively committed to the truth of many such claims, for example, that every Form is imperceptible, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and unchanging – claims that hold true of each Form *qua* Form, regardless of the particular Form it is. I am claiming, rather, that Plato offers no analysis of such predications, as they are not nicely subsumed under either Is or Has predication. Take, for example, the claim ‘the Big itself is intelligible’. Plato would clearly accept this claim as true. Yet it is not the case that the Big itself *Is* intelligibility; what it is to be big is not to be intelligible. Nor is it the case that the Big itself merely *Has* intelligibility; intelligibility is not just some property added to it, which it stands to lose. Thus the *Phaedo*’s theory of predication lacks an analysis for an import subset of true predications about the Forms.

Indeed, this lack of an analysis seems at one point to lead Plato to outright deny that such predications are possible. Through a series of counterfactual claims at 105e11–106a10, Socrates indicates that various Forms – explicitly, the Form of Oddness, of Coldness, and of Hotness;
but arguably, all Forms except for the Form of Life – are not indestructible.⁵³ His point cannot be that these Forms, unlike the Form of Life, will eventually fall out of existence; all the Forms are clearly everlasting and indestructible in some sense.⁵⁴ His point seems to be, rather, that these Forms are not indestructible nonderivatively, that is, in virtue of what they specifically are. For instance, being odd is not a way of being indestructible (whereas it is a way of being countable, say). In contrast, being alive is a way of being indestructible (at least according to Socrates in the Aitia Argument). In other words, the Form of Life is indestructibility, or is indestructible pros heauto or kath’ hauto, while the Form of Oddness is not indestructible in this way. Now, in the Parmenides and the Sophist, it may still be that the Form of Oddness is indestructible pros ta alla or pros allo. In the Phaedo, however, there is no other viable analysis available. If it is not the case that the Form of Oddness is indestructible, then it would seem that the Form of Oddness is not indestructible in any way – precisely as Socrates indicates at 105d11–106a1.

The major innovation which occurs between the Phaedo on the one hand and the Parmenides and the Sophist on the other is, I believe, a recognition in the latter of a new form of derivative predication. In the Phaedo, recall, all derivative predications hold true in virtue of a relation of addition.⁵⁵ In the Parmenides and the Sophist, however, not all derivative predications are cashed out in this way. They accept, for example, that ‘Motion rests’ and ‘Simmias is big’ are both true derivative predications, but they do not take this to mean that Rest is “added to” Motion in the sense that Bigness is “added to” Simmias. Rather, Motion rests pros ta alla or pros allo.⁵⁶

In summary, then, the Phaedo, the Parmenides, and the Sophist alike deploy predicational theories whose leading distinction is one between derivative and nonderivative predication. In the Phaedo, this linguistic distinction between types of predication directly corresponds to an ontological distinction between the subjects of the predications: ordinary things are that of which derivative predications are made; and Forms (and bearers) are that of which nonderivative predications are made. In the Parmenides and the Sophist, this correspondence is no longer so direct, since derivative predications can also be made of Forms. Rather, the ontological distinction would be as follows: ordinary things are that of which only derivative

⁵³The actual text is a bit more complicated than this, since Socrates does not here speak explicitly in terms of Forms but rather refers to “the un-even”, “the un-hot”, and “the un-cold”. However, I believe the surrounding context makes clear that these terms can be replaced by their respective Forms; cf. Socrates’ clarification of what it means to be “un-F” at 105d13–17.

⁵⁴Indeed, Plato presents an argument to this effect at 78b4–d9, within the Affinity Argument, and at 79d2 describes the Forms as “always in existence and immortal”.

⁵⁵This is reflected in our very definition of ‘Having’: if F-ness is derivatively predicated of x, then there is something which is added to x which is itself F-ness. As explained in §4.4 and §4.3.2, this relation of addition may be, more specifically, one of “participation”, “sharing”, “immanence”, or “occupation”.

⁵⁶I will say more in support of this interpretation of Plato’s later predicational innovations in §4.5.2.
predications are made; and Forms are the only things of which nonderivative predications are made. This contrast between the two theories is visually represented in Figures 2.1 and 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$x$ is:</th>
<th>F-ness is predicated of $x$...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ordinary thing</td>
<td>deratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(∧)</td>
<td>(∧)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>(∧)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.1: “How can F-ness be truly predicated of $x$?” in the Phaedo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$x$ is:</th>
<th>F-ness is predicated of $x$...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ordinary thing</td>
<td>deratively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(∧)</td>
<td>(∧)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>∨ (&quot;participates&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2: “How can F-ness be truly predicated of $x$?” in the Parmenides

2.9 The theory of predication in the Phaedo, as per Aristotle

This is not the only evidence that corroborates the theory of predication I have identified in the Phaedo. We may also look to certain contemporary commentators on Aristotle who have sought to identify the Platonic theory of predication which Aristotle takes himself to be responding to and improving on in the Categories. As the following two sections demonstrate, the principles and definitions of their Platonic reconstructions closely correspond to those of the theory set forth here.

2.9.1 Alan Code’s “logic of Being and Having”

Alan Code interprets both Plato and Aristotle as working with what he describes as a “logic of Being and Having”. The logic, as he presents it, consists of over thirty principles, definitions, and theorems, some of which are held uniquely by either just Plato or just Aristotle, but most of which are intended to be commitments shared by both.⁵⁷ These principles and definitions establish that his ‘Being’ and ‘Having’ conform to the same logic as ours.⁵⁸

Of particular note is the first in his list of “total definitions”:

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⁵⁷These principles, definitions, and theorems are neatly set out in Code (1986, 414–416).
⁵⁸Cf. also his remark at Code (1986, 417) that “Plato identifies Being with τὸ ἐξαντλητικὸν ὄν (‘pure’ Being), and identifies Having with μὴθεξίως (participation).”
⁵⁹D1. Code (1986, 414). In what follows I take some small liberties in how I report others’ principles and definitions. The differences between my glosses and their originals are primarily notational, and intended merely to bring out the similarities between the others’ formulations and my own.
**PREDICATION PRINCIPLE (CODE)**

\[ x \text{ is predicable of } y \iff (y \text{ Is } x \lor y \text{ Has something that Is } x) \]

This principle says that, in any case where \( x \) is truly predicated of \( y \), either \( y \) Is itself \( x \) or there is something else which Is \( x \), which \( y \) Has. What this means is that all cases of true predication hold true in virtue of something which Is the predicated thing, and which is either identical to or Had by the predication’s explicit subject. This is analogous to our own Predication Principle.\(^6\)

In addition, Code identifies what he calls the “Platonic Principle”.\(^6\)

**HAS COROLLARY (CODE)**

\[ x \text{ Has a Form } y \implies \text{the definition of } y \text{ is not linguistically predicable of } x \]

This is more or less our own Has Corollary, if we substitute “...is true of...” for “...is linguistically predicable of...”. Furthermore, though Code does not isolate the following claim as its own principle, certain of his remarks make clear that he takes Plato to be committed also to the following claim, an analogue of our Is Predication.\(^6\)

**IS PREDICATION (CODE)**

\[ x \text{ Is a Form } y \iff \text{the definition of } y \text{ is linguistically predicable of } x \]

\(^6\)A note on terminology: \( x \) and \( y \) are used by Code to refer to beings, of whatever ontological category, which according to Aristotle include ordinary things (Aristotelian primary substances, or particulars) and Forms (roughly, non-substance universals), as well as secondary substances (substance universals) and non-substance individuals (possibly Platonic bearers). The “...is predicable of...” relation translates Aristotle’s κατηγορεῖται, and is an ontological relation, distinct from the relation of linguistic predicability (on which see n. 5 below).

\(^6\)As a slight but ultimately inconsequential difference between Code’s formulation of the principle and my own arises from how we respectively define the Has relation. By his FP4 (Code (1986, 414)):

\[ x \text{ Has } y \iff x \text{ Has something that Is } y \]

In contrast, by Has Predication on my account:

\[ x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness } \iff \text{there is something added to } x \text{ that Is } F\text{-ness} \]

That is, I explain the Has relation, not in terms of another Has relation, but in terms of an independently specified relation, “addition”. This seems to me in better keeping with the Phaedo. For example, on its analysis, a body Has life because a soul is in the body and this soul Is itself life; it is never suggested that the body Has its soul. But I do not think anything substantial hinges on this difference.


\(^6\)Code (1986, 422–423) explains that linguistic predicability is “a relation between linguistic predicates and things”, as opposed to predicability simpliciter, which is a relation between things and other things. The reason behind making this distinction is merely that, because definitions are linguistic items as opposed to veritable things in the world, we must introduce a new relation, distinct from regular predicability, to describe when they truly apply to things.

\(^6\)Cf. Code (1986, 426): “Plato’s realm of separable Being ... is the domain of definable entities – the objects about which one asks the Socratic ‘What is X?’ question. This question is a request for a definition that says what X really is... X itself is the only thing to which the definition of X properly applies.” (I return to this qualification of “only” in n. 53)
Which is all just to say that the “logic of Being and Having”, which Code, rather abstractly, imputes to Plato on Aristotle’s behalf, is actually explicit in the theory of predication I have identified in the *Phaedo*. I take this to be further evidence in the latter’s favour.

### 2.9.2 Wolfgang Mann’s “predicational schemata”

Wolfgang Mann presents a different formulation of Aristotle’s conception of the Platonic theory of predication, but one which amounts to much the same thing. According to his interpretation, the basic tenet of the Platonic theory is again a distinction between two forms of predication, or as Mann puts it, two ways in which a sentence of the form ‘*X* is *Y*’ can be true. Specifically, he analyzes true predications into two possible schemata, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicational Schemata (Mann)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘<em>X</em> is <em>Y</em>’ is true $\iff$ either:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) $y$ is (part of) what being $x$ is; or alternatively, $x$ is $y$ in virtue of its own nature; or:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) $x$ is $y$, even though being $y$ is not (part of) what being $x$ is; or alternatively, $x$ is $y$, but not in virtue of its own nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though this articulation of the distinction makes use of terms unfamiliar from our own analysis of the *Phaedo* (“nature”, “(part of) what being $x$ is”), in outline it is the same as our Predication Principle, analyzing all true predications as falling under one of two kinds. Furthermore, as Mann elaborates, the distinction between schemata (i) and (ii) is one between nonderivative and derivative predication; as he states:

“In the first case, $x$ is $y$ in virtue of itself ($\kappaαλλιστερον$). Thus $x$ is called *Y*, because being $y$ is (part of) what $x$ is, i.e., *x* is called *Y* in its own right, in a nonderivative way. The force of this emerges in contrast with the second case. Here $x$ again is $y$, but now not in virtue of itself. So $x$ cannot be called *Y* because being $y$ is (part of) what $x$ is, for being $y$ is not (part of) what being $x$ is; rather $x$ is called *Y* because $x$ is appropriately related to $y$. Let us use *participation* as the name for the appropriate relation. Then we can say that [in the second case] $x$ is $y$, because $x$ participates in $y$. And $x$ is called *Y*, but is so called, not in its own right, but after $y$; in other words, $x$ is called *Y* derivatively.”

Furthermore, Mann states that in the second, derivative case, the item $y$ in which $x$ participates, is itself called *Y* “in its own right, nonderivatively.” Therefore, we can reformulate Mann’s initial schemata thus:

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65*Mann* (2000, 77). Note that in Mann’s usage, “*X* introduces an item, $x$, into discourse, and *Y* introduces $y$ into discourse” (*Mann* (2000, 76)). As such, “‘*X* is *Y*’ is true” is equivalent in our terms to “$y$ is truly predicated of *X*”.


**Predication Principle (Mann)**

\[ 'X \text{ is } Y' \text{ is true } \iff \exists z \ [ z \text{ is called } Y \text{ nonderivatively } \& ( x = z \lor x \text{ participates in } z ) ] \]

This nicely mirrors our Predication Principle, substituting “...is called nonderivatively...” for “...Is...” and “...x participates in y...” for “...y is added to x...”. And although Mann does not define his participation and nonderivative predication relations any further (that is, although his analysis includes nothing analogous to our Has Predication and Is Predication), the rest of his discussion indicates that his overall framework is in general sympathy with the theory of predication I have outlined here.

### 2.10 The theory of predication in the *Categories*, again

These two contemporary analyses confirm that, according to Aristotle, the distinguishing feature of the Platonic theory of predication was a distinction between derivative and nonderivative predication, with the former explained in terms of the latter. This, I have argued, is precisely the sort of distinction Plato relies on in the *Phaedo*; and in §2.4 we saw that Aristotle adopts his own version of it in the *Categories*, in distinguishing between said of and in predication.

Yet where does Aristotle depart from his teacher? Here I will highlight just his most pertinent innovation.

Recall that, from all we are told in the *Phaedo*, ordinary things are nothing; everything truly predicated of an ordinary thing is something it has. Code codifies this assumption as the second of his “Platonic Theorems”.

**Platonic Theorem (Code)**

\[ x \text{ is particular} \iff \sim \exists y \ [ y \neq x \land y \text{ Is } x ] \]

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66Among the innovations I will be skipping over are Aristotle’s recognition of different kinds of eponymy (namely, homonymy and synonymy, but possibly also heteronymy; cf. Mann (2000, 54–55)) and his denial of the (supposedly Platonic) claim that each universal is a separable Platonic Form (cf. PPT, Code (1986, 415)). In addition, Code contends that Plato believed, and Aristotle denied, that only the Form of F-ness Is F-ness—i.e., that there is no case in which x Is y and yet x is nonidentical to y (cf. PPT, Code (1986, 415)). As he states, “Only X itself really and truly Is X... For instance, the Form, the beautiful itself, is the only thing that really and truly Is beautiful” (Code (1986, 426)). Further on he elaborates, “The *Phaedo* holds ... that there is always a word ... that applies to a Form in virtue of what that Form Is, and applies to [all] other things in a derivative way, in virtue of something they Have... The number three is rightly called ‘odd’ in virtue of the fact that it Has the μορφή (shape, form, or character) of the Form of the odd. By way of contrast, the word ‘odd’ is applicable to the Form itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἄρσις), to Oddness, not in virtue of its Having the character of the odd, but in virtue of its Being ὅπερ τὸ περιττόν (i.e. in virtue of what it Is)” (Code (1986, 427)). Yet this is not quite what the *Phaedo* says. Rather, it explicitly states that both oddness and threeness “deserve the name” of oddness (103ε2 ff., quoted on p. 43). Thus oddness is truly predicated of both of them in the same sense. At any rate, if it were the case that threeness and other bearers merely Had their associated properties, then they would not qualify as causes of those properties, by the Is Lemma. But they are causes; thus, Plato is not committed to PPT, pace Code.

66Cf. §2.4.


71Which is to say, x is not predicable of anything other than itself, by d6 (Code (1986, 414)).
Assimilating Aristotelian “particulars” to Platonic “ordinary things”, this theorem states that there is nothing which any given ordinary thing Is, other than the ordinary thing itself. Socrates Is Socrates, and nothing else.

Aristotle believes otherwise. He, like Plato, accepts that there are things which are derivatively predicated of particulars: paleness is in Socrates; softness is in this cat; wetness is in this eggplant. He also, and again like Plato, accepts that there are things which are nonderivatively predicated of Forms (and universals more generally): knowledge is said of grammatical knowledge, for instance. Yet Aristotle, unlike Plato, believes that there are also things which are nonderivatively predicated of particulars: human is said of Socrates; animal is said of this cat; nightshade is said of this eggplant. These predicational possibilities are visually represented in Figure 2.1.

Aristotle’s recognition of nonderivative predications of ordinary things has telling implications for his accompanying ontology. Recall that, on the Platonic theory of predication (whether in the Phaedo or in the Parmenides and the Sophist), the class of beings which allow other things to be predicated of them nonderivatively is identical to the class of Forms (and bearers). Thus, in Plato, nonderivative predicability could be seen as a hallmark of a special kind of entity. In the Categories, however, the class of beings which allow other things to be predicated of them nonderivatively isolates no special subset of beings at all. Rather, all beings have other things said of them.⁷³ And if we assume in addition that Aristotle, like Plato in the Parmenides and the Sophist, recognized derivative predications of Forms and universals, then no ontological distinction can be drawn from the ways in which other things are predicated of a given subject. Regardless of whether the subject is an ordinary thing or a Form, other things can be both said of and in it.

This observation may explain why, when Aristotle comes to distinguish his four classes of beings, he relies on a different consideration: not the ways in which other things can be

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⁷²Mann also imputes this assumption to Plato, though he puts it in slightly different terms, stating that Plato uses his distinction between derivative and nonderivative predication “to partition everything into two wholly disjoint classes” (Mann 2000, 84). These disjoint classes are, on the one hand, the class of things which always Are and never Have what is truly predicated of them (viz., Forms), and on the other, the class of those things which always Have and never Are (viz., ordinary perceptible objects).

⁷³Except, perhaps, for the highest genera, such as being.
predicated of a given subject, but the ways in which the subject can be predicated of other things. Thus, ordinary things are distinguished by being neither said of nor in anything else, whereas Forms are both said of and in other things, as represented in Figure 2.2. Indeed, this observation may even explain why Aristotle privileges ordinary things as his “primary substances”, unlike Plato, who privileges the Forms. Once both ordinary things and Forms are recognized as enjoying nonderivative predication, such that the distinction must be cast in terms of how they themselves are predicated of other things, ordinary things look more ontologically primary, since they, unlike Forms, are not predicated of other things. All other predications ultimately trace back to being of them.

Yet is Plato truly committed to the claim that there is no nonderivative predication of ordinary things, that ordinary things Are nothing? Again, I would claim that it is more accurate to say that Plato lacked an analysis of such predications. In the Phaedo (as well as in the Parmenides and the Sophist), Plato simply never addresses cases of nonderivative predications of ordinary things. His examples are limited to statements like ‘Simmias is big’ and ‘this body is hot’, and never statements like ‘Socrates is human’. There is no indication of how he would analyze such a statement; yet this is no reason to assume that he would necessarily think it true because Socrates Has humanity.

In this regard, we must bear in mind that the Phaedo’s theory of predication is not a general theory intended to account for all the true statements we make. Rather, it is introduced within a discussion of causation, and this discussion severely limits the bounds of its analysis. As we saw in Chapter, the Phaedo’s theory of causation is concerned to account for only those properties which ordinary things stand to gain or lose. The properties which are predicated of ordinary things nonderivatively are not like this. (Socrates cannot gain or lose his humanness.) Thus it is no surprise that the Phaedo’s theory of predication has nothing to say about the proper analysis of such predications.

This is not to deny that Aristotle has the better general theory of predication; he clearly does. And indeed, we may very well wish that Plato had said more than he did in the Phaedo, and that he had provided us with a predicational theory which could cover all the cases. Yet we should not criticize him for not doing so, especially given the extent to which he

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As emphasized from the very start of this chapter, in §2.1.
was pioneering all he was doing, and the fact that he was doing so with distinctive, pre-Aristotelian preoccupations and presuppositions. As is typical of his method, Plato is in the *Phaedo* only as general as he needs to be to serve his explicit purpose, and he should not be too harshly faulted for failing to provide anything more.
Chapter 3

The hypothesis of ultimate universal causes

The *Phaedo* counts many things among its *bona fide* causes: fire is a cause of hotness, threeness is a cause of oddness, soul is a cause of life. In addition, the *Phaedo* states that Forms are causes. The Beautiful itself is a cause – even, ultimately, the only cause – of ordinary things’ beauty, the Big itself a cause of ordinary things’ bigness, and so on. As Socrates confidently asserts:

“It seems to me that if anything other than the Beautiful itself is beautiful, then it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful; and I say this for all things. Do you agree to this sort of cause (*τῇ τοιᾷδε αἰτίᾳ*)?” (100c4–7)

This chapter explains this identification of Forms as causes. Our discussion will be guided by two questions: First, *in what sense* are Forms causes? (What sort of cause are Forms supposed to be, and how do they differ from other *bona fide* causes?) Second, *on what basis* are Forms causes? (How are Forms here being conceived, and is their identification as causes derived, stipulated, assumed, or something else?)

The first question will be relatively straightforward to answer, given our account from Chapter 2. Forms are “ultimate universal” causes, as I explain in §3.1. The second question will prove trickier, and I will offer a bold new response: as I argue in the remainder of the chapter, the identification of Forms as causes should be read as a *constitutive* claim – Forms are identified as causes because that for Plato is, fundamentally, what Forms are.

3.1 Forms as ultimate universal causes

What sort of cause are Forms supposed to be? First and foremost, they are causes in the *Phaedo*’s distinctive sense of the word: they are “ingredient causes”, as per the definition of
‘aitia’ from §3.1. An ingredient cause of something’s \(F\)-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now \(F\).

Every \textit{bona fide} cause from the Aitia Argument is an ingredient cause, but Forms are a specific sort of ingredient cause. Note that, given our definition, ingredient causes may be either particular or universal\footnote{Or, in contemporary parlance, ingredient causes may be either singular or general, or either causal tokens or types.}. If you make me a cup of tea and I ask what makes the tea sweet, you may say “the sugar”, meaning that lump of sugar, which you scooped out of \textit{that} jar. This is to cite a \textit{particular} cause. The sugar in my tea is in my tea alone. It is not the sugar in your tea. It is the cause only of \textit{my} tea’s sweetness, not of yours, or of anyone else’s.

Ingredient causes may also be universal. If you give me a glass of lemonade and I ask what makes lemonade sweet, you may say “the sugar”, meaning the general ingredient of lemonade, independent of whatever particular scoop of sugar is in this glass. This is to cite a \textit{universal} cause. Sugar, as a general ingredient, is in many distinct things: my lemonade, your lemonade, his tea, her coffee. It is a cause of sweetness in all of them.

Forms are universal ingredient causes. They are in many distinct things, and are the cause of \(F\)-ness in all of them. Indeed, more than this, Forms are \textit{ultimate} universal causes. Sugar is a cause of sweetness in many drinks, but not all. In Coca-Cola, for example, the cause of sweetness is not sugar but high fructose corn syrup. The Form of \(F\)-ness, in contrast, is the cause of \(F\)-ness in all the many \(F\) things. What makes every sweet drink sweet is sweetness. This statement may seem trivial, but it is not vacuous: after all, if a drink were without any sweetness (be it sugar or corn syrup or honey or aspartame), then the drink would not be sweet at all.

Therefore, I propose that when Forms are identified as causes at \textit{Phaedo I}00c, they are being identified as ultimate universal causes – or, as I will abbreviate them from now on, “\textit{uucs}”\footnote{Pronounced, for what it’s worth, as “ukes”.}. The Form of \(F\)-ness is that one thing which has been added to all the many \(F\) things, such that they are now \(F\).

\section{3.2 The status of the identification}

Yet why are Forms identified as such causes? On what basis does this identification hold true? The answer I wish to defend is that the identification of Forms as causes is a constitutive claim: Forms are identified as (ultimate universal) causes because, for Plato, (ultimate universal) causes are, fundamentally, what Forms are. That is, the Forms’ avowed status as \textit{uucs} in the \textit{Phaedo} is not some feature newly bestowed on them, or somehow derived from other
assumed features. Rather, it is their fundamental and most basic feature. In this regard, the identification of Forms as causes at *Phaedo* 100c does no more than make explicit what was implicit all along.

To defend this answer fully will require the rest of this chapter. For some initial support, we may look to the argumentative context of *Phaedo* 100c. Of particular note is that the argument in which the identification of Forms as causes appears – the “Aitia Argument” – is explicitly billed as a *hypothetical* argument: an argument that begins by assuming some hypothesis, and then demonstrates some further claims on the basis of that hypothesis. Socrates advertises this methodological strategy, and explains its application to the Aitia Argument, as follows:

“I start from these things, (i) hypothesizing that there is a Beautiful itself by itself, and a Good, and a Big, and all the rest. If you grant me these things and accept that they exist, then I hope, from these things, (ii) to demonstrate to you the cause, and (iii) to discover that the soul is immortal.” (100b5–9)

In other words, the Aitia Argument, as a hypothetical argument, consists of three parts: (i) a hypothesis, (ii) an intermediary claim, and (iii) a conclusion. The conclusion of the argument is that the soul is immortal, and its intermediary claim has something to do with “the cause”.

That is, Socrates is here indicating that everything he will go on to say in the Aitia Argument about causes is meant to follow in some fashion from the hypothesis with which he starts.

Socrates’ hypothesis, according to the above excerpt, is the existence, or reality, of a certain set of entities: namely, a Beautiful itself by itself, a Good itself by itself, a Big itself by itself, and “all the rest”. These entities, unsurprisingly, are taken by Socrates to constitute an identifiable category, and elsewhere he refers to them collectively as “Forms”, or εἴδη.

I will not attempt to specify the full extension of this category. For present purposes, it will suffice if we understand ‘Forms’ loosely, as referring to the examples just listed and “other similar things”. This allows us to specify the hypothesis of the Aitia Argument in the following,

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3 Or, more specifically, “the kind of cause which [Socrates] has occupied himself with” (τῆς αἰτίας τὸ εἶδος ὃ πεπραγμάτευμαι, 100b3–4), to which τὴν αἰτίαν at 100b8 clearly refers.

4 Given remarks made earlier in the *Phaedo*, we can confidently assume that this “rest” includes a Just itself by itself, a Pious, and an Equal (cf. 75c9–d1), as well as health and strength (cf. 65d2–13). And, if we look ahead to remarks yet to come in the Aitia Argument, we can also include smallness (101a4), numerosness (101b6), twoness (101c5), the Hot and the Cold (103c11–d1), the Even and the Odd (103c6–104b4), the Whole (105b2), sickness (106c5), and the Musical (105d16).

5 Most notably, at 102b1, where Socrates paraphrases the initial hypothesis as assuming that “each of the Forms exists” (ἐὰν τί ἑκάστων τῶν εἴδων). For further examples of this use of εἴδη, see 103e3 and 104e7, and possibly 106d6.

6 Though the comments made in §4.2 and §4.3 would suggest that it is limited to Forms of opposites. This would accord with the confidence with which Forms of opposites are accepted by Socrates at *Parmenides* 130b, and the interpretation put forth by Nehamas (1974). At any rate, Forms of opposites are all that figure in the *Phaedo*’s various arguments, and all that is needed for these arguments to go through.
abbreviated manner: it is simply the hypothesis that “there are Forms.”

Immediately following this initial hypothesis is the passage at 100c4–7 with which this chapter began, in which the hypothesized Forms are identified as causes. Thus, if we wish to understand why Forms are identified as causes, we must clarify the relationship between this identification and the initial hypothesis. Our question, then, is, What is the content of the initial hypothesis, and how does it relate to the identification of Forms as causes which follows it?

Contemporary scholarship on this question divides into two camps. One side argues that the identification of Forms as causes is a continuation of the initial hypothesis and included as part of it; that the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis, when fully specified, is that there are Forms and that these Forms are causes. The other side argues that the identification of Forms as causes is a consequence of the initial hypothesis; that the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis is only that there are Forms, and does not claim anything about the Forms’ being causes. For convenience, I will call the first side the “Forms plus” interpretation, and the second side the “just Forms” interpretation.

There is compelling evidence on both sides of this debate. In support of the “Forms plus” interpretation, scholars claim that the mere hypothesis that there are Forms is not sufficient for what is supposed to follow from it – Socrates’ exclusive acceptance of explanations like ‘beautiful things are beautiful by the beautiful’ and ‘ten is more numerous than eight on account of numerosness’, and categorical dismissal of explanations like ‘this man is bigger than that man by his head’. In other words, Socrates accepts explanations which identify a Form as the cause and dismisses explanations which identify the cause as anything else. And this, it is claimed, is because Socrates is working from a hypothesis that includes the identification of Forms are causes, accepting whatever conforms with this identification and dismissing whatever does not.

In support of the “just Forms” interpretation, scholars note that only the claim that there are Forms is ever explicitly referred to as a hypothesis, at 100b5. Furthermore, Socrates twice
distinguishes this claim from his explanations in terms of Forms, and characterizes these explanations as “following from” that claim. This is not, presumably, how Socrates would have put it if the identification of Forms as causes were meant to be included in the argument’s hypothesis.

I do not wish to align myself with either of these camps. Indeed, I believe that the long-standing dispute between them suggests that both sides are missing something, and that a middle ground must be sought. Yet what middle ground is possible? As both readings assume, we have two claims – that there are Forms, and that Forms are causes. The first claim is clearly hypothesized in the Aitia Argument; the question is whether the second is hypothesized along with it. Only two answers would seem available: yes (the “Forms plus” interpretation) or no (the “just Forms” interpretation). There is no third option.

The solution is to reject the assumption that we have two separate claims. If we assume, rather, that the two claims are equivalent, and that to hypothesize that there are Forms just is to hypothesize that there are \( \text{Forms} \), then a middle ground emerges. On this interpretation, as on the “just Forms” interpretation, the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis is just that there are Forms; but as on the “Forms plus” interpretation, this hypothesis includes the identification of Forms as causes. Call this the “just causes” interpretation.

Here is another way to put the point of the “just causes” interpretation: Both the “just Forms” and the “Forms plus” interpretations assume that, fundamentally, Forms are something other than causes. Perhaps Forms are thought of as standards, or paradigms, or the objects of definitions or thought or knowledge. Regardless, whatever Forms are assumed fundamentally to be, their status as causes is not included in this description, and must be

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¹¹ At 100c3, Socrates introduces the identification of Forms as causes passage as “what follows” or “what comes next” (τὰ ἑξῆς ἐκείνοις), after the hypothesis that there are Forms. Cf. the passage quoted on p. 3.2 above: “If you grant me these [Forms] and accept that they exist, then I hope, from these things (ἐκ τούτων), to demonstrate to you the cause” (100b7–8).

¹² There is other evidence which, though often taken in support of one reading, actually supports the other just as well. For instance, at the end of the Aitia Argument, Socrates exhorts his audience to go back and re-examine “the first hypotheses” (τὰς ὑποθέσεις τὰς πρώτας, 107b5). The plural here is sometimes treated as indication that the argument’s initial hypothesis must have included a multiplicity of claims: namely, that there are Forms, and that Forms are causes, in support of the “Forms plus” interpretation (cf. Rowe (1993, 61 n. 22) and Rowe (1993, 228 n. 5, 234)). Yet the plural could just as easily be accounted for by the fact that the argument hypothesizes the existence of a multiplicity of Forms (which it does do, after all), without further hypothesis about the Forms’ being causes. There is also the remark at 102b1–3, where Phaedo summarizes the argument thus far by stating, “It was agreed that each of the Forms exists, and the other things, by taking part in them, are named after these very Forms.” Clearly, Phaedo is here restating the earlier claims that there are Forms and that Forms are causes, and the fact that both of these claims are said to be “agreed to” is sometimes taken as indication that both have the status of a hypothesis, in support of the “just Forms” interpretation. (Indeed, Rowe (1993, 53) takes this remark as “a clinching reason for taking the hypothesis of b5–7 as intended to be amplified by c4–6;” see also Rowe (1993, 233–234).) Yet it is just as plausible that the second claim is “agreed to” because it follows from the first, and thus that the argument’s hypothesis is limited to the claim that there are Forms (cf. Kanayama (1990, 54–55)).
added to it in some way. (In other words, the claim that Forms are causes is interpreted as a synthetic claim.) On the “just Forms” interpretation, the Forms’ status as causes is meant to follow in some way from the sort of thing which Forms fundamentally are; on the “Forms plus” interpretation, this status is simply hypothesized in addition. Yet neither reading considers the possibility that Forms might fundamentally be causes. This is the proposal of the “just causes” interpretation.

However, for all we have seen thus far, nothing recommends this proposal beyond interpretive peacemaking. Why, then, should we think that the Forms hypothesized at the start of the Aitia Argument are meant to be understood as uucs and no more? In what follows I will defend this interpretation on three fronts. I begin, in §3.2, by presenting evidence from the “early” dialogues which suggests that the conceptual precursors of the Forms are none other than uucs; this will show why it makes sense to understand Forms as uucs at all. Following this, in §3.4 I discuss further evidence from within the Aitia Argument and defend my interpretation against potential textual objections; this will show why the argument’s Forms can be understood as uucs. Finally, in §3.5 I look at some of the Phaedo’s other arguments and demonstrate that they, too, start from the hypothesis that there are Forms, and that in each of these arguments the hypothesis must be understood as the claim that there are uucs. And this will show that the Aitia Argument’s Forms are meant to be understood as uucs.

### 3.3 Ultimate universal causes in Plato

To begin, then, let us step outside the Phaedo for a moment and look at some “early” dialogues which also employ the concept of ultimate universal causes, if only implicitly. By highlighting the ways in which this concept appears elsewhere, the identification of Forms as uucs in the Phaedo will begin to seem less obscure, and more obviously constitutive. In the following sections, I will discuss three prominent examples of ultimate universal causes in Plato: in connection with Socratic definitions, with expertise, and with knowledge.

#### 3.3.1 Ultimate universal causes and definitions

First and foremost, the existence of ultimate universal causes is a presupposition of Socrates’ search for definitions. This is because the definitions which Socrates seeks are definitions of uucs, by Socrates’ own lights. The answer which Socrates seeks to his ‘What is F-ness?’ questions just is the ultimate universal cause of F-ness.

This claim may seem tendentious. Typically it is said that the answer which Socrates seeks is the essence, or nature, of F-ness. I have no qualms with such statements in and
of themselves. However, such claims are sometimes taken to mean that Socrates is seeking the necessary and sufficient conditions of F-ness: that which all and only F things have in common. This is to say that Socrates is seeking merely the universal F-ness, with no concern for that universal’s causal status. But this is a misconstrual of what a Socratic definition is.

This is established beyond a doubt in the Euthyphro, which builds up to a universal definition of piety and then shows this still to be inadequate, since it is lacking in causal force. Euthyphro’s first definition, that ‘the pious’ is prosecuting the wrongdoer, states a merely sufficient condition of piety: all acts of prosecuting a wrongdoer are pious, but not all pious acts are prosecutions of some wrongdoer, since “there are many other pious acts” (6d6–7). In contrast, Euthyphro’s second definition, that ‘the pious’ is that which is god-loved, states a merely necessary condition of piety: all pious acts are god-loved, but not everything that is god-loved is pious, since the gods disagree with each other (7b1 ff.) and that which is loved by some gods will be hated by others and thus impious (8a4–8). Euthyphro’s third definition, however, avoids the errors of these previous two and states a necessary and sufficient condition of piety, something all and only pious acts have in common: they are loved by all the gods. Yet this answer still does not satisfy Socrates. As he states at the end of his refutation of it, Euthyphro’s third definition states merely an affect or quality of piety (πάθος τι, 2a1), whereas Socrates was seeking its essence or nature (τὴν οὐσίαν, 2a8–9).

Therefore, the answer to Socrates’ ‘What is F-ness’ questions – the essence or nature of F-ness – is something more than a necessary and sufficient condition of F-ness. If it were not, then Euthyphro’s third definition would be an adequate answer to the question ‘What is piety?’ Furthermore, as Socrates’ refutation at 10a ff. makes clear, what Euthyphro’s third definition lacks is causal force. It is not the case that a pious act is pious because it is loved by all the gods; therefore, being loved by all the gods is not the essence or nature of piety. Conversely, we may say that what the essence or nature of piety is is that because of which all and only pious things are pious.

This interpretation is corroborated by the Hippias Major. Socrates’ question in this dialogue is ‘What is beauty?’, and at one point he describes the answer he is looking for as follows:

“I thought we were looking for that by which all beautiful things are beautiful. For example, that by which all big things are big is exceeding. For it is by this that all big things are big, even if they do not appear so. If they exceed, necessarily they are big. Similarly, we say that the beautiful is that by which all things are beautiful, whether

¹³See, for example, Nozick (1997, 149): “The Socratic search for the definition of a concept F is a search for necessary and sufficient conditions that provide a standard that can be utilized to decide whether F applies in any given case.”

¹⁴As Euthyphro puts it, “the pious is that which all the gods love, and its opposite, the impious, is that which all the gods hate” (9e1–3). The initial suggestion, however, is Socrates’; cf. 9d1–5.
or not they appear to be beautiful... We must try to say what it is that makes things beautiful, whether or not they appear so. This is what we are looking for, if indeed we are looking for the beautiful." (294a8–c2)

Note the causal language in this passage: the beautiful is that by which (ἡ) all beautiful things are beautiful, that which makes (ποιοῦν) beautiful things beautiful.¹⁵ And note also the contrast between really making and making appear: the beautiful does not merely make other things appear beautiful, but truly makes them beautiful, regardless of how they appear.¹⁶

This is why I claim that the objects of Socratic definitions are **AUCS**. As the *Euthyphro* and *Hippias Major* make explicit, causality is an indispensable part of any such definition: not only must the definition of *F*-ness define that which all and only *F* things have, but it must also define that which makes those things *F*. As we saw in 3.1, that which makes some *F* thing *F* is a particular cause of *F*-ness, and that which makes all and only *F* things *F* is the ultimate universal cause of *F*-ness. In this regard, the idea that there are definitions – the intuition and presupposition behind so many of the “early” dialogues – is one and the same as the idea that there are **AUCS**.¹⁷

### 3.3.2 Ultimate universal causes and expertise

In a similar vein, the existence of ultimate universal causes is, by Plato’s lights, a presupposition of the commonplace recognition of experts and teachers in specific fields. This is because an expert in *F*-ness is precisely someone who knows the universal cause of *F*-ness. This knowledge is what enables the expert to make others become *F*.

The connection between expertise and universal causes is illustrated clearly in the *Laches*. The opening question of this dialogue concerns the education of the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias: “What should they study or practice such that they turn out best?” (179d6–7) To answer this question, Socrates observes that they must first determine “who is expert (τεχνικός) in the care of the soul” (179e). This expert, Socrates goes on to remark, is someone “who has cared for the souls of many young people” (179e4) and “through whose influence others

¹⁵Causal language, we should note, which is mirrored in the *Phaedo*; cf. 100d5, d7, and e2.

¹⁶To a modern reader, it may seem that I am here conflating causal and constitutive claims. For example, being divisible without remainder by two is what makes all even things even, but no modern reader would think it is a cause of evenness; rather, divisibility by two merely constitutes evenness. In this regard, it may seem that we can specify ‘that which makes all *F* things *F*’ and yet fail to specify a cause. Yet Plato would deny this. For Plato, ‘that which makes all *F* things *F*’ always refers to a *bona fide* entity (the ultimate universal ingredient cause), whose presence in other things causes them to be *F*. In other words, for Plato, there is no constitution without causation. We may, of course, disagree with Plato here, but we should not charge him with conflating the causal and the constitutive.

¹⁷Which in the *Euthyphro*, it should be noted, is also one and the same as the idea that there are Forms: at 6d10–11, Socrates describes the answer which he seeks to the ‘What is piety?’ question as “that Form itself, by which all pious things are pious.”
are agreed to have become good” (186b3–5). That is, the mark of the expert is her ability to change others, in accordance with her expertise.

At 189e ff., Socrates explains that this ability of the expert rests on her knowledge. The expert who is able to make others virtuous and good is so able because she knows what virtue is. Yet this is not, as one might expect, because this “knowledge of what virtue is” enables the expert merely to recognize who is and who is not truly virtuous and thereby ensure that those in her care conform to this standard. Rather, this knowledge is necessary because virtue is that which, when added to a person’s soul, makes that person better (cf. 190b4–5). That is, virtue is here being understood as the universal cause of goodness in human souls. The expert in virtue is able to make others better because she understands this cause, since it is by its presence that others become better. The universal cause of goodness is precisely what those who are not good lack and require, and the expert in virtue brings about this universal cause in them.

Socrates establishes this point in the Laches by means of an analogy with another field of expertise: the art of medicine. As he explains:

“[If we happen to know that sight, when added to the eyes, makes those eyes to which it is added better], and furthermore are able to add it to the eyes, [then clearly we know what sight itself is], about which we would become advisers on how one might best and most easily obtain it. Because if we did not know what sight or hearing itself was, then we would hardly be worthy advisers and doctors about either the eyes or the ears as to the manner in which one might be obtain either sight or hearing.” (190a1–b1)

The point here is that what enables the medical expert to, say, heal the eyes and return to them their sight is knowledge of what sight itself is, and this amounts to knowing that sight is that which, when added to the eyes, makes those eyes better. Thus, the medical expert’s status as an expert rests on knowledge of the universal cause of goodness in all parts of the body – namely, health. Indeed, according to Socrates, this relation holds generally: all experts are experts through their knowledge of an ultimate universal cause. And in this way, the recognition of experts in any field presupposes that there are \( vuc\), which the experts are knowledgeable of.

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18 190b7–c2: “Therefore, isn’t it necessary for us to know what virtue is? Because if we do not know with all certainty what virtue is, then how are we going to advise anyone on the best manner in which to obtain it?”

19 Cf. 189e3–7: “If we happen to know, about anything whatsoever, that when added to something else, it makes that to which it is added better, and furthermore are able to make the addition, then clearly we know that very thing about which we would become advisers on how one might best and most easily obtain it.”

20 This point is echoed in the Gorgias, where Socrates distinguishes medicine (a bona fide area of expertise, or craft) from pastry-baking (a false art, or knack) as follows: “I was saying that I didn’t think that pastry baking is a craft, but a knack, whereas medicine is a craft. I said that the one, medicine, has investigated both the nature of what it treats and the cause (\( τῆν \ aιτίαν \)) of what it does, and is able to give an account of each of these. The other, the one concerned with pleasure, to which the whole of its treatment is devoted, proceeds toward pleasure.
3.3.3 Ultimate universal causes and knowledge

Thirdly, the existence of ultimate universal causes can be seen, in a fashion, to stand behind the recognition of knowledge, as distinct from right opinion or true belief (ὀρθὴ/ἄληθὴς δόξα). At Meno 98a3–4, in what is admittedly an obscure remark, Socrates says that knowledge differs from and is prized more highly than right opinion in being “tied down” by “a reasoning out of the cause” (αἰτίας λογισμῷ). It is unclear precisely what Socrates here means by “the cause”, but it is clear that, whatever it is, it is necessary for knowledge: if there is knowledge, then there are causes, which those with knowledge reason out.

This association is not peculiar to Plato. In the opening chapter of the Metaphysics, Aristotle also distinguishes knowledge and wisdom from mere experience by their concern with causes:

“We think that knowledge and understanding (τὸ εἰδέναι καὶ τὸ ἐπαίειν) belong more to expertise (τέχνη) than to experience, and we suppose experts to be wiser (σοφωτέρους) than people of experience, inasmuch as wisdom in all cases depends more on knowledge. And this is because the former know the cause, while the latter do not. People of experience know the fact (τὸ δότι) but not the reason why (διότι), while experts know the reason why and the cause... Clearly, then wisdom is knowledge of certain principles and causes.” (Metaphysics A.1 98a24–30, 98a21–3)

Indeed, Aristotle builds the whole Metaphysics upon this commonplace association between wisdom and causes. Because wisdom in general is a matter of knowing the cause, the Metaphysics, as the ultimate essay on wisdom, must be an investigation into the first cause and principle of all.

Thus the recognition that there is knowledge presupposes that there are causes. Does it, however, presuppose that there are ucscs, that is, ultimate universal causes? Not in all cases. In the Meno, for instance, the example of knowledge under consideration is knowledge of a particular piece of information: knowledge of the way to Larissa. Presumably, the cause which the person who knows has an account of will be correspondingly particular: the reason why this way is the way. However, in other cases, the cause will be universal, because the knowledge itself is of universals. This is the sort of knowledge had by the expert (as Aristotle reminds us at Metaphysics A.1 98a1–6). The doctor, for example, knows the universal health, and this knowledge is a matter not merely of recognizing which people are and which people are not healthy but more centrally of grasping why healthy people are healthy, or that which makes healthy people healthy. So we arrive at much the same point as we did in the

in a quite uncraftlike way, without having at all considered either pleasure’s nature or its cause” (50e4–50a16). Thus what separates the real from the fraudulent expert is the former’s grasp of a cause, which presupposes that there are causes for such experts to be knowledgeable of.

previous section: the recognition that there is expert knowledge presupposes that there are "uucs, which that expert knowledge is knowledge of.

3.3.4 Ultimate universal causes in the Phaedo

It is no coincidence that the examples of ultimate universal causes I chose to highlight in the preceding sections are things which are often also associated with Forms. Socratic definitions, the objects of expert knowledge – these are frequently taken to be the historical and intuitive beginnings of the theory of Forms. What I am here suggesting is that what unifies these "proto-Forms" is that they are uucs.

But are the Forms of the Phaedo meant to recall these proto-Forms? It is often assumed that by the time of the Phaedo, Plato is working with the full-fledged "middle period" theory of Forms, and has moved well beyond its Socratic beginnings. And indeed, by the end of the Phaedo, we have been told that Forms are imperceptible, eternal, unchanging, self-predicative, and separate – and these seem more like features of "Platonic" Forms than of the objects of Socratic definitions.

However, when Socrates first introduces the Forms in the dialogue, his remarks seem designed to recall their provenance in Socratic questions and expert knowledge. The relevant passage runs as follows:

"Do we say that there is a Just itself or not?" — "Yes, indeed, we do."

"And also a Beautiful and a Good?" — "Of course."

[...]

"And I am talking about all such things: bigness, health, and strength, for example – and, in a word, the being of all the rest, what each of them really is." (65d4–e1)

The first thing we should note about this passage is its final relative clause, the description of the Forms as "what each of them really is" (ὅ τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὄν). This phrase is significant because it recalls the Forms’ provenance in Socrates’ ‘What is F-ness?’ questions. ‘What virtue really is’, for example, is the answer to the Socratic question ‘What is virtue?’ Thus, by referring to the Form of F-ness as ‘what F-ness really is’, Socrates is connecting the Forms back to Socratic definitions.

²²This connection goes as far back as Aristotle; cf. Metaphysics A.6 987b1–10.

²³Indeed, Socrates frequently refers to the Forms in the Phaedo as the "what it is" (ὁ ἐστιν). (See specifically the references at 75d1–2 and 92d9, where the forms are characterized, respectively, as "everything to which we affix the label ‘what it is’" (περὶ ἀπάντων οἷς ἐπισφραγίζομεθα τὸ "ἀυτὸ ὃ ἐστι") and "the being which has the name ‘what it is’" (ἡ αὐσία ἔχουσα τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τῇ τοῦ "ὁ ἐστι"); see also 65d2–e1, 74d6, and 78d1–7.) Admittedly, this moniker also gets used in other dialogues in reference to what are obviously Platonic Forms (see, for example, Symposium 211c8–d1 and Republic 507b7). Nonetheless, the provenance of the phrase clearly stems from the fact that the Form of F-ness is, among other things, meant to be the answer to the Socratic question ‘What is F-ness?’.
Socrates’ final set of example Forms in this passage is particularly telling. Health, strength, bigness — these are each the object of a particular branch of expertise: health of the art of medicine, strength of the art of gymnastics, and bigness of the art of measurement. These examples, then, connect the Forms back to the objects of expert knowledge.

Furthermore, Plato understands these particular objects of expert knowledge explicitly as \( \text{uucs} \). We know this from the \textit{Meno}, where Socrates cites precisely the same set of examples when introducing the Form of virtue:

“Do you think that this is the case only for virtue, Meno, that there is one virtue for a man and a different virtue for a woman, and so on for the rest? Is this also the case for health and bigness and strength? Do you think that there is one health for a man and a different health for a woman? Or is the same Form present in all cases, if they are indeed cases of health, whether in a man or in whoever else?” — “Health, at least, seems to me to be the same both for a man and a woman.”

“And also bigness and strength? If a woman is strong, will she be strong by the same Form and by the same strength? What I mean by ‘the same’ is that the strength does not differ at all with regard to its being strength, whether it is in a man or in a woman.”

(72d4–e7)

Strength, as we learn from this passage, is what is the same in all strong people (i.e., it is an ultimate universal), and that by which strong people are strong (i.e., it is a cause).\[24\] And the same, we are told, is true of health and bigness: all three examples are \( \text{uucs} \). Thus, by citing the very same examples at the start of the \textit{Phaedo}, Socrates plausibly wishes to reminds his interlocutors of the very same reasons for accepting the existence of Forms — which, as we would put it, are reasons for accepting the existence of \( \text{uucs} \).\[25\]

### 3.4 The hypothesis of ultimate universal causes

So, then, we can now see that the existence of ultimate universal causes is a recurrent starting point for Plato. In the early dialogues, it is the presupposition standing behind the Socratic search for definitions and the recognition of expert knowledge; and by the time of the \textit{Phaedo}, \( \text{uucs} \) are explicitly being couched in the language of Forms. Is it possible, then, that the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis that “there are Forms” just is the hypothesis that there are \( \text{uucs} \)?

This, recall, was the proposal of the “just causes” interpretation from §3.2. The present section will argue that this proposal is consistent with the text of the Aitia Argument, by

\[24\] This is concisely stated in Socrates’ remark at the start of the second paragraph that a strong person “will be strong by the same Form and by the same strength” (\( τῷ \ αὐτῷ \ εἴδει \ καὶ \ τῇ \ αὐτῇ \ ἰσχύϊ \ ἰσχυρά \ ἐσται \)). Note the use of the causal dative in this remark; precisely the same construction is used to pick out causes in the \textit{Phaedo}.

\[25\] That the \textit{Meno} was composed before the \textit{Phaedo} is established by the clear reference to its slave-boy example at \textit{Phaedo} 73a–b.
guarding it against a series of likely objections. The following section will then show that this proposal is moreover the most plausible, based on the evidence from the rest of the *Phaedo*.

### 3.4.1 The hypothesis of Forms “themselves by themselves”

One objection against the “just causes” interpretation is that it is simply not open to us, insofar as Socrates describes the Forms he hypothesizes as each an “itself by itself” (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὑτὸ, 100b6). This, so the objection goes, is a technical locution in Plato’s vocabulary which he uses to refer to full-fledged Platonic Forms, rather than mere υφικα. Thus, by explicitly hypothesizing “a Beautiful itself by itself”, Plato must mean for us to have in mind the imperceptible, eternal, unchanging, self-predicative, and separate Platonic Form of Beauty, not merely that which makes all beautiful things beautiful; and likewise for all the other hypothesized Forms.

I do not deny that “itself by itself” is used by Plato in certain dialogues as shorthand for full-fledged Platonic Forms. Yet I do deny that it must, or even should, be taken in this sense in the *Phaedo*.

First, it ought be noted that “itself by itself” language is sometimes used by Plato with no possible insinuation of full-fledged Platonic Forms, as at the end of the *Meno*, where Socrates says:

> “And so, Meno, from this line of reasoning, it appears that virtue is present in those of us in whom it is present as a gift from the gods. And we will have clear knowledge of this when, before we investigate how virtue comes to be present in people, we first try to investigate what virtue itself by itself is.” (100b2–6)

Here Socrates speaks of “virtue itself by itself”, yet he cannot be referring to the full-fledged Platonic Form of Virtue, which plays no part in the discussions of the *Meno*. Rather, “virtue itself by itself” refers, simply, to what he has been seeking all along: the answer to the question of ‘What is virtue?’, that “one and the same form which all the many virtues have, because of which they are virtues” (72c7–8). In other words, “virtue itself by itself” in this passage is none other than the ultimate universal cause of virtue.

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26Sedley (2007, 72) states this objection succinctly (though in reference to the Recollection Argument rather than the Aitia Argument): “I go along with the majority view that ‘the Equal itself’ (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον) here is, from the start, the transcendent Form of Equal... ‘The F itself’ (e.g. αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον) is de facto Plato’s most favoured, even if not his most technical, locution for Forms.”

27To be clear: the ultimate universal cause of F-ness is not something distinct from the Platonic Form of F-ness; it is the Form, but minimally characterized. Indeed, as I argue in §3 and Chapters 4 and 5, the minimal features of υφικα entail the full-fledged features of Platonic Forms.

28Cf., for example, *Parmenides* 130b8.

29Note also how this passage subtly emphasizes the fact that virtue itself by itself is an ingredient cause: it “comes to be present in people” (τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραγίγνεται), and, presumably, by doing so makes them virtuous.
Similarly, in other places, Plato uses “itself by itself” language merely to signal a general element of abstraction. At Symposium 183d4–5, for instance, Pausanias says of love (ἔρως) – or rather, of the activity of loving (τὸ ἔρων) – that “itself by itself (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ) it is neither beautiful nor ugly.” Pausanias here is not here referring to any transcendent Form of Love (which it is unlikely even Plato believed in). Rather, he is referring to love as such, as opposed to the particular forms it takes when practiced by people, and his point is just that, when considered in abstraction from these particular manifestations, love is neither beautiful nor ugly, neither good nor bad.³⁰

Or take Theaetetus 206a5–8, where Socrates describes the student who is learning to read and write as “trying to distinguish, in sight and in sound, each individual letter itself by itself (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὑτὸ), so that you might not be confused by their different positions in written and spoken words.” Again, Socrates is not here referring to the transcendent Form of each individual letter, but rather to each individual letter as such, in abstraction from its particular appearances in words.³¹

Therefore, “itself by itself” language does not always serve to signal a full-fledged Platonic Form; sometimes, “the F itself by itself” may be used to refer merely to F-ness as such.³²

How, then, is the locution used in the Phaedo? The immediate context of Phaedo 100b is not any help in settling this question, since all we are told about the Forms in this passage is that each is itself by itself. Nor do we get much assistance from the few earlier occurrences of the locution in reference to the Forms. At 66a2, each Form being itself by itself is associated with each being “pure” or “unmixed” (εἰλικρινὲς), and at 78d5, it is associated with each being “uniform” (μονοειδὲς), but these descriptions apply just as well to the full-fledged Platonic Form of F-ness as to F-ness as such.³³

³⁰Cf. 180e4–5, at the beginning of his speech, where Pausanias states that “every activity in itself (ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς) is neither beautiful nor ugly.”

³¹Similarly, in Republic IV, when Socrates speaks of “thirst itself” (αὐτὸ τὸ διψῆν, 437e4), he is not referring to the transcendent Form of Thirst, but rather to thirst “insofar as it is thirst” (καθ’ ὅσον δίψα ἐστί, 437d8) – that is, to thirst as such, as opposed to some particular thirst for some particular drink. Also, in the Protagoras, when Socrates raises the question of whether or not “pleasure itself” (τὴν ἡδονὴν αὐτὴν, 351e2–3) is good, he explicitly claims this to be equivalent to asking whether or not pleasant things “insofar as they are pleasant” (καθ’ ὅσον ἡδέα ἐστίν, 351e2) are good. In both these instances, “itself” language is used merely as a means to discuss something as such, in abstraction from its particular manifestations – that is, to focus on the common nature shared across many diverse things.

³²This is, essentially, the view urged by Ademollo (2013, 48): “So, although the [‘itself’] idiom ends up as a technical expression for a transcendent Platonic form, part of what it originally and essentially imports is not transcendence, but just abstraction.” See also Burnyeat (2000, 36): “In Plato ‘itself’ and ‘itself by itself’ standardly serve to remove some qualification or relation mentioned in the context. Their impact is negative. Only the larger context will determine what remains when the qualification or relation is thought away.” And cf. the view advanced by Peterson (2000, 35–37), that the “basic and minimal use” of ‘itself’ in Plato is as a “topic-focussing device”.

³³The precise meanings of purity and uniformity in Plato are discussed more in n. 50 on p. 499 and n. 27 on p. 552 below.
Fortunately, however, the dialogue can assist us in other ways. “Itself by itself” language is in fact used extensively throughout the text – except in the *Phaedo* it is used primarily to talk, not about Forms, but about the soul. We will look at the full body of this evidence in §5.3.1; for now, it will suffice to highlight the following two remarks: At 65c7–9, we are told that “[the soul] comes to be itself by itself most of all when it ignores the body and, as far as it can, does not associate or have contact with it.” And at 81b1–c3, we are told that the soul fails to be “itself by itself” when it is tainted by the body, such that it retains the body’s desires and pleasures, so much so that it no longer recognizes the things proper to it. The upshot is that a soul itself by itself is a soul which is untainted by the body’s influence – which is purely and simply soul, or a soul as such.

Similarly, then, when Socrates hypothesizes that there is “a Beautiful itself by itself” at 100b6, we should understand him in an analogous fashion, as referring to beauty as such, in abstraction from its particular manifestations; and likewise for all other Forms. Thus, the language of the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis does not provide any proof that Plato intends to be hypothesizing full-fledged Platonic Forms.

### 3.4.2 The hypothesis and “harmonization”

A second objection to the “just causes” interpretation concerns how it squares with the avowed methodology of the Aitia Argument. In particular, there seems to be a problem in that the passage at 100c4–7, in which the Forms are identified as causes, is introduced as “what follows” or “what comes next” (τὰ ἑξῆς ἐκείνοις) after the hypothesis that there are Forms. How, then, can we maintain that the hypothesized Forms are meant from the outset to be understood as causes?

A subtle clarification is needed in response. It is not the identification of Forms as causes itself which is said to follow from the hypothesis; rather, it is Socrates’ “safe answers” – his explanations in terms of Forms. That is, what follows from the hypothesis is not the claim that the Beautiful itself is a cause of beauty; rather, it is particular explanations of the form ‘this beautiful thing is beautiful because of the Beautiful itself’. In other words, the hypothesis is that there exist various words, and what follows from this hypothesis is explanations in terms of these causes.

To fully appreciate the merits of this interpretation, however, we must clarify the precise...
relation between a hypothesis and the claims which follow from it. At the very start of the Aitia Argument, Socrates characterizes the relation in this way:

"On each occasion I hypothesize whatever theory I deem most robust, and I set down as true whatever I think harmonizes with it, both about aitia and about everything else – and set down as false whatever does not." (100a3–7)

According to this passage, then, the claims which are set down as true on the basis of a hypothesis are those which “harmonize” (συμφωνεῖν) with it. What, then, does it mean for one claim to “harmonize” with another?

As I see it, harmonization is best interpreted as a relation of coherence, such that what it is for one claim to harmonize with another is for the latter claim to positively recommend, or give us reason to accept, the former. However, since part of what leads me to favour this interpretation is the failure of others, it is worthwhile, first off, to review why these other interpretations of the relation will not work.

As the contemporary literature on this issue has well established, neither of what may seem the two most obvious interpretations of the harmonization relation – entailment and compatibility – will do. The entailment interpretation, on the one hand, is too strong, as it would have Socrates setting down as false everything which is not entailed by the hypothesis, including compatible but unconnected truths. The compatibility interpretation, on the other hand, is too weak, as it would have Socrates setting down as true everything which is compatible with the hypothesis, including unrelated falsehoods. That is, neither the entailment nor the compatibility interpretation seems to result in a viable argumentative method.

A solution to this difficulty which some scholars have opted for is to interpret harmonization in two distinct ways, depending on its polarity – namely, to interpret “harmonizes with” as ‘is entailed by’ and “does not harmonize with” as ‘is incompatible with’, despite what the text itself suggests. This interpretation at least results in a viable argumentative...
method, since it sets down as true everything the hypothesis entails and as false everything the hypothesis rules out. However, it faces difficulties with respect to a subsequent use of συμφωνεῖν in the Aitia Argument, where Socrates states:

“And if someone were to hold to the hypothesis itself, you would dismiss them and not answer until you had looked into its consequences to see whether or not they harmonize with one another.” (101d3–5)

This passage seems to indicate how to assess the legitimacy of a given hypothesis, the recommendation being to look at the consequences of the hypothesis and see whether or not they harmonize with each other. Assuming, as seems reasonable, that these consequences (τὰ ἀπ’ ἐκείνης ὁρμηθέντα) are the claims initially set down as true on the basis of the hypothesis, and remembering that “harmonizes with” is equivalent on this interpretation to ‘is entailed by’, the recommendation would be, more precisely, to look at the claims which are entailed by the hypothesis and see whether or not they entail each other. Yet there is no reason to expect or to demand that all the claims entailed by a hypothesis should, in addition, entail one another. Therefore, harmonization cannot be entailment, no matter what we take not harmonizing to be.

Rather, as the recent literature on this question has urged, harmonization must be understood as a relation falling somewhere in between entailment and compatibility. And this, I believe, should lead us to interpret harmonization as a relation of coherence. In other words, the claims which harmonize with a hypothesis will be those claims which the hypothesis supports, or positively recommends. The claims which the hypothesis entails will be included in to set down as true whatever is entailed by the hypothesis, and to just remain neutral about everything which is not entailed by it. As Ebert emphasizes, this construal of the method seems to correspond better with the method as it is actually deployed by Socrates in the text; in addition, he believes his emendation is supported by certain evidence from the manuscripts as well.

41 Unless, of course, the claims were not merely entailments but equivalences of the hypothesis (since equivalence, unlike entailment, is not only transitive but also symmetric). Such an interpretation would have the advantage of aligning the Phaedo’s method of hypothesis more closely with the geometrical method of analysis (on which see Beaney (2012)), and thereby with the method of hypothesis in the Meno (on which see Menn (2002)); however, it has not, as far as I am aware, been adopted by any commentator on the Phaedo, presumably because it is hard to see how the actual claims set down as true from the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis (such as the identification of forms as aitiai) could be said to be in any way equivalent to the hypothesis that there are forms.

42 The same critique also applies to the interpretation adopted by Ebert (2003) (cf. n. 40 above), though this does not invalidate his suggested emendation of the text (on which cf. n. 46 below).

43 As Bailey (2005, 99), endorsing the interpretation of Gentzler (1991), remarks: “Socrates must be talking about an interim relation, stronger than consistency but weaker than entailment: that is, a relation for which consistency is necessary but not sufficient, and for which entailment is sufficient but not necessary.”

44 Following the recommendation of Gentzler (1991, 270), who defines harmonization as follows: “A proposition $P$ συμφωνεῖ with $Q$ if and only if $P$ is consistent with $Q$ and $P$ stands in either a suitable inductive or deductive inferential relation to $Q$. $P$ συμφωνεῖ with $Q$ just in case $Q$ gives one some reason to believe that $P$ is true.” In a similar vein, van Eck (1994, 31) suggests that a hypothesis is appropriately related to some other claim when it “gives some ground that would recommend” that claim.
this set, of course, but they do not exhaust it. Weaker explanatory or inferential relations will be sufficient for harmonization, as well; mere compatibility, however, will not be enough. The claims which do not harmonize with a hypothesis, in contrast, will be those that the hypothesis recommends against. As such, by following the Phaedo’s method of hypothesis, we will set down as true those claims which our hypothesis gives us reason to accept, and set down as false those claims which our hypothesis gives us reason to deny.

This, I take it, is a viable and productive argumentative method. Yet this interpretation of harmonization is recommended by more than interpretive cogency. In addition, it corresponds better to what the etymology of the term suggests. Like its English translation, συμφωνεῖν is at root a musical term. In ancient Greek musical theory, it is used to describe the relation between two notes, or pitches. The basic idea is this: Within a given musical scale (ἁρμονία, more accurately translated as ‘mode’), pitches at certain intervals or ratios from the tonic will combine to form harmonies (συμφωνίαι) – namely, the octave (the 2:1 ratio), perfect fifth (3:2), and perfect fourth (4:3). The other pitches, in contrast, though still part of the scale, do not harmonize and thus are said to be in discord (διαφωνεῖν).

What does all this tell us about harmonization? A few observations: First of all, when determining which pitches harmonize with a given note, we do not choose from all available pitches, but only from those specific pitches which comprise the scale based on that note. Thus, even the pitches which do not harmonize with a given note are still related to it, though in a weaker way. Secondly, harmonization can arise through multiple, distinct intervals: the octave, perfect fifth, or perfect fourth. Thus, there is no single way in which all harmonizing pitches are related to the tonic.

Now, if we carry these observations over to the case of hypothetical harmony, we may infer the following: First of all, when determining which claims do and do not harmonize with a hypothesis, we should not expect to be choosing from all possible claims, but only from those...
which are related or connected to the hypothesis in some way. Secondly, harmonization will arise through multiple, distinct relations to the hypothesis, and so we should not expect there to be a single analysis of it.

Both these features, I believe, are well represented by the coherence interpretation. As we have seen, on this interpretation, claims which a hypothesis gives us reason neither to accept nor to deny will be said neither to harmonize nor not to harmonize with it, such that any claim which does or does not harmonize with a hypothesis will thereby be related to it in some way. Furthermore, by accepting anything which a hypothesis positively recommends as harmonizing with it, this interpretation allows for harmonization to arise from various distinct explanatory and inferential relations.

For these reasons, I treat harmonization as a coherence relation. Thus, the claims which harmonize with the hypothesis that there are Forms are those claims which the existence of Forms positively recommends and gives us reason to believe. Provided that the hypothesis that there are Forms just is the hypothesis that there are \( \text{Forms} \), as the “just causes” interpretation proposes, then this hypothesis positively recommends the explanations in terms of Forms which Socrates accepts. If we accept the existence of something which makes all beautiful things beautiful (call it “the Beautiful itself”), then it makes sense also to accept that this beautiful thing is beautiful by that beautiful. Furthermore, since, \( \text{ex hypothesi} \), \( \text{Forms} \) are the only causes whose existence we accept, we have reason to doubt all other explanations, and to dismiss explanations which claim that this beautiful thing is beautiful by its colour, or shape, or anything else. And this, of course, is precisely what Socrates does at \( \text{Phaedo} \) 100c–101c.

3.4.3 The “safe claim” of the hypothesis

A third and related objection to the “just causes” interpretation concerns the text at 101d1–2, where Socrates describes the person who accepts only explanations in terms of Forms as “holding to that safe [claim] of the hypothesis (\( \text{ἐχόμενος ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς τῆς ὑποθέσεως} \)).” Proponents of the “Forms plus” interpretation take this line as evidence that the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis consists of multiple, nonidentical claims – that there are Forms, and that these Forms are causes. That is, reading \( \text{τῆς ὑποθέσεως} \), plausibly, as a partitive genitive, the quoted phrase would be glossed as “that safe part of the hypothesis”, and would seem to suggest a conception of the Aitia Argument’s hypothesis as consisting of multiple claims as parts, one of which – the claim that Forms are causes – is here picked out as safe. Thus, the

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50 Bailey (2003, 106 ff.), in contrast, believes the musical analogy suggests that harmonization should be understood as the relation which holds between a general principle or law and the particular facts which instantiate that principle (an interpretation which is also recommended, in a more cursory fashion, by Gallop (1975, 181)). However, it is not clear to me how exactly he finds this relation represented in the musical case, and I am not persuaded by the problems he raises against the coherence interpretation at pp. 99–101.
hypothesis’s other claim – that there are Forms – must mean something else.

I concede that this may be the most natural reading of the quoted phrase. Yet we should also note just how odd the phrase is to begin with. To wit, ἡ ὑπόθεσις appears in the partitive genitive nowhere else in Plato (or in Aristotle, for that matter). As such, we cannot assume too much about the correct interpretation of the phrase. Indeed, we should not necessarily assume even that τῆς ὑποθέσεως is a partitive genitive. It may also be a more ordinary genitive of possession, in which case the quoted phrase could be glossed as “that safe [claim] belonging to the hypothesis”, or even a genitive of source, “that safe [claim] originating from the hypothesis”. Thus, on this reading, the quoted phrase would support the “just causes” interpretation, with the hypothesis as the claim that there are uucs and its safe claim as the subsequently accepted explanations in terms of these causes.

And indeed, there are other reasons, beyond the purely grammatical, to resist the partitive reading of τῆς ὑποθέσεως. In particular, immediately following the quoted phrase, Socrates contrasts the person who clings to ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς τῆς ὑποθέσεως with the person who clings to “the hypothesis itself” (αὐτῆς τῆς ὑποθέσεως, 101d3). Yet this is not the contrast we would expect, if τῆς ὑποθέσεως in ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς τῆς ὑποθέσεως were truly a partitive genitive. Rather, we would expect the contrast to be with the person who clings to πάσης τῆς ὑποθέσεως: the entire hypothesis, or the hypothesis as a whole (or, perhaps, to the other part of the hypothesis). Yet none of these are plausible readings of αὐτῆς τῆς ὑποθέσεως, the phrase which actually appears in the text.

Rather, it seems that, given its contrast with the hypothesis itself, ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀσφαλοῦς τῆς ὑποθέσεως must refer to something which is not any part of the hypothesis, but which is connected or related to the hypothesis in some way – just as are the explanations in terms of Forms, as we saw in § 3.4.2. However, as we also saw in that section, the “harmonization” between these explanations and the hypothesis makes sense only on the assumption that the hypothesis is the hypothesis that there are uucs. And this just is the “just causes” interpretation.

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51 Kanayama (2000, 61) provides a brief discussion, and dismissal, of the alternative readings.

52 The genitive of possession includes instances which may also be classed as the genitive of origin; cf. Smyth 1298, and especially his example from Iliad II.396–397 of κύματα παντοίων ἀνέμων (“waves caused by all kinds of winds”).

53 In addition, I find there to be something odd about conceiving of the hypothesis as consisting of safe – and thus presumably also unsafe – parts. The Aitia Argument’s hypothesis is supposed to be “most powerful” or “most robust”, and thus should in its entirety be safe. Furthermore, even if we did accept that the hypothesis included both safe and unsafe parts, it seems counterintuitive that the claim that Forms are causes should be classified as its safe part, when this identification presupposes the hypothesis’s other (and thereby unsafe) part, that there are Forms.
3.5 The hypothesis throughout the *Phaedo*

Thus it is indeed consistent with the text of the Aitia Argument to read its hypothesis that “there are Forms” as the hypothesis that there are *ousia*. Why, however, think this is all its hypothesized Forms are meant to be? Given the catalogue of other features assigned to the Forms over the course of the *Phaedo* – imperceptibility (65d), nonidentity (74c), eternity and unchangingness (79d), self-predication (100c), separation (102d) – it may seem a foregone conclusion that Socrates is working with a richer conception of the Forms than as mere *ousia*.

However, when we look closely at how these other features of the Forms appear in the dialogue, we see that none of them is taken for granted, but rather each is derived over the course of its arguments. What this suggests is that Socrates in fact starts from a minimal conception of Forms, which does not specify any of these other features, yet from which these features can be shown to follow. And what I wish to suggest is that this minimal conception of Forms, from which all the arguments of the *Phaedo* proceed, is the conception of Forms as *ousia*.

That the Aitia Argument means the “Forms” it hypothesizes to be already familiar concepts is no secret. Socrates first refers to the Forms in the argument as “those much-spoken-of things” (ἐκεῖνα τὰ πολυθρύλητα, 100b4–5), and introduces them by means of the examples of the Beautiful itself, the Good, and the Big – the very same examples used to introduce Forms earlier in the *Phaedo*, at both 65d and 75d. However, most commentators seem to assume that the Forms are the *only* part of the Aitia Argument that is meant to be familiar. And yet, the text actually suggests that the familiarity is meant to extend further: in addition, Socrates seems to indicate that the *method of hypothesis* which the argument employs is also supposed to be something we are acquainted with at this point. This is evident from the way in which Socrates introduces and then clarifies this method at the argument’s outset:

“This is how I started out: On each occasion I hypothesize whatever theory I deem most robust, and I set down as true whatever I think harmonizes with it, both about aitia and about everything else – and set down as false whatever does not. But I want to tell you more clearly what I mean. I think that at the moment you don’t understand.”

But note that “a minimal conception of Forms” is not the same as “a conception of minimal Forms”. The ultimate universal cause of *F*-ness is not some distinct entity from the Form of *F*-ness; it is the Form, but minimally characterized. An analogy: A minimal conception of gravity might be as “the force with which all physical bodies attract each other”. The rich conception of gravity would specify features such as its being directly proportional to the product of the bodies’ masses, and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them (assuming, counterfactually, the truth of Newtonian mechanics, for the sake of simplicity). It is not as if two different things are being talked about between the rich and the minimal conceptions. The force with which physical bodies attract one another is indeed a force which is directly proportional to the product of their masses, and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. The minimal conception does not deny these features; it simply leaves them unspecified. This is what I mean by “a minimal conception of Forms”.

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54Note that “a minimal conception of Forms” is not the same as “a conception of minimal Forms”. The ultimate universal cause of *F*-ness is not some distinct entity from the Form of *F*-ness; it is the Form, but minimally characterized. An analogy: A minimal conception of gravity might be as “the force with which all physical bodies attract each other”. The rich conception of gravity would specify features such as its being directly proportional to the product of the bodies’ masses, and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them (assuming, counterfactually, the truth of Newtonian mechanics, for the sake of simplicity). It is not as if two different things are being talked about between the rich and the minimal conceptions. The force with which physical bodies attract one another is indeed a force which is directly proportional to the product of their masses, and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. The minimal conception does not deny these features; it simply leaves them unspecified. This is what I mean by “a minimal conception of Forms”.


“Indeed I don’t,” said Cebeus, “not entirely.”

“It is this: nothing new, but what I’ve always been saying, both elsewhere and in the argument thus far (ἐν τῷ παρεληλυθότι λόγῳ) [100a3–b3].”

Therefore, if we take Socrates at his word, and accept that the Aitia Argument is meant to employ a familiar argumentative method, we should expect to discover its same tripartite structure of hypothesis, intermediary, and conclusion in at least some of the Phaedo’s preceding arguments. And indeed, in what follows, I will show that this tripartite structure is in fact present in several of the Phaedo’s other arguments for the immortality of the soul: the Recollection Argument at 74a–77a, the Affinity Argument at 78b–80b, and even in Socrates’ opening defence at 65b–66a.⁵⁶

In addition, once the hypothetical structure of these other arguments is revealed, we will see that each of them in fact proceeds from the very same hypothesis as the Aitia Argument: that is, the hypothesis that there are Forms. In other words, it is not merely that the Forms have been mentioned prior to the Aitia Argument; more precisely, they have been hypothesized previously. Furthermore, when we turn our attention to these other arguments we see that the hypothesis from which they all start is none other than the hypothesis of unity. And this should give us good reason to assume that the same minimal conception of Forms is at work in the Aitia Argument.

### 3.5.1 The hypothesis in the Recollection Argument

The Recollection Argument at 74a–77a is perhaps the clearest example of another hypothetical argument within the Phaedo. As is well known, the argument proceeds from the assumption that “there is an Equal itself” (74a9–12) – an assumption which, as Socrates explains later on, is meant to be taken more generally; as he states:

> “Our present argument is no more about the equal than it is about the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, the Just, and the Pious, and, as I’ve been saying, about everything to which we affix the label ‘what it is’.” (75c10–d2)

In other words, the Recollection Argument assumes the existence of that set of entities which Socrates elsewhere identifies as “Forms” – that is, precisely the same hypothesis as in the Aitia Argument. And although this assumption is never explicitly called a “hypothesis” within the Recollection Argument, it is referred back to as such later on in the Phaedo, when Simmias

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⁵⁵Incidentally, note that Socrates’ reference to the hypothesis’s frequent appearance “elsewhere” – that is, in other, earlier dialogues – would, assuming the standard chronological ordering, suggest that he is referring to his common starting point (familiar from the Euthyphro, Laches, and Meno, as we saw in §3.3) that there are Forms.

⁵⁶See Figure 3.1 on p. 409 at the end of this chapter for a visual summary of this shared structure.
recalls that “the argument concerning learning and recollection was demonstrated by means of a hypothesis worthy of acceptance” (92d6–7) – a hypothesis which Simmias immediately goes on to identify as the claim that “there exists the being which has the name ‘what it is’” (92d9).

Therefore, the Recollection Argument, just like the Aitia Argument, begins from the hypothesis that there are Forms. And yet, the similarity does not end there. The Recollection Argument also conforms to the same tripartite hypothetical structure, proceeding from its hypothesis to an intermediary claim before arriving at its ultimate conclusion. Indeed, Socrates explicitly highlights this structure at the very end of the Recollection Argument, summarizing the argument as follows:

“So is this how things stand for us, Simmias? (i) If those things we are always going on about exist – a beautiful and a good and every such being – and (ii) if we refer everything originating from our senses back to this being, discovering what was previously ours, and compare them to it, then (i) just as these [Forms] exist, (iii) so too must our soul exist before we are born.” (76d7–e5)

Thus, the conclusion of the Recollection Argument is that our soul exists before we are born (iii), and it reaches this conclusion by means of the intermediary claim that perceiving reminds us of the forms, which we knew before we began perceiving (ii) – or, as I will abbreviate this claim, that learning (of Forms) is recollection. That is, that our soul exists before we are born is meant to follow from the claim that learning is recollection, which in turn is supposed to be supported by the hypothesis that there are Forms (i).

This, of course, is precisely the structure we are led to expect. Well before the Recollection Argument begins, Cebes affirms that the prenatal existence of the soul follows from the theory that learning is recollection. That is, the connection between the Recollection Argument’s intermediary claim and its conclusion is already granted, before the argument itself is even presented. What the Recollection Argument seeks to establish, rather, is why we should grant this intermediary claim. The argument is set off, recall, because Simmias is not fully convinced by Cebes’ initial statement, and this is because, as Simmias explains, he is still in

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57 The phrase “by means of a hypothesis” (δι’ ὑποθέσεως) is an atypical one, and does not, as far as I can tell, occur anywhere else in Plato (or in Aristotle, for that matter). We would expect, rather, to be told that the argument was demonstrated from a hypothesis (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως; cf. Meno 86e3–4 and Republic 510b7). However, I do not think we should place much weight on this difference in prepositions, and it seems appropriate to me to interpret “by means of a hypothesis” as synonymous with “from a hypothesis” in this instance.

58 72e3–73a3: “Indeed, Socrates, this [that the living come to be from being dead, and that the souls of the dead exist somewhere] is the case also according to that theory – if it’s true – which you are so fond of propounding, that learning for us is in fact nothing other than recollection. According to this theory, we must have learned at some previous time what we presently recollect. And this would be impossible if our soul did not exist somewhere before it came to be in this human form. And so, in this way, too, the soul seems to be something immortal.”
need of “proofs” (ἀποδείξεις, 73a5) – that is, proofs of the theory that learning is recollection (and not proofs from this theory to the conclusion of the prenatal existence of the soul). The Recollection Argument is meant to provide just such a proof, and it does so by starting from the hypothesis that there are Forms, a claim which Simmias accepts as indubitable, and which can thereby provide firm support for the theory of recollection – if, that is, this theory can indeed be shown to follow from that hypothesis.

At any rate, this should be sufficient evidence to establish that the Recollection Argument is a hypothetical argument in precisely the same sense as the Aitia Argument, and furthermore, an argument proceeding from precisely the same hypothesis: the hypothesis that there are Forms.

Now we must turn to the real question: What conception of Forms is the Recollection Argument working with? Does it assume the rich conception of Forms as full-fledged Platonic entities or the minimal conception of Forms as υπάρχει? An answer to this question can be found, I believe, by examining the immediate inferences drawn from the hypothesis, in the brief stretch of text at 74a9–c5:

“Consider then,” said Socrates, “whether this is the case. We say, I suppose, that there is ‘an equal’ – by which I mean, not a stick equal to another stick, nor a stone equal to another stone, nor anything else of this sort, but something else besides all these, the Equal itself. Should we say that there is such a thing or not?”

"Indeed, we very much should!” said Simmias.

“And do we also know what it is?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“From where did we get our knowledge of it? Was it not from the things just mentioned – from seeing that sticks or stones or other things were equal? Was it not from those things that we came to think of that [Equal], as something distinct from them? Or does it not appear distinct to you? Then consider this, too: Do not equal sticks and stones sometimes, while remaining the same, appear equal in one way and unequal in another?”

“They do.”

“And what about this: Have the Equals themselves ever appeared to you unequal, or equality inequality?”

“Never, Socrates.”

“Therefore, these equal things and the Equal itself are not the same thing.”

As nearly every line of this passage has been the subject of intense scholarly debate, a thorough analysis is outside the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, I believe there are two basic

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59I translate τῷ μὲν ἴσα φαίνεται, τῷ δ’ οὐ at the end of this line as "appear equal in one way and unequal in another", though not much hangs on this particular rendering; cf. Haynes (1964, 20–21) for a defence of this translation.
and uncontentious features of this argument that tell in favour of the minimal conception of the Recollection Argument’s hypothesis.\footnote{Kelsey (2000, 99 ff.) defends a similar reading of the Recollection Argument’s hypothesis, stating: “...At least part of what is involved in Socrates’ claim that the Form of Equality exists is just the thesis that there is a single account to be given of what constitutes the equality of equal things. This at least is an assumption of the recollection argument, and it is plain that it is not argued for in the Phaedo; my own view is that it is ‘the’ assumption on which Socrates thinks the entire argument depends... The recollection argument does not rely on any further assumptions about the Form of Equality that are not implied by the thesis identified here.” His specific arguments in defence of this reading differ from my own, but I am indebted to his article for first bringing this interpretation of the hypothesis to my attention.}

The first point in favour: After assuming that there is an Equal itself, Socrates’ next move is to ask Simmias if we \textit{know} what this Equal itself is, to which Simmias responds that we “certainly” do.\footnote{74b1–3. There is a long-standing debate over who the “we” in this question refers to – whether it is meant to refer to anyone and everyone, or only to philosophers (or, even more narrowly, to the present company of philosophers, who are already sympathetic to Socrates’ views). I follow Kelsey (2000, 94–97) and Sedley (2007, 74–76) in assuming the former.} Yet we would not expect such a ready admission of knowledge if the Equal itself were intended as a full-fledged Platonic Form. From everything we are told about such Forms elsewhere, knowledge of the Forms is extremely hard to come by, accessible to only a select few and only after having endured a long process of training and initiation.\footnote{See, for example, the “ascent” passage at Symposium 210a–211d; the thirty-year-long educational programme laid out in Republic VII; or the “greatest difficulty” raised against the possibility of knowing the forms at Parmenides 133b–134e.} And even if we assume that Socrates means to be limiting the discussion to only these select few, we should still be surprised to see \textit{Simmias} accepting this claim without reservation. Simmias, recall, is assuming the role of devil’s advocate in the Recollection Argument. Earlier, he demanded more rigorous proofs of the theory of recollection, even though he himself admitted to “already being convinced to some extent” (73b8–9). Therefore, we should not expect to see him shortly thereafter happily granting what is arguably an even more controversial thesis, that we have knowledge of full-fledged Platonic Forms.

In contrast, this ready admission of knowledge makes good sense if the Equal itself is treated as a \textit{UFC}. In this case, all Simmias would be granting is that we know what it is by which all the many equal things are equal – and this, at least as Plato sees it, is indeed something that is widely understood. This is because equality is a basic geometrical concept, of a piece with bigness and smallness, and interdefinable with them.\footnote{A point that has been emphasized recently by David Sedley; see his discussions in Sedley (2004, 317–318) and Sedley (2007, 69–72).} What it is to be equal is simply the double negation of what it is to be big and what it is to be small: that is, to be equal is to be neither big nor small\footnote{This explains why, after demonstrating that we recollect our knowledge of the equal, Socrates claims to have shown that we have prenatal knowledge of “the equal and the bigger and the smaller” (75c9). Cf. the other examples of this triad at Republic X 602a4–5 and Sophist 257b6–7.} And, as we saw in §2.5, Plato thinks of bigness (and thus,
implicitly, also smallness) as “easy”, readily definable \text{uuc}s. Namely, all the many big things are big by each \textit{exceeding} (something), and all the many small things are small by each \textit{being exceeded} (by something). Therefore, all the many equal things are equal by each \textit{neither exceeding nor being exceeded}. This is the ultimate universal cause of equality, and it is far from a difficult or technical definition. It is an identification that everyone would accept, and that everyone could (at least be led to) supply. Thus it seems right to accept that we know what the Equal itself is – as long as the Equal itself is construed as an \text{uuc}.

The second point in favour of the minimal conception: In the argument’s next move, Socrates attempts to demonstrate that “the equal things and the Equal itself are not the same thing” (74c4–5) – which, for ease of reference, I will call the “nonidentity” thesis. Yet note: There would be no need for Socrates to \textit{prove} nonidentity if the Equal itself were intended as a full-fledged Platonic Form. \textit{Of course} the Platonic Form of Equality is nonidentical to all the many equal things we perceive – it is separate and imperceptible, after all. That is, the nonidentity thesis is \textit{already included} in the rich conception of Forms, thus making a demonstration of this thesis superfluous, if not question-begging. And yet, this is precisely what Socrates attempts to provide: a demonstration of nonidentity from the hypothesis that there are Forms.

Furthermore, the specific considerations that Socrates employs in his demonstration suggest that the Equal itself is being thought of as a \text{uuc}. The precise interpretation of this stretch of text is notoriously complicated and controversial, but the following outline should be uncontentious: In this demonstration, Plato seeks to establish the nonidentity thesis by means of a disanalogy, highlighting the fact that each of the many equal things also appears unequal, whereas the Equal itself does not. There is much disagreement about what precisely this appearance claim amounts to, but as I see it, its point has to do with the different ways in which we can \textit{conceive} of the two groups – the different ways in which they can appear “in the

\footnote{This interpretation also better explains why, later on in the Recollection Argument, Simmias seemingly contradicts himself and claims that \textit{next to no one} knows the Forms (76b1–12). As other commentators have noted, this is not an outright contradiction, because at this point in the argument the Forms have now been explicitly expanded to include the Forms of beauty, goodness, justice, piety, and the like (cf. 75c11–12), and it is presumably these Forms that Simmias is denying that we have knowledge of at 76b1–12. Yet if we assume that all talk of Forms in the Recollection Argument refers to full-fledged Platonic Forms, we should not expect this later set of Forms to be any harder to know than the Form of Equality, since all such Forms are subject to the same difficulties of knowledge acquisition, stemming from their shared separation, imperceptibility, and so on. In contrast, if we assume that the Recollection Argument is conceiving of Forms as \text{uuc}s, it makes sense that some Forms should be more difficult to know than others, since that by which all the many \textit{F} things are \textit{F} is obvious in some cases, like equality and bigness, but much less obvious in others, like beauty. (It is notable that of the four forms explicitly mentioned at 75c11–d1, three are the subject of aporetic definitional dialogues: beauty in the \textit{Hippias Major}, piety in the \textit{Euthyphro}, and, if we assume that the first book of the \textit{Republic} was written prior to and independently of the rest of the work, justice in \textit{Republic} I.)}

\footnote{74b7–c5, the end of the passage quoted above.}
mind’s eye”, as it were. More specifically, any particular equal thing can also be conceived as unequal – perhaps along another dimension, or perhaps by the thing itself altering; the precise explanation does not matter. The point is that, even if we are presently apprehending a particular equal thing as equal, it is always possible to imagine it losing that equality and thus appearing unequal.

The Equal itself, in contrast, is not supposed to be like this; we are not supposed to be able to conceive of the Equal itself as unequal. And this claim makes sense, if we understand the Equal itself as that one thing by which all the many equal things are equal – that is, as a uuc. As we saw in §1.3.5 and §2.5.1, it is a basic feature of the Phaedo’s theory of causation that any cause of F-ness is in no way un-F. Thus, the ultimate universal cause of equality is in no way unequal. Thus, accepting that there is an ultimate universal cause of equality brings with it a recognition that it cannot be conceived as unequal. If anyone ever thought that it could be so conceived, this would only betray that they fail to grasp what the Equal itself is.

For these reasons, I believe that the hypothesis of the Recollection Argument must be construed minimally, as assuming that there are uucs, and not full-fledged Platonic Forms. This, at any rate, seems the more charitable interpretation of the passage. On the rich conception of the hypothesis, the Recollection Argument starts from a controversial assumption (the existence of Platonic Forms) and unnecessarily “demonstrates” a claim already included in that assumption (the nonidentity thesis). On the minimal conception, in contrast, the argument proceeds from a reasonable and secure assumption (the hypothesis of ultimate universal causes) and draws out a sensible inference from that assumption (again, the nonidentity thesis) – which is precisely what we should expect a hypothetical argument to do.

### 3.5.2 The hypothesis in the Affinity Argument

The Affinity Argument at 78b–80b is less obviously a hypothetical argument, never advertising itself explicitly as such. Yet more careful examination reveals that it conforms to precisely the same structure and proceeds from precisely the same hypothesis as both the Recollection Argument and the Aitia Argument.

To begin, let us summarize the structure of the Affinity Argument. The conclusion of the

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67Or perhaps, any particular pair of equal things; see the discussion in Sedley (2007, 76 ff.).

68This way of understanding the passage is closely related to the modal reading of the com presença of opposites discussed in n. 67 on p. 109.

69Cf. White (1987, 203): “If equality is for present purposes understood to be sameness of some spatial dimension, then inequality seems to amount to nothing but lack of sameness of that spatial dimension. Thus, equality and inequality seem to stand to each other as merely the possession and the lack, by things within the same domain, of one and the same feature. A person to whom equality appears to be inequality appears accordingly like a person who is not capable of realizing that the having of a certain feature and the lacking of it are distinct. And such a person might well seem to be someone who is incapable of having equality, or inequality, in mind.”
argument is plain: In response to worries raised at 77d5–e2 that the soul might be dissipated when it leaves the body upon death, the Affinity Argument seeks to establish that “the soul is the sort of thing to be altogether incapable of dissolution, or nearly so” (80b9–10). To reach this conclusion, the argument endeavours to show that the soul is akin to some other entity, which is more obviously not the sort to be dissolved. More specifically, it is the Forms to which the soul is related, and which are shown not to be the sort to be dissolved. In this regard, then, the Affinity Argument implicitly relies on the existence of Forms to serve as this comparison. And although Socrates does not explicitly assume their existence (as in the Recollection Argument or the Aitia Argument), he does explicitly introduce the Forms into the argument, and in a manner which recalls their earlier role as hypotheses; as he says, “Let us then go back to the same things as in the previous argument” (78c10–d1).

In this way, I believe the Affinity Argument is rightly characterized as a hypothetical argument. Its conclusion is that the soul is not the sort of thing to be dissolved, its intermediary claim is that the Forms (to which the soul is akin) are not the sort of thing to be dissolved, and its hypothesis is that there are Forms. And so, again, we must ask: What conception of “Forms” is the Affinity Argument working with – the rich or the minimal conception?

One observation in particular tells against the rich conception. After introducing the Forms into the discussion, Socrates still feels that he must demonstrate that these Forms are not the sort to be dissolved – that is, that this feature of the Forms can receive independent argument. And yet, if they were full-fledged Platonic Forms, we should not expect there to be much demonstration needed. Forms are, by definition, indissoluble – they are, among other things, eternally existing entities, after all. That is, the Affinity Argument’s intermediary claim is already included in the rich conception of Forms, and need not be argued for.

Yet this is not how the Affinity Argument proceeds. The Forms’ indissolubility is not taken for granted, but rather demonstrated through a series of considerations which connect indissolubility with the defining feature of these Forms. This demonstration goes as follows:

1. That which is incomposite is not the sort of thing to be dissolved
2. That which always stays in the same state and condition is incomposite

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79 Translating ψυχῇ προσήκει, following the translation of Sedley and Long (2010).
81 See Socrates’ opening remark at 78b4–9: “We should ask ourselves a question like this: What sort of thing is liable to undergo this – being dissipated? What sort of thing, that is, is such that one should fear that it will be dissipated, and what sort of thing is not like that? And after this we should examine which class the soul belongs to, and on this basis be confident or fearful on its behalf.”
78c1–4: “That which has been put together and is naturally composite is the sort to undergo division, in the respect in which it was put together. But if, on the other hand, anything happens to be incomposite, this alone (if anything is) is the sort not to undergo division.”
78c6–8: “Those things which always stay in the same state and condition are most likely to be incomposite, whereas those that are in different conditions at different times and never stay in the same state are most likely to be composite.” I omit the “most likely” qualification in the above proof to preserve validity for the purposes.
3. That which is uniform always stays in the same state and condition
4. The Forms are uniform.
\[ \therefore \text{The Forms are not the sort of thing to be dissolved} \]

Thus, this demonstration shows that because Forms are uniform they are unchanging, because of which they are incomposite, because of which they are not the sort to be dissolved.

In this regard, the Affinity Argument takes uniformity to be a defining feature of the Forms it hypothesizes. And this is significant, because uniformity would seem to be a defining feature of \( \nu\nu\varsigma\varsigma \). Since \( \nu\nu\varsigma\varsigma \)s are ultimate universals, the hypothesis of \( \nu\nu\varsigma\varsigma \)s tells us that there is one single form common to all the many \( F \) things. And this is what the Affinity Argument seems to assume, inferring from the fact that the Form is one and the same across all the many \( F \) things (whether they be in the past, present, or future) that the Form is therefore unchanging (and, for independent reasons, therefore incomposite and indissoluble).

Put otherwise, the Affinity Argument hypothesizes that there are \( \nu\nu\varsigma\varsigma \)s, and demonstrates from this minimal assumption that these \( \nu\nu\varsigma\varsigma \)s are not the sort to be dissolved, and thus provide a suitable model from which to establish the soul’s indissolubility. In other words, the Affinity Argument, too, is a hypothetical argument which proceeds from the hypothesis of ultimate universal causes.

### 3.5.3 The hypothesis in Socrates’ opening defence

There is one final instance of the hypothesis of Forms that we must still deal with – its very first appearance, at 65d, within Socrates’ opening defence. Like all the points raised in this of analysis; it is no secret that the Affinity Argument relies on several dubious claims of mere plausibility.

748d5–7: "Each of them – each ‘what it is’ – always stays in the same state and condition, being uniform itself by itself, and never in any way admits of any alteration whatsoever" (\( \alpha\varepsilon\iota\iota\alpha\varepsilon\tau\omega\nu\ \varepsilon\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omega\nu\ \delta\ \varepsilon\sigma\tau\iota, \mu\nu\nu\kappa\iota\delta\varepsilon\ \omega\nu\ \alpha\varepsilon\tau\iota\ \kappa\alpha\theta\ \alpha\varepsilon\tau\iota, \\omega\sigma\alpha\uacute\tau\iota\sigma\omega\nu\ \kappa\alpha\tau\iota\ \tau\alpha\iota\tau\iota\ \varepsilon\chi\varepsilon\iota\ \kappa\iota\delta\varepsilon\sigma\tau\iota\ \sigma\delta\varepsilon\sigma\mu\mu\iota\ \sigma\delta\varepsilon\mu\iota\mu\varsigma\ \varepsilon\lambda\lambda\iota\oacute\iota\sigma\varsigma\varsigma\ \sigma\delta\varepsilon\mu\iota\varsigma\iota\ \varepsilon\iota\delta\varepsilon\chi\varepsilon\tau\iota\nu\iota\iota \)). Obviously, I am reading a fair deal of explanatory force into the participial phrase of this sentence, more than others might be willing to grant based on the grammar alone. For a philosophical defence of why uniformity is the fundamental explanation of the forms’ unchangingness, incompositeness, and indissolubility, see Prauss.

75I assume that, for Plato, to be uniform is to be purely what one is; thus, the Form of \( F \)-ness is uniform in that it is purely \( F \). In this I am following the interpretation of Mann (good 119), who says that “Forms are uniform because they are (that is really and nonderivatively) only what they are”, and traces this interpretation back to Heindorf and Bekker (cited in his n. 76, ad loc.). (Uniformity is thus closely related to “austerity” in McCabe’s sense.) For further remarks on the Forms’ uniformity, see §5.3.2, especially n. 2 on p. 153.

76It is also helpful to note that the features of Forms to which the soul is said to be akin are features that have been established by previous arguments – namely, that the Forms are invisible (or imperceptible) and that they are objects of knowledge or cognition, as established in both the Recollection Argument and Socrates’ Defence. In this regard, the Affinity Argument need not be thought to be referring here to other features that are included in its hypothesis of Forms (which would contradict the claim that this hypothesis is working with the minimal conception of Forms), but rather to features that have already been shown to follow from that hypothesis.

77I should note here that the Phaedo’s other major argument, the Cyclical Argument at 70c–72d, is not a hypothetical argument. Its conclusion is that “the souls of the dead must exist somewhere” (72a7), and it reaches...
defence, the introduction of Forms is designed to support Socrates’ overall conclusion that the philosopher’s sole pursuit is dying and being dead (64a5–6), for which reason the philosopher has no reason to fear death, and should even confront it with hope. More specifically, the Forms are introduced into the discussion to provide an example of the general point just made at 65b–c, that the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom is impeded by the body and gained only through reasoning, the distinctive activity of the soul. And in this way, Socrates’ Defence can be seen to conform to our familiar tripartite structure, starting from the hypothesis that there are Forms, moving through the intermediary claim that we acquire knowledge (of these Forms) through the soul and not the body, and ultimately arriving at the conclusion that the philosopher, in seeking knowledge, seeks to detach herself from her body as much as possible and is thereby practising for death.

In our earlier discussion of this hypothesis in §3.3.4, we saw that the examples with which the Forms are introduced (namely, bigness, health, and strength) emphasize their provenance in Socratic ‘What is F?’ questions, and at least suggest that they are meant to be taken as uuchs and nothing more specific. However, immediately after introducing these Forms, Socrates asks Simmias, “Have you ever seen any of these [Forms] with your eyes?”, to which Simmias responds plainly, “Not at all.” The immediacy with which Simmias here accepts the imperceptibility of the Forms might suggest that this feature is presupposed by the hypothesis, and thus that Forms here are being conceived of more richly than as uuchs. And if this occurrence of the hypothesis, its very first, is to be read as working with the rich conception of Forms, this would cast doubt on the proposal that the hypothesis elsewhere works only with the minimal conception of Forms as uuchs. Can we, then, avoid the rich conception of the hypothesis in Socrates’ Defence?

I do not believe there is any positive evidence to be offered against the rich conception in this case, however, I do believe that the minimal conception is at least just as tenable. It is natural to think of ingredient causes like uuchs as imperceptible; after all, we never perceive such ingredients in isolation, but only ever mixed in with other things. That is, what we perceive are the macroscopic changes which uuchs bring about. We do not perceive uuchs...

---

This conclusion from a general principle about opposites and coming-to-be: that “all opposite things come to be from opposites” (71a9–10), so that the living must come to be from the dead. However, this principle is not supported by any further assumption or hypothesis. Rather, it is demonstrated inductively, through of a series of examples at 70e–71a: just as the bigger comes to be from being smaller, the weaker from being stronger, the slower from being faster, and the worse from being better, so does everything that is some opposite come to be from being its opposite. This does not, however, spoil the argument I am making. I am claiming merely that the hypothetical structure of the Aitia Argument is found in some of the Phaedo’s other arguments; it need not be the case that it is present in all of them.

Though it should be noted that the passage itself is not at all explicit as to why it takes Forms to be inaccessible to the body; rather, it simply accepts this fact as obvious. Therefore, any interpretation needs to read into the passage to some degree.
as such; thus \( \text{uucs} \), as such, are imperceptible.\(^7\) At any rate, Plato would not be alone in reasoning in this manner. Other, pre-Platonic ingredient causes, such as Anaxagorean elements and Hippocratic \( \text{dunameis} \), were also considered imperceptible, and for precisely the same reason.\(^8\) In this regard, the minimal conception of Forms as \( \text{uucs} \) gives sufficient reason to think that such Forms are imperceptible. Thus, the fact that Simmias immediately grants that the imperceptibility of Socrates’ Forms is no indication that these Forms are being conceived of as anything richer than \( \text{uucs} \). The passage can intelligibly be read assuming the minimal conception of Forms and no more. And since there is strong indication that this is all that is assumed in the \textit{Phaedo}’s subsequent hypothetical arguments, we should be all the more receptive to preferring this reading over the alternative.

### 3.5.4 The hypothesis \& the derivation of Forms

Understanding the Aitia Argument’s hypothetical structure is key to its correct interpretation, and ultimately, for our purposes, to making sense of the basis on which it identifies Forms as causes. In the preceding sections I have proposed that this hypothetical structure is not unique to the Aitia Argument, and that the \textit{Phaedo} as a whole is plausibly read in large part as a \textit{series} of hypothetical arguments – and not just that, but as a series of arguments proceeding from the same, secure hypothesis that “there are Forms”. Furthermore, I have shown that, in the context of the Recollection Argument and the Affinity Argument, this hypothesis ought to be construed minimally (and in the context of Socrates’ Defence, \textit{can} be construed minimally), as assuming only the existence of ultimate universal causes, and nothing more specific than that. And this should give us good reason to assume that the same minimal conception of Forms is at work in the Aitia Argument.

We may also note that while these other arguments are alike in using this hypothesis to establish some conclusion about the existence of the soul, they all derive different consequences about the Forms along the way. Thus, in Socrates’ Defence, we learn that Forms are imperceptible (and thus known only through the soul); in the Recollection Argument, we learn that they are nonidentical to their participants (and thus known only via recollection); and in the Affinity Argument, we learn that they are eternal and unchanging (and thus that they are not such as to be dissolved). However, these features do not accumulate from passage to pas-

\(^7\)Recall that, as discussed in §3.4.4, the \textit{Phaedo}’s hypothesized Forms are each an “itself by itself”, a locution which seems to be used precisely to refer to F-ness \textit{as such}. Admittedly, “itself by itself” language does not appear in Socrates’ Defence, but at 65d4–5 Socrates does at least refer to the “Just itself”, which likely carries the same meaning (cf. n. 32 above).

\(^8\)On the imperceptibility of Anaxagorean elements, see \textit{Furley} (1976, 64); on the imperceptibility of Hippocratic \( \text{dunameis} \), see \textit{Moline} (1984, 97–100). On the interpretation of these entities as ingredient causes, see §3.3.3.
sage; at the start of each new argument, we return to the same original assumption as before (the hypothesis of ultimate universal causes), free of all the previously derived specifications. And in this regard, the *Phaedo*’s various arguments can be seen as revealing the nonobvious consequences of the hypothesis of ultimate universal causes, showing us that **uuc**s, as such, are imperceptible, distinct, unchanging, and eternal entities. That is, the *Phaedo*, far from assuming the full-fledged middle-period theory of Forms, actually derives the features of such Forms from their fundamental status as ultimate universal causes.

In the Aitia Argument we are presented with two further features of its hypothesized entities: self-predication and separation. These are perhaps the two most controversial features of Platonic Forms. Yet if the interpretation I have set out in this chapter is correct, we should expect these features, too, to follow naturally from the minimal conception of Forms as ultimate universal causes. And in the following two chapters, we will see just how this entailment is supposed to work.
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**Figure 3.1:** The hypothetical structure of the *Phaedo*’s arguments
Chapter 4

Self-Predication

Plato often says things which indicate that he believes the Forms to be self-predicative: that the Beautiful itself is beautiful, the Just itself is just, the Big itself is big. Furthermore, as a quick survey of the evidence confirms, we find these statements across the corpus, in dialogues considered to be early, middle, and late:

*Protagoras* 330c7–8: "Justice is the sort of thing that is just."

*Protagoras* 330d8–e1: "Scarcely anything else would be pious, if Piety itself were not pious."

*Hippias Major* 292e6–7: "I suppose the Beautiful is always beautiful."

*Euthydemus* 301b5–8: "Isn’t the Beautiful beautiful and the Ugly ugly? ... And isn’t it also the case that the Same is the same and the Different different?"

*Cratylus* 439d5–6: "The Beautiful itself is always such as it is."

*Phaedo* 100c4–6: "If anything other than the Beautiful itself is beautiful..."

*Sophist* 258b11–c2: "Just as the Big was big and the Beautiful was beautiful..."

Let us call such statements (that is, statements of the form ‘the F itself is F’) “self-predication statements”.

These statements are, at least on the surface, odd, so odd that one might wish they could be brushed aside as inessential. Yet the variety and ubiquity of these statements suggest that they articulate no mere incidental feature of the Forms, but rather one of their most fundamental.¹ For convenience, let us refer to this feature as “Self-Predication” (with a capital ‘S’ and a capital ‘P’):

\[
\text{SELF-PREDICATION} \\
\forall F \ [ \text{the } F \text{ itself exists} \implies \text{the } F \text{ itself is } F ]
\]

¹Though this, as with most things, has been questioned on occasion; cf. Malcolm (1999), for instance.
What we are looking for, then, is an explanation of why Plato would hold this conditional to be true. And as it turns out, we already have such an explanation. It is a direct consequence of the causal framework developed in the preceding chapters that Forms, as causes, are self-predicative.

A quick review, to see why this is so: According to the theory of predication defended in Chapter 3, something is a cause of $F$-ness only if $F$-ness is truly predicated of it. Thus, any cause of $F$-ness is $F$. Furthermore, our theory of predication tells us, more specifically, that something is a cause of $F$-ness only if the definition of $F$-ness is true of it. Therefore, since every Form of $F$-ness is a cause of $F$-ness, every Form of $F$-ness “is $F$” – and “is $F$” in that the definition of $F$-ness is true of the $F$ itself. In this regard, Self-Predication is a direct consequence of the Forms being causes, which, as I have also argued, is what Forms fundamentally are.

The textual evidence for this explanation has already been provided, in the preceding chapters, especially in §3.6. This chapter thus mounts a different sort of defence, which demonstrates my explanation’s superiority over the alternatives, and challenges the assumptions in the literature which might seem to present barriers to it. After all, I am hardly the first to attempt an explanation of Self-Predication. Thus, I must demonstrate why my explanation is preferable to others’. Furthermore, my explanation is in many respects novel – indeed, some may even say incredible. Thus, I must demonstrate why an explanation like mine is the kind that we should wish to impute to Plato. And this, in turn, will reveal that many of the ways in which we are accustomed to thinking about Self-Predication are misguided.

### 4.1 Three endoxa about Self-Predication

Adopting an occasional method of Aristotle’s, I will organize our ensuing discussion around three common scholarly opinions, or “endoxa”, about Self-Predication. All three have been influential in shaping how Self-Predication is thought of today; yet in keeping with the endoxic method, I will show that each stands to be corrected in some way.

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²The Is Lemma from §2.5.4 states that if $a$ is a cause of $F$-ness, then $a$ is $F$-ness (i.e., that a cause of $F$-ness is something to which the name of $F$-ness is rightly applied), and the Predication Principle from §2.2 tells us that if $a$ is $F$-ness, then $F$-ness is truly predicated of $a$ (i.e., that something’s Being $F$-ness is a way of $F$-ness being truly predicated of it).

³The Is Lemma from §2.5.4 states, again, that if $a$ is a cause of $F$-ness, then $a$ is $F$-ness, and the definition of ‘Being’ from §2.3 states that $a$ is $F$-ness iff the definition of $F$-ness is true of $a$.

⁴Specifically, the ultimate universal cause of $F$-ness; cf. §4.1.

⁵Cf. Chapter 4 passim. I am not the first to subordinate Self-Predication to the causal role of the Forms; see, for example, Gill (2012 23–24), Rickless (2007 32), Sharvy (1986 514–516), and Teloh (1973). My interpretation differs, however, in divorcing the Forms’ causal role from the “transmission theory of causality” (cf. §4.1.1 n. 3), and in situating this causal role in a sophisticated theory of predication.
The first common scholarly opinion about Self-Predication is that, whatever it means, it cannot be taken literally, or that to do so would be preposterous. Just consider the self-predication statement ‘the Big itself is big’. It would be absurd to take this as an ordinary predication of bigness. “How big is it then?” one might reasonably ask. “The biggest thing there could be?” And other self-predication statements seem to fare no better. Are we really to believe that the Form of Whiteness is itself coloured white, despite being imperceptible? Or, as it has been most tendentiously put, that the Form of Dog can wag its tail?

These objections have encouraged scholars to propose a variety of nonliteral interpretations of Self-Predication. Yet as I will show in §4.2, these interpretations have been misguided: the real problems lies, not in taking Self-Predication literally, but in taking it univocally.

The second common scholarly opinion about Self-Predication is that Plato himself came to doubt it later in his career, and illustrated these doubts in the so-called “Third Man Argument” of the Parmenides. More specifically, this argument is commonly taken to show that Self-Predication, when combined with a simple “introduction rule” for Forms, results in an infinite regress of Forms – an unacceptable result for any Platonist, for whom each Form is supposed to be one.

This textual evidence has further encouraged scholars to avoid taking Self-Predication literally. Yet as I will show in §4.3, this “evidence” overlooks certain other key elements of the Parmenides’s argument, which, when acknowledged, reveal that Plato had no doubts about Self-Predication after all.

The third (and slightly less) common scholarly opinion about Self-Predication is that, insofar as Plato himself ever worked out an analysis of Self-Predication, he did so only late in his career, namely, in the second part of the Parmenides and the Sophist. Before these dialogues, Self-Predication was for Plato an unanalyzed commitment, a truth known and held but not fully understood. Not until the Parmenides and the Sophist did Plato work out his mature, sophisticated theory of predication, which presents, among other things, a sensible analysis of Self-Predication.

This approach is compelling, and has led to some of the best work on Self-Predication in recent years. Yet I also believe that the emphasis on Self-Predication in such work is misplaced: as I will show in §4.4.1, the problem which Plato’s later theory of predication truly aims to address is not the self-predication but the “self-participation” of Forms.

Let us, then, examine these three opinions in detail and expose their misunderstandings, and thus pave the way for the interpretation of Self-Predication which I propose.

“[This example is presented in Fine (1992, 62), though it was anticipated by Allen (1960, 147), who similarly ridicules the literal interpretation of Self-Predication by noting that “not even God can scratch Doghood behind the Ears.”]
4.2 Literal and Nonliteral Self-Predication

As we saw above, one common scholarly opinion about Self-Predication is that it cannot be taken literally, on pain of absurdity. By “taking Self-Predication literally” I mean taking self-predication statements of the form ’the F itself is F’ to mean that F-ness is truly predicated of the F itself. To take Self-Predication literally is, in other words, to interpret self-predication statements at face value, as genuine predicative statements, in which a property is ascribed to the Form. Call such an interpretation Literal Self-Predication:

**Literal Self-Predication**

\[ F \text{-ness is truly predicated of the } F \text{ itself} \]

Much of the literature on Self-Predication has been defined by its desire to avoid the apparent absurdity of Literal Self-Predication, and thus has sought to interpret Self-Predication nonliterally. Yet as I will show in this section, this backlash is misdirected.

Several nonliteral interpretations of Self-Predication have been put forth over the years – that is, interpretations which take ‘the F itself is F’ to mean something radically different than its surface grammar would suggest. For instance, some have thought to interpret it instead as an identity statement, where F-ness is not predicated of but rather identified with the F itself.[⁷] Call this the “identity interpretation”:

**Identity Interpretation**

the F itself is \( F \equiv_{\text{def}} \) the F itself is identical to F-ness

Others have also interpreted ‘the F itself is F’ as an identity statement, but one which identifies the F itself, not with F-ness, but with the essence or definition of F-ness – “what it is to be F”.[⁸] Call this the “definitional interpretation”:

**Definitional Interpretation**

the F itself is \( F \equiv_{\text{def}} \) the F itself is what it is to be F

Still others have thought to interpret Self-Predication even more radically, as concerned not with the identity of the F itself but with the effects it has on ordinary things. For instance,

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⁷Cherniss (1957, 257–259) and Allen (1964, 150) present the canonical statements of this view; cf. also Bestor (1978), Bestor (1980b), and Bestor (1980a). Apolloni (2011) also ends up defending something like the identity interpretation, despite his claims to the contrary; cf. his admission that “what Plato is saying [in his claim that ‘the Equal is equal’] in effect is that the Equal is Equality” (Apolloni (2011, xviii)). Apolloni claims that Plato makes this claim with a predicative and not an identity statement, but I have difficulty seeing how Apolloni can maintain this, especially given his claim that the predicate in virtue of which the F itself “is F” is a predicate which applies only to the F itself (cf. Apolloni (2011, 227)).

⁸Nehamas (1979) presents the earliest statement of this view, which can also be found in Allen (1982, 144) and Silverman (2002, esp. 15–16).
some have argued that ‘the F itself is F’ means merely that the F itself makes all F things F, or that it is a cause of F-ness in all the many F things. Call this the “explanatory interpretation”:

**EXPLANATORY INTERPRETATION**
the F itself is F \( \equiv_{\text{def}} \) the F itself makes all F things F

In a similar vein, others have claimed that ‘the F itself is F’ is not a claim about the F itself at all, and means merely that necessarily, all F things are F. Call this the “deflationary interpretation”:

**DEFLATIONARY INTERPRETATION**
the F itself is F \( \equiv_{\text{def}} \) necessarily, all F things are F

Specific complaints can and have been brought against each of these interpretations. Yet rather than get into these specifics, I will here confine myself to some general remarks, since I believe there are reasons to be suspicious of all such nonliteral interpretations.

For one thing, all four interpretations gloss ‘the F itself is F’ as a statement which Plato was perfectly capable of expressing in more transparent language. It is not as if Attic Greek did not have the resources to express ‘the Beautiful itself is what it is to be beautiful’ or ‘the Beautiful itself makes all beautiful things beautiful’. Thus there is something odd about claiming that Plato would have expressed these and other nonliteral glosses by means of the much different locution ‘the F itself is F’. If in all the places where Plato says that the F itself is F, all he meant was, for example, that the F itself is what it is to be F, then why did he not just say that, rather than what he did say? Granted, Plato is sometimes looser in his language than we, as interpreters, might wish. Yet given the ubiquity of self-predication statements in the corpus, their surface grammar cannot be explained away as mere looseness. Rather, if we wish to maintain a nonliteral interpretation, we must conclude that Plato is in these statements being systematically elliptical or metaphorical. Yet this conclusion does not jibe with the self-evident manner in which self-predication statements are put forth in the dialogues, and accepted by the dialogues’ interlocutors.

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10This is the “Pauline predication” interpretation, defended, for instance, by Vlastos (1974).
11For a detailed summary of these complaints, see Heinaman (1986). The way in which my own interpretation of Self-Predication differs from and improves upon each of these nonliteral interpretations will be explained in §4.5.4.
12Indeed, Plato expressed these very statements, and not by means of self-predication statements: cf. Symposium 211c8–d3, where αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν is described as ὃ ἔστι καλὸν; and Phaedo 100d7–8, τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται καλὰ.
13Which, we might note, includes occurrences in explicitly technical passages, such as Phaedo 100c and Sophist 258c.
14Some of the above interpretations were, it seems, encouraged by the claim, once much in vogue, that Plato did not distinguish the ‘is’ of identity from the ‘is’ of predication until late in his career, in the Sophist (cf. Ackrill)}
A further but related criticism of these nonliteral interpretations is that they all, it seems to me, are more concerned to articulate what Plato could have meant by Self-Predication, rather than to discover what Plato did in fact mean. That is, these interpretations’ top priority seems to be to provide a cogent and defensible analysis of Self-Predication, rather than an analysis which Plato himself would have supplied. Yet surely it is the latter analysis that we are after.

Of course, I do not deny that any of the above glosses are claims which Plato believed to be true of the Forms. What I deny is that any of them are appropriate glosses on Self-Predication. Indeed, I believe that the only thing making such nonliteral interpretations seem at all plausible is the perceived embarrassment of Literal Self-Predication. And this is a problem, since, I believe, this embarrassment is misplaced.

As I see it, the true bugbear of Self-Predication is not Literal Self-Predication per se, but rather one specific form of it, according to which ‘the F itself is F’ means, not only that F-ness is truly predicated of the F itself (as its surface grammar would suggest), but further that F-ness is predicated of the F itself in the same way as F-ness is predicated of ordinary F things. That is, according to this interpretation, self-predication statements are not merely genuine predicative statements, but moreover predicative statements which work just like any other. Call this species of Literal Self-Predication *Univocal Self-Predication*:

**Univocal Self-Predication**

*F*-ness is truly predicated of the *F* itself in the same way that *F*-ness is truly predicated of ordinary *F* things

*Univocal Self-Predication* is rightly regarded as preposterous. Absurdities abound on this interpretation: the intangible Form of Hotness will be hot to the touch, the simple and in- composite Form of Evenness will be divisible by two, and so on. Yet it is a mistake to think that taking Self-Predication univocally is the only way of taking it literally, as if the patent absurdity of Univocal Self-Predication were an indictment of Literal Self-Predication itself.

(1952). If this were the case, then it could be thought that Plato would naturally have used ‘the F itself is F’ to express an identity statement. But this is not the case. Plato distinguishes identity from predication already in the *Phaedo* (103e2–5 ff.), and is still saying things like “the big is big” within the *Sophist* (258b11–c1).

15These interpretations do, of course, base their analyses on things that Plato actually says and believes about the Forms; my point is just that these things are not presented by Plato as analyses of self-predication statements.

16Presumably, these interpretations seek to provide their own analyses because they assume that Plato (at least in the early and middle dialogues) does not hint at any sort of analysis of his own. As it turns out, I believe this assumption to be mistaken, as should already be evident from my views in Chapter 3 about the theory of predication in the *Phaedo*. However, if this assumption were correct, it should only encourage us all the more to take Plato’s self-predication statements at their word, rather than searching for some oblique translation. If Plato did not think to explain his claims that the *F* itself is *F*, that is most probably because he meant precisely what he said.

17Though some have, nonetheless, believed it to be the correct interpretation; cf., for example, Gill (2012, 23–25).
An example will illustrate this point best. It is true to say that both an \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) molecule and a glass of liquid from the tap “are water”.\(^1\) Obviously, the glass of liquid is water ultimately in that it is composed of \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) molecules.\(^2\) Yet this compositional relation makes it all the more remarkable just how different the former is from the latter. For observe: The glass of liquid exhibits various physical properties which we take to be characteristic of water – properties of density, of melting and freezing points, of surface tension, and so on.\(^3\) An \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) molecule exhibits none of these properties; it is water in virtue of its molecular structure and its molecular structure alone.\(^4\) That is, the characteristic “water properties” exhibited by the glass of liquid are not at all exhibited by the very molecule which ultimately accounts for those properties. This should not, however, suggest, that one of the two is not literally water, or that there are here two distinct senses of ‘water’ in play.\(^5\) Rather, one and the same predicate, ‘... is water’, holds true of each. Yet this does not require each to display the same properties. Both “are water”, but in two different ways (macroscopically and microscopically, we might say, or physically and molecularly).\(^6\)

This example relies on insights from modern chemistry, but its basic distinction was already present in the ancient science which was familiar to Plato. Take the scientific worldview of Anaxagoras, for example. On this picture, there are two markedly distinct things which one can truly say “are hair”. First is the stuff that grows out of the top of my head, which is rightly called ‘hair’, even though it is in truth (according to Anaxagoras) a mixture of all the elemental quasi-stuffs. Second there is the elemental quasi-stuff which dominates in this mixture, which is itself also called ‘hair’, even though it is no such mixture but, rather, pure hair. Thus, ‘hair’ is truly predicated of each but in two different ways, analogous to the water example.\(^7\)

\(^1\)I mean for this to be a claim about the predicate ‘... is water’ rather than the property of being water (i.e., a claim about what we say, rather than what each is).

\(^2\)Though it is notable that a glass of water need not, and generally will not, be composed \textit{purely} of \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) molecules, but also include various minerals and impurities.

\(^3\)Indeed, it is generally on the basis of these properties that we determine whether a given sample of liquid is water, rather than by analyzing its molecular makeup.

\(^4\)We might also note that various compositionally distinct molecules are water in this sense; I am thinking primarily of water isotopes (i.e., water molecules with different numbers of neutrons in their nuclei).

\(^5\)There might be a distinct sense of ‘water’ in ordinary language, signifying the clear potable stuff that fills rivers and lakes. Yet this, I stipulate, is not the sense in which the glass of liquid is said to be water in the above example.

\(^6\)One might object that the statement ‘\( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) is water’ is not a predication but an identity statement. Fair enough (though the point about isotopes in n. 2 might complicate this picture). Yet note that, even still, there is no temptation to say that the statement is not meant literally. That is all I wish to stress with this example (which, after all, is only meant as a heuristic). As we will see further on, the sense in which the \( F \) itself “is \( F \)” cannot be construed as an identity relation, since things other than the \( F \) itself can “be \( F \)” in precisely the same sense.

\(^7\)Cf. Furley (1976, 62). A similar parallel could be made with respect to Hippocratic \textit{dunameis}; cf. the discussion in §3.3.
The upshot of these examples is that the preposterousness of *Univocal Self-Predication* does not necessitate a nonliteral interpretation of *Self-Predication*. A predication can be made literally without applying univocally. That is, there is conceptual space for a literal but *equivocal* interpretation of *Self-Predication*. Call this “*Equivocal Self-Predication*”:

**Equivocal Self-Predication**

*F*-ness is truly predicated of the *F* itself in a different way than *F*-ness is truly predicated of ordinary *F* things.

This – and not something nonliteral – is the kind of interpretation we should be after.

### 4.3 Self-Predication and the Bigness Regress

Let us now move to our second common scholarly opinion about *Self-Predication*, which concerns its role in the argument at *Parmenides* 132a1–b2. Generally, this argument is known in the literature as the “Third Man Argument”, following Aristotle’s moniker for it (cf. *Metaphysics* A.9 990b17). However, the actual argument in the *Parmenides* concerns not the Form of “Man” but of Bigness – that is, a Form of an attribute or adjective, rather than of a substance or noun. Since there would seem to be an important distinction between these two kinds of Forms, and since Socrates himself expresses doubts about the existence of Forms of substances, including the Form of Man, at *Parmenides* 130c1–4, I will refer to the argument at *Parmenides* 132a2–b2 instead as the “Bigness Regress”.

The text of the Bigness Regress is as follows:

PARM.: “I suppose you think each Form is one on the following ground: (A) Whenever some number of things seem to you to be big, perhaps there seems to be some one Form, the same Form as you look at them all, and from this you believe that the Big is one.” — Soc.: “That’s true.”

“And what about the Big itself and the other big things? (b) If you look at them all in the same way with the mind’s eye, again won’t some one big thing appear, by which all these other things appear big?” — “It seems so.”

“Therefore another Form of Bigness will make its appearance, emerging alongside Bigness itself and its participants; and in turn another over all these, by which all of them will be big. And then each of your Forms will no longer be one, but unlimited in multitude.”

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25 To be clear, *Equivocal Self-Predication* differs from Nonliteral Self-Predication in that the former’s analysis of self-predication statements is still genuinely *predicative*. (That is, according to *Equivocal Self-Predication*, a property is still being ascribed to the Form, just not in the ordinary way.) Nonliteral interpreters concur that self-predication statements require a distinct analysis from ordinary predicative statements, but differ in assuming that the proper analysis must be nonpredicative. Cf., for example, [Sharma (2007, 192)]: “At [Phaedo] 100c, [Socrates] ... allow[s] that the-beautiful [i.e., the Beautiful itself] “is beautiful” while denying that ‘the-beautiful is beautiful’ should be given the analysis appropriate to a statement like ‘Charmides is beautiful’. Thus, there is no temptation to construe ‘the-beautiful is beautiful’ as a “predicate”.”

26 And since I believe that Aristotle’s shift to “Man” is intentional and significant, as we will see in §4.4.
This argument claims to show that for each Form of $F$-ness, there is not just one but rather infinitely many of them, thereby threatening the Forms’ supposed uniqueness. And, as I and many others interpret it, the argument rests on two basic premisses. The first, which appears in the sentence I have labelled $(\alpha)$, is a sort of “introduction rule” for Forms: it tells us, basically, that whenever there exists a plurality of things all of which are $F$, there will exist some additional thing – “the $F$ itself”, or “the Form of $F$-ness”. Call this premiss “omni” (for One-over-Many plus Non-Identity).²⁷ The second premiss, which appears implicitly in the sentence I have labelled $(\beta)$, is just Self-Predication: it tells us that the $F$ itself is $F$. Call this premiss “sp”.

Together, these premisses result in an infinity of Forms: Any plurality of $F$ things will generate an $F$ itself (by omni), which when taken together with the initial plurality will form a new plurality of $F$ things (by sp), which in turn will generate another $F$ itself (by omni), and so on ad infinitum. This argument is formalized in Figure 4.1.

1. omni: whenever there exists a plurality of things all of which are $F$, there exists an additional thing, “the $F$ itself” ²⁷

2. sp: the $F$ itself is $F$
   - assumption: there exists a plurality of $F$ things, “$F$”
   - there exists an additional thing, “the $F$ itself” [omni]
   - the $F$ itself is $F$ [sp]
   - there exists a second plurality of $F$ things, “$F_2$”, consisting of the things in $F$ and the $F$ itself
   - there exists an additional thing, “the $F$ itself$_2$” [omni]
   - the $F$ itself$_2$ is $F$ [sp]
   - ...

∴ for any plurality of $F$ things, there exist infinitely many “$F$’s themselves”

**Figure 4.1**: The Bigness Regress (*Parmenides* 132a2–b2)

The conclusion of this argument is clearly unacceptable, both to Socrates in the *Parmenides*²⁹ and to any self-respecting Platonist.³⁰ The argument is valid, so its conclusion can be avoided only by dropping (or at least modifying) one or both of its premisses.

²⁷I adopt this abbreviation from Hunt (899, 7).
²⁹Who immediately responds by attempting to amend the argument so as to avoid the Bigness Regress’s conclusion and thereby maintain that “each Form is one and no longer faces the difficulties just mentioned” (132b5–6).
³⁰As Bailey (2009, 670–671) duly notes, the unacceptability of this conclusion does not rest so much on its proliferation of Forms, but rather on its demonstration that contraries hold true of them – that each Form is both one and infinitely many. (Cf. 129b–e, where Socrates explicitly voices his astonishment at the thought that contraries could hold true of the Forms.)
Traditionally, it is the Self-Predication premiss, sp, which has been thought in need of correction.³¹ Sometimes this judgment is passed, as it were, from the outside: sp, it is claimed, is the premiss that Plato should drop, whether or not he himself realized it or knew how.³² Other times it is argued that sp is the premiss that Plato intended to criticize and make his readers question, as a corrective either to his actual earlier views about Self-Predication or merely to a tempting misreading of Self-Predication which Plato wished to guard against.³³ The differences between these readings are not important. All, I believe, are generally mistaken, as the Bigness Regress, as it is presented in the Parmenides, does not give the slightest indication that sp needs fixing.

This is not to deny that dropping or otherwise modifying sp would successfully stop the Bigness Regress’s regress; it clearly would. Furthermore, for those who already have doubts about the cogency of Self-Predication (such as the nonliteral interpreters of §4.3), dropping sp would seem the most sensible thing to do. However, if we are seeking to illuminate how Plato thought about Self-Predication, then we must look at how Plato treated Self-Predication in this argument. And once we look closely at this evidence, it becomes quite clear that Plato had no doubts about it.

The first thing to notice about the text of the Bigness Regress is that the Self-Predication premiss is left implicit in the argument. Parmenides does not need to get Socrates’ agreement that the Big itself is big; rather, he proceeds straight to inferring the consequences of the initial omni premiss:

“And what about the Big itself and the other big things? If you look at them all in the same way with the mind’s eye, again won’t some one big thing appear, by which all these other things appear big?” — “It seems so.” (132a6–9)

Self-Predication is, undoubtedly, a presupposition of this inference, and rightly included as part of the logic of the Bigness Regress. However, dialectically, it seems to me significant that Self-Predication is presented as a tacit presupposition, rather than as an explicit assumption. What this suggests, I believe, is that Self-Predication is supposed to be self-evident – not the sort of claim that needs to be granted, or that could reasonably be doubted. And this is in accord with the self-evident manner in which self-predication statements are presented in other dialogues.

Admittedly, it is not beyond Plato to leave implicit the very premisses he means for us to question.³⁴ However, the wider context of the Bigness Regress makes clear that this is not

³¹This tradition began in Vlastos (1954), the article which inaugurated the contemporary concern with the Bigness Regress.
³²Cf., for example, Vlastos (1954, 336–339) and Strand (1965, 151–155).
³³Cf., for example, Sellars (1953, 422–430), Meinwald (1992), and Hunt (1997).
³⁴Indeed, this seems to be precisely his method in certain of the aporetic dialogues.
what is happening here. Though it is a fact all too often neglected, the Bigness Regress does not occur in isolation, or even as the climax of the first part of the Parmenides. Rather, it is a part of a series of arguments, starting at 130e5, concerning the correct specification of the relation between Forms and their participants.\textsuperscript{35} In this stretch of text, Parmenides takes up and refutes a number of different accounts of this relation: whole–part (131a4–e7), thought–object (132b3–c11), and paradigm–copy (132c12–133a10). The Bigness Regress, situated in the middle of this series at 132a2–b2, takes up another such account: that each Form is a one-over-many, posited whenever the same property is predicated of many things.\textsuperscript{36} And this account, of course, is just our \textit{omni} premiss.

Given that this is the context in which the Bigness Regress appears, it is all the more evident that it is \textit{omni}, and not \textit{sp}, which the argument is meant to challenge. And indeed, it is \textit{omni} which Socrates \textit{takes} the argument to challenge. This is why, when Socrates responds to the Bigness Regress, he does so by offering alternative accounts of the Form–participant relation – that is, by dropping \textit{omni}.\textsuperscript{37}

Furthermore – though this is not spelled out in the text – both of Socrates’ subsequent alternatives to \textit{omni} successfully block the Bigness Regress (though they are shown, nonetheless, to fail for other reasons). Socrates’ first response, at 132b3–5, is that “perhaps each of the Forms is a thought (\textit{νόημα}), and properly occurs only in minds (\textit{ἐν ψυχαῖς}).” This proposal, I take it, emends the Bigness Regress’s \textit{omni} premiss by revoking its claim that the \textit{F} itself is a real, mind-independent entity. Rather, it is a mere thought, whose only “reality” is in our mind. Therefore, the introduction of the \textit{F} itself does not add anything new and real to our ontology; and thus no new plurality of \textit{F} things can be formed with it, as it simply is not a “thing” – that is, a real and objectively existing being. Thus the Bigness Regress cannot even get started. Correspondingly, Parmenides refutes the proposal that Forms are thoughts on different grounds.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35}For a compelling defence of this reading of \textit{Parmenides} 130e–133a, see Schofield \textit{(1996), 53–59).}

\textsuperscript{36}Cf. the statement with which the argument begins: “I suppose you think each Form is one on the following ground...” (132a1).

\textsuperscript{37}A further reason for accepting that \textit{omni} is the premiss of the Bigness Regress to be dropped is that, unlike \textit{sp}, Plato does not seem ever to commit himself to it. The closest he comes is at \textit{Republic} X 596a6–8; yet that this remark expresses a general one-over-many principle has been doubted since Smith \textit{(1971),} and has been thoroughly refuted recently by Sedley \textit{(2014).} (In addition, it does not seem that Socrates in the \textit{Parmenides} could be committed to \textit{omni}, either, given his professed doubts about the scope of Forms at 130c–d. In this regard, we might see it as significant that \textit{omni} is Parmenides’, rather than Socrates’, suggestion; cf. again 132a1, Parmenides’ opening remark: “I suppose you think...”)

\textsuperscript{38}In brief, Parmenides argues that even if Forms are thoughts, they are thoughts of real entities, which ordinary things participate in; thus, on this proposal, ordinary things are either composed of thoughts and always thinking, or unthinking despite being thoughts. I find this argument revealing of the way in which Parmenides (and perhaps also Plato) conceives of the composition of ordinary things, but to discuss this further would take us too far afield.
Socrates’ second response, at 132d1–4, presents another account of the Form–participant relation:

“What appears most likely to me is this: the Forms are like paradigms set in nature, and the other things resemble them and are likenesses, and this participation in the Forms is, for the other things, nothing other than being modelled on them.”

This proposal, I take it, amends the Bigness Regress’s omni premiss by restricting the sort of \( F \) things whose existence entails the additional existence of a Form. Rather than postulating a Form for every plurality of things all of which are \( F \) in whatever way (as does omni), the present proposal postulates a Form for every plurality of things all of which are modelled on the same paradigm.\(^{39}\) Thus, since the \( F \) itself is not modelled on itself, its introduction will not result in a new plurality of the relevant sort, and the Bigness Regress is blocked.\(^{40}\)

Furthermore, there is good reason to think that the proposal that Forms are paradigms, unlike omni, represents Plato’s actual view of the Form–participant relation. Its language of modelling and paradigmatisms is found in many of the canonical discussions of the Forms.\(^{41}\) It is put forth by Socrates with a level of confidence yet unseen in his dialogue with Parmenides.\(^{42}\) And it is Socrates’ last word in the Parmenides on how the Form–participant relation should be understood.\(^{43}\) If, then, I am correct that this proposal is immune to the Bigness Regress, then it is a mistake to think that the Bigness Regress is meant to expose a genuine problem in Plato’s metaphysics, much less with self-predication.

However, this is not to say that there is nothing to learn about self-predication in the Bigness Regress and the rest of the first part of the Parmenides. For observe: the proposal that Forms are paradigms blocks the Bigness Regress by distinguishing two different ways of

\(^{39}\)I take the language of modelling here to be metaphorical (note that all Socrates states is that Forms are merely “like” (\( \vartheta\alpha\sigma\sigma\tau\rho \)) paradigms). As such, we should not take this remark to entail, for example, the literal existence of a cosmic demiurge who does the modelling (though this image may still be a useful heuristic). Ordinary things can be “modelled on” the Form of \( F \)-ness simply by being deficiently \( F \), à la the equal sticks and stones of Phaedo 74d.

\(^{40}\)Admittedly, Parmenides’ subsequent refutation of the proposal that Forms are paradigms shows it still to result in regress. Yet as I will argue in §1.4.1, the logic of this regress is importantly different from that of the Bigness Regress, despite what many other commentators have assumed.

\(^{41}\)Cf. esp. Phaedo 74, Republic X 597, and Cratylus 380.

\(^{42}\)On this point, cf. Schofield (896, 58–59), who quotes Proclus, from his commentary on the Parmenides (906.37–907.6, translated in Morrow and Dillon (1987, 265–266)): “And [Socrates] has placed so much confidence in this argument, that, whereas he had formerly sworn that it was no easy thing to define the nature of this participation and how the Forms come to be in sensibles, now he says that it appears to him very likely that this is the method of participation, and by his use of the phrases ‘very likely’ and ‘plainly appears’ (\( \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\phi\alpha\nu\alpha\iota\varepsilon\omega\theta\alpha\varsigma \)) rather than simply ‘appears’ (\( \phi\alpha\iota\nu\varepsilon\omega\theta\alpha \)), he shows that he is especially confident about this theory.”

\(^{43}\)Proclus sees Socrates’ arrival at this position as the result of Parmenides’ dialectical midwifery (907.16–22, translated in Morrow and Dillon (1987, 266)): “If, then, Socrates rises to new heights on the head of each problem raised, and perfects and articulates his ideas about the primal Forms, it must be said that he is having his ideas brought to birth by Parmenides rather than being overthrown, and that this action is performed for his improvement rather than his defeat.”
“being F” (namely, by being a paradigm of F-ness and by being modelled on the paradigm), and then postulating Forms only for pluralities of things which are F in the latter sense. That is, this proposal suggests that the general predicate ‘... is F’ is ambiguous between two senses, which we may abbreviate for the moment simply as ‘... is\textsubscript{p} F’ and ‘... is\textsubscript{m} F’ (for ‘... is a paradigm of F-ness’ and ‘... is modelled on the paradigm of F-ness’, respectively). This allows us to revise the Bigness Regress’s OMNI premiss as follows:

1. **OMNI\textsuperscript{*}**: whenever there exists a plurality of things all of which are\textsubscript{m} F, there exists an additional thing, “the F itself”

This revision of OMNI is sufficient for stopping the Bigness Regress, even without revising SP. That is, even if we leave SP in its disambiguated form of ‘the F itself is F’, it does not validly follow that, given a plurality of things all of which are\textsubscript{m} F, there will be a second plurality of things all of which are\textsubscript{m} F, consisting of the things in the initial plurality and the F itself. For all we know from SP, the F itself might “be F” in that it is\textsubscript{p} F. Thus the regress cannot get started. This “proof” is formalized in Figure 4.2.

1. **OMNI\textsuperscript{*}**: whenever there exists a plurality of things all of which are\textsubscript{m} F, there exists an additional thing, “the F itself”
2. **SP**: the F itself is F\textsuperscript{p}
   - **ASSUMPTION**: there exists a plurality of things all of which are\textsubscript{m} F, “\textsubscript{F}”
   - there exists an additional thing, “the F itself” [OMNI]
   - the F itself is F [SP]
   - **INVALID INFERENCE**: there exists a second plurality of things all of which are\textsubscript{m} F, “\textsubscript{F\textsubscript{2}}”, consisting of the things in \textsubscript{F} and the F itself

\[ \therefore \text{ no regress!} \]

**Figure 4.2**: The Bigness Regress, blocked

However, if we wish to block the regress definitively, we should revise SP, too, as follows:

2. **SP\textsuperscript{*}**: the F itself is\textsubscript{p} F

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\textsuperscript{44}Admittedly, I am reading in here a bit; Socrates’ proposal that Forms are paradigms is presented as an account of participation, not of predication. I mean here simply to use this account of participation to explain what is for Plato the basic predicational datum that both the F itself and ordinary F things “are F”, and thus relate this participatory model more directly to the Bigness Regress.

\textsuperscript{45}Note, however, that this revision alone is not sufficient for stopping the Bigness Regress, if OMNI is left in its original form. OMNI, unlike OMNI\textsuperscript{*}, generates a new Form for every plurality of things all of which are F in whatever sense (that is, for every plurality of things all of which either are\textsubscript{m} F or are\textsubscript{p} F), and by SP\textsuperscript{*}, the F itself is still F, and thus capable of figuring into plurality of F things. Which is just to say: OMNI\textsuperscript{*} is necessary and sufficient for stopping the Bigness Regress – which is all the more reason for taking OMNI as the premiss which the Bigness Regress is meant to challenge.
What this suggests is precisely what was suggested in the previous section: Self-Predication is to be taken literally (and not rejected or radically reinterpreted), but not univocally; F-ness is truly predicated of the F itself, but in a different way than it is predicated of ordinary F things; or simply, the proper interpretation of Self-Predication is Equivocal Self-Predication.⁴⁷

4.4 Self-Predication and Plato’s later theory of predication

Let us now turn to our third and last common scholarly opinion about Self-Predication, according to which Plato did indeed possess a tenable analysis of Self-Predication – but not until late in his career. Scholars of this opinion find this analysis specifically in the predicational theories of the Sophist and the second part of the Parmenides, and indeed, see the working out of Self-Predication as one of the major achievements of these theories.

The specific form of this view I have in mind is that of Constance Meinwald.⁴⁸ Her interpretation is based on the “pros heauto–pros ta alla” distinction she identifies in the second part of the Parmenides, defended at length in Meinwald (1991) and discussed already here in §2.8.

To recapitulate that discussion, this distinction marks whether it is in relation to itself, or in relation to something else, that a subject is said to be whatever it is said to be. If in relation to itself, then this is predication pros heauto, and the predication holds in virtue of an internal relation (that is, a relation to the subject’s own nature). If in relation to something else, then this is predication pros ta alla, and the predication holds in virtue of an external relation (that is, a relation to the nature of the displayed feature).⁴⁹ In ordinary language, both kinds of predication can be expressed with the general, ambiguous predicate ‘…is F’, so long as we understand that anything which is truly said to “be F” might either be F pros heauto or be F pros ta alla.

As I remarked in §2.8, the precise natures of pros heauto and pros ta alla predication could be better specified by Meinwald. The most illuminating explanation she offers likens pros heauto predications to genus–species “tree predications”: for example, leopards are said to be feline because leopard is a species of the genus cat (or “Felidae”), and bravery is said to be…

⁴⁷Indeed, it might even seem that this suggestion is implicit in the text of the Bigness Regress itself: When Parmenides is describing how Socrates will look upon the plurality of big things consisting of the many big things along with the Big itself, he specifically notes that Socrates will do so "with the mind’s eye" (τῇ ψυχῇ ἱδεῖς, 243a). I concur with Bailey’s (2003, 674) assessment of this comment: “That [Socrates] must now turn to his mind’s eye is a strong indication of how very different in kind is the new thing he is invited to consider alongside the sensible [big] things. And if it is so different, there is no reason to suppose that it is [big] in quite the same way that [big] sensible things are.”

⁴⁸Though it can also be found in Frede (1997, 31–33), Mann (2000, 182), Peterson (2000), and Silverman (2002, 110–111). I will continue to refer to Meinwald as the representative of this view, but my comments should be understood to apply to all its proponents.

virtuous because bravery is a species or kind of virtue. In contrast, pros ta alla predications are “ordinary”, “everyday”, or “garden variety” predications, as, for example, Achilles is said to be brave – that is, not because Achilles is a species of bravery, but because he displays it (at least in certain contexts).

With regard to the self-predication of Forms, Meinwald’s claim is that such predications are always predications pros heauto. Call this the “relational interpretation”:

**RELATIONAL INTERPRETATION**

the $F$ itself is $F \equiv_{\text{def}}$ the $F$ itself is $F$ pros heauto

Note that this interpretation provides precisely the sort of literal but equivocal interpretation of Self-Predication that I have been championing in the preceding sections. It maintains that $F$-ness is truly predicated of the $F$ itself (since the $F$ itself is $F$ pros heauto), but not in the same way as it is truly predicated of everything else (since some other things are $F$ pros ta alla). Thus, the relational interpretation avoids both the absurdities of Univocal Self-Predication and the pitfalls of nonliteral interpretations. Furthermore, it does so based on a predicational distinction which Plato himself puts forth and thematizes; thus it would seem to represent his considered view.

For these reasons, the relational interpretation is very attractive. I am strongly in agreement with its general approach, and it is, in my opinion, the best interpretation of Self-Predication in the literature. However, I also believe that it still has some problems – problems, moreover, which my own interpretation of Self-Predication can fix.

The first problem with the relational interpretation is that it still leaves obscure just what Self-Predication means. Indeed, there is a worry that it makes Self-Predication more obscure. According to Meinwald, self-predication statements are “the limit case of predication of a subject in relation to itself [i.e., predication pros heauto].”\(^{50}\) That is, whereas the paradigm cases of pros heauto predication are those in which a genus is predicated of one of its various species (as ‘animal’ is predicated pros heauto of ‘leopard’, ‘cat’, and ‘mammal’), self-predication is that special case in which the genus and the species are identical (such that ‘animal’ is also predicated pros heauto of ‘animal’). However, it may be objected that this “limit case” is precisely where the analogy with genus–species tree predications breaks down. We do not usually speak of a genus being its own genus or its own species. So what sense does it make to say that the $F$ itself “is $F$ pros heauto”? Without further clarification of the pros heauto relation, the relational interpretation runs the risk of leaving Self-Predication unexplained.\(^{51}\)

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\(^{51}\) Furthermore, as Sayre (1996, 113) notes, Meinwald’s analysis of pros heauto predication is seemingly anachronistic: “The notion of a ‘genus–species tree’ on which [Meinwald’s treatment of pros heauto predication] relies for a criterion is an Aristotelian gloss of which Plato was probably innocent.”
The second problem with the relational interpretation is that it suggests a picture of Plato’s philosophical development which we should be reluctant to accept, based on what we observed in the preceding section. As Meinwald has persuasively demonstrated\(^\text{52}\), the pros heauto–pros ta alla distinction (upon which the relational interpretation is based) is a decisive innovation of the second part of the Parmenides. And this means, she takes it, that before the Parmenides, Plato naïvely took Self-Predication univocally (or at least did not have the theoretical resources to explain how not to take it univocally). Thus, Meinwald takes the Bigness Regress to pose a genuine problem for Plato’s pre-Parmenides theory of predication, which the second part of the Parmenides then solves.\(^\text{53}\)

Yet as I argued in §4.3, the Bigness Regress is already adequately responded to within the first part of the Parmenides, by the paradigm model of participation. Furthermore, this model blocks the Bigness Regress by precisely the maneuver which the relational interpretation, on Meinwald’s reading, is supposed to make available: that is, by distinguishing two ways in which something can “be F”.\(^\text{54}\) It even comes close to putting forth the relational interpretation’s very analysis of this distinction, since, on its account, the Form of F-ness is F by being the paradigm of F-ness (that is, in relation to itself), while ordinary F things are F by being modelled on the paradigm (that is, in relation to something else). That is, the paradigm model of participation seems already to include the “decisive innovation” of the second part of the Parmenides. And insofar as the paradigm model was Plato’s pre-Parmenides view,\(^\text{55}\) it is hard to see how the pros heauto–pros ta alla distinction could be an improvement on that earlier view.

Of course, the paradigm model is shown by Parmenides to lead to problems of its own. Indeed, many commentators have thought that the paradigm model, far from blocking the Bigness Regress, is shown to fall right back into it.\(^\text{56}\) Yet I will now, in the following section, demonstrate that this is a misreading of Parmenides’ argument, and that the argument, when properly read, shows the paradigm model to lead to a new sort of regress – a regress which, as we will see, has nothing to do with Self-Predication. And it is this regress, I will argue, and not the Bigness Regress, that the pros heauto–pros ta alla distinction is actually meant to address.\(^\text{57}\)

\(^{52}\) Cf. esp. Meinwald (1999, Chapter 2).

\(^{53}\) This thesis is nicely laid out in Meinwald (1992).

\(^{54}\) These, recall, were what I abbreviated in §4.3 as “…is\(m\) F” and “…is\(p\) F”.

\(^{55}\) As argued in n. 1 above, and the surrounding discussion.

\(^{56}\) This was especially common in early treatments of the Parmenides’s regress arguments (cf. Owen (1953, 82–84), Vlastos (1954, 329–332), and Cherniss (1957, 257 ff.)), yet the opinion is still common enough: Fine (1993, 214) states that Parmenides’ two critiques are “logically the same argument”, and Silverman (2002, 111) recommends that the second be read “as essentially a version of the first.” Allen (1983, 145 ff.) was an early opponent of such readings, and has since been supported by Turnbull (1985) and Schofield (1996).

\(^{57}\) Meinwald herself does not take a stand on whether or not this regress is the same in form as the Bigness
4.4.1 The Likeness Regress

The argument in question appears at Parmenides 132d5–133a3. This argument is sometimes referred to as the “second Third Man Argument”, but I will call it the “Likeness Regress”, since I do not believe it is the second version of anything, but something new. The argument itself is complicated in terms of both its text and its logic, so the analysis which follows will be slow and careful. To begin with, here is the text of the Likeness Regress in full:

(a) Soc.: “What appears most likely to me is this: the Forms are like paradigms set in nature, and the other things resemble them and are likenesses, and this participation in the Forms is, for the other things, nothing other than being modelled on them.”

(b) Parm.: “If, then, something resembles the Form, can that Form fail to be like what was modelled on it, to the extent that the thing has been made like it? Or is there any way for something like to be like what is not like it?” — “There is not.”

(c) “Therefore, isn’t there a compelling necessity for that which is like to participate in the same one Form58 as does what is like it?” — “There is.”

(d) “And if the like things are like by participating in something, won’t that be the Form itself?” — “Undoubtedly.”

(e) “Therefore, nothing can be like the Form, nor the Form like anything else – otherwise, in addition to the Form another Form will always make its appearance, and if that Form is like anything, yet another, and a new Form will never stop emerging, if the Form proves to be like what participates in it.” — “That’s very true.”

(f) “Therefore, it’s not by likeness that the other things participate in the Forms. Rather, we must seek some other means by which they participate.” — “It seems so.”

It will be easiest, I believe, to analyze this argument from the outside and work our way in. First, then, we might ask, What is this argument’s conclusion? As with the Bigness Regress, the conclusion here is the unacceptable result that there exist infinitely many Forms – as Parmenides says at (e), “a new Form will never stop emerging.” Unlike the Bigness Regress, however, this conclusion is not a general one, meant to affect each and every Form. Rather, the conclusion here is that there exist infinitely many Forms of Likeness.60 Admittedly, this is not explicit in Parmenides’ remarks, but it is the most natural reading of the text, insofar as

58Retaining the MSS reading εἴδους. Its excision was proposed by Jackson (1882, 291 n. 1), on purely interpretive grounds; this proposal has since been refuted decisively by Schofield (1996, 62–63).

59Cf. 132b1–2 of the Bigness Regress: “…then each of your Forms will no longer be one, but unlimited in multitude.”

60This point has been persuasively argued by Schofield (1996, 61–65), though it was anticipated by Allen (1984, 145 ff.) and McCabe (1994, 87–88).
Parmenides’ repeated mentions of “the Form” throughout (e) clearly refer back to “the Form itself” at the end of (d), which is described there as that Form by participating in which the Form we started with in (b) and its participant (“the like things”) are like, and thus can only be understood as the Form of Likeness. Therefore, when Parmenides says in (e) that “a new Form will never stop emerging,” what he means is a new Form of Likeness. Indeed, the entire remark could be more transparently rendered thus:

(e) “Therefore, nothing can be like the Form [of Likeness], nor the Form [of Likeness] like anything else – otherwise, in addition to the Form [of Likeness] another Form [of Likeness] will always make its appearance, and if that Form [of Likeness] is like anything, yet another, and a new Form [of Likeness] will never stop emerging, if the Form [of Likeness] proves to be like what participates in it.”

Let us, then, set down the argument’s conclusion as follows:

∴ there exist infinitely many “Likes themselves”

Parmenides clearly takes this conclusion to complete a reductio of the argument’s starting assumption: Socrates’ proposed paradigm model of participation in (A). Refer to Parmenides’ closing remark:

(f) “Therefore, it’s not by likeness that the other things participate in the Forms; rather, we must seek some other means by which they participate.”

Should we, however, agree with Parmenides’ assessment of the argument’s conclusion? We might seem to have some reason to be suspicious. Note that, in (f), Parmenides characterizes Socrates’ proposal as treating participation as a matter of “likeness”. Yet Socrates’ actual proposal, in (A), was that participation is “nothing other than being modelled on [the Forms].” Clearly, being like is not the same as being modelled on; the former is, for instance, a symmetric relation, while the latter is asymmetric. Thus it might seem that Parmenides, in claiming to show that participation is not a matter of likeness, has not in fact refuted Socrates’ proposal at all, but has rather slyly changed the subject without Socrates noticing.

\[\text{Cf. 129a4 and 131a3: “The other things, by participating in likeness, come to be like.” Note also that if “the Form itself” in (d) is understood not as the Form of Likeness but as whichever Form of F-ness, then (d) would be a redundant repetition of (c). (This was the reasoning behind Jackson’s excision of ένδον in (c) from the MSS; this, however, in addition to flagrantly ignoring the MSS, would require μετέχειν in (c) to carry the metaphysically neutral meaning of “have in common”, rather than its obvious technical Platonic meaning of “participate.”) Again, cf. Schofield (1996: 62–65).}

\[\text{Of course, just because the argument shows only that there exist infinitely many Forms of Likeness does not mean that its conclusion cannot be generalized. The Bigness Regress, after all, shows only that there exist infinitely many Forms of Bigness, but this example is then generalized to apply to all Forms. My point here is merely that the Likeness Regress makes no such claims to the generality of its conclusion, and so neither should we in our analysis of it.}\]
However, there is another, more charitable possibility. Rather than seeing Parmenides as willfully and deviously misinterpreting Socrates’ proposal, we can see him instead as focussing on a consequence of that proposal. After all, even though being modelled on is not the same as being like, it is plausible to suppose that the former entails the latter. That is, it seems right to say that if one thing is modelled on another, then it will be like the other. Therefore, participation, when defined asymmetrically as being modelled on, will inevitably involve likeness in all its symmetry. And this means that showing that participation cannot involve likeness is sufficient for disproving that participation is being modelled on. Thus we can take Parmenides in (r) at his word. Let us, then, set down the following two premisses as the argument’s starting points:

1. **Assumption:** $x$ participates in the $F$ itself $\equiv_{def} x$ is modelled on the $F$ itself
   
   (a) $x$ is modelled on $y \implies x$ is like $y$

How, then, does the argument reach its conclusion from these initial premisses? What other premisses ought we to supply? At (e), Parmenides says that “a new Form [of Likeness] will never stop emerging, if the Form [of Likeness] proves to be like what participates in it.” Therefore, one crucial additional step in the argument’s logic would seem to be the following:

- the Like itself is like that which participates in it

Yet why, we might wonder, should we feel compelled to accept this claim? In fact, this claim follows directly from the argument’s initial premisses, along with a further uncontroversial premiss concerning the symmetry of likeness. This premiss, when combined with our first two, entails that every Form is like that which participates in it:

1. **Assumption:** $x$ participates in the $F$ itself $\equiv_{def} x$ is modelled on the $F$ itself
   
   (a) $x$ is modelled on $y \implies x$ is like $y$
   (b) $x$ is like $y \iff y$ is like $x$
   (c) $x$ participates in the $F$ itself $\implies$ the $F$ itself is like $x$ \[\[\text{[I+Ia+Ib]}\]

By premiss \[\text{[I]}, anything which participates in a Form is modelled on that Form. By premiss \[\text{[Ia]}, anything which is modelled on a Form is like that Form. And by premiss \[\text{[Ib]}, if something is like a Form then that Form is like it. Therefore, taken all together, if something participates in a Form then that Form is like it. Thus, from these premisses, it must be the case that the Like itself is like that which participates in it.

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"This plausibly explains why Socrates in (A), while defining participation as being modelled on, also describes participants as 'likenesses'.

"Parmenides emphasizes the symmetry of likeness in (n): as his closing rhetorical question establishes, something cannot be like something which is not itself like it.

"Just as Parmenides states in (n): "If, then, something resembles the Form, can that Form not be like what was modelled on it?"
Yet how does this premiss lead to there being infinitely many “Like themselves”? The explanation in this case is more complicated, but the basic idea is this: If the Like itself is like that which participates in it, then it must be like by participating in the Like itself; but since nothing can participate in itself (as will be explained shortly), the Like itself must participate in some different Like itself; so there exists a second “Like itself”, which will also be like that which participates in it; and so on ad infinitum.

The questionable step here is the inference that the Like itself must be like by participation in the Like itself. Was not the point of the paradigm model of participation to establish that the Form of F-ness is F in a different way than its participants – that it is F in that it is the paradigm of F-ness, whereas ordinary F things are F in that they are modelled on that paradigm? Why, then, should we accept that the Like itself is like in the same way ordinary like things are like, that is, by participation?

Here is one explanation: We accepted that the Like itself is like (that which participates in it) because every Form of F-ness is like (that which participates in it). Clearly these other Forms are not like in that they are the paradigm of likeness; only the Like itself is like in this way. Every other Form must be like in another way – and on the paradigm model, the only other way that something can be like is in that it is modelled on the paradigm of likeness, that is, by participating in the Like itself. Yet the Like itself is like for the very same reasons, and thus in the very same way, as every other Form. Therefore, the Like itself, in addition to being the paradigm of likeness, is like by participation.

Here is another, complementary explanation: We accepted that the Like itself is like (that which participates in it) because that which participates in it is like (it) – that is, because of the symmetry of likeness. But Parmenides states not only that something must be like that which is like it, but also that it must be like it to the same extent. Clearly that which participates in the Like itself is like the Like itself to a limited extent; if it were perfectly like the Like itself, then it would just be the Like itself. Yet by the symmetry of likeness, the Like itself must be like its participant to the very same extent. Therefore, the Like itself, in addition to being the perfect paradigm of likeness, is like in another, imperfect sense – and on Socrates’ assumed framework, it would seem that this imperfect likeness can only be accounted for by participation.

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⁶⁶To put this point another way: In §4.4, I suggested that the Likeness Regress distinguishes two senses of the general predicate, ‘… is F’ and ‘… is of F’. Only the Like itself is of like; thus, if any other Form “is like”, it must be the case that it is of like. But the Like itself “is like” in the very same way as these other Forms. Therefore, the Like itself, in addition to being of like, is of like. This explanation is supported by the fact that, from (n) to (p), Parmenides establishes the general claim that if something participates in a Form, then that Form and that participant both participate in the Like itself.

⁶⁷In (n): “If, then, something resembles the Form, can that Form not be like what was modelled on it, to the extent that the thing has been made like it?”
It does not matter which of the preceding two explanations one prefers, or thinks is more textually faithful. The point that both of these explanations establish is the same: the Like itself, in addition to being the paradigm of likeness, is also like in another sense. It is like its participants, just as its participants are like it, and just as every other Form is like its own participants, and those participants like their Forms. And since, on the paradigm model, there are only two ways in which something can be $F$ – by being the paradigm of $F$-ness or by being modelled on that paradigm – the Like itself, in addition to being the paradigm of likeness, must be modelled on a paradigm of likeness, and thereby participate in the Like itself. Let us, then, set down the following premiss:

2. $x$ participates in the $F$ itself $\implies$ both $x$ and the $F$ itself participate in “the Like itself”

One final premiss is needed to secure the regress, and it is, simply, that nothing participates in itself:

3. $x$ participates in $y \implies x \neq y$

Though this premiss is never explicitly articulated in the text, it is safe to assume that it is implicitly there. Given that participation is being understood as a relation of being modelled on a paradigm, it cannot be a relation in which a thing can stand to itself – that is, it must be irreflexive. Otherwise the same thing would be both paradigm and derivative copy of that paradigm; but this is absurd. Therefore, participation must always be in something distinct from the participant.

With these premisses in place, an infinite regress of Forms of Likeness results, just as Parmenides claims. This argument is formalized in Figure 4.1. If anything participates in a Form, then that Form must itself participate in “the Like itself”; and by the same principle, the Like itself must itself participate in “the Like itself”; but since nothing can participate in itself, the Like itself must participate in a second Like itself; and by the initial principle again, this second Like itself must participate in “the Like itself”; and so on ad infinitum.

Much more could be said about the Likeness Regress, but the preceding analysis is sufficient for the point I wish to emphasize, which is this: Though the Likeness Regress, like the Bigness Regress, derives an infinite regress of Forms, it does not rely on any general thesis concerning the self-predication of the Forms. The regress-generating step is not the claim that the Like itself “is like” in the way that every $F$ itself “is $F$", but the more specific claim that

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68This premiss reflects Parmenides’ remark in (c): “Therefore, isn’t there a compelling necessity for that which is like to participate in the same one Form as does what is like it?”

69Note that this also holds true on the *Phaedo’s* additive model of participation (cf. §2.4), in which $x$ participates in $y$ only if $y$ is added to $x$, which is possible only if $x$ and $y$ are nonidentical.
1. ASSUMPTION: $x$ participates in the $F$ itself $\equiv_{def} x$ is modelled on the $F$ itself
   (a) $x$ is modelled on $y \implies x$ is like $y$
   (b) $x$ is like $y \iff y$ is like $x$
   (c) $x$ participates in the $F$ itself $\implies$ the $F$ itself is like $x$ 

2. $x$ participates in the $F$ itself $\implies$ both $x$ and the $F$ itself participate in “the Like itself”

3. $x$ participates in $y \implies x \neq y$
   (a) ASSUMPTION: there exists something, “$a$”, which participates in some Form, “the $F$ itself”
   (b) both $a$ and the $F$ itself participate in the Like itself $[3a+2]$
   (c) the $F$ itself participates in the Like itself $[3b]$
   (d) both the $F$ itself and the Like itself participate in “the Like itself” $[3c+2]$
   (e) both the $F$ itself and the Like itself participate in the Like itself, $[3d+3]$
   (f) the Like itself participates in the Like itself, $[3e]$
   (g) both the Like itself and the Like itself participate in “the Like itself” $[3f+2]$
   (h) both the Like itself and the Like itself participate in the Like itself, $[3g+3]$
   (i) ...

$\therefore$ if anything participates in anything, there exist infinitely many “Likes themselves”

**Figure 4.1**: The Likeness Regress

the Like itself “is like” *by participating in the Like itself*, that is, “is like” in the way that every $F$ itself “is like”. And as we saw, this claim was established on the basis of considerations having to do with the nature of participation and likeness, that is, considerations unrelated to the general feature of Self-Predication. As such, the Likeness Regress stands *regardless* of what we make of Self-Predication.

If, then, we agree with Meinwald – as I believe we should – that the *pros heauto–pros ta alla* distinction is a decisive innovation of the second part of the *Parmenides*, meant to provide the resources to resolve the problems raised in the first, then we should not construe this distinction as aimed solely at clarifying Self-Predication, as the relational interpretation suggests. If it were, then the Likeness Regress would remain an unresolved problem at the dialogue’s end, since, as we have now seen, Self-Predication does not figure in the Likeness Regress. This is not to say that the *pros heauto–pros ta alla* distinction does not in any way help in clarifying Self-Predication. The point is that if the distinction is truly to resolve all the problems raised in the first part of the *Parmenides*, then it must also be in the service of clarifying something other than Self-Predication, lest Plato’s later theory of predication also fall prey to the Likeness Regress.
4.5 The aitia interpretation of Self-Predication

Let us now pause to take stock of what we have learned about Self-Predication thus far. In §4.2 and §4.3, I argued that the proper interpretation of Self-Predication should be literal but equivocal, affirming that $F$-ness is truly predicated of the $F$ itself, but predicated in a different way than $F$-ness is truly predicated of ordinary $F$ things. In §4.4, we looked at an influential example of such a literal but equivocal interpretation of Self-Predication, Constance Meinwald’s “relational interpretation”. Yet as I argued there, this interpretation does not go far enough in truly elucidating Self-Predication, and moreover bases its analysis on one of Plato’s later innovations, while there is reason to believe that Plato had actually worked out an analysis earlier on.

What we are looking for, then, is a literal but equivocal interpretation of Self-Predication which, first of all, gives a substantial sense to self-predication statements, and secondly, is based on textual resources from before the Parmenides. And this is precisely the sort of interpretation that the account I have developed in this dissertation thus far provides. Given the theory of predication detailed in Chapter 4, it is clear that Plato had worked out a meaningful analysis of Self-Predication already in the Phaedo. This section sets out this analysis in detail, and situates it in relation to the various interpretive issues we have considered in this chapter. For ease of reference, I will call this analysis the “aitia interpretation” of Self-Predication as it is derived from the Forms’ status as causes (or more precisely, as “aitia” in the sense defined in Chapter 4).

To begin, let us review the key principles of the Phaedo’s predicational theory, which lead to and inform the aitia interpretation. The backbone of this theory is a distinction between two ways in which a property $F$-ness can be truly predicated of a subject $x$, which I abbreviate as “Having” and “Being” (cf. §4.2):

**PREDICATION PRINCIPLE (BASIC)**

$F$-ness is truly predicated of $x$ $\iff$ $(x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness } \lor x \text{ Is } F\text{-ness })$

In this way, both Having and Being are ways of literally “being $F$”. The Having–Being distinction is suitably equivocal as well, insofar as, according to the Phaedo, ordinary things always and only Have $F$-ness, while Forms and bearers (their close ontological relatives) always and only Are $F$-ness (cf. §4.2):

**EPONYM**

$(F\text{-ness is truly predicated of } x \& x \text{ is an ordinary thing }) \iff x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness}$

**ONOMY**

$(F\text{-ness is truly predicated of } x \& (x \text{ is a bearer of } F\text{-ness } \lor x \text{ is a Form of } F\text{-ness })) \iff x \text{ Is } F\text{-ness}$
Thus, on this analysis, $F$-ness can be truly predicated of the $F$ itself, but will always be predicated in a different way than it is truly predicated of ordinary $F$ things.

The distinction between Having and Being is one between derivative and nonderivative predication (cf. §§2.3–2.4), and Having and Being are defined as follows (cf. §§2.4–2.5):

**HAS PREDICATION**

\[ x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness} \iff \exists y \left[ y \text{ Is } F\text{-ness } \& y \text{ is added to } x \right] \]

**IS PREDICATION**

\[ x \text{ Is } F\text{-ness} \iff \text{the definition of } F\text{-ness is true of } x \]

In addition, these definitions, when combined with certain principles from the *Phaedo*'s theory of causation (cf. §1.3.5), result in the following lemma concerning causes (cf. §2.5):

**IS LEMMA**

\[ a \text{ is a cause of } F\text{-ness} \implies a \text{ Is } F\text{-ness} \]

Therefore, Forms, as causes of their respective properties (cf. §3.1), also Are their respective properties, resulting in the following interpretation of **Self-Predication**:

**AITIA INTERPRETATION**

the $F$ itself is $F \equiv_{\text{def}}$ the definition of $F$-ness is true of the $F$ itself

This, then, is my proposed interpretation of **Self-Predication**. It is literal but equivocal, provides a substantial analysis of self-predication statements, and is founded on resources from within the *Phaedo*, well before the *Parmenides*. Thus it would appear to provide exactly the sort of interpretation we are looking for – and in the following two subsections, I will explain precisely why this is so.

### 4.5.1 Elucidating Self-Predication

To begin with, what advantage is there to interpreting self-predication statements in terms of Is predication (as on the **aitia interpretation**) as opposed to in terms of pros heauto predication (as on the **relational interpretation**)? I see two principal benefits.

First, the **aitia interpretation** offers a deeper explanation of the genus–species “tree predications” which are the **relational interpretation**’s paradigm of pros heauto predication. Recall that, on the **relational interpretation**, what it means for something ‘to be $F$ pros heauto’ is understood as analogous to being a species of the genus $F$-ness. Thus, to repeat our earlier example, bravery is virtuous pros heauto because bravery is a species or kind of virtue.

However, the fact that genera are truly predicated of their species is, on the **relational interpretation**, simply to be accepted as bedrock; no further explanation is supplied. On the **aitia interpretation**, in contrast, this fact is explained by the more fundamental fact that a species is
a specification or determination of the definition of its genus.\textsuperscript{70} Consider again the statement ‘bravery is virtuous’. It is an open question whether Plato ever defined virtue or bravery to his satisfaction, but a plausible interpretation of his view would take the definition of virtue (i.e., what virtue is) to be the knowledge of good and evil, and bravery to be the knowledge of future goods and evils (i.e., of what to be hoped for and what is to be feared).\textsuperscript{71} On this interpretation, bravery is clearly a specification of the definition of virtue: whereas virtue is the knowledge of all goods and evils, bravery is a subset of this knowledge, the knowledge of future goods and evils. In this regard, the definition of virtue is automatically true of bravery; and therefore, on the aitia interpretation, virtue is truly predicated of bravery.\textsuperscript{72}

This is the first advantage of the aitia interpretation over the relational interpretation. The second and more significant advantage is that the aitia interpretation better explains the limit case of Is predication which is Self-Predication. On the relational interpretation, recall, self-predication statements must be understood as the near-nonsensical case of a genus being its own genus or its own species. On the aitia interpretation, in contrast, self-predication statements are simply the trivial case of a definition being true of the very thing it defines. For example, the definition of virtue is obviously true of virtue; it would not be the definition of virtue otherwise. And therefore, on the aitia interpretation, virtue is truly predicated of virtue. In this way, self-predication statements are indeed a limit case – just not a limit case of what the relational interpretation says they are.

Indeed, on the aitia interpretation, we might plausibly account for Plato’s commitment to Self-Predication in the following manner. Plato started from the recognition that sometimes we say that something “is F”, not because it displays F-ness in any way, but simply because the definition of F-ness is true of it. This sort of predication is exemplified in statements like ‘bravery is virtuous’ and ‘three is odd’. Yet if something can “be F” simply when the definition of F-ness is true of it, then the F itself must “be F” in this same sense. After all, the definition of F-ness is trivially true of the F itself, as the F itself just is F-ness.

One might object to Plato here by claiming that it is not, in fact, appropriate to say that something “is F” when the definition of F-ness is true of it. Rather, in such instances, the proper thing to say is it “is (a) F-ness”. (To take a specific example, the objection would be that ‘bravery is virtuous’ is ill-formed, and that what one should say is that ‘bravery is a

\textsuperscript{70}As Aristotle would later codify it, a species is defined by its genus plus a differentia; this differentia is the specification or determination of the genus.


\textsuperscript{72}Cf. Peterson (2000, 38)’s gloss on Meinwald’s relational interpretation: “I take pros heauto to mean ‘as a matter of definition or analysis’.” That is, just as on the aitia interpretation, Peterson analyzes pros heauto predication as a definitional claim. She does not, however, say much in support of this analysis; specifically, she does not show that Plato had anything like this analysis in mind. The aitia interpretation differs in demonstrating that this definitional analysis is recommended by the text of the Phaedo.
virtue’. If this is right, then Plato made a grammatical blunder in claiming that the $F$ itself “is $F$”; what he should have said was that the $F$ itself “is $F$-ness”. Yet even if one thus insists that Plato was solecistic in his statements, he was not, as I have demonstrated, confused in his analysis. Though he does, at times, use the same surface form for derivative and nonderivative predications, he does not ever seem to conflate their underlying logical structure. In addition to which, I do not think that Plato is actually being so solecistic. ‘Bravery is virtuous’ is not obviously ill-formed, ‘three is odd’ even less so; at any rate, it is clear, fairly immediately, what statements like these mean. ‘Virtue is virtuous’ and ‘oddness is odd’ are, I have suggested, natural extensions of such statements, in that they share the same truth conditions, and thus should not be seen as any more an affront to ordinary language.

As further evidence in its favour, the aitia interpretation also helps us see the truth in the prominent nonliteral interpretations of Self-Predication canvassed in §4.2. Like the identity interpretation, the aitia interpretation explains self-predication statements in virtue of the fact that the $F$ itself is identical to $F$-ness. The difference is that, whereas on the identity interpretation this fact exhausts the meaning of self-predication statements, on the aitia interpretation it merely underlies this meaning: the fact that the $F$ itself is identical to $F$-ness explains why the definition of $F$-ness is true of the $F$ itself, but it is this latter fact which is what ‘the $F$ itself is $F$’ means. Similarly, like the definitional interpretation, the aitia interpretation explains self-predication statements in terms of the definition of $F$-ness. The difference is that, whereas the definitional interpretation identifies the $F$ itself with this definition, the aitia interpretation holds merely that the definition of $F$-ness is true of it. In this way, the identity interpretation and the definitional interpretation are not so much incorrect as they are incomplete. The aitia interpretation is to be preferred because it captures their insights without taking on the problems of nonliteralism.

The aitia interpretation also illuminates the explanatory interpretation and the deflationary interpretation. These interpretations, recall, reduce self-predication statements to claims about why ordinary $F$ things are $F$. The aitia interpretation does not accept this reduction, but these claims do follow from its interpretation of Self-Predication. Recall our definition of Having:

$$x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness } \iff \exists y \ [ y \text{ Is } F\text{-ness } \& \ y \text{ is added to } x ]$$

We know that the $F$ itself, as the ultimate universal cause of $F$-ness, is added to all the many $F$ things.⁷³ And according to the aitia interpretation of Self-Predication, the $F$ itself Is $F$. Therefore, by the above definition, all the many $F$ things Have $F$-ness, and thereby are $F$. Thus,

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⁷³As established in §4.3 cf. also Phaedo 100d4–6, as discussed in §4.3.2.
because of Self-Predication all $F$ things are $F$. The explanatory interpretation and the deflationary interpretation get this right, though they go too far in reducing Self-Predication to a claim about ordinary $F$ things. The aitia interpretation avoids this error while still respecting the insight, and indeed does one better, by situating the insight within a theoretical framework which explains just how the self-predication of Forms relates to our everyday predications of ordinary things.

4.5.2 Elucidating Plato’s later theory of predication

In this way, the aitia interpretation has several advantages over the rival analyses of Self-Predication. Furthermore, the aitia interpretation bases its analysis on textual resources from the *Phaedo*. This would suggest that Plato was not only convinced of the truth of self-predication statements from early on in his career, but also had worked out an analysis of Self-Predication well before the *Parmenides*. This, in turn, opposes the scholarly tendency to see the *Parmenides* as critiquing Plato’s earlier treatment of Self-Predication (viz., in the Bigness Regress), as well as the tendency to see the *Parmenides* as presenting Plato’s first adequate treatment of Self-Predication (viz., via the *pros heauto-pros ta alla* distinction of the dialogue’s second part). What, then, does the aitia interpretation say about the arguments of the *Parmenides* and Plato’s later theory of predication?

First, the aitia interpretation confirms that the Bigness Regress does not pose a genuine problem for Plato’s pre-*Parmenides* theory of predication. As I suggested in §4.3, the Bigness Regress only works on the assumption that predication is univocal; once we recognize two different kinds of predication (roughly, one for Forms and another for ordinary things), the regress is easily blocked. And this is precisely what the aitia interpretation recognizes, in its distinction between Is and Has predication, as represented in Figure 4.1. Ordinary $F$ things

1. OMNI*: whenever there exists a plurality of things all of which Have $F$-ness, there exists an additional thing, “the $F$ itself”

2. SP*: the $F$ itself Is $F$-ness
   - ASSUMPTION: there exists a plurality of things all of which Have $F$-ness, “$\mathbb{F}$”
   - there exists an additional thing, “the $F$ itself” [OMNI]
   - the $F$ itself Is $F$-ness [SP]
   - INVALID INFERENCE: there exists a second plurality of things all of which Have $F$-ness, “$\mathbb{F}_2$”, consisting of the things in $\mathbb{F}$ and the $F$ itself

\[ \therefore \text{no regress!} \]

**Figure 4.1:** The Bigness Regress, on the aitia interpretation
all Have $F$-ness, and a Form of $F$-ness is indeed posited to account for the $F$-ness that these
ordinary things Have, but the Form of $F$-ness Is $F$-ness, and so requires no further Form to
account for its $F$-ness.

More significantly, the aitia interpretation confirms that the Likeness Regress does pose a
genuine problem for Plato’s pre-Parmenides theory, just as I suggested in §4.4.1. As I argued
there, the Likeness Regress starts from the recognition that the Like itself is like in a way other
than the sense in which it is self-predicative. In the vocabulary of the aitia interpretation, this
is to say that the Like itself is like in a way other than that it Is likeness. And this means that
the Like itself must Have likeness, since, according to the aitia interpretation’s Predication
Principle, there are only two ways in which anything can be $F$ – either it Is $F$-ness or it Has
$F$-ness. Yet this is a problem: given our definition of Has predication, if the Like itself Has
likeness, this means that there is something which Is likeness and which has been added
to the Like itself. What has been added to the Like itself cannot be identical to the Like itself,
so there must exist a second “Like itself”. But by parity of reasoning, this second Like itself,
just like the first, will also be like in a way other than that it Is likeness, so it must also Have
likeness, and this will necessitate the existence of a third “Like itself”, and so on ad infinitum.
This argument is formalized in Figure 4.2.

1. ASSUMPTION: the Like itself is like in a way other than that it Is likeness

2. PREDICATION PRINCIPLE: $F$-ness is truly predicated of $x \iff (x\ Has\ F$-ness $\lor x\ Is$ $F$-ness $)$

3. HAS PREDICATION: $x\ Has\ F$-ness $\iff \exists y\ [y\ Is\ F$-ness $\& y\ is\ added\ to\ x]$  
   (a) the Like itself Has likeness \[b-2]\ 
   (b) there exists “the Like itself$_2$”, which is added to the Like itself \[b+3]\ 
   (c) the Like itself$_2$ is like in a way other than that it Is likeness \[b+1]\ 
   (d) ...

\[\therefore\] there exist infinitely many “Likes themselves”

**Figure 4.2:** The Likeness Regress, on the aitia interpretation

The problematic assumption of this argument is not, I think, the starting one, that the Like
itself is like in a way other than that it Is likeness. There is good reason to accept this claim.
It is natural to say, for example, that the Beautiful itself is like a beautiful boy (in that they
are both beautiful) and like the Big itself (in that they are both Forms). Yet clearly, the way in
which the Beautiful itself is like, in these or in any other cases, will not be by Being likeness.
The definition of likeness is not true of the Beautiful itself; beauty is neither identical to nor a
species of likeness. Thus, the Beautiful itself must be like in some other way. And whatever
this way is, the Like itself (in addition to Being likeness) must be like in precisely the same
way, since it too is like its participants (in that they are both like) and like the Big itself (in
that they are both Forms). Thus, the Like itself is like in a way other than that it Is likeness.

The problematic assumption, rather, is that of the Predication Principle, that there are
only two ways in which F-ness can be truly predicated of something, such that if something
is not F in that it Is F-ness then it must Have F-ness. As long as this is granted, the only
possible conclusion to be drawn from the argument’s starting assumption is that the Like
itself Has likeness – and it is this conclusion which truly generates the regress, since, given
our definition of the Having relation, nothing can Have F-ness unless there exists something
else which Is F-ness and which has been added to it. This means that, insofar as the Like itself
Has likeness, there must exist a second “Like itself”, which, by the same token, can be shown
to Have likeness, and so will generate a third “Like itself”, and so on.

In this regard, we can now see that the Likeness Regress is a problem that extends beyond
the particular example of likeness, since we can generate analogous regresses with other
Forms. Consider, for instance, the Parmenides’s Form of choice, the One. By Self-Predication
the One itself Is oneness. This, recall, means that the definition of oneness is true of the One
itself (though trivially so, since the One itself just is oneness). Yet this is not the only sense
in which the One itself is one. Every Form, insofar as it is a single Form, is one; and the One
itself, being a single Form, is also one in this sense. Yet it is not the case that every other Form
Is oneness; thus every Form (including the One itself) must be one in a way other than that
it Is oneness. And if, as the Predication Principle states, there are only two ways in which
anything can be one, we must conclude that the One itself, just like every other Form, Has
oneness.⁷⁴ And this means that there must exist a second One itself, which, as a single Form,
must also Have oneness, and so will generate a third One itself, and so on.

Note that this sort of regress is not a general problem for the theory of Forms. It does not
arise in the case of every Form, but only with those Forms which, we might say, “display”
their own properties.⁷⁵ In addition to the Forms of Likeness and Oneness, this would seem to
be true of the Forms of Sameness (in that each Form is the same as itself), Difference (in that
each Form is different from every other), and Being (in that each Form is), and perhaps also

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⁷⁴ This conclusion is encouraged by the fact that the sense in which each Form is one seems analogous to the
sense in which each ordinary thing is one. For example, Socrates is a single person, thus Socrates Has oneness.
Cf. Parmenides 129c8–d2: “And when someone wants to show that I am one, they will say that I am one person
among the seven of us, because I participate in the One.” Note that we cannot even say that, unlike ordinary
single things, the One itself is “perfectly” one – for it, too, is many, insofar as it has multiple qualities (it is
identical to itself, different from other things, and so on).

⁷⁵ To clarify: The properties which a Form “displays” are those it has in virtue of being a Form, as opposed
to those it has in virtue of the particular Form it is (which are the properties it Is). This distinction has been
characterized in the literature as that between a Form’s “ideal” and “proper” attributes (cf. KeYt (1969) and Santas
(1982)); between the attributes the Form of F-ness has “qua Form” and those it has “qua F-ness” (cf. Vlastos (1973));
and between what Owen (1968) unhelpfully called ‘A-predicates’ and ‘B-predicates’.
those of Motion, Rest, Beauty, and Goodness. Determining precisely which Forms generate this sort of regress is not the issue. The crucial point is that, even though a dichotomous theory of predication (like that of the aitia interpretation or the relational interpretation) successfully escapes the Bigness Regress, there is another regress to which this interpretation will inevitably still fall prey.

Here is another way to put the point: The theory of predication in the *Phaedo* (upon which the aitia interpretation is based) presents a viable analysis of the way in which the *F* itself is *F*, in distinction from the way in which ordinary *F* things are *F*. What this theory fails to present, however, is any special analysis of the way in which the *F* itself is anything other than *F*. Yet any *F* itself is going to be more than just *F*, given the intuitive appeal of statements such as that all Forms are like, one, same, and different. And according to the theory of predication in the *Phaedo*, the only way in which all these Forms can be these properties is by Having them. Thus, at least in some cases, we will be forced to say that the *F* itself Has *F*-ness – an unacceptable, regress-generating result.

The way to avoid the Likeness Regress, then, is to deny that the Like itself Has likeness, and the way to do this is to deny that there are only two kinds of predication. Suppose, rather, that there is a third kind of predication, in addition to Is and Has predication. Because of its closeness to ordinary Has predication, let us call this “Owns” predication, and posit the following, trichotomous predication principle:

**THREEFOLD PREDICATION PRINCIPLE**

*F*-ness is truly predicated of *x* $\iff (x \text{ Has } F\text{-ness } \lor x \text{ Owns } F\text{-ness } \lor x \text{ Is } F\text{-ness})$

This emendation is sufficient to block the Likeness Regress. We can now accept that the Like itself is like in a way other than in that it Is likeness without being forced to accept that it Has *F*-ness, since, alternatively, the *F* itself can Own *F*-ness, and therefore, no regress will arise. This is represented in Figure 4.3.

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76This is why I disagree with Schofield (1996, 71 ff.) and others who claim that the solution to the Likeness Regress lies in denying that there is a Form of Likeness, and instead treating ‘is like’ as a second-order predicate, not to be explained by participation in a Form, but meaning simply ‘shares the same first-order predicate’. If this were the intended solution to the Likeness Regress, then we would have to deny the existence of many other Forms as well, since an analogous regress can be generated in many other cases – as I have suggested, for the Forms of Oneness, Sameness, Difference, Motion, and Rest, and possibly also Goodness and Beauty. But to deny the existence of all these Forms seems too implausible, especially given the pride of place Plato accords them in his later ontology.

77Except in cases like ‘bravery is virtuous’, where the Being relation still applies.

78Even in the *Phaedo*, Plato at least implicitly grants this, insofar as he states that each Form is “divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, and indissoluble” (80b1–2).

79In other words, that the properties a Form has in virtue of being a Form (its “proper” attributes, to adopt the terminology of n. 75) are predicated of the Form in a way distinct from both the way in which the properties the Form has in virtue of the particular Form it is (its “ideal” attributes) are predicated of it, and the way in which the same properties are truly predicated of ordinary things.
1. **Assumption:** the Like itself is like in a way other than that it is likeness

2. **Threefold Predication Principle:** $F$-ness is truly predicated of $x \iff (x$ Has $F$-ness $\lor x$ Owns $F$-ness $\lor x$ Is $F$-ness $)$
   - **Invalid Inference:** the Like itself Has likeness
   \[ \therefore \text{no regress!} \]

**Figure 4.3:** The Likeness Regress, blocked

Arguably, then, the introduction of a third kind of predication provides the proper solution to the Likeness Regress. And this, I believe, is precisely what Plato’s later theory of predication is intended to introduce. That is, the decisive innovation of this theory is not (as Meinwald claims) its introduction of *pros heauto* predication as distinct from ordinary, *pros ta alla* predication. Rather, the major innovation between the *Phaedo* and the *Parmenides* – as I argued in §4.8 – is the latter’s recognition of a kind of derivative predication which the Forms can enjoy, distinct from the kind of derivative predication enjoyed by ordinary things. In other words, the real innovation of the *Parmenides* is its introduction of *pros ta alla* predication as distinct from both *pros heauto* predication (the *Phaedo*’s Is predication) and participation (the *Phaedo*’s Has predication).

This is not the place to go into an in-depth analysis of the second part of the *Parmenides* and the account of *pros ta alla* predication it sets forth. All I wish to emphasize here is the following interpretive point: The Likeness Regress of the first part of the *Parmenides*, and the theoretical innovations which follow in the second part, are indeed aimed critically at Plato’s pre-*Parmenides* theory of predication. These criticisms, however, have nothing to do with the general feature of *Self-Predication* (that is, the sense in which each Form of $F$-ness “is $F$”). The innovations of the second part do not suggest that we should understand such self-predication statements any differently; each Form of $F$-ness “is $F$” in that it Is $F$-ness (or is $F$ *pros heauto*). That is, despite their other differences, Plato’s earlier and later theories of predication treat *Self-Predication* the same – just as the *aitia interpretation* has it.

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80Note that the same focus is to be found in the *Sophist*, in its explicit concern with and extensive discussion of the “association of the kinds with each other” (κοινωνίαν ἀλλήλους τῶν γένων, 2578a).

81Plato’s later theory of predication differs in recognizing that some Forms of $F$-ness “are $F$” also in another sense, in that they Own $F$-ness (or are $F$ *pros ta alla*). Thus, on Plato’s later theory of predication, statements of the form ‘the $F$ itself is $F$’ are superficially ambiguous between descriptions of the Form *qua* Form and genuine statements of *Self-Predication*. 
4.6 Self-Predication and the Third Man Argument

Let us now, in closing, look at one further puzzle about the regress arguments of the *Parmenides*. Suppose that the interpretive claims I have made in this chapter are correct; suppose that neither the Bigness Regress nor the Likeness Regress posed insoluble problems for Plato – that the Bigness Regress was already blocked by the theory of predication in the *Phaedo*, and that the Likeness Regress was blocked by the updated theory presented in the dialogue’s second part. Why, then, was the “Third Man Argument” levied as a serious criticism against the Platonist, from Aristotle onwards?

The answer, I believe, is because the Third Man Argument is importantly different in its logic from both the Bigness Regress and the Likeness Regress, and the regress it introduces is one to which even Plato’s later theory of predication falls prey. That is, even though neither the Bigness Regress nor the Likeness Regress pose actual problems for Plato’s mature theory of predication, they introduce a style of argument which can still be used against it, if adapted in the right way. Getting clear on this matter will, in addition, explain why this style of argument came to be known after Plato as the Third “Man” Argument.

In our discussions of the Bigness and Likeness Regresses in §§4.3 and §4.4.1, I was at pains to emphasize the differences between these two arguments. We should now note an important similarity between them: in each case the regress arises because the $F$ itself and ordinary $F$ things are thought to “be $F$” in precisely the same sense. The Bigness Regress arises on the assumption that there is only one kind of predication, such that the Big itself and ordinary big things have to be big in the same sense. The Likeness Regress arises on the assumption that the Like itself is like in that it Has likeness, just as ordinary like things are like. Might we, then, make out a third kind of regress by showing that some ordinary $F$ things are $F$-ness, just as the $F$ itself is $F$?

This kind of regress, I now wish to suggest, is precisely what the Third Man Argument sets out. To make out such a regress, we must find some property $F$-ness whose definition is true of ordinary $F$ things. The property of being human seems like an appropriate candidate. The definition of human being is, according to canonical wisdom, “rational animal”, and this definition certainly seems true of ordinary humans: Socrates is a rational animal, and so are Simmias and Cebes and Phaedo. Thus, in the vocabulary of the *aitia interpretation*, Socrates Is humanness, and so Are Simmias and the rest. Yet by *Self-Predication*, the Human itself Is humanness, too. Therefore, the Human Being itself and ordinary humans seem to “be human” in precisely the same sense. And if, as in the other regresses, the Human itself is introduced...
so as to explain the humanness of ordinary humans, then a new sort of regress will occur, as presented in Figure 4.1. This is the Third Man Argument as it has been known since Plato. Like

1. **OMNI**: whenever there exists a plurality of things all of which are humanness, there exists an additional thing, “the Human itself”
2. **SP**: the Human itself is humanness

∴ for any plurality of humans, there exist infinitely many “Humans themselves”

**Figure 4.1:** The Third Man Argument

the regresses which Plato actually does set out in the *Parmenides*, it works from an example in which the $F$ itself “is $F$” in precisely the same sense as ordinary $F$ things. But unlike those regresses, its example is one in which both the $F$ itself and ordinary $F$ things are $F$-ness.

Like the Likeness Regress, this Third Man Argument is not a general problem for the theory of Forms. It does not arise in the case of every Form, but only with those Forms whose definition also seems to be true of their participants. However, this encompasses an entire subset of Forms: namely, substance Forms, or “secondary substances”, as they would come to be called in Aristotle. Thus, if indeed Plato accepts the existence of substance Forms – which he at least seems tempted to do at various points⁸³ – these Forms will be susceptible to the Third Man Argument. This, then, explains why the argument was still used against Platonists after Plato, and why it came to be known as the Third “Man” (and not the Third “Big” or the Third “Like”).⁸⁴

Does Plato have any way out of this regress? Following the strategy of the other two solutions, we might think to distinguish between two kinds of nonderivative predication. I do not, however, think that this is the way to go (not least because I do not see that there is any plausible distinction to be made). Another way out of the regress, of course, would just be to deny that there is a Form of Human Being at all, or any other substance Forms. If, as seemed to be the case in the *Phaedo*, there are only Forms of opposites, then the Third Man Argument will never arise. Yet this sort of response fails to do justice to the fact that Plato does seem inclined toward accepting the existence of substance Forms, not just in the *Parmenides*, but also in the *Timaeus* and (if it is by Plato) the *Seventh Letter*.

Rather, if there is a solution to the Third Man Argument, I believe that it must be to deny

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⁸³In addition to the examples raised at *Parmenides* 130c, cf. the references to the Form of Fire at *Timaeus* 51c, the Form of Bed in *Republic* X 596b, and the Form of Shuttle at *Cratylus* 380b.

⁸⁴As it is always referred to in Aristotle; cf. *Sophistical Refutations* 178b36, *Metaphysics* A.9 990b17, and Z.13 1039a2. These texts tell us little about how Aristotle himself conceived of the Third Man Argument, but I assume that his version is in broad outline similar to the version reported by Alexander in the *Peri Ideón*. (On the many difficulties and controversies concerning the precise interpretation of Aristotle’s argument, see Fine (1993), Chapters 15 and 16) and Sharma (2009).
the first premiss. As we saw in §§4.5.1–4.5.2, the introduction of a Form is necessitated only when something Has \( F \)-ness, not when it Is \( F \)-ness. That is, if there is reason to accept the existence of a Form of Human Being, it is not because of the existence of a plurality of ordinary human beings.\(^8\) If we are to believe that there is a Form of Human Being, we must do so based on other considerations.\(^8\) Yet Plato never indicates what those considerations might be, and for that he may rightly be criticized.

Thus, in my opinion, with regard to the Third Man Argument, what we should say is that Plato saw the attraction in accepting the existence of certain substance Forms, but did not quite see how to incorporate such Forms fully into his theory. In this regard, the Third Man Argument is not some cheap shot; it highlights a genuine problem which Plato did not yet resolve. Yet the Third Man Argument is not some knock-out punch, either, since its problem is not one to which Plato cannot respond, and its solution is not one which Plato’s predicational theory cannot accommodate. That is, as I see it, the Third Man Argument points to a lacuna in Plato’s theoretical framework, as opposed to a critical pressure point. Thus the proper response to the Third Man Argument is not to give up on the theory, but to work to fill in the gap.

\(^8\)Since, \textit{ex hypothesi}, ordinary human beings are not deficiently human, or any less human than the Form of Human Being. We could, alternatively, conceive of ordinary human beings as deficiently human (because they are not always rational, or because of metempsychosis, or something else), in which case the postulation of a Form of Human Being would seem warranted; but then ordinary human beings and the Form of Human Being would no longer “be human” in the same sense, and the Third Man Argument would no longer be valid.

\(^8\)And conversely, if we can find no other considerations, then we need not believe there to be a Form of Human Being – which is what Aristotle, apparently, took the force of the Third Man Argument to be; cf. Owen (1986, 209), who suggests that Aristotle’s solution to the Third Man Argument was to deny the “Non-Identity Assumption”, which allowed ordinary human beings to Be humanness without there being an \textit{additional} thing, the Form of Human Being.
Chapter 5

Separation

Separation is typically presented as the distinguishing feature of the Forms – that which sets them apart from all other manner of universals, properties, and so on. It is, in addition, probably their most controversial feature. The separation of the Forms was, famously, Aristotle’s preferred hobbyhorse in his criticisms of Platonic metaphysics. Indeed, at one point, he goes so far as to claim that “the separation [of the universal from its individuals] is responsible for all the difficulties that arise in connection with the Forms.”

This presentation is usually accompanied by a complementary historical narrative, according to which the separation of Forms is the decisive break between Plato (or Plato later in his career) and Socrates (or Plato early in his career), whose “forms” were merely immanent. Admittedly, many have called this narrative into question, arguing either that Forms are separate even in the early dialogues, or that separation was criticized and abandoned by Plato in the later dialogues. All these treatments, however, share a common assumption: either Forms are separate or they are immanent. Thus the interpretive questions they ask are always a matter of determining which sort of Form Plato was truly committed to (or was committed to within a given dialogue), and why.

This way of thinking about separation is so well entrenched that one can easily lose sight of how thinly supported it actually is. For one thing, Plato himself rarely describes the Forms as “separate” (χωρίς); this word is a term-of-art of Aristotle’s. What Plato does say is merely

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¹Metaphysics Μ.9 1086b6–7; cf. Μ.4 1078b30–31 and Μ.9 1086a32–b5.
²This narrative is, in essence, what I called in the Introduction the “standard story” of what led Plato to believe in Forms; for a list of ancient and modern tellers of the narrative, see n. 5 on p. 9.
⁴And strikingly, the only two instances in which the Forms are described as “separate” in the dialogues occur within caricatures of the theory of Forms, which are then duly criticized: first, in young Socrates’ avowal of his belief in Forms at Parmenides 129d6–8 (which is immediately taken to task by Parmenides); and second, in the description of the beliefs of the “Friends of the Forms” at Sophist 248a7 (which are immediately taken to
that Forms are “themselves by themselves” (αὐτὰ καθ’ αὑτὰ). Now, this description is typically taken to signal his belief that Forms are separate, since Plato frequently and explicitly sets the Forms’ being themselves by themselves in opposition to their being “in” things, or immanent. Yet, as discussed in §3.4.1, all this phrase means in many of its occurrences is that the Form is F-ness “as such”. Furthermore, in many of the places where Plato speaks of there being Forms which are themselves by themselves, he also speaks of there being (other) Forms which are in things. Thus, contrary to the conventional story, there would seem for Plato to be no stark either/or choice between believing in separate Forms themselves by themselves and believing in immanent Forms in things. Plato is happy to believe in both. Thus, the interpretive question we should be asking is not why Plato believed in separate rather than immanent Forms, but why Plato believed in separate as well as immanent Forms, and in what sense he himself took them to be ‘separate’.

The Phaedo is, incidentally, the perfect place to look for an answer to this question. First of all, it is explicitly committed to the existence of both separate and immanent Forms. In addition, it accepts both separate and immanent Forms as causes. This suggests that here, as elsewhere in this dissertation, we might be able to orient our discussion around the causal role of the Forms, and understand Plato’s belief in separate Forms in light of the account of causation I have laid out thus far.

However, while this approach made good sense with regard to the Forms’ other features, with regard to separation it may seem doomed from the start. Recall that, according to the theory of causation defended in Chapter 4, “causes” in the Phaedo are ingredient causes – things which make other things F by being added to them. So it would seem, on my account, that all causes are in the things they affect, or immanent. Thus, given that the Phaedo accepts all Forms as causes in the ingredient causal sense, it would seem that all its Forms must be immanent, and none of them separate. That is, it would seem that the causal role of the Forms (as I have interpreted it) licenses only a theory of immanent Forms, and not a theory which includes separate Forms as well. Conversely, if we wish to maintain that some Forms truly are separate, then it would seem that we must forgo their causal role. If there are Forms which are not in their participants, then it would seem impossible for them to be (ingredient)

task by the Eleatic Stranger).

⁵For example, at Parmenides 133c3–5 and Symposium 211a7–b1 (quoted below in §6.2. Note, however, that it is actually doubtful that this description is the same as, or even entails, separation in the Aristotelian sense(s) (on which see Fine (1999/1986, 276–277)).

⁶This evidence will be canvassed in §4.1, where I will also explain why I believe these immanent entities should be classified as “Forms”. Also, to be clear, when I say that Plato speaks of there being some Forms which are themselves by themselves and others which are in things, I mean that he speaks of there being a Form of Beauty itself by itself as well as a Form of Beauty in things (not that he speaks of there being some values of ‘F’ whose Form is only ever itself by itself and other values whose Form is only ever immanent).
causes in any way. Yet the *Phaedo* is clearly committed to the existence of both separate and immanent Forms, and to their both being causes. Therefore, if I wish to uphold the account I have developed in this dissertation thus far, I must explain how ingredient causes can, at least in some cases, be separate and causally nonredundant in relation to their immanent counterparts.

This chapter provides just such an explanation. Drawing on evidence from earlier in the dialogue, I demonstrate that the *Phaedo* adopts a conception of separation according to which for something to be separate (i.e., itself by itself) is for it to be unqualifiedly what it is (§§5.3.1–5.3.2). A separate soul is soul pure and simple, untainted by the body’s nature and desires; the separate Form of Beauty is beauty pure and simple, unqualified by any perceptible factors. An immanent soul, in contrast, is a soul controlled and constricted by the body’s habits, interests, and values; an immanent Form of Beauty, similarly, is beauty limited and restricted by its corporeal manifestation. In this regard, separate Forms can be seen as analogous to what contemporary philosophers classify as maximally determinable properties (e.g., being shaped), and immanent Forms analogous to their determinates (e.g., being triangular, or being scalene) (§5.3.3). This parallel, in turn, will help spell out an interpretation according to which separate Forms can be seen as veritably “added to” their participants, and thereby causes (§5.3.4). At the same time, this interpretation will illuminate certain problems with the causal argument for separate Forms – problems which correspond to the actual problems raised against separate Forms in later texts (§5.4).

5.1 The coexistence of separate and immanent Forms

I claimed above that the conventional way of thinking about separation is misguided – that, based on the textual evidence of the dialogues, Plato’s recognition of the existence of separate Forms did not come with a concomitant disavowal of the existence of immanent Forms; rather, Plato seems happy to believe in both. Let us, then, begin by looking at this evidence.

The *Phaedo* is the best evidence in support of my view. On the one hand, Socrates explicitly endorses the hypothesis that “there is a Beautiful itself by itself, and a Good, and a Big, and all the rest” (100b6–7). As I argued in §3.2, this hypothesis amounts to the claim that there are Forms, and the use of “itself by itself” here would suggest that these Forms are in some sense separate. On the other hand, Socrates also recognizes other immanent entities “in us”, which he repeatedly contrasts with the Forms themselves by themselves. Thus, in addition to speaking of a Big itself by itself, Socrates speaks of “the bigness in Simmias” (102b5–6), or “the bigness which Simmias happens to have” (102c2), and clearly understands these as two distinct entities. For instance, at 102d6–8, Socrates remarks:
"Not only is bigness itself never willing to be big and small at the same time, but also the bigness in us never admits the small, and is unwilling to be exceeded."

The “not only … but also” (οὐ μόνον … ἀλλὰ καί) construction indicates that the Big itself by itself and the bigness in us are two distinct entities. Similarly, at 103b4–5, Socrates states that:

“The opposite itself could never come to be opposite to itself, neither the opposite in us nor the opposite in nature.”

The “neither … nor” (οὔτε … οὔτε) construction again indicates that opposites themselves by themselves (or opposites “in nature”) and opposites in us are two distinct classes of beings.

Thus, Plato in the Phaedo accepts the existence of a class of immanent opposites “in us”, alongside its class of separate opposite Forms. Yet is it correct to think of these immanent opposites as “Forms”, too? Many who recognize their existence still decline to do so, referring to them instead as ‘immanent characters’, and reserving the moniker ‘Form’ for that which is separate and itself by itself. And indeed, Plato himself never refers to an immanent opposite with the word ‘Form’. Nonetheless, it is not as if Plato had some other word for them, and when he does describe them it is in language similar to the language he uses of the Forms. In any case, the opposites in us are clearly intended as the separate Forms’ immanent counterparts. If one wishes to introduce a term of art and say that the Forms’ immanent counterparts are ‘characters’, fine. But it is just as well to say that there are two types of Forms, separate ones and immanent ones. Thus, in what follows I will refer to the opposites in us as “immanent Forms”.

However, nothing crucial hangs on this terminological decision. In either case, there is still the question of why Plato believed in both separate Forms and their immanent counterparts in us.

Furthermore, Plato’s acceptance of both separate Forms and their immanent counterparts is not a commitment confined to the Phaedo. The existence of both separate and immanent Forms is also recognized in the Parmenides, for example, at 130b3–6, where Parmenides asks Socrates:

"Do you think that there is a likeness itself separate from the likeness we have? And a one and a many and all the other things you heard from Zeno just now?" — “I do indeed.”

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⁸Though, to be fair, Plato barely refers to separate Forms as ‘Forms’ in the Phaedo, and most of the time refers to them rather as ‘the F itself’ or simply ‘the F’.

⁹Look again at the passage quoted immediately above: Socrates refers to the separate opposite in nature and the immanent opposite in us both “the opposite itself”.

¹⁰This should not, however, suggest that immanent Forms share all the same features as separate ones. In § 3.4, I identified (separate) Forms as ultimate universal causes; immanent Forms are not ultimate. The bigness in Simmias, I take it, is not meant to be the same as the bigness in every other big thing. (Immanent Forms are, however, causes and, as I will insist in § 3.3.4, universals.) Indeed, as we will see in § 3.4.4, the ultimacy of separate Forms is what stands behind their separation.
Consider, also, the argument at 133b4–134e8. This argument, like the argument in the Phaedo, begins with an explicit endorsement of the existence of separate, nonimmanent Forms: as Parmenides states, and Socrates subsequently agrees, “anyone who posits there to be some being of each thing itself by itself would agree, first of all, that none of them is in us” (133c3–5). Yet Parmenides then goes on to distinguish these Forms themselves by themselves both from their participants (literally, “us” (ἡμεῖς), 133d1) and also from what look to be other Forms which are in those participants (literally, “the things belonging to us” (τὰ παρ’ ἡμῖν), 133c9–d1). These, we are told, are things like “the knowledge belonging to us (τὴν παρ’ ἡμῖν ἐπιστήμην), and the beauty, and all the rest” (134c5–6) – that is, immanent counterparts to the Forms themselves by themselves. Thus the Parmenides, like the Phaedo, simultaneously accepts the existence of separate and immanent Forms.

Or take the Symposium, which includes, in the “ascent” passage of Diotima’s speech, this famous remark at 211a7–b1:

"[The Beautiful itself] is not anywhere in another thing – for example, in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else – but it is always uniform, itself by itself with itself."

Here, Diotima clearly accepts the existence of a separate Form of Beauty. And yet, this does not in any way deter her from speaking also of other, immanent beauties in things: for example, “the beauty in a given body” (τὸ κάλλος τὸ ἐπὶ ὁτῳοῦ σώματι, 210a9–b1) or “the beauty in all bodies” (τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς σώμασι κάλλος, 210b3) “the beauty in souls” (τὸ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κάλλος, 210b6–7); and “the beauty in habits and customs” (τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι καὶ τοῖς νόμοις καλὸν, 210c3–4). Indeed, it is precisely by appreciating all these other beauties in things that we come to behold the separate Form of Beauty itself by itself (cf. 211b7–di). Thus the Symposium, too, seems happy to speak simultaneously of both separate and immanent Forms.

#### 5.2 The causal redundancy of separate and immanent Forms

Why, then, did Plato believe in the existence of both separate and immanent Forms? Here as elsewhere, I shall orient the discussion around the Forms’ role as causes. One motivation for this comes from the interpretive framework I have developed: given that causality is among the Forms’ fundamental features, it should also be explanatory of their separation. Another motivation is textual: since the Phaedo not only accepts but introduces separate Forms as

¹¹Why is the preposition in these instances ‘ἐπὶ’ rather than, as we might expect, ‘ἐν’? I am unsure, but note that Diotima subsequently switches the preposition at 210b7, referring instead to “the beauty in the body” (τοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι).
causes, we should expect their causal role to be especially relevant. A final motivation, already noted above, arises, as it were, out of necessity: I have claimed that "causes" in the *Phaedo* are all and only ingredient causes, doing their causal work by being added to other things. This seems to disqualify anything separate and nonimmanent from being a cause. That is, the separation of Forms seems to present a decisive challenge to my account of the Forms’ causal nature.

In fact, the problem runs deeper than this. It is not just that there is an apparent inconsistency between the notion of separation and my definition of a cause. The *Phaedo*’s acceptance of separate Forms as causes also seems troublingly unmotivated, given that it also accepts immanent Forms as causes.¹²

To see why this is so, recall how the immanent Forms in us are introduced in the *Phaedo*; as Socrates says:

“Whenever you say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, don’t you mean that at that time both bigness and smallness are in Simmias?” (102b4–6)

What does this passage tell us? It seems to be saying that, because Simmias participates in the separate Form of Bigness (because we say that ‘Simmias is big’), therefore there is an immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias. That is, the immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias appears as a consequence of his participation in the separate Form of Bigness. To generalize, then, we may say that whenever \( x \) participates in a separate Form of \( F \)-ness, there exists something else, the immanent Form in it, distinct from both \( x \) and the \( F \) itself. In other words, immanent Forms are like a byproduct of ordinary things’ participating in separate Forms, a necessary concomitant of any instance of participation.

This ontology of immanent Forms, however, seems to obviate the need for separate Forms as causes. Separate Forms, recall, are introduced in the *Phaedo* as the causes of \( F \)-ness in all the many \( F \) things – they are, in the vocabulary of §3.1, ultimate universal causes. Yet if in every case in which a subject participates in a separate Form there also exists an immanent Form in it, then the immanent Form will serve perfectly well as the cause of its \( F \)-ness, and there is no need to reference the separate Form itself as the cause.¹³

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¹²As established at *Phaedo* 102b1–2: “[Simmias exceeds Socrates] by the bigness he happens to have.” “The bigness he happens to have” refers back to the immanent Form in Simmias, introduced at 102b5–6; the use of the dative (τῷ μεγέθει) in this sentence indicates that the immanent Form is a cause.

¹³Note that the question here is not merely why we should accept the *existence* of separate Forms – for which, we should note, we have an answer: There would be no immanent Forms without separate Forms, since immanent Forms depend for their existence on the existence of separate Forms (along with the existence of participants which participate in those separate Forms). Thus, even if we wish to accept only immanent Forms (and not separate Forms) as causes, we would still need to accept the existence of separate Forms, as ontological ground for the existence of immanent Forms. Our question is, more specifically, why would should accept separate Forms as the *causes* of \( F \)-ness in all the many \( F \) things.
Because of the immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias (i.e., the bigness he has, in relation to Socrates, with respect to their heights). Why is Phaedo big? Because of the immanent Form of Bigness in Phaedo (i.e., the bigness he has, in relation to Simmias, with respect to their heights). And so on. In any particular case in which we might wish to point to a separate Form as the cause, we can just as well point to an immanent Form. Why, then, need we bother ever pointing to the separate Form?¹⁴

For these reasons, the *Phaedo*’s acceptance of separate Forms as causes seems not merely inconsistent but also unmotivated. And yet, Plato appears unfazed by these difficulties. The Forms themselves by themselves, remember, are the Aitia Argument’s starting point, the first bona fide causes which Socrates identifies and accepts. As such, they pave the way for the argument’s subsequent acceptance of other causes, including immanent Forms in us.

### 5.3 The relationship between separate and immanent Forms

To summarize the results of our discussion thus far, these are the questions which any adequate account of the separation of Forms in the *Phaedo* must answer:

» How can (ingredient) causes also be separate?

» Why does Plato believe in both separate and immanent Forms?

» How can a separate Form and an immanent Form both be causes of the same thing?

» Why are separate Forms the Aitia Argument’s causal paradigm?

The key to unravelling all these difficulties, I believe, is to get clear on the relationship between separate and immanent Forms. Following a recent suggestion from D. T. J. Bailey¹⁵ I believe we can helpfully view separate and immanent Forms as related as determinable to determinate properties – that is, as related as being coloured is to being blue, or as being triangular is to being scalene. This interpretation, as Bailey indicates, clears away many of the apparent paradoxes surrounding the causal status of separate Forms. Yet I believe that this

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¹⁴Caston (1999, 185) puts the point succinctly: “For if the large in us suffices to make us large, what need is there for another explanans?” An analogous point about separate Forms’ redundancy is sometimes made in relation to the theory of predication in the *Phaedo* and the Forms themselves’ supposed status as the essential bearers of predicates. See, for example, Patterson (1985), 108: “The most plausible way of finding essentialism here would be to regard the opposite-in-us (the equal-in-us, tallness-in-us, etc.) as a sort of substance essentially characterized equal, tall, or whatever. (I do not consider this very plausible, but let that pass.) But this assumption would be self-defeating for the view under consideration. One would then no longer need separate Forms to serve as essential bearers of opposite predicates, since items in our world (the opposites-in-us) already fill the bill quite nicely.”

interpretation is even more powerful, and even better founded, than Bailey suggests, as we will see in the section to follow.

Let us begin, however, by looking at the relationship between separate and immanent Forms on the *Phaedo*'s own terms, and thus seeing the textual basis for the interpretation to be developed.

### 5.3.1 Separate and immanent souls

Forms are not the only things in the *Phaedo* which are described in terms of both separation and immanence. The same descriptions are also, in various places, applied to the soul. On the one hand, the soul, as a bearer of life, is capable of being in the body and thus immanent, just like any other bearer:

> “What is it that, *when it comes to be in some body*, makes the body alive?” — “It is soul.” (105c9–11)

On the other hand, the soul is also said to be capable of being itself by itself and separate:

> “Being dead is this: when the body has been released from the soul and comes to be separate, itself by itself, and the soul has been released from the body and is separate, itself by itself. Or is death anything other than this?” (64c5–8)

Perhaps, then, we can get clearer on the relationship between separate and immanent Forms by looking at the relationship between the separate and immanent soul.

Let us begin, however, by noting a difference between Forms and souls in this regard. As demonstrated in §5.1, separate and immanent Forms in the *Phaedo* are two distinct classes of beings. This is not the case with the soul. The separate soul which exists itself by itself is not some entity distinct from the immanent soul which exists in the body. Rather, upon death, the soul which was in the body *becomes* itself by itself – at least according to the above excerpt from 64c5–8. In other words, being separate and immanent are *conditions* or *states* of the soul, not specifications of the sort of thing a soul is.

The situation is different with the Forms. If a Form is separate, that means it is not now, nor will it ever be, immanent; and if a Form is immanent, that means it is not now, nor will it ever be, separate. That is, in the case of Forms, being separate and immanent are *specifications* of the sort of thing that Form is. Yet this does not entail that they are not also conditions or states of the Forms; it just means that in the case of Forms they are *essential* conditions or states.

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¹For examples of bearers being described in the language of immanence and addition, see §6.3.2.

¹⁷Throughout this section, I borrow from and build on considerations first raised in §8.4.1.
Therefore, being separate and immanent are states which both the soul and the Forms may be in (accidentally so in the case of the soul, essentially so in the case of the Forms). The question, then, is: What is the difference between these two states?

At first blush, it may seem, at least in the case of the soul, that the difference between these two states amounts to no more than that the immanent soul is in the body and the separate soul is not. Similarly, it may seem, in the case of the Forms, that the difference between separation and immanence is just that immanent Forms are in their participants whereas separate Forms are not. Yet in the case of the soul, this interpretation cannot be right, as there is textual evidence in the *Phaedo* which explicitly tells against it. As Socrates reveals midway through the dialogue, the soul’s release from the body is not in fact sufficient for it to become itself by itself:

“If the soul is tainted and impure when released from the body, having always been coupled with the body and having always served it, smitten and bewitched by bodily desires and pleasures so much so that nothing else seems to exist for it but the corporeal, which one can touch and see or eat and drink or make use of for sexual enjoyment, whereas that soul is accustomed to hate and fear and avoid that which is dim and invisible to the eyes but intelligible and to be grasped by philosophy – do you think that such a soul, when released, will be pure and itself by itself?” – “In no way whatsoever.” (81b1–c3)

As this passage indicates, a soul may very well fail to be itself by itself even when it is released from the body upon death. This happens when the soul is tainted by the body which it was in, such that it retains that body’s desires and pleasures, so much so that it no longer recognizes the things proper to it. Such a soul is, we are told, “permeated by the corporeal” (81c4); the corporeal is “ingrained in it” (81c6). Because of this, the soul comes to resemble the body. In other words, an immanent soul is not simply a soul which is in some body. Rather, it is a soul which has become itself bodily, and is controlled by the body’s habits, interests, and values – or, as I will put it, it is a soul which is corporeally restricted.

Therefore, the fact that the soul is no longer in the body is not a sufficient condition for that soul’s being separate. Similarly, the fact that the soul is still in the body does not prohibit it from being separate, at least to some extent. Rather, the soul can become “itself by itself” simply by dissociating itself from the body – that is, by doing the reverse of what the corporeally restricted soul from the preceding paragraph did. Thus, we are told that “[the soul] comes to be itself by itself most of all when it ignores the body and, as far as it can, 

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¹⁸A preliminary observation we can already make is that, since both souls and Forms can be immanent, this means that immanence cannot be cashed out in terms of perishability. Some immanent things are imperishable – namely, the soul. Rather, the perishability of immanent Forms would seem to be a consequence of immanence being an essential condition of their being.

¹⁹81c8–11: “We must think that the corporeal is heavy, grievous, earthy, and visible. Having it, then, such a soul becomes heavy and is dragged down to the visible region, in fear of the unseen and of Hades.”
does not associate or have contact with it” (65c7–9), and that “the soul of the philosopher most disdains the body, flees from it, and seeks to become itself by itself” (65c11–d2). Finally, further on, these remarks are reiterated as follows:

“And does purification not turn out to be this – the very thing we mentioned in our argument from earlier – namely, to separate the soul as far as possible from the body and accustom it to assemble and gather itself by itself from every part of the body, and to dwell alone by itself as far as it can both now and in the future, freed, as it were, from the bonds of the body?” (67c5–d2)

Thus, what it means for the soul to be separate and itself by itself is not simply that it is released from the body and no longer in it; more specifically, it means that it is avoiding the body’s influence and acting only in its own right. In other words, a separate soul is not simply a soul which is not in some body; rather, it is a soul which is not at all tainted by the body, not at all corporeally restricted – a soul which is purely and simply soul.

The picture, then, is as follows: The soul has, as part of its nature, a number of distinctive features and activities (e.g., thinking, knowing, invisibility), and the body has, as part of its nature, features and activities of its own (e.g., perceiving, appetitive pleasures, visibility). The soul is separate and itself by itself to the extent that it exemplifies the features proper to it and resists exemplifying the features proper to the body. Conversely, the soul is immanent and not itself by itself to the extent that it exemplifies the features proper to the body and fails to exemplify the features proper to it. In general, the soul is immanent in this sense when it is actually in the body, and separate when it is actually released from the body upon death. However, this is not always the case. The glutton’s soul is immanent even after death, and the philosopher’s soul is to a high degree separate even during life. The real difference between separation and immanence in the case of the soul does not have to do with where the soul is in relation to the body – in it or apart from it. Rather, it has everything to do with how the soul is in comparison to the body – like it, or unlike it and like itself.

5.3.2 Separate and immanent Forms

If the preceding interpretation of the relationship between the separate and immanent soul is correct, what then might this tell us about the relationship between separate and immanent Forms?

20Similarly, when Socrates speaks of “thought itself by itself” (66a1–2; cf. 79d1 and 83b1), he is referring, not to thought which occurs apart from bodily existence, but to thought which ignores the evidence of the senses – that is, to thought as such, or thought in its own right. Cf. Republic VI 485d10–12, where Socrates remarks that “when someone’s desires flow towards learning and everything of that sort, then, I suppose, they’d be concerned with the pleasure of the soul itself by itself, and they’d forsake the pleasures that come through the body.”
Let us begin by looking at a particular example: the Form of Bigness. This example is apt because, unlike most other Forms, we can say something concrete about what this Form is. The definition of bigness, recall, is “exceeding”; what it is to be big is to exceed. The separate Form of Bigness, as it were, exhausts this definition: it is exceeding pure and simple, exceeding full stop. In contrast, an immanent Form of Bigness — say, the Form of Bigness in Simmias — is something more: it is an exceeding, to be sure, but instead of being exceeding pure and simple, it is an exceeding in terms of height and by a definite amount and in relation to Socrates — that is, an exceeding along a particular spatial dimension and by a particular spatial amount and in relation to a particular object in the sensible world.

In this regard, we may say that the immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias is a corporeally restricted version of the separate Form of Bigness itself by itself. It is still a Form of Bigness — it is still an exceeding — but it is determined more concretely than the separate Form of Bigness, and qualified by factors associated with the sensible world. This is why, instead of being pure exceeding, it is a spatial exceeding in relation to a perceptible object.

It is important to note that the way in which the Form of Bigness in Simmias is qualified is but one way in which an immanent Form of Bigness may be restricted. The Form of Bigness in the sea is an exceeding in terms of depth rather than height; the Form of Bigness in a beach is an exceeding in terms of length; the Form of Bigness in a shout is an exceeding in terms of volume. However, as diverse as these various determinations of the Form of Bigness may be, they are all qualified by thisworldly factors, which are spatial or otherwise perceptible in nature.

These various qualifications of these various immanent Forms of Bigness are no accident. It is plausible to assume that in order for a Form of Bigness to manifest itself down here, it must be restricted and take on some perceptible qualification. Yet by taking on some such qualification, the immanent Form of Bigness is no longer the same as the separate Form of Bigness, which is exceeding pure and simple. Which is just to say that the separate Form of Bigness never appears in the sensible world. We never perceive exceeding pure and simple, but only ever exceedings along particular perceptible dimensions, by particular perceptible amounts, and in relation to particular perceptible objects.

What I now wish to suggest is that this example be generalized to all Forms. That is, the relation between separate and immanent Forms is as follows: an immanent Form of F-ness in us is a perceptible determination of the separate Form of F-ness itself by itself. Put otherwise, an immanent Form of F-ness is the separate Form of F-ness qualified in some thisworldly
way. Therefore, for a Form to be separate is for that Form to be unqualifiedly what it is, to be purely and simply $F$.

Admittedly, Plato never explicitly comes out and defines separation in just the way I have suggested, but there are a few points at which he comes close. For instance, at *Phaedo* 78d5–6, each Form is described as being “uniform, itself by itself” ($μονοειδὲς ὄν αὐτὸ καθ’ ἑαυτὸ$). Similarly, at *Symposium* 211b1–2, the Form of the Beautiful is described as being “always uniform, itself by itself with itself” ($αὐτὸ μεθ’ αὑτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰὲν ὄν$). It seems, then, that Plato is here insinuating that for a Form to be itself by itself is for it to be uniform — and being uniform would seem to be nothing other than the Form’s being purely and simply what it is.

### 5.3.3 Determinable and determinate Forms

Let us thus accept the preceding account of the relationship between separate and immanent Forms. I shall now explore the extent to which this relationship is, in contemporary parlance, the relation which holds between determinable and determinate properties (or “determinables” and “determinates”, for short).²⁸

The paradigmatic examples of determinable and determinate properties are colours, shapes, sizes, and weights. For example, the following pairs of properties are related as determinable to determinate: coloured vis-à-vis green; green vis-à-vis emerald; shaped vis-à-vis triangular; having a height vis-à-vis measuring 57 inches tall.

As the first two examples indicate, a property is a determinable or determinate only relative to some other property; no property is determinable or determinate in and of itself. In relation to one another, however, determinable and determinate properties occupy fixed “lev-

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²⁵This interpretation corresponds to the way in which Plato generally uses the “itself by itself” locution, as we saw in §5.4.1 — that is, to discuss something *as such*, in abstraction from its particular manifestations. To again quote Burnyeat (2000, 36): “In Plato ‘itself’ and ‘itself by itself’ standardly serve to remove some qualification or relation mentioned in the context. Their impact is negative.”

²⁶Note especially the absence of a conjunction or any other connective between “itself by itself” and “uniform” in both of the quoted lines.

²⁷The evidence in support of this interpretation of uniformity was presented in n. 7 on p. 102. Cf. also the Republic’s description of the Forms as that which “completely” ($παντελῶς$, 477a3) and “purely” ($εἰλικρινῶς$, 477a8) is — which, if we follow the interpretation of Brown (1994), should be read as meaning ‘that which completely and purely is what it is’. (Being “itself by itself” and “pure” are explicitly associated, in reference to the soul, at *Phaedo* 81c1; cf. Molina (1981, 95–97) on the pre-Platonic association of separation with purity in Empedocles and the Hippocratic writers, and Sharma (2003, 156), who claims that the “itself by itself” locution “signals that a Form has a ‘pure’ nature, one unmixed with that of any other entity.”)

²⁸Throughout this section, I follow most closely the analysis of the determinable–determinate relation found in Funkhouser (2003). (In particular, the four features of determination listed below correspond to his second, third, fourth, and eighth truisms on pp. 548–549.) Crane (2008) is another helpful contemporary account. Influential earlier accounts of the relation can be found in Johnson (1924, 173–185), Prior (1949), Searle (1949), and Armstrong (1997, 48–63).
els.” For example, at the same level as green vis-à-vis coloured would be blue and red and yellow, and at the same level as emerald vis-à-vis green would be chartreuse and olive and jade.

Furthermore, no chain of determinable and determinate properties is infinite; at one end there will be a determinable which is a determinate of no other property, and at the other there will be a determinate which is no other property’s determinable. Adopting the terminology of Funkhouser (2006), let us call such properties ‘super-determinables’ and ‘super-determinates’, respectively. Being coloured is a likely super-determinable; being M&M’s green (Pantone 120-1-4 C) might be one of its super-determinates.

What features, then, characterize the determinable–determinate relation? In what follows, I highlight four central “features of determination”, and show how these same features also characterize the relationship between separate and immanent Forms.

The first feature is more or less a definition of the determinable–determinate relation:

**First Feature of Determination**

For an object to have a determinate property is for that object to have the determinable property which the determinate falls under in a specific way.

For example, being periwinkle is a specific way of being blue, which is itself a specific way of being coloured. Being cornflower is also a specific, though differently specific, way of being blue, just as being green is a specific, though differently specific, way of being coloured.

This feature explains why the determinable–determinate relation is such an apt characterization of the relationship between separate and immanent Forms. As we saw in §5.3.2, an immanent Form of $F$-ness is the separate Form of $F$-ness qualified in some specific, this-worldly way. For example, the immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias (an exceeding in terms of height) is a specific way of being big (exceeding pure and simple). Immanent Forms are qualifications, or specifications, of their respective separate Forms. This is why we should understand the two as related as determinates to determinables.

The second feature details the consequences of instantiating a determinable property:

**Second Feature of Determination**

An object instantiating a determinable property must also instantiate some determinate property which falls under that determinable.

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²⁹This feature is emphasized by Armstrong (1997, 48–49), who adds that particulars cannot instantiate multiple determinates falling under the same determinable and at the same level (e.g., a particular cannot have two different lengths), though he admits that in some cases this feature may be absent (e.g., a particular may have two different tastes).

³⁰This feature, incidentally, is what differentiates the determinable–determinate relation from other similar relations, such as the genus–species relation and entailment (cf. Crand (2008, 179)).

³¹Are not separate Forms a counterexample to this feature, insofar as the $F$ itself by itself is, on my analysis, $F$ simpliciter? No, because the $F$ itself does not instantiate $F$-ness – in the terms of the theory of predication.
For example, no object is coloured *simpliciter*; any coloured object must be blue or green or yellow and so on. Likewise, no object is blue *simpliciter*, either; any blue object must be navy or sky or cobalt and so on.

In §5.2, we saw that Plato seems to hold that whenever an object $x$ participates in the separate Form of $F$-ness, there exists something else, an immanent Form of $F$-ness in $x$, distinct from both $x$ and the separate Form of $F$-ness. Initially, this principle may have seemed unmotivated, but if we assume that separate and immanent Forms are related as determinables to determinates, it is exactly what we should expect. Nothing can instantiate a determinable without also instantiating some determinate of it; analogously, then, nothing can instantiate a separate Form without also instantiating an immanent Form of it. And as I remarked in §5.3.2, nothing in the sensible world is ever big *simpliciter*. In order for anything down here to be big, it must be big along some particular spatiotemporal dimension, by a particular spatiotemporal amount, and in relation to some particular thisworldly object. That is, it must instantiate some determinate bigness – thus there must exist some immanent Form of Bigness in it, in addition to the separate Form of Bigness itself by itself.

The third feature details the consequences of instantiating a determinate property:

**THIRD FEATURE OF DETERMINATION**

Necessarily, an object instantiating a determinate property also instantiates every determinable property which that determinate falls under.

For example, every periwinkle object is also blue and coloured. Correspondingly, something which is tall (that is, big with respect to height) will also be big.

This feature thus mirrors the fact that, in the terminology of Chapter 2, both the separate and immanent Forms of $F$-ness “Are $F$-ness”. That is, although an immanent Form of $F$-ness is a qualified version of the separate Form of $F$-ness, this qualification does not make it any the less $F$; the immanent Form is $F$ in a specific way, but that does not make it in any way un-$F$. As we are told explicitly at 102d6–9, the immanent Forms of Bigness in us no more admit of smallness than does the separate Form of Bigness itself by itself.

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set out in Chapter 2, the $F$ itself Is, not Has, $F$-ness. In this regard, the above feature of determination could be better translated into Platonic language as stating: “An object which Has a determinate property must also Have some determinate property which falls under that determinable.”

This feature is a consequence of the first: since to have a determinate property is to have the determinable property which the determinate falls under in a specific way, an object which instantiates a determinate property will also instantiate its determinable. Yet this determinable (unless it is a super-determinable) will itself be a determinate of some other determinable; thus the object will also instantiate that determinable, and so on until a super-determinable is reached.

Recall that, as a cause of $F$-ness, the immanent Form of $F$-ness must be perfectly $F$, according to the Is Lemma from §1.3.4, and thus can be in no way un-$F$, by the Exclusion Lemma from the same section. (Another way to put this point is that, for Plato, causes do not suffer the compresence of opposites; cf. §1.4.1) An immanent Form of $F$-ness is determinately, but not thereby imperfectly, $F$, in the same way that a rhombus is determinately, but not imperfectly, quadrilateral.
Furthermore, if we assume that bearers are also related to separate Forms as determinates to determinables, then this third feature is even more sharply mirrored in the *Phaedo*. After all, Socrates’ entire discussion of bearers at 103c–105c is directed at establishing the claim that anything instantiating a bearer of \( F \)-ness will also instantiate \( F \)-ness – for example, that anyone who is feverish will also be ill (105c2–4), anything which is three in number will also be odd (104d1–3), anything which is fiery will also be hot (105b8–c2). And again, in the terminology of Chapter 2, this is because bearers of \( F \)-ness, just like the separate Form of \( F \)-ness, “Are \( F \)-ness”.

The fourth and final feature of note is both the most controversial and the most relevant for our purposes:

**FOURTH FEATURE OF DETERMINATION**

Instances of determinables and their determinates do not causally exclude each other

This feature is often denied, as many philosophers believe that only super-determinates, and no determinables, can be cited in genuine causal explanations. We shall return to this criticism in §5.4. For the moment I shall focus on what leads other philosophers to accept this feature, as these reasons will prove most helpful to our discussion.

The intuition standing behind this feature is easy enough to grasp. Consider the following example: In order to ride the Leviathan roller coaster at Canada’s Wonderland, you must be at least 54 and at most 84 inches tall. Call this property, of being greater than 54 and less than 84 inches tall, “Leviathan-height”. Now imagine Jordan, who visits Canada’s Wonderland every summer, and who this summer, after shooting up 4 inches over the past year, is now 57 inches tall. It is natural to say that Jordan can ride the Leviathan this summer because she is 57 inches tall. It is also natural to say that Jordan can ride the Leviathan this summer because she is Leviathan-height. In other words, Jordan instantiates a determinate property – being 57 inches tall – and a determinable property – being Leviathan-height – and both seem to be causes of the same thing – her ability to ride the Leviathan. Yet this is not a case of causal overdetermination; the two properties are not in causal competition with one another. For whatever reason, both determinate and determinable seem like perfectly acceptable causes of the same phenomenon, capable of causing side by side.

Separate and immanent Forms do not causally exclude each other, either. We can say that Simmias is big either because of the separate Form of Bigness itself by itself (101a2–3)

\(^{34}\) As does Bailey (2014, 27–28).

\(^{35}\) In this regard, bearers would seem to be mid-level determinates/ables: determinates of the separate Form above them but still capable of further (corporeal) determination (as we might distinguish between types or degrees of fevers).

\(^{36}\) As explained in §5.5. cf. also §4.5.4
or because of the immanent Form of Bigness in him (102c2). Initially, this seemed like a case of causal double-counting or redundancy. Yet once separate and immanent Forms are understood as related as determinables to determinates, the identification of both as causes is perfectly natural.

5.3.3.1 On immanent Forms and property instances

These four features of the determinable–determinate relation strongly recommend that the relationship between separate and immanent Forms be understood in the same way. There is, however, a crucial way in which the two relations would seem to diverge. Namely, immanent Forms are often thought to be individual or particular, that is, spatiotemporally located property instances. In contrast, determinates – even super-determinates – are universal, that is, multiply realizable properties. Think of our previous example of the super-determinate property of being M&M’s green: many M&M’s instantiate this property, not just one. How, then, do we account for this discrepancy?

Note that it will not do to say that an immanent Form’s spatiotemporal individuation is just a further aspect of its determination. Being in a certain place or at a certain time are not specific ways of being big (though they may be unavoidable conditions for certain determinate ways of being big). Rather, bigness is determined only by the dimension along which it is measured and the amount by which it exceeds. A particular instance of a determinate property is just that – an instance, not a further determinate of it.

Therefore, if immanent Forms are individuals, then they cannot be determinates. Yet I do not believe the evidence is so clear-cut that immanent Forms are individuals. There is a property instance of bigness in Simmias, to be sure, but we need not identify the immanent Form in him with that instance. For all we know about the immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias, it is just an exceeding with respect to height of Socrates. But surely another person

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³⁷To clarify the parallel, the separate Form of Bigness might be understood as the determinable property of being bigger than anything, and the immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias as the determinate property of being taller than Socrates, which is a determinate in virtue both of being along a certain dimension (height), and of having a lower bound (Socrates’ height).

³⁸On this interpretation, the immanent Form of Bigness in Simmias would be the particular instantiation or token of bigness in him; see, for example, Gallop (1973, 195), Nehamas (1973, 477), and O’Brien (1967, 201).

³⁹Granted, for the purposes of my interpretation, it is not necessary for the determinable–determinate relation to mirror the relationship between separate and immanent Forms in every respect. I have brought in the determinable–determinate relation merely as a contemporary heuristic; its worth lies in its ability to illuminate the otherwise puzzling, not in its being a perfect match. The worry is that this particular discrepancy is too pronounced to ignore.

⁴⁰These are, to again adopt the terminology of Funkhouser (2006, 551), the “determination dimensions” of bigness. As Funkhouser emphasizes, every determinable comes with a unique set of determination dimensions along which it can be determined. The determination dimensions of colour, for example, are hue, saturation, and brightness. Thus colour cannot be determined in any other way.
can instantiate this same bigness. In this regard, we may read “the bigness in us” as referring, not to particular spatiotemporal instances, but rather to particular perceptible determinations of bigness.\textsuperscript{41}

It is useful in this regard to observe that there are references to immanent Forms in other dialogues which clearly refer to universals, not individuals. At Symposium 210b3, Diotima states explicitly that “the beauty in all bodies” – that is, the immanent Form of Beauty in bodies – “is one and the same.” At Euthyphro 5d–2, Socrates remarks that “the pious itself” is “the same in every action”. And at Parmenides 134c5, Parmenides refers to “the knowledge belonging to us”, by which he presumably means knowledge of particular thisworldly facts, which many individual people can have. In these passages there is no temptation to think of immanent Forms as individuals.

Further support for this interpretation comes from the fact that bearers (which, recall, immanent Forms are meant to anticipate within the Aitia Argument)\textsuperscript{42} are quite clearly not individual.\textsuperscript{43} The number three, fever, fire, snow – all of the argument’s examples of bearers are things which can be in any number of subjects, not just one.\textsuperscript{44} And even if it is objected, say, that the bit of fire in this body is not the same as the bit of fire in that body, and that only the former is a cause of hotness in this body, it is nonetheless clear that both bits are one and the same stuff, and it is the fact that this bit is fire (and not the fact that it is in this body) which makes it a cause of hotness.\textsuperscript{45}

But what of all the Aitia Argument’s talk of immanent Forms and bearers “perishing”?\textsuperscript{46} Surely the determinate property of bigness which Simmias happens to instantiate does not itself pop out of existence when Simmias alone of its instances ceases to be big in this way. Or even more obviously, curing a single case of fever does not eradicate fever in everyone else.

\textsuperscript{41}A parallel might be drawn here to the long-standing controversy surrounding what individual nonsubstances are in Aristotle’s Categories. In recommending that we view immanent Forms as determinates rather than instances, I am making an analogous move to those who wish to view individual nonsubstances (e.g., Socrates’ knowledge of the Pythagorean theorem) as \textit{infimae species} of nonsubstances (i.e., knowledge of the Pythagorean theorem, which Socrates and any number of other people can possess) rather than property instances individuated by the primary substances which instantiate them (i.e., Socrates’ personal knowledge of the Pythagorean theorem, which only Socrates can possess).

\textsuperscript{42}Bailey (2014, 29–30) seems to suggest even that ‘the F-ness in x’ is a bearer, but referred to \textit{qua determinable} Form rather than \textit{qua} determinate bearer. If, for example, Simmias has a fever, then ‘the illness in Simmias’ is fever.

\textsuperscript{43}Except for souls, which are an exception due to their being imperishable.

\textsuperscript{44}This is emphasized by the generic terms in which Socrates describes bearers, as “those things that compel \textit{whatever they occupy} to have, not only their own form, but also always the form of some opposite of something as well” (emphasis my own) – the presupposition being that bearers can, and do, occupy multiple things.

\textsuperscript{45}Cf. Phaedo 105b8–c2: “If you were to ask me what it is that, when it comes to be in any body, makes that body hot, I will not give you that safe and ignorant answer, that it is hotness, but a subtler one, thanks to what we now say: that it is fire.”

\textsuperscript{46}Cf. 102e2, 103a1, 103d8, 103d11, for example.
In all such cases, it is the individual instance which perishes, not the determinate universal.

However, this talk of perishing would not be so out of place if immanent Forms were being conceived of as *in re* universals, which are nothing over and above their individual instances. Such universals *do* in a sense perish when they lose one of their instances – not in their entirety, but in part. Perhaps immanent Forms can be thought of in a similar way. After all, they are supposed to be immanent, and thus to depend for their existence on the existence of the participants which instantiate them. Perhaps, then, this amounts to their being properties which are constituted by their property instances, such that the loss of an instance is a partial perishing of the property.

In this way, in spite of the preceding worries, the determinable–determinate relation remains a viable interpretation of the relationship between separate and immanent Forms.

### 5.3.4 Separate causes

Now that we have seen the reasons which recommend viewing separate and immanent Forms as related as determinables to determinates, let us return to the questions raised at the start of §5.3 and see how this interpretation helps us put them to rest.

» How can (ingredient) causes also be separate?

This is explained by our third feature of determination. Anything which instantiates some determinate must also instantiate every determinable of that determinate; likewise, anything which instantiates some immanent Form of *F*-ness must also instantiate the separate Form of *F*-ness. When Simmias appears big, this is because there is bigness in him. Of course, this bigness in him is some determinate bigness. However, the various determinations of his bigness do not compromise its status as a bigness: the bigness in him is still an exceeding, is still in no way small. And in this regard, the determinable bigness has been added to him as well. Therefore, that which is added to something can be determinable, or separate; therefore, ingredient causes can also be separate.

» Why does Plato believe in both separate and immanent Forms?

This is a consequence of our second feature of determination. Since nothing can instantiate a determinable without also instantiating some determinate of it, nothing can instantiate a separate Form without also instantiating an immanent Form of it.

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⁴⁷Cf. Fine ([1999/1986, 307–308]), who makes sense of immanent Forms’ “perishing” by likening them to “non-material stuffs with different bits … in each of its possessors”.

⁴⁸Nonetheless, it must be granted that, if immanent Forms are indeed universals and not individuals, then the talk of their perishing in the *Phaedo* is infelicitous, and would be much better phrased in terms of an instance or part of the immanent Form perishing.
How can a separate Form and an immanent Form both be causes of the same thing?

This is explained by our fourth feature of determination. As we have seen, there are intuitive reasons for supposing that determinables and determinates do not causally exclude each other; therefore, neither should separate and immanent Forms.

Why are separate Forms the Aitia Argument’s causal paradigm?

Here, too, the interpretation of separate Forms as determinables is illuminating. Not only is there reason to think that determinables and determinates do not causally exclude each other; there is also a trend in the contemporary literature which argues that, of the two, it is often determinables which are better suited to be identified as the cause. The basic intuition behind this argument is that, to adopt Stephen Yablo’s terminology, a cause should be “commensurate” or “proportional” to its effect: a cause should “incorporate a good deal of causally important material but not too much that is causally unimportant.”

Determinables do this, and determinates do not, or so the argument goes.

An example will be of assistance. Consider again our example of Jordan at Canada’s Wonderland. We saw previously that, in response to the question of why Jordan can ride the Leviathan this summer, we can cite either her determinate property of being 68 inches tall or her determinable property of being Leviathan-height (that is, greater than 54 and less than 84 inches tall). Yet in this example the determinable seems the better explanation, and we can now explain why: It is not causally important that Jordan is, specifically, 57 inches tall, rather than, say, 56 or 58. All that is causally important is that she is Leviathan-height, since that is all that is required for one to ride the Leviathan.

Another way to put the same point is that it is the determinable, not the determinate, which is counterfactually robust in this case. It is true to say that if Jordan were not Leviathan-height then she would not be able to ride the Leviathan. Yet it is not true to say that if Jordan were not 57 inches tall then she would not be able to ride the Leviathan – after all, she could still be 56 or 58 inches tall. Given the widely acknowledged association between causes and counterfactuals, this provides further motivation to identify the determinable as the cause in such cases.

If, then, separate and immanent Forms are related as determinables to determinates, we should expect there to be some cases in which separate Forms are better identified than im-

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49Which is not to say that there are not other reasons for doubting the veracity of the fourth feature; we will get to these reasons soon enough, in §6.4.


51Yablo (1992, 274).

52Yablo (1992, 276) draws specific attention to the importance of causes being required for their effects.

53For a direct and influential treatment of this association, see Lewis (1973).
manent Forms as the cause. Judging from the examples in the Aitia Argument, these cases would seem to be those in which we are concerned to explain, simply, why something is $F$—for example, why Alcibiades is beautiful, rather than why Alcibiades is a beautiful boy. The various this worldly determinations which attach to immanent Forms are not causally important to such effects. It does not, for instance, matter that the immanent Form of Beauty in Alcibiades is a beauty with respect to his physique (or his hair, or his eyes), if all we are looking to explain is why Alcibiades is beautiful. All that matters to this end is that there is some beauty in him, of whatever determinate sort that happens to be. Which is just to say that what matters is that the separate Form of Bigness has been added to him.

In this regard, it is helpful to recall that when the Forms are introduced in the Aitia Argument, they are introduced as ultimate universal causes: the Form of $F$-ness is the cause of $F$-ness in all the many $F$ things.\footnote{This was first discussed in §6.1} As we are told, “all beautiful things are beautiful by the beautiful” (100d7–8); “everything bigger than something else is bigger by nothing other than bigness ... and everything smaller is smaller by nothing other than smallness” (101a2–4); and “anything which is going to be two must share in [twoness], and anything which is going to be one must share in oneness” (101c6–7) (emphases my own). This generality requires that the Forms be maximally undetermined, since it is not the case that all the many $F$ things share the same determinate property of $F$-ness. (Simias is big in this way, but the sea is big in this other way, and the beach is big in yet another way.) Rather, what is one and the same in all of them is the determinable property of $F$-ness. Thus the ultimate universal cause of $F$-ness is the determinable. Thus the ultimate universal cause of $F$-ness is the separate Form of $F$-ness.

Of course, separate Forms are not best identified as the cause in every case. It is better to say that someone is sick because of fever than because of sickness, at least if our concern is to heal them. Yet Plato welcomes this sort of explanation. His point, in accepting separate Forms as causes first and foremost, is that separate Forms are the safest cause to be cited, if our concern is to explain, simply, why something is $F$. And as I have urged, this point is best illuminated by viewing separate Forms as maximally determinable properties.

5.4 Against separate causes

Therefore, by interpreting separation in terms of determinability, we have a powerful explanation for why Plato could have believed in causes which are also separate (that is, in separate Forms). In this final section, I now wish to highlight the limitations of this interpretation, and explain why we might nonetheless find these reasons un compelling. That is, whereas the preceding section detailed a plausible line of argument from the acceptance of certain causal
truths to the existence of separate Forms, this section will show why it is ultimately an unsatisfactory argument. And in fact, this is precisely the result we should want, since the causal efficacy of separate Forms was criticized both by Aristotle and by Plato later in his career, and as I will demonstrate in §§5.4.1 and §5.4.2, the problems which our interpretation leads us to expect correspond to and anticipate the actual problems raised in these later texts.

What, then, are these problems in the proposed line of argument? To review, the metaphysical grounding we were supposed to have for the existence of separate Forms, understood as determinable causes, was the observation that in many cases it is the determinable, and not its determinate, which is counterfactually robust (that is, which figures in true counterfactual causal statements). However, as recent opponents of the existence of determinable causes have argued, we can accept the truth of the counterfactuals in which determinables figure without thereby accepting that these determinables exist. Rather, they contend, the truth of these counterfactuals requires only the existence of determinates.

The argument goes as follows: 55 Granted, there are true counterfactual statements in which determinable predicates figure. (To repeat our earlier example, it is true to say that if Jordan were not Leviathan-height (i.e., greater than 54 and less than 84 inches tall) then she would not be able to ride the Leviathan, and ‘...is Leviathan-height’ is a determinable predicate.) However, such determinable predicates need not refer to actual existent determinable properties in order for such counterfactual statements to be true. Rather, we can interpret these predicates as referring to a disjunctive set of determinate properties, in which case only these properties need actually exist. 56 Put otherwise, determinable predicates are just a convenient shorthand we have for referring to a disjunctive set of determinate properties. Thus, to predicate some determinable of a subject is not to specify that there is some determinable property which it instantiates; rather, it is to specify that there is some determinate property within a certain set which it instantiates. Likewise, to say that something is the case because of a determinable is not to say that the cause is a determinable property; rather, it is to specify that there is some determinate property, within a set of disjuncts, which is the cause. So, while it is true to say that Jordan can ride the Leviathan because she is Leviathan-height, all this means is that there is some determinate height, greater than 54 and less than 84 inches, which Jordan instantiates, and it is this determinate height, and this determinate height alone,
which is the cause of her being able to ride the Leviathan. There is no additional property of being Leviathan-height which is the cause.

Here, then, is the same point, but now applied to Forms: Grant that it is true to say that something is \(F\) because of, or by, the \(F\) itself by itself – for example, that Alcibiades is beautiful by the Beautiful itself by itself. The objection to the Platonist is that we can accept the truth of this statement without thereby accepting that there is a separate Form of Beauty. That is, ‘the Beautiful itself by itself’ need not refer to the separate Form of Beauty in order for the statement ‘Alcibiades is beautiful by the Beautiful itself by itself’ to be true. Rather, we can interpret ‘the Beautiful itself by itself’ as referring to a disjunctive set of immanent Forms of Beauty, and interpret the statement as a whole as stating merely that there is some immanent Form of Beauty in Alcibiades – in which case, immanent Forms are the only Forms which need exist (at least to ground the truth of such causal statements). Separate Forms might sometimes be cited as causes, but this is just a shorthand method for referring to a set of immanent Forms; such causal explanations do not require that separate Forms actually exist.

Admittedly, these considerations do not provide any positive reason for denying the existence of determinable properties or separate Forms (beyond, say, an independent commitment to ontological parsimony). All these considerations show is that the existence of determinable properties and separate Forms is not strictly or metaphysically necessary, at least on the basis of the truth of certain causal statements we make. As far as the metaphysics of causation is concerned, determinate properties and immanent Forms are all we need. And this means that if there is supposed to be a causal argument for the existence of separate Forms, this will be not a logically compelling argument. The metaphysics of causation can get along just fine without determinable causes, thus it can get along just fine without separate Forms.

### 5.4.1 Plato’s criticisms of separate Forms

Plato does not seem to worry about these problems with the causal argument for separate Forms in the *Phaedo*; separate Forms are accepted as causes at the end of the Aitia Argument.

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57Note, in addition, that this analysis of determinable predicates is still counterfactually robust; if there were not some determinate height, greater than 54 and less than 84 inches, which Jordan instantiated then she would indeed not be able to ride the Leviathan.

58A parallel might be drawn here to certain contemporary arguments made for the existence of universals on the basis of the truth of natural law statements, i.e., statements which express supposed “laws of nature” (see, e.g., Dretske (1977), Tooley (1977), and Armstrong (1983)). The only way to make sense of such statements, it is claimed, is as expressing relations which hold between universals or properties; thus, these universals or properties must exist. Such arguments have, in turn, elicited parallel criticisms which claim that the existence of universals is not strictly necessary to secure the truth of laws of nature (see, e.g., van Fraassen (1980, Chapter 5)). Cf. the responses to such criticisms in Armstrong (1993) and Pages (2002).

59Of course, we might still be compelled to believe in separate Forms for other reasons (just as we might be compelled to believe determinable properties for other reasons); these will just not be causal reasons.
just as confidently as they are at its beginning.⁶⁰ There is, however, indication that Plato came to worry about these problems elsewhere – for instance, in the last of Parmenides’ opening arguments in the *Parmenides*, the “greatest difficulty” facing the hypothesis of Forms at 133b4–134e8.

As noted already in §6.4, Parmenides begins this argument by distinguishing, just as Socrates distinguishes in the *Phaedo*, between three classes of beings: Forms themselves by themselves (133c4); their participants (literally, “us” (ἡμεῖς), 133d1); and the immanent Forms in those participants (literally, “the things belonging to us” (τὰ παρ’ ἡμῖν), 133e9–d1). Thus, as in the *Phaedo*, we have a distinction between separate and immanent Forms. Yet in this argument, this distinction is now cast in a new light: as Parmenides emphasizes at 133c8–d5 and 133e7–134a1, separate Forms are what they are in relation to themselves (i.e., to other separate Forms) and not in relation to immanent Forms, whereas immanent Forms are what they are in relation to themselves (i.e., to other immanent Forms) and not in relation to separate Forms.

To clarify this admittedly obscure distinction, Parmenides brings in the example of the Forms of mastery and slavery (133d7–e5). Someone who is a master, Parmenides explains, is not a master of the Form of Slavery itself, of what it is to be a slave. Likewise, someone who is a slave is not a slave of the Form of Mastery itself, of what it is to be a master. Rather, a human master is a master of a human slave, and a human slave is a slave of a human master. In contrast, the Form of Mastery itself is mastery of the Form of Slavery itself, and the Form of Slavery itself is slavery of the Form of Mastery itself. In this regard, separate Forms are what they are in relation to different things than their immanent counterparts, and thus the two classes of Forms are distinct.

It is notable that, although Parmenides here opts for the examples of mastery and slavery, he could have made the same point just as well with the *Phaedo’s* preferred examples of bigness and smallness. As Socrates explains at *Phaedo* 102c, the bigness in Phaedo is bigness “in relation to Simmias’s smallness” (102c8–9), and the smallness in Simmias is smallness “in relation to Socrates’ bigness” (102c4–5). In contrast, the Forms of Bigness and Smallness themselves – as Parmenides indicates later on in the *Parmenides*, at 150c7–d2 – are what they are “in relation to one another.” Thus the *Parmenides’s* manner of distinguishing between separate and immanent Forms is just as applicable to the specific Forms at issue in the *Phaedo*.

Therefore, this argument from the *Parmenides* presents us with the same ontological framework as the Aitia Argument from the *Phaedo*. Yet unlike the Aitia Argument, the *Parmenides* argument aims to criticize this framework, and specifically, to cast doubt on the supposed causal powers of separate Forms. From the very start, we are told that it is by participating in

⁶⁰Cf. 105b5–c6 and the reference to “the Form of Life itself” at 106d5–6.
immanent Forms, not separate Forms, that we come to be called the various derived names we are called. Simmias is called big, we seem to be being told, because of the immanent Form of Bigness in him, and not the separate Form of Bigness. And this makes sense, if the thought behind this statement is that immanent Forms, as determinates, are the only true causes.

This thought is borne out by the way the argument proceeds. Although the ultimate conclusion that Parmenides wishes to draw is that separate Forms “cannot be known” (133b5), this is a specific application of a more general point: that, as Parmenides concludes midway through the argument, “things in us do not have their power (πὴν δύναμιν ἐχει) in relation to those [Forms themselves], nor do the latter have their power in relation to us” (133e4–5). Rather, “each of them has their power (πὴν δύναμιν ἐχειν ἢν ἐχει) in relation to themselves” (134d5–7). These repeated mentions of the Forms’ “powers” are significant. If we read in the fuller description of such powers from the Sophist, we may say that they are powers “to act or to be acted upon, in relation to even the smallest thing.” That is, the Forms’ powers seem to be causal powers. Thus, since separate Forms have their powers only in relation to themselves and not in relation to us, they cannot be causes of things in us, belonging to our world. In this way, the Parmenides presents a stark criticism of the causal status of separate Forms, showing them to be not merely causally superfluous, but completely causally inert with respect to the things down here. Thus the fact that we recognize there to be causes of various thisworldly phenomena cannot be any basis for believing in separate Forms.

It is, however, significant that the specific point Parmenides makes in this argument concerns our knowledge of separate Forms. This suggests that, by the time Plato wrote the Parmenides, the strongest considerations in favour of separate Forms were not causal but epistemological in nature, such that an argument to the effect that separate Forms cannot be known would indeed constitute the “greatest difficulty” for the doctrine of separate Forms. Perhaps, then, given his other comments about separate and immanent Forms in the Parmenides, Plato in his later career became sensitive to the very real problems of attempting to causally ground the existence of separate Forms, and came to privilege epistemological grounds for their existence instead.

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61 133e9–d2: τὰ παρ’ ἡμῖν ... ὃν ἡμεῖς μετέχοντες εἶναι ἕκαστα ἐπονομαζόμεθα.
62 248c5: ἣ τοῦ πάσχειν ἢ δρᾶν καὶ πρὸς τὸ ομικρότατον δύναμις.
63 The decisive problem raised against the “friends of the Forms” at Sophist 248–249 also concerns how separate Forms can be known. And in the Timaeus the sole argument presented for why the claim that there are separate Forms is not a “vacuous gesture” (μάτην, 51d4) relies on there being a real distinction between nous and opinion. (Cf. Republic V 476–480.)
64 Which is not to say that there are not very real problems in attempting to epistemologically ground the existence of separate Forms, as well. It is just to say that Plato may have felt that these were firmer grounds, and felt more confident in his abilities to defend separate Forms on these grounds, which would explain why he spends so much time doing so in his later work.
5.4.2 Aristotle’s criticisms of separate Forms

If Plato, by the end of his career, had already come to see the inadequacies in the causal argument for the existence of separate Forms, then we should expect that Aristotle would also be well aware of these inadequacies. After all, Aristotle was no sympathizer with separate Forms. Criticisms of Platonic ontology pervade his corpus, and it is the separation of Forms in particular which he identifies as being “responsible for all the difficulties that arise in connection with the Forms” (Metaphysics M.9 1086b6–7). And indeed, chief among these difficulties for Aristotle is how separate Forms can be causes of anything in the sensible world. In Metaphysics A.9 his consideration of the question takes up no less than thirty-three lines, where it is fittingly introduced as “the greatest difficulty of all”:

Furthermore, both in this passage and in a similar passage from On Generation and Corruption I.2, Aristotle refers to the Phaedo by name, as the source of the claim that Forms are causes.

Aristotle, of course, does not agree that separate Forms are causes, and levies several criticisms against this claim. These numerous refutations might be taken simply as evidence of just how problematic and wrong-headed the view is, but they also indicate just how important and central the view was to Platonists. Aristotle would not bother to so thoroughly defeat a merely ancillary thesis about the Forms. Thus, the fact that Aristotle does devote so much attention to the claim that separate Forms are causes indicates that separate Forms’ status as causes is indeed one of their fundamental features, just as I have been at pains to emphasize throughout this dissertation. Furthermore, Aristotle’s explicit references to the Phaedo indicate that this dialogue (rather than, say, the Timaeus or the Republic) is where the Forms’ status as causes is codified, and thus where we should be looking in order to understand this status, just as I have done here.

But what of Aristotle’s criticisms themselves? Why does he claim that separate Forms cannot be causes of things in the sensible world, and are his reasons the ones that our interpretation would lead us to expect? At first blush, his arguments can seem perplexing, since for the most part they seem concerned to show merely that separate Forms are not causes in any of Aristotle’s four recognized senses of ‘cause’. For instance, the arguments at On Generation and Corruption 331b18–24 and Metaphysics 99a11 show that separate Forms are not efficient causes; the arguments at Metaphysics 99a12–13 and 99b1–3 show that separate Forms are not (Aristotelian) formal causes; and the argument at 99a10–20 shows that separate Forms are not material causes.

Yet if I am correct in suggesting that separate Forms are meant to...
be causes in a distinct, fifth sense – that they are “ingredient causes” – then it would seem that Aristotle is forcing Plato into the terms of his own theory, and neglecting Plato’s actual reasons for believing separate Forms to be causes. Similarly, Aristotle often argues against the claim that separate Forms are causes of the unqualified coming-to-be of sensible things, as at *Metaphysics* 991a24–27 and 991b6–9. Yet as I urged in Chapter 4, Forms are meant to be causes only of the qualified coming-to-be of sensible things – causes only of properties which their subjects stand to lose. Even a cursory reading of the *Phaedo* would show that separate Forms are not meant to be efficient causes; thus an argument showing that they are not efficient causes would seem a *non sequitur*. How, then, is Aristotle being anything but uncharitable in his criticisms of separate Forms as causes?

In fact, we need not accuse Aristotle of carelessness or interpretive prejudice, for missing or omitting the sense in which separate Forms are meant by Plato to be causes. Aristotle did seem to grasp this sense, and even at one point cares enough to mention it. He downplays it in his discussions, I believe, because he sees this way of making sense of the Forms’ causal status as hopelessly flawed, for reasons he sets forth elsewhere – and which, as we will now see, are precisely the reasons we should expect, given the interpretation of this chapter.

Aristotle’s sole acknowledgment of the thesis that separate Forms are ingredient causes comes as what is almost a passing remark at *Metaphysics* A.9 991a15–19:

> “Perhaps it might seem that Forms are causes in the way that the white is a cause in the white thing, by being mixed into it. But this account, which was stated first by Anaxagoras and later by Eudoxus and others, is easily upset (since it is easy to bring many contradictions against such a doctrine).”

The example of whiteness, the mention of mixture, the reference to Anaxagoras – all the aspects of Aristotle’s remark fit well with the theory of causation I attributed to Plato in Chapter 4, and its additive model of property acquisition. Aristotle is here as good as saying, “Perhaps it might seem that separate Forms are ingredient causes.”

The reference to Eudoxus is also telling. Eudoxus was a student of Plato, and is portrayed here as having advanced a certain defence of Forms, in light of the problems which were being brought against them in the Academy in his time and which Aristotle in this passage of the *Metaphysics* is cataloging. Thus, Eudoxus seems to have thought it a suitable defence of final causes, if “paradigms” are understood as perfect models which sensible things strive for, à la the Recollection Argument in the *Phaedo*.

66 This would be more understandable if Aristotle limited his criticisms to showing that Forms are neither material nor formal causes, since, as I suggested in §4.4, ingredient causes are a kind of undifferentiated material-cum-formal cause – though even still, we might wish that Aristotle had been more transparent about what he was doing.

separate Forms to emphasize their role as ingredient causes. Which, I take it, is further confirmation of the interpretation I have been defending here: If the Forms’ status as ingredient causes is indeed one of their fundamental features, then it is only natural that some of Plato’s associates would have thought to emphasize this feature, too.

Aristotle claims that “many contradictions” can be brought against the doctrine that separate Forms are ingredient causes, but never says what those contradictions are. However, we can plausibly glean his reasons from other texts; indeed, a fuller explanation of the same conclusion is presented at On Generation and Corruption I.10 327b15–22:

"Body cannot be mixed with white, nor, in general, can properties and states be mixed with things, since we see them persisting unaltered. Further, white and knowledge cannot be mixed, either, nor anything else which is inseparable. And those who say that all things were once together and mixed do not speak well. It is not the case that everything can be mixed with everything. Rather, each of the things mixed must exist separately; but no property exists separately (ἄλλ’ ὑπάρχειν δεῖ χωριστὸν ἑκάτερον τῶν μιχθέντων· τῶν δὲ παθῶν οὐθὲν χωριστὸν)."

Judging from this passage, Aristotle’s refutation of separate Forms as ingredient causes would appear to rest on two claims: first, that only separable substances can be mixed together; and second, that properties are inseparable from their subjects. Given these two claims, Forms cannot be both separate and the ingredient causes of properties, as they are intended to be.

Fundamental to this argument is the Aristotelian tenet that the properties of things are without exception immanent in those things. And this thought, we can now see, is related to the objection outlined above that the metaphysics of ingredient causation requires only immanent Forms. The point of this objection, after all, was that there is nothing in the sensible world that we need separate Forms to account for. Aristotle, in his ontology, seems simply to have taken this point to heart, by cutting separate Forms of nonsubstance properties out of the picture altogether. And in this regard, I believe we should credit Aristotle with apprehending that separate Forms, as ingredient causes, are not metaphysically necessary.

Why, then, does Aristotle spend so much time arguing against other interpretations of separate Forms’ causal status? Here is what strikes me as a plausible explanation: Aristotle recognized the significance to Platonists of the causal argument for separate Forms, which grounded their existence in their status as causes. Aristotle also recognized that, on its own terms, this argument fails, for the reasons we have now seen. Yet Aristotle also knew that

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⁷⁰Alexander, in his commentary on the Metaphysics (97.19–98.24), presents seven such contradictions as a gloss on Aristotle’s remark, though it is debatable the extent to which he is accurately reporting Aristotle; cf. Dancy [1994], 32–35 ff.⁷¹This refutation mirrors the first objection which Alexander presents against Eudoxus, that “if the Forms are mixed with the other things, then, first, they would be bodies, for mixture is of bodies” (97.30–98.1). Cf. the discussion of this objection in Dancy [1994], 45–47. Aristotle attacks Platonists explicitly with an similar to this at Metaphysics N.5 1092a23–26.
he should be careful: even though separate Forms fail in their intended role as ingredient causes, this might not stop some enthused Platonist from clinging to the causal argument and attempting to defend separate Forms instead as some other sort of cause. Aristotle, then, was anticipating these rejoinders (some of which, after all, may have been floating around the Academy). By demonstrating that separate Forms cannot be causes of any sort, Aristotle preemptively stops the causal argument dead in its tracks. In this regard, Aristotle is not being unfair or uncharitable; he is simply being thorough and leaving no stone unturned.
Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation I announced that I would be presenting a new explanation of why Plato believed in Forms: the “causal argument” for Forms. Now that the details of this argument have been set out, let us step back and review how all the pieces fit together.

The causal argument for Forms starts from the assumption that there are causes of a particular sort – what I define as “ultimate universal ingredient causes”. This, we have seen, is an assumption which Plato repeatedly hypothesizes throughout the *Phaedo*, and plausibly inherited from Socrates, Anaxagoras, and the Hippocratic writers.

Yet Plato also went beyond his predecessors, drawing out the implications of this assumption and determining more precisely the nature of ultimate universal ingredient causes. As we have seen, there are implicit and explicit arguments to be found in the *Phaedo* which demonstrate that ultimate universal ingredient causes are: imperceptible (in Socrates’ Defence); distinct from the ordinary objects of sensible experience (in the Recollection Argument); eternal and unchanging (in the Affinity Argument); and self-predicative and separate (in the Aitia Argument). In other words, ultimate universal ingredient causes are Forms, and if we accept that there are such causes, then we ought to accept that there are Forms. So we have our causal argument for Forms.

As I have developed it, this argument for Forms is built up exclusively from resources found in the *Phaedo*, and specifically, the theories of causation and predication implicit therein. Both these theories, I have shown, are much more sophisticated and defensible than typically assumed. The *Phaedo*’s theory of causation is an effective extension and refinement of the form of causal theorizing which was in vogue at the time, and by seeing it in this light we are able to make sense of its otherwise puzzling causal principle that a cause of *F*-ness cannot itself be un-*F*. The *Phaedo*’s theory of predication, in turn, is a groundbreaking analysis of the distinction between derivative and nonderivative predication, and by clarifying the details of its analysis we are able to make sense of the sense in which the Form of *F*-ness (like any cause of *F*-ness) “is *F*”, in that the definition of *F*-ness is true of it.

These theories are not without their problems, however: the theory of predication is incomplete, insofar as it lacks an analysis of how properties can be derivatively predicated of
Forms; and the theory of causation is less ontologically parsimonious than one might like, insofar as it accepts the existence of multiple distinct entities (namely, both separate and immanent Forms) as causes of the same effect. Yet these problems are ones that Plato himself acknowledges and responds to in his later work (in his criticisms of the causal status of separate Forms, and his introduction of pros ta alla predication), and thus serve as further confirmation that Plato was indeed committed to these theories earlier on.

Lastly, the causal argument for Forms shines new light on why Aristotle did not believe in Forms. With Aristotle’s clarification of the matter–form distinction (not to mention his distinction between substances and non-substances, and his recognition of privation as a principle of change), the ingredient causal model of his predecessors became manifestly Procrustean. It was no longer intuitive to conceive of ordinary objects as mixtures; they were now recognized as composites of matter and form, with corresponding material and formal causes. Yet with material and formal causes on the scene, ingredient causes become otiose, and without ingredient causes there is no causal argument for Forms – which might explain why Aristotle is so nonplussed by Plato’s identification of Forms as causes.

In this regard, the causal argument for Forms is unlikely to serve as a newfound vindication of Platonic metaphysics. Yet this is not its purpose. It is intended, rather, as an exegesis of Platonic metaphysics, and as such it has much to recommend it.
Bibliography


