Some Ways of Being in Plato

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A proper assay of Plato’s ontology would treat of all the different kinds of things which, according to Plato, are said to be. It would divide those kinds into the primitive and, if there are any, the derived, and then show, where possible, how the latter kind of beings arise from the former. In addition, it might try to explain why Plato starts from the primitives he does, that is, why he thinks them the best arxai. Finally, perhaps, it would isolate and discuss any meta-principle which Plato relies on, and the very categories of the ontological theory, with the aim of showing how they are to be assimilated to the theory itself. What follows will not be a proper assay of Plato’s ontology. I do not have the time to do a proper assay, although the lack of time is only a prophanas. I do not know how to complete all these tasks. So, in deference to my fellow symposiast, I propose to examine on this occasion three closely related issues in the interpretation of Plato’s metaphysics, the separation of Forms, participation, and the nature of particulars. In the compass of this talk, I cannot do justice to all three of these issues, indeed probably to none of them. A fortiori, I cannot do a semblance of justice to the closely related topics of predication, both ontological and linguistic, the status of Aristotle’s remarks about Plato’s metaphysics and his own treatment of these issues, or the vexing problem of the development of Plato’s thinking. Nonetheless, I cannot avoid these topics. So please regard the claims I stake about these matters as promissory. I hope to cash them later.

I: Remarks on the strategy.

The key to understanding Plato’s metaphysics is to determine the various roles essence, ovosía, plays within it. I assume that Plato’s metaphysical inquiries begin with and from the Socratic ‘What is X’ question. The answer to this question is a (linguistic) definition, Logos, which has the form of a subject-predicate sentence consisting of a subject-term, the definiendum, a copula, and a predicate-expression, the definiens. (As a matter of convenience, however, I shall often use ‘definition’ to refer just to the definiens.) The subject term is usually a name or noun phrase, e.g., ‘Justice’ or ‘The Just Itself,’ while the predicate-expression is a complex phrase. The name signifies the object whose essence we are seeking. The predicate signifies the essence of that object. Thus when we know the answer to a What is X question, we know the essence of X. One question, we must answer is what kinds of things possess essences, or, equivalently, can serve as the subject of a definition. Clearly Forms can. It is not clear whether particulars such as Socrates are definable. The worry here is not whether there are Forms of natural kinds, as opposed to Forms restricted in population to incomplete properties. I shall posit Forms of natural kinds. My concern, rather, is whether particulars in natural kind classes are definable, or to put it differently, whether they have essences. A second question concerning definitions is how the essence signified by the definiens applies to the definable subjects. In the Phaedo we find a distinction between two ways a word or a predicate may apply to an object. It may apply in virtue of what an object Has, or it may apply in virtue of what an object Is². ‘Beautiful’ applies to Helen in virtue of the Beauty which she Has, not in virtue of what she Is. In those cases where there are Forms,—and at the very least there are Forms for relatives and incomplete notions like Beauty,—the text makes it clear that ‘beautiful’ applies to Beauty itself in virtue of what it Is. When it applies to other things, such as Helen, it does so in a secondary or derivative manner. Having granted that there are Forms for predicates such as ‘man’, the second question can be put as follows: does the essence signified by a definiens apply to whatever it applies to in virtue of what that thing Is, in virtue of what it Has, or in virtue of either what it Is or what it Has. The final question is what are the metaphysical consequences of the fact that something does or does not have an essence, both with respect to the Forms themselves, particulars, and their relation to one another. How we answer these questions will partially determine what we make of Plato’s account of particulars, of participation, and of the separation of Forms. If, for instance, we conclude that particulars are not definable, we can claim that Forms are definitionally separate from particulars in that the definition will apply only to the Form of, say, Man. If we add the thesis that possession of essence is sufficient for existence, we can then conclude that Forms are ontologically separate from particulars; being definable they are capable on their own of existing apart from particulars (and perhaps from other Forms). On the other hand, we may want to argue that although particulars cannot possess essences in the same manner as Forms do, they must have essences lest they be bare particulars. Particulars will then have essences, whereas Forms are essences. Among other issues raised by this possibility is the nature of the participation relation itself. Traditionally, at least in one tradition, participation has been equated with the relation between a particular and a Form, and opposed to the relation between a Form and its essence, which we can call ‘Being’. Are we then to conclude that a particular’s having an essence is due to its participation in a Form? The status of the participation relation and its interplay with essence leads directly to the third of our questions. If particulars lack essences entirely, what are they and how do they come to be what they are?
Conversely, since it seems clear that by the time of the *Sophist* Forms are not just or not simply essences, do Forms participate in other Forms? Moreover, if Being itself is a Form, how are we to explain the notion of a Form participating in Being?

In this talk I want to defend a view of particulars according to which particulars are bundles of properties. They are what they are by participating in Forms. They neither are nor have essences, not even relationally. The properties in these bundles are not the Forms themselves, but form-copies or property-instances. I will therefore offer a metaphysical account of the nature of these form-copies. I will also defend a view of participation according to which participation turns out to be a family concept, among whose subspecies is a primitive and *sui generis* relation that obtains between particulars and other entities, and between Forms and other Forms. In both of these cases I will argue that to participate in a Form is for the participant to be characterized by that Form, i.e., to have the property(-instance) which the Form Is. Furthermore, I want to show how Plato can claim that Forms and Forms alone participate in Being, where that a) commits him to the previous claim that the participating Form is characterized in a certain way, but b) fails to commit him to the claim that to participate in the Form Being is to treat existence as a property, or c) to a vicious regress of Participations, and yet d) allows him to speak of a special ontological relation, Being, that can be contrasted with Participation. I will approach these positive claims from an examination of the problem of Separation. My aim here is to clarify some of the difficulties confronted by various interpretations of what it is for Forms to be separate, in order to develop some of the tools I need to address the issues of participation and the nature of particulars.

If we return to the *Phaedo* and its discussion of how names or predicates apply to objects (102a10-105c7), we note that the linguistic relations ‘being the name of’ and ‘being the eponym of’ appear to model two metaphysical relations, Being and Participating, respectively. ‘Beautiful’ is the name of Beauty because Beauty Is beautiful, whereas it is the eponym of Helen because she participates in the Form, Beauty. Helen, we might say, is called derivatively by the predicate because she derives the property in virtue of which the predicate applies from the Form which is named by that predicate in a primary or non-derivative fashion. The two metaphysical relations explain the linguistic predicability of predicates to their subjects. In order to approach the topics I wish to examine today, it is useful to state certain principles governing the relations of Being and Participating. Let me adopt, at least provisionally, both the nomenclature and some of the fundamental principles of the logic of Being and Having developed by H.P. Grice and Alan Code. Of particular interest to me are what Code labels Formal Principles 3 and 4 and his total definitions:

FP3 If x Has y, then it is not the case that x Is y.
FP4 x Has y iff x Has something that Is y.

Taking the two notions Being and Having as primitive, Code goes on to define the following ontological concepts:

D1 x is predicable of y iff either y Is x or y Has something which Is x.
D2 x is I-predicable of y if and only if y Is x.
D3 x is H-predicable of y iff y Has something that Is x.
D4 x = y iff x Is y and y Is x.
D5 x is individual iff (necessarily) for all y it is the case that (if y Is x, then x Is y).
D6 x is particular iff (necessarily) for all y it is the case that (if x is predicable of y, then (x Is y and y Is x)).
D7 x is universal iff (possibly) there is a y such that (x is predicable of y and it is not the case that (x Is y and y Is x)).

I set out these principles and definitions neither out of loyalty nor any commitment to their accuracy. Rather, I do so to exhibit the possibility that, first, we can employ a notion of I- (or essential) predication which does not amount to treating that notion as equivalent to identity; second, that within this logic we can derive an identity relation from I-predication; and, finally, because this logic bans the possibility that anything, x, can both Be and Have some property, y. Code, of course, is well aware that FP3 might be incompatible with doctrines expressed in the *Sophist*. He is equally aware that the logic as stated may not capture Plato’s theory at any stage of its development, since it is designed to represent what Aristotle may have thought to be the metaphysical theory of Plato especially as it appears in the *Phaedo*. Code notes, for instance, that no provision is made for souls. Another omission are those mysterious entities, the-large-in-Socrates, the-beautiful-in-Helen, what I’ve labelled ‘form-copies’. In the subsequent discussion, I will rely on the logic of Being and Having—although with challenges to these definitions and their implications—both to explore the various answers to the three questions raised in our brief discussion of essence and to illustrate how those questions and their answers condition our conclusions about separation, participation and the nature of particulars.
SEPARATION

Of the many features Plato allegedly ascribes to Forms, none has had a more distinguished legacy in the History of Philosophy than separability. Platonic universals or Forms are allegedly separate or transcendent, in contrast to the immanent universals or forms distinctive of Aristotelian metaphysics. There is no consensus today as to what Plato thought separation amounted to. Indeed, it has been argued that Plato never explicitly claims that Forms are separate, i.e. χωριστόν. If taken to the letter, this claim is true. But Plato does assert that Forms are χωρίς. More importantly, he frequently describes them in terms that are arguably equivalent in sense to χωριστόν. Especially significant is his claim that forms are αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτὰ χωρίς. What then is meant by the claim that Forms are separable or are αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτὰ χωρίς? There are two aspects to the separation claim. There is the question of the complement; from what is a Form separate? and there is the issue of how it is separate. Since our concern is with the separation of Forms—a question opposed to particulars—a first question divides in two:

1a) (Some) Forms are separate from particulars; or (inclusive)
1b) (Some) Forms are separate from other Forms.

The second question admits of three, possibly overlapping, answers:

2a) Forms are spatially separate; or
2b) Forms are ontologically separate, where this amounts to the claim that they can exist independently of ______; or
2c) Forms are definitionally or logically separate.

Of the six permutations, 2a1a) and 2a1b) are relatively non-controversial. Forms are non-spatial in the sense that they ’live’ outside of space (and time). We can say either that spatial separation is not applicable to Forms, or that they are spatially separate from particulars which do occupy space. The spatial separation of two (non-spatial) Forms is either moot or a matter for stipulation.

The problems begin with combinations involving 2b). That forms are ontologically or existentially separate from particulars, 2b1a), is the traditional analysis of what it is to be a Transcendent universal. The weakest reading of this claim would be to explicate ontological separation as amounting to nothing more than difference from particulars. A stronger reading would be that a Form, F, can exist independently of any given particular which is F. Since neither of these two readings would be repugnant to the proponent of immanent universals, the favored interpretation of 2b1a) is that the Form can exist independently of all particulars which are (have been or will be) F: Forms can exist uninstantiated. This interpretation is not free from difficulties. When we assert that Plato thinks that a Form can exist uninstantiated by particulars, we need to ask what notion of particular is in play here. Some have alleged that Plato need not mean by particular entities like Socrates or Fido, but rather only sensible properties. On this reading, in place of particular in 1a, we should write ‘sensibles’, thus allowing either sensible properties to be what Forms are separate from, or sensible particulars. The primary motivation for this view is the presence of a number of arguments in the middle period-dialogues that, it is claimed, show that Forms, such as Beauty, cannot be reduced to or identified with any sensible property or properties. These arguments all concern the flux of the sensible world and seem to turn on the compresence of opposites. Given their reading of this notion, it is not the particulars themselves which suffer compresence, but sensible property types such as ‘being bright(ly) colored’, or ‘being three feet long.’ That a Form is not reducible to sensible properties does not suffice to show that these Forms can exist independently of sensible properties; for, as the proponents admit, sensible properties may figure in the definition of the Form, even if they do not exhaust it. If they do occur in its definition, the Form will not be existentially independent of sensibles.

Besides postulating sensible properties as a possibly relevant relatum, this approach to separation seeks not so much to show that Forms are existentially independent from particulars, but rather to exhibit the reason (or a reason) why Plato thought Forms are separate. To the extent that we are here relying on Aristotle’s account of Plato’s reasoning, it is not surprising that by Aristotle’s lights the argument from flux fails to justify separated Forms. Nor are the proponents of separation as existential independence under any illusions here. The argument(s) from flux recounted by Aristotle, they contend, gets Plato only the conclusion that the universals required for knowledge and definition are non-sensible universals different from sensibles. Additional premises are needed to get to separation, in particular premises to the effect that these non-sensible universals are Forms, that there are non-sensible substances, that the Forms are the non-sensible substances, and that non-sensible substances are separate. This last step is crucial. Aristotle argues that since whatever is separate is a particular, the fact that Forms are separate entails that they are both universal and particular. If I understand the argument advanced by these interpreters, while they concede...
that the flux argument guarantees that Forms are substances, as Plato understands that notion, it does not guarantee that Forms exist separately from particulars. Aristotle of course disagrees: in order to be a substance the candidate must satisfy the separation criterion. And since the Flux argument does not show that Forms are separate, it does not justify the claim that Forms are substances. Plato, on the other hand, thinks that the flux of sensibles, in conjunction with 'considerations about knowledge and definition,' requires the existence of Forms, i.e., non-sensible substances. That these substances do not satisfy Aristotle's criteria, and hence do not license the conclusion that they are separate substances, is true. Yet, this is not worrisome according to these interpreters, because Plato, unlike Aristotle, does not make separation a defining feature of substances, οὐσίαι. *Whenever he characterizes the realm of ousia, he mentions—not separation but—changelessness, everlastingness, inaccessibility to sense perception, being basic to knowledge and definition, and the like. As we have seen, none of these features requires separation.* (Fine,SEP, 70-71)

Let us leave to one side the reconstruction of Aristotle's arguments here. Instead, let us ask two questions, one about Plato's use of the flux argument, the second about the notion of existential independence itself. How are we to understand the sense of 'existential' in the phrase 'existential independence'? Perhaps it is thought to be obvious that Forms, for Plato, exist, that the only question is whether their existence requires the sometime presence of a particular which instantiates them. I believe that the 'problematic' of existence, as it has developed over the centuries, has at times obscured the issues involved in the debate over separation in Plato. That existence is some primitive and inexplicable property of Forms is not I think Plato's view of the matter. In fact, the argument from flux suggests why this is not so. The critical steps in the flux argument take Plato from the flux of sensibles to their unknowability and/or indefinability. Since it is assumed that there is knowledge and definition, and that these require universals, this allows us to conclude that there are universals distinct from sensible particulars. As Fine constructs the rest of Aristotle's argument, we then assume that these non-sensible universals are Forms, that there are non-sensible substances, and that the only candidates for these non-sensible substances are the Forms. But this is to leave the notion of substance, οὐσίαι, hanging in thin air. A more plausible account is to link the notions of knowability and definability to substance-hood. Nor is this link hard to forge. For Plato, as sometimes for Aristotle, knowledge is knowledge of definitions, and what definitions are, or, rather, what linguistic definitions signify, are essences, οὐσίαι. Thus if, with Plato, we assume that there is knowledge, and that knowledge has an object, we can conclude that there are essences. From here, we can derive the conclusion that there are non-sensible substances from the assumption that whatever an essence is 'present to' is, for Plato, always a substance and the assumption that sensibles are not knowable or definable, that is sensibles lack essences. If Forms possess essences, and hence are substances, can we then argue that they are separate, that they exist independently of particulars? The answer seems to me to be yes. The argument will have two stages. In the first stage we will contend that in virtue of possessing an essence the Form exists. Not only does this comport with the Greek, it gives some flesh to the otherwise bare notion of existence that is under scrutiny in the separation debate. In support of this claim, we can cite the intuition that in order to exist or be, the subject must be something. Clearly, being an essence counts as being something. Indeed, the Platonist might urge that this dictum is too weak. In its place he might insist that for something to exist is for it to possess an essence. That x is F is necessary and sufficient for x to be. That is to say there is no different or special notion of existence: being something or, better, Being some essence, is all there is to the notion. The second stage should then show that these οὐσίαι, the Forms, exist independently of particulars. Having granted that Forms have essences and hence exist, all that remains is to show that their possession of an essence is not dependent upon the existence of the sensible particulars. This, however, seems to fall out of the argument from flux. Once it is granted that sensibles are in flux and that anything in flux is indefinable, we can conclude that the sensibles do not possess essences. For if they did, they would not be indefinable. So, that the Form possesses an essence is not dependent upon the sensible's possession of an essence. Perhaps it might be claimed that Forms can possess an essence only if particulars do instantiate, i.e., participate in, Forms. But what could be the motivation for such a claim? The mere participation in the Form contributes nothing to the Form's possession or failure to possess an essence; for participation, it appears, is not only independent from Being in the Phaedo, it seems to exclude Being: what participates fails to be (in respect of that in which it participates) and what is, or is, fails to participate (at least in respect of that which it is). On this account then, the so-called epistemological considerations suffice to show that Forms exist independently from particulars, because they show that Forms possess essences, that sensible particulars do not possess.
essences, and because Plato assumes that the possession of essence entails the existence of that which possesses the essence.

If possession of an essence is sufficient for existence, on a Platonic reading of existence, then position 2b1b), does a Form \( F \) exist independently of all other Forms, amounts to the question `Can a Form exist by itself, that is, if no other Forms exist? The answer seems to me to be no. Such a Form would be victim to the arguments leveled against the One of the first Hypothesis of the Parmenides. A second question would be whether a given Form can exist if certain other Forms do not exist. It is hard to know what to say here. If we consider the \( \text{megista gene} \) to be necessary properties of all Forms, for instance, then it seems reasonable to assert that, or were they not to exist, no Form would exist. On the other hand, if it does seem possible for some Forms, or better, families of Forms, to exist apart from other Forms or families of Forms. Is it not possible that there be Forms of Colors, say, but no Forms of Moral Properties? At bottom, I suspect that the evaluation of this position depends upon the stance we take to Plato's teleology and, more germanely, the stance we take to the relation of the so-called elements of the definition of some Form to the Form being defined; for example, could the Form, Man, itself, exist apart from the Form Animal Itself? Guidance as to how to draw the lines which mark off families of Forms from one another is needed, if we are to maintain that the existence of certain Forms is independent of the existence of certain other Forms. Whatever can be said in the compass of this talk about the independence of Forms from one another is best left until we have discussed definitional separation, to which I now turn.

By `definitional separation' scholars seem to mean one of two things. On one reading of the notion, A is definitionally separate from B if the the definition of A does not apply to \( B \). On the other reading, A is definitionally separate from B only if \( A \) is definable without mention of \( B \). On the former reading, we provisionally restrict the type of definable entities to the Form and the type of entities from which the Form is definitionally separate to particulars. Accordingly, Forms are definitionally separate from particulars in that the definition of the Form does not (cannot) apply to any particulars. The motivation behind this reading is a solid one: Forms just are their essences, or at least the essence is \( I \)-predicable (essentially predicable) of the Form. Particulars, on the other hand, are whatever they are via Participation. Whereas Beauty Is \( F \), Helen Has \( F \). Nonetheless, this reading is not without difficulties. Some might wish to contend that Platonic particulars within the natural kind categories do have essential properties, where the `having of essential properties (essences)' by these particulars is understood not to differ in manner from `the having of essential properties (essences)' on the part of Forms. I do not believe that particulars have essences in this manner. Let us assume therefore that particulars never Are anything, that whatever they are, they are in virtue of Having. My problem is that the Form, which we concede the particular Has, and its essence turn out to be identical. This is true regardless of whether we adopt the Identity approach associated with Chenniss and Allen, or with the Code-Grice Logic of Izzing and Hazzing. But if the Form and its essence are identical, how can the Form be predicatable of a particular and the essence fail to be predicatable? We can try additional restrictions; for example, we might stipulate that a Form \( F \) is definitionally separate from a (all) particular \( F \) just in case the essence of \( F \) is \( I \)-predicable of the \( F \) alone. This would allow particular \( F \)s to Have the essence without offending the purport of this reading of the separation of the Form from the particulars. The trouble is, we need to make sense of the notion that an essence can be predicatable of something, or in the linguistic mode, that a definition can be a linguistic-predicate of some subject-predicate sentence, and yet not be essentially predicatable of that thing. This is not the same problem as denying that some particular is identical with its essence. Rather, it is the problem of distinguishing among all the properties which are possessed in the same way--namely, via participation--the one that is the particular's essence from the rest, which are its (merely) accidental properties.

Since our concern is with what a particular Has, it is not implausible to try as a possible solution to this problem an appeal to form-copies. If we add form-copies to our considerations, we stipulate that particulars do not Have Forms, but rather form-copies. This frees us from the bind resulting from the identification of the Form with its essence. But we now require an account of the relation between the Form and a form-copy. Since we are using the Logic of Izzing and Hazzing, we are forced to say that the form-copy \( F \), since Having is defined as a particular's Having something which is \( F \). That 'something' is the form-copy. That a property-instance is the same in essence as the property of which it is an instance is certainly not unintuitive. Besides, were the form-copy also a Haver of the Form, we would be off on a regress or we would have to confront again the problem of how something can Have an essence. If, therefore, a form-copy Is its essence, then the definition of the Form will be \( I \)-predicable of it. Hence, a Form \( F \) will not be definitionally separate from its form-copies. On the other hand, unless the Form is identical with its form-copies, we can still claim the definition separability of Forms from particulars. For particulars will Have form-copies, and form-copies will not be identical with their essences. Here the utility
of letting identity be a function of reciprocal I-predication comes to the fore. The Form and its essence are identical, on the Logic of Izzing and Hazzing, because the essence, \( Y \), is I-predicable of the Form, \( X \), and the Form, \( X \), is I-predicable of the essence, \( Y \). If the form-copies are not to be identical with the Form, and at least they should not be numerically identical, since property-instances are not identical with the property of which they are instances, then we must block the reciprocal I-predicability of form-copy and essence. Since we have claimed that the essence (of the Form) is I-predicable of the form-copy, we must hold that the form-copy is not I-predicable of the essence. That form-copies are not identical with the Form is I think implied by Plato's depiction of them in the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus*. They, it will be remembered, withdraw and perish and enter and exit the receptacle whereas the Form performs none of these military maneuvers. On the other hand, unlike the particulars, which are named after the Forms, the form-copies are, like the Forms themselves, named by the expressions which also name the Forms; that is, a linguistic predicate or \( \delta \phi \nu \mu \lambda \alpha \) applies to the Form and the form-copy in the same manner (103b,e). This suggests that the essence is predicable of both. And finally, there is the clear hint in the dialogue that form-copies are not only numerically distinct from the Form, they are also numerically distinct from one another. For the beautiful-in Helen and the beautiful-in-Andromache are in fact different.

There is more to be said about form-copies and their relation to particulars, but once again let me postpone that discussion. I want to turn briefly to the other reading of definitional separation, and to the attendant question of whether the Forms are definitorially separate from one another. Those who offer the second account of definitional separation, that A can be defined without mention of B, are prone to distinguish sensible particulars from sensible properties. (see above p. ) While this may seem to render the question of separation from particulars moot, it is not without textual or philosophical merit. It would be a special, and I think clearly unPlatonic, property whose definition mentioned a particular, though such properties are possible (e.g., the property of orbiting the sun). But if by 'definitional separation' it is meant that the definiens does not mention a sensible property, we are owed, first, an account of what makes one property 'sensible' or 'observational',—that is an account of what Plato might have made of these notions—and, second, an explanation of why Plato would find sensible properties repugnant. The colors are definable, as the Timaeus at least suggests, as what is able to compact or dilate the visual stream in a particular way. It would seem therefore, that we cannot ban all sensible properties from the world of Forms. But why then is Red(ness) not definitorially separate from sensibles?

Since I am not sure how the proponents of this reading would answer these two questions, let us see what is involved in general in explaining the separation of a Form from another Form just in case no mention is made of the other Form in the former's definition. The idea is that if something, the Form G, is mentioned in the definition of F, then F is not separable from G. Difficulties arise when we press the issue of whether F is separate from those properties mentioned in the definition of G, and the properties mentioned in the definitions of the other elements of the definition of F, say H and I. At the limit, we arrive at Speusippean wholism, the doctrine that no Form is definitorially separable from any other. We can of course try to limit the exposure of one Form to another through appeal to families of Forms, perhaps along the lines suggested by the hierarchies developed through the method of collection and division. On the other hand, we might stick to the intuition that definitional separation amounts to the nothing more than the definitional distinctness of each Form. Since each Form has a unique definition, each is different from every other Form. Here we retreat to the former reading of definitional separation. For on this reading, the reason that each Form is separable is just that the definition is predicable of nothing other than itself (and its form-copies). Hence, the definition of a given Form, F, is not predicative of any other Form. I suspect that the only way we can approach the topic of definational separation of one Form from the others, and with it the related question of whether Forms can exist independently from some others, is to examine whether, and in what sense, Forms participate or have a share of each other. To that topic I now turn.

**PARTICIPATION**

Ryle's Regress is an objection leveled against Plato's theory of universals. In brief, the idea is that according to Plato participation is a relation between one thing, the particular, and a second thing, the Form. Since this relation is found in all cases of particulars possessing properties, we have, by Plato's lights, a many—all the instances of participation—over which we should posit a one, the Form Participation itself. Let me quote Ryle: 'We have two different instances of the relation of being-an-instance-of. What is the relation between them and that of which they are instances? It will have to be exemplification Number 2. The exemplification of P by S will be an instance of exemplification, and its being in that relation to exemplification will be an instance of a second-order exemplification, and that of a third, and so on ad infinitum. One response to this regress is to insist that inherence or exemplification or Participation is
not a relation, but rather is a *sui generis* relationship or, to put it somewhat differently, a *non-relational* tie. The deliberate vagueness of Plato's remarks about what Participation is permit one to infer that he too thought that the notion was *sui generis*. That it is *sui generis* does not, however, vitiate the force of Ryle's objection. Were the many instances over which we are positing a single Form not of their own special kind, there would be no need for a distinctive Form. The emphasis must be put first on the fact that we are talking about a special relationship, inhering, instancing, or exemplifying, not on the *sui generis* character of the multiple cases of the relationship. We must be prepared to deny that we are here talking about instances of a relation, as that notion is traditionally understood. I think that there are three arguments available to Plato to justify such a denial. The first is quite general. Plato could appeal to theoretical considerations. Each theory has to start from some primitives, where what is primitive is revealed in the structure of the theory itself. So, it is open to Plato to say, as he does, that Participation is I know not what, but let it be whatever connects participants or subjects to their properties. Because it is both primitive or indefinable, and because it is not the kind of relation, e.g., larger than, over whose many instances the theory typically does posit a Form, there is no regress to worry about.

The other two arguments are more peculiar to Plato. One focuses on the nature of the supposed relation. Dyadic relations obtain between two relata or objects. In the case of Participation between a particular and a Form, Plato clearly has to concede that the Form is an object. Must he concede that the particular is an object? It seems to me that he does not. Participation between a particular and a form does not so much 'add' a property to an independently existing object, an object that would or could exist prior to any Participation it might engage in. Rather, Participation is what gives the particular any and all of its properties; it somehow constitutes the particular and so Participation cannot be a relation holding between an object and a Form. Here it might be objected that Plato, at least, is still subject to the regress. For after all, even if Participation is best seen not as a relation but rather as something like 'being present at' or compresence, we have many instances of compresence and hence the need for a one over this many. Maybe so. But if so, I do not see that a vicious regress threatens.

The second argument in defence of Plato begins (and ends) from the *Sophist*. Of all the dialogues, the *Sophist* offers the most deliberate and detailed discussion of the communion of Forms. Along with the *Parmenides*, it is one of the few places in which Plato analyses the sorts of properties or Forms which might be called foundational to the theory. By this I mean the sort of properties which belong to all (or almost all) Forms simply in virtue of the fact that they are Forms. Let us call these Formal properties. These include at least some of the *megista gene*. For the moment, let me postpone the question of whether the communion relation -- that is, the partaking of Forms in one another -- is the same as the Participation relation obtaining between particulars and Forms. I want to focus first on the fact that Participation, or Partaking, or Communion, is not here said to be a Form, and the fact that among the *megista gene* we do find Being. These two facts seem to me to reinforce the suspicion that Plato did not think, or want to have to maintain, that Participation is a Form such that Ryle's regress could victimize the theory. It is necessary to take the two together in order to derive this support. For the mere absence of Participation is telling only if we think that the *megista gene* exhaust the greatest kinds or most important Forms. But there is reason not to believe this. We recall the *Republic*, where the Good is cited as the most important and somehow the foundation of all Forms; in the *Parmenides*, we have Unity, a Form that seems to be partaken of by all Forms, itself included; and in the *Symposium* we find reason to think that Beauty is a Form that all Forms partake of, or should partake of, because all Forms are, for Plato, beautiful. So it might be argued that Participation, like these others, was just left off the list. However, the force of this counter seems to me to be diminished by the fact that Being is on the list. Being, after all is said and done, seems to be a Form that represents the ontological relation that obtains between a Form and what the Form is, namely its essence. Since the *Phaedo* at least, Being has been found in opposition to Participating: the former is the way or mode of being enjoyed by Forms; the latter is the way enjoyed by particulars. Even if we concede that in the (early) middle period, Forms do not participate, that Being excludes participating, and that in the later period Being no longer excludes participating, the fact remains that Being is a or the distinctive mode of being for Forms. But if both Being and Participating are ways of being, what reasons might Plato have for insisting in the *Sophist* that there is a Form Being, which would, at the same time, prompt him to refrain from positing a Form Participating?

One possibility is that Participating is subsumed under Being. When Plato distinguishes the two kinds of beings, or two ways in which beings are said (255c12-13), perhaps the *aita kath aita* sense correlates with Being and the *pros allo* sense correlates with Participating. We need of course an analysis of these two ways of being or being said. With that in hand we can ask whether there is some common bond between them. If there is some common or overarching connection, then we shall cite that as part of our rational reconstruction of why there is a single Form Being. If there is not some common connection, --if,
that is, the two different ways of being are assimilated only because of some common way of speaking\textsuperscript{18}, then we are back at square one.

One prominent analysis\textsuperscript{19} holds that ‘is’ is used in the first way in a sentence of the form ‘X is Y’, if what is signified by ‘X’ is not different from Y-ness. It is used in the second way if they do differ. When unpacked, however, we find that the first way represents the ‘is’ of definition, namely where Y-ness stands for the essence of X. Here then we have a use that relies on the special relationship between a thing and its essence (and perhaps also parts of its essence). The second way of being said to be, on the other hand, seems to characterize the subject. We are thus left with two different relations contained within the notion of Being, a characterizing and a definitional ‘is’. However, if we allow that Plato thinks some Forms are characterized by themselves, then even if we have these two uses, this analysis in terms of distinct relata or same relata will not do. For example, Difference is what it is to be different—this is the first use. But in so far as it is different from all other Forms, it also is characterized by itself. This is, it seems, a different sense of ‘is’ from the first, and yet it is not the \textit{pros allo} or second use specified above. On this analysis, then, all self-characterizing statements would be classified as \textit{auta kath auta} statements, even though they differ in sense from the ‘is’ of definition.

A second analysis focuses on the relation represented by ‘is’, as opposed to the relata. It insists that there is only one kind of ‘is’, what I have called the characterizing ‘is’. The difference isolated at 255 is then explicated in terms of self-predication versus ‘other-predication’, i.e., partaking of some Form other than itself. In this case, Being just is Participating. Now this works if we are willing to view self-predication as it was introduced by Vlastos\textsuperscript{20}. All forms on this account do not self-predicate, so there will be some Forms which will be characterized by the properties that characterize all Forms, and some which, in addition, will be self-characterized. One problem with this approach is that it seems not to square with the text. What one would expect to find is the opposition ‘some beings are said \textit{auta kath auta}—because they self-participate— but all forms are said \textit{pros allo}.’\textsuperscript{21}

Finally, we come to the view that Being in the \textit{Sophist} is the property Existence: the \textit{auta kath auta} way of being said represents existence statements, i.e. the ‘is’ is complete or 1-place; the \textit{pros allo} stands for predications where the ‘is’ is incomplete or 2-place. Here we find a reason not to posit Participating as a Form, whereas we do have a reason for positing Being as a Form, namely the fact that Existence is a property. Here, participation is a relation obtaining between Forms, including the Form Being. Motion, for example, partakes of or participates in Being and thus exists. (256a1) This leaves open the possibility that Being can be said to be \textit{auta kath auta}, i.e. to participate in Being, and thereby exist, and to be said \textit{pros allo}, where by \textit{pros allo} predication we mean to indicate that it participates in other Forms. Notice that this is a special case of self-participation. There may be other Forms that self-participate. On the other hand, it seems clear that all Forms (and perhaps everything else) participates in Being, where Being is existence, for all of them are. Notice also that as an \textit{on}, Being will not serve as a predicate in a \textit{pros allo} predication. Given its nature as a Form, Being when partaken of, will always be the predicate of an \textit{auta kath auta} statement.

I do not wish to enter into the debate over whether in the \textit{Sophist} Plato isolates, or uses, or should be understood sometimes to be using, the ‘is’ of existence. If Being is Existence, and if being said to be \textit{auta kath auta} is meant to be an existence claim, then we will confront two questions. One is the problem of the essence. It seems to drop out of the picture on this view, for it neither goes smoothly into \textit{pros allo} predications nor does it seem to emerge in the analysis of Existence and partaking of Existence. It is not, in general, required that any subject that partakes of Existence thereby becomes or acquires an essence; particulars may lack essences and yet still exist. Perhaps we could posit that when a Form partakes of Being it comes to have/be an essence. But this is just an additional stipulation. The second problem is similar: we seem to have left out any way to describe what I have been calling self-participation statements. When we say that One is, we speak of a being \textit{auta kath auta}. If we insist that \textit{pros allo} predication always introduces a second Form, then we find that self-participation is impossible. This last defect can I think be remedied. If \textit{pros allo} predication is neutrally viewed as either participation simpliciter or, perhaps more plausibly, as all other kinds of predication than \textit{auta kath auta}, then we can plug self-participation in as one kind of \textit{pros allo} predication.

It seems to me that a contrastive reading of \textit{pros allo} predication offers the best hope of understanding the difference between the two ways of being said to be and the postulation of the Form Being. The contrastive reading of \textit{pros allo} uses of ‘is’ will segregate being said to be \textit{auta kath auta} from all other forms of predication. These other forms will embrace both complete and incomplete predicates and, more importantly I think, predication statements whose subject and predicate expression refer to the same property or thing, but are not \textit{auta kath auta} (hereafter \textit{aka}) statements. An \textit{aka} predication will use what might most safely be called ‘the definitional ‘is’’. Typically in the dialogues such statements have the form
F(ness) is F. These are definitional in the sense that the predicate awaits the proper unpacking, which should culminate in the fully articulated definition upon the discovery or determination of the essence of the Form being defined. If to possess an essence, in the case of a Form, is for it to be or exist, then the world of Forms is the world of definable entities and exists simply in virtue of the fact that Forms are definable.

These definitional statements are to be distinguished from ordinary identity statements which, for Plato, will involve the subject’s relation to the Form Sameness. In virtue of partaking of Sameness each Form is self-identical. On the other hand, there is a Form, F, that can partake of Sameness and thus be self-identical, just because F, in a “conceptually prior” partaking, partakes of Being and thereby acquires or possess an essence. Naturally, Sameness, Difference and Being present special difficulties here. Consider Difference. Difference is a Form and hence Difference has an essence. When we wish to state this fact we would have to use ‘be’ in an aka fashion, i.e., ‘Different is (Is) different’. If this is correct, we find ourselves up against Plato’s declaration at d1 that Difference is always said [to be?] pros eteron, with respect to something else or with respect to something different. Now we cannot escape the bind merely by distinguishing ‘Difference’ used as subject and ‘is different’ used as predicate. For in our aka statement we can legitimately have ‘is different’ as predicate. By ‘Different is different’ we learn that The Different has a nature, that it Is that nature. In the injunction at d1-7 we are told that when ‘difference’ is predicated then the subject is being said to be different from something or everything else. When ‘is different’ is used in the aka statement, let us say that it is not being different that is predicated, but what it is to be different, for in effect we are saying that the essence is being predicated of The Form Difference. Thus, as with all other Forms, Difference is (Is) what it is, difference, in virtue of its own nature. In the case of everything else, however, there is little confusion when we point out that justice, simply in virtue of its own nature is not different from all other Forms. Rather Justice is different from all other Forms because of its participation in the Different. We must be careful not to think that what Justice is in virtue of its own nature contributes nothing to the grounding of its difference from all other Forms. In the case of every Form, each is different from every other because of its own nature, namely because it is a natured entity and hence Is, and because for Plato there is the meta-principle that each Form has one nature and each nature is the nature of exactly one Form. Recognition of this contribution allows us to say that just because something is a Form, it partakes of Difference. Hence, simply because it is a Form, Difference not only is (Is) what it is to be different, but it is different, where here we are using ‘is different’ in the pros eteron or pros allo sense. When we say that the Different is different from everything else, we assert that the Different partakes of itself. Nehamas, who has written trenchantly on this passage, runs into some difficulties here. He says that the statement, ‘the Different is different from everything else’, is not grounded in the nature of Difference, but “[R]ather, it is grounded in the fact that the Different, like everything else, partakes of the different and is distinguished from other things in virtue of possessing characteristics which it does not share with them.’ (357) With the first conjunct I have no quarrel. With the second I do. While possessing the characteristic of going through all the Forms will distinguish Difference from most Forms, what characteristic distinguishes Difference from the other megista gene or at least Sameness and Being? Pace Nehamas’ claim that the difference of Difference is not grounded in its own nature, I can think of nothing that distinguishes Difference from everything else except its possession of its own nature (or properties which are grounded in its nature).

Nehamas goes on to argue that we can understand statements of the form “The Beautiful itself is other than beautiful” or “The beautiful itself is not beautiful” as asserting not that “the nature of Beauty is not what it is, but only that Beauty possesses some other characteristic as well.” (363) This is established through a consideration of the role Sameness and Difference can play as second-order properties. We can say of a ball and a shirt that they are the same in virtue or respect of their sharing a property, say both of them are red. Sameness can range over all properties and be predicated on the basis of two things sharing some property. Similarly, Difference ranges over all properties and can be predicated on the basis of two things failing to share a property. In the case of Beauty, because being beautiful (or even partaking of beauty?) is a different property from, say, being the same as itself, we can say that Beauty is not beautiful and mean that it is something else, namely the same (as itself). Nehamas generalizes this treatment and concludes that we can say that Difference is different from Difference and grounds this in the fact that it is something other than different, namely, say, it is the same as itself. I agree. However, when he connects this treatment of the peculiar ‘is not’ statements, e.g., Beautiful is not beautiful’, with the grounding of the statement that the Different is different from everything else, he seems to be suggesting that the Different partakes of Difference because of some other character that it possesses. It seems that Nehamas believes that were it not the case that there were some other characteristic it possessed, the Different could not partake of Difference. This is wrong, I believe. The Different, like every Form, partakes of Difference simply because it is a Form. It is true that there will be other characteristics which Difference possesses; the megista gene
guarantee that each Form is what it is and, in addition, is whatever the \textit{megista gene} stand for. And this same fact renders it inconceivable that the Different or any Form could fail to have these properties. But it is not the possession of these properties which licenses or grounds the Different's partaking of itself. These kinds of facts are all dependent upon the nature of the Different. Because it has a nature, i.e. because it is a Form, the Different has these characteristics and, moreover, it is owing to the very nature of the Different that these are distinct characteristics. By the same token, there will be no characteristic that the Different possesses apart from possessing its nature that distinguishes it from the \textit{megista gene} which lack that characteristic. So, it is because it is other things besides what it is to be different that the Different can be said to be different from the Different. But it is because it is what it is, it is because of its nature, that it is these other things. And when we wish to explain why the Different self-participates,—in Nehamas' terms to ground the statement that it is different \textit{from everything else}—, we can not appeal to features that it has or lacks which distinguish it from everything, nor need we cite the other features, e.g., Sameness, that it has because it is a Form. It self-partakes because it is a Form, because every Form partakes of the Different.

Now the same pattern of argumentation, \textit{mutatis mutandis}, would show why the Same is the same and why it partakes of the Same, and why the One is one and partakes of the One. I forego these demonstrations in order to return to Being. We began this section puzzling over why there is a Form Being but no form Participation Itself. We have found that it is necessary in order to understand Plato's various remarks in this section of the \textit{Sophist} to appeal repeatedly to the Form's nature or essence. We appealed to essence when we explained what it is for a being to be said to be in the \textit{auta kath auta} fashion, and the possession of an essence was critical in the account of a Form's possession of other properties, especially Sameness and Difference. The notion of being an essence is thus at least on a par with the notion of being different from everything else and being the same as itself. Indeed, it is prior in that in order to be the same as itself, each Form must be what it is, and this is just what it is for a Form to be. Plato, I submit, conceives of Being as this generic property, i.e., \textit{essencing}. Each Form, when it partakes of Being, is esseneced and, once esseneced, can be said to be, —full stop if you like,— can be said to be different from everything else—which in the case of Forms means every other esseneced thing,— and can be said to be the same as itself. The temporal notions employed throughout these remarks must of course not be thought of as marking real distinctions in time. Rather they are confined to moments in the conceptual or logical dimension. There is no time when Difference is what it is to be different yet not different from all other Forms, as though it were waiting for them to partake of Being. Yet it is talk of Being partaking in Being or Difference Partaking of Being that is so difficult to wrap one's mind around. One source of the difficulty is that there is no subject, i.e., no Form, prior to the Form's partaking of Being. A second, perhaps related, and more profound difficulty is that we are wont in some way to regard Being as a Form on a par with Red when we consider how it is partaken of. Everything that is red partakes of Redness, and in partaking of Redness comes to be the same thing, namely red. We can say that everything that is partakes of Being, and then say that in partaking of Being everything comes to be the same thing, namely existing. But this I think it is not quite right, though I do not deny these claims. I would change the end of the second conjunct to read 'the same thing, namely a being'. For this better signals that what each becomes in partaking is its own unique nature or essence. What is common among all the Forms is that each is a thing of this kind, an esseneced thing, not that each possesses the same property, existence, or the same essence.

If this is coherent, then Plato has reason to postulate a Form Being. It also goes some way towards explaining why there is no Form Participation Itself. For the relation of partaking is common to all interactions among Forms and participants. The form Difference partakes of Being and partakes of Sameness. When it does so, it is tied to its object in different ways, not because of the relation but because of the nature of the relatum, Being. When it partakes of Being, it becomes essenced. I think that the special function of this Form to create or legitimize subjects for the partaking relation licenses Plato's postulation of a special way of being, what Plato describes as being said to be \textit{aka} partaking of Being, or what I have called Ising. We can say that the Form becomes characterized by Being, where it is understood a) that it was not a legitimate object before this partaking, and (b) provided that we understand that being characterized by Being does not entail that there is some single first-order property everything becomes in being so characterized. We can then say that in partaking of Sameness and Difference, each of these Forms does become characterized by these properties. Indeed all Forms are so characterized because they are Forms. (So, too, I think that just because they are Forms, all Forms partake of and hence are characterized by Beauty, Good, Motion and Rest. Hence all these Forms also self-predicate and self-participate.) There is a sense, however, in which Being is special in respect of self-participation. With the other self-participating Forms, they each acquire their respective natures in virtue of their participation in Being, and then go on to acquire the characteristic property that they constitute because of their nature. Being, too, acquires its nature by partaking in Being, whatever that nature might be. But it is hard to envisage what further participation in
Being could be appropriately described as self-participating. Here perhaps we can say is that there is no
difference with respect to Being between self-partaking and self-predicating. Or alternately, we can
appeal to the fact that in partaking of other Forms, each of which is itself a being, Being self-participates.

I have argued that participation, at least among Forms, is a primitive notion wherein the subject is
characterized by the property named by the predicate. The special exception is participation in Being, which,
because of its foundational role, has a special cachet and merits a special way of being said. If we are
satisfied that Being is a Form while partaking is not, then we can maintain our theory that there are two
basic predication relations in Plato only with some adjustments. One obvious adjustment is to assert that
while there are two predication relations in the middle period, there is only one in the later, namely
partaking. On behalf of this assertion we might point to the elevation of Being to the status of a Form and
Plato's recognition, apparently around the time of the Parmenides, that Forms also participate. However, if
we consider that when Being is partaken of, that partaking creates or endows entities with essences, we
can preserve everything we want from the Ising relation (provided that Forms alone partake of Being). To participate in Being is to become an entity of a special sort and once one is such an entity, then one can enter
into further relations with other entities of the same kind. These partaking relations will again characterize
the Form. If this is a correct way to view the matter, then we should go on to discuss three issues left over
from our discussion of predication and participation: 1) what is the relation between the Form and the
elements of the definition; 2) what is the status of second-order properties like Being a Form, or being able
to possess properties; and 3) what analysis can we give of particulars of the ordinary sort.

Let us begin with the first question. The problem is this: We seem to have a choice between the
Scylla of Hazzing, in which case the Horse itself partakes of, perhaps necessarily, Animality, and thus is an
animal; or the Charybdis of Ising, in which case The Horse itself is animal, and thus seems to possess two
essences, that of Horse and that of Animal. We can beat various retreats here. To avoid Scylla some
might protest that Forms are not like particulars when it comes to Having or partaking. They are abstract
objects and abstract objects, unlike particulars are not characterized when they partake. To think that they do
is to commit a 'level' confusion. This will not do as it stands, since Forms are characterized by certain
properties, e.g. the megista gene. Indeed, there are other properties true of Forms, for instance, eternity, non-spacality, immutability, not to mention some relational properties such as being capable of being
known or named. Whether there are Forms corresponding to all these properties is our second question. Yet
we can now say that these are the sorts of properties that Plato finds appropriate for Forms and
inappropriate for ordinary particulars. Nonetheless, were they predicated of particulars one would not assert
something nonsensical, just something false. We therefore have little reason to think that in partaking Forms
do not become characterized simply because they are Forms or abstract objects. They are characterized by
the properties that are appropriate to them (and necessarily so).

A second tack is to insist that the relation of predication obtaining between a particular and a Form
is a different relation from that which obtains between a Form and another Form. The genera-species
hierarchies of collection and division exhibit Plato's penchant for classifying Forms as related to one
another in some way, but he nowhere considers Forms to be characterized by the predicates which appear
above them in the hierarchies. So merely two predication relations will not do for the later Plato, if we some
kind of predication relation holds between the genera, species and differentiae of a classificatory scheme.
Now I think this is true as far as it goes, but I am not sure where it does go. The fact remains that some of
the relations between Forms concern properties that Forms do have, i.e. are characterized by, to wit the
above mentioned megista gene and the properties peculiar to Forms. As for the relations between the
'nodes' of the classificatory schema, I believe that the they amount to nothing more than relation of the
elements of the definition to the Form defined. If they do not, then we can say that this tack amounts to
insisting that there is some third relation special to this problem, some third relation which in general is not
specified in the dialogues.

Perhaps we are mislead in asking how the elements of the definition are related to the definiendum
by the syntactic complexity of the linguistic definition. Certainly Aristotle and, I think, Plato maintain that
the ontological correlate of this complex formula is itself not complex, but singular or unified. The
complexity of the linguistic formula, in combination with Aristotle's 'solution' of the problem through
appeal to genus and specific differentia, form and matter, and actuality and potentiality, have, I believe,
caused us to try to force Plato into a Procrustean bed. Though the Platonic divisions have a form resembling
that of a genus-species hierarchy, there is no hint in the dialogues that the genus is somehow ontologically
prior to the species, or vice-versa. With respect to their essences, each Form is equally freestanding and
independent. Coupled with this lack of ontological discrimination, however, is a methodological or heuristic
priority accorded the genus in Plato's method of division. But this amounts to the claim that the divisions
themselves, i.e., the results of Platonic diaries, should not be accorded existential force: they do not portray or represent the relational arrangements of the ideas, such that one idea is ontologically prior or posterior to another, or that one is a whole of which the others are parts. To view the diaries in this fashion is to mistake the method utilized by the later Plato to aid with the discovery of the unified and unitary Form for an analysis of the metaphysical nature of that Form. If we focus on the unitary nature of the Forms and the fact that diaries provides us only with an analytical program, not an existential map, we have little reason to think that the Forms either Have or Are the elements of their definitions. So, my conclusion is that there is no partaking between and hence no problem with the relation of a Form to the elements of its definition. That said, it does not follow that the relation between Forms and the relation between particulars and Forms are different. Sometimes Forms do partake of other Forms, and when they do, they are characterized by the property constituted by the Form of which they partake. What does follow is that we need to view on a different plane the relation between Forms that is investigated through the method of diaries. The relations are roughly those of compatibility, incompatibility and implication. These are elements within logical or epistemological categories, not ontological features of the world of Forms.

The mention of compatibility and implication brings me to the second question about properties or notions which, although apparently subject to some kind of one-over-many argument, do not seem to have Forms correlated with them. It is widely agreed now that there is no solid evidence that Plato accepted what might be called a semantic one-over many principle such that there is a Form corresponding to every predicate in the language. There are a variety of ways to discount the Republic's apparent argument to this effect, and there is the explicit testimony of the Statesman that not all cuts get you kinds. But this said, there remain a host of notions, such as participation, which seem to be sufficiently well entrenched in Plato's theories and for remarks about what there is, that some have tried to use these notions either to craft objections to Plato's theory or to salvage certain elements of them. We have seen how Ryle employs a one-over many argument to create a regress of participations. Other problematic notions for Plato include that of Form itself. Clearly there are many Forms and hence shouldn't there be a Form, Formhood itself, in virtue of which each of the Forms is a Form? Similarly, there will or should be the Particular Itself, the Soul itself, and so on for every kind of thing or category one finds in Plato's final metaphysics. Of the properties used to buttress a Platonic argument, the most often mentioned are being extended, persistence, being spatio-temporal, and being able to possess properties. These are pressed into service to ground the independence of particulars and thereby provide for particulars that are something, though what they are does not require their sharing in Forms. With such properties in hand, scholars have gone on to build reconstructions of Platonic particulars which allow them to partake of Forms without being either bare particulars or merely relational entities. Naturally, these same properties for which there are no Forms are useful in constructing 'Platonic solutions' to the problems of change, persistence and essential predication. For instance, the receptacle is said by Plato to have no properties for which there are Forms, so that it not interfere with the incoming images. Yet it is said to have a nature (physis) (e.g., Tim. 49a4-5, 50b5ff., especially 51a4-b4), namely the property of receiving or mirroring properties. Since there is no Form of this property, it follows, according to this line of reasoning, that at least one thing that is not a Form (or form-copy) can have a nature without having it in virtue of partaking of a Form.

There is talk of the receptacle having a nature, as well as being invisible and without shape or form. Yet, it is unclear to me that this particular use of phusis permits one to claim that it is essentially all receiving, or is constituted by this property for which there is no Form. The relation between the Receptacle and this property, being all receiving, does not seem to be that of Partaking or Being, i.e., the ways of being appropriate to particulars and Forms respectively. Nowhere does Plato talk of the ousia of the receptacle, nor does he ever speak of it as partaking except 'somehow of the intelligible in a most strange way' (51b1). Finally, attempts to define the receptacle at all or to assert that it is essentially or is constituted by any property or quasi-property strike me as inconceivable with the text. Not only does Timaeus insist that the receptacle is somehow a participant in a most perplexing way of the intelligible, that it is hard to grasp and grasped by some kind of bastard reasoning, but Plato's usually lucid prose becomes almost tortured in his depictions of the receptacle. I think that his prose deliberately reflects the status of the receptacle. It is a poset of reason, something required in and by his best theoretical account of the phenomena to be saved. It is not something that is to be defined within that account. There are very difficult questions here about how we should regard the categories utilized in his theorizing and his attitude towards them, questions about the nature or function or status of what we might call transcendental notions, or what we might consider a problem appropriately handled by meta-theory or in the meta-language. Whatever we make of the status of the very categories used in our theory or our account of his theory, it seems to me to be inappropriate to offer a second-order or transcendental notion as the essence or nature of a first-order entity, such as the receptacle. Be this as it may, the fact that Plato is so reticent to express himself about the
There are other properties or property-like entities to which appeal has been made to account for Platonic particulars, especially notions like being extended, being spatio-temporal and persisting. These, I think, fail to live up to their billings, which I shall attempt to show momentarily. But, along with 'being a particular' or 'being a universal', I think they, too, are categories of the theory, notions which logically prefigure any account of what there is of the sort that Plato has undertaken. They may be part of the proper study of Metaphysics. But, it seems clear that Plato does not assert (or want to assert) that his primitive kinds of *onta*, as that notion figures in his accounts, are themselves to be explained or constituted by second-order properties or categorical notions such as the property of being a Form, or being a particular, or being capable of receiving properties.

**PART III: PARTICULARS**

Finally, we come to particulars and predication. As I've indicated, the use of Non-Form properties has been key to some accounts of particulars in Plato, whether to explain the *physis* of the receptacle or to allow us to speak about independent particulars which can stand in relations to Forms. For the purposes of this talk, I will assume that a bare particular is one that lacks any essential properties, not one that lacks any properties at all. The debate I am interested in concerns whether or not Plato allows that particulars are a relational entities, and b) whether this entails that they (can) have no essential properties. It has been argued that Plato does allow for particulars with relational essential properties. Fine has put the case best.

According to her, Matthews and Cohen (M/C) are wrong to think that if some particular, x, is essentially F, then it is F not in virtue of its relation to F. A particular for Fine's Plato turns out to be a 'roughly independently identifiable spatio-temporal continuant' (p.248) which has (an) essential property by standing in a relation to some Form. Against M/C, Fine argues that there is nothing incoherent in the notion of a relational essential property. She cites in defense of relational essential properties Kripke's argument that I am essentially related to my parents. Other properties, e.g., being minted at the appropriate facility, say the Philadelphia mint, come to mind for the dime in my pocket. As for her claim that there are relational essential properties, I concede Fine's point. But I am not convinced that she has squarely answered the argument of M/C. For M/C, the critical principle is:

P) For x to be able to bear any relation R to something else y, x must be something in its own right, independently of its bearing R to y. (p.633)

My worry is whether Fine has confused being something essential relationally with being something in its own right. Fine has to show not that relational essential properties make sense, but rather that something, x, can be essentially something relationally without being something in its own right prior to or independently of its being essentially related to y. Consider the dime in my pocket. It is, I grant, essentially what it is, a dime, in virtue of a relational property, since in order to be a dime it must have been minted in Philadelphia. Yet, although it was not a dime prior to being minted, there was the metal or matter that acquired the property of being a dime when it was minted. Moreover, we can independently identify the metal in its own right. That is, while the dime came into being only when it acquired its relational essential property, the metal did not. Indeed, here we have a 'roughly identifiable spatio-temporal continuant' that becomes essentially something. The same is, I think, true of me; I am essentially related to my parents, although the matter--the pun is very much intended--, is more difficult to decide. In general, it seems to me that the question is whether we have in Plato a doctrine of particulars such that something which exists prior to any relation it might stand in becomes essentially F by being related to The F Itself, or whether we have the view that there is no particular prior to its relation to Forms. I do not deny the possibility that Socrates becomes a man by becoming essentially related to, i.e. participating in, the Form *Man*. I am urging, however, that such a possibility is itself founded on there being something that comes to be Socrates upon engaging in this relation, and that that thing, whatever it is, might not have become Socrates, and it might cease to be Socrates. The availability of matter in post-Cartesian philosophy affords us the vehicle for identifying what it is that becomes a dime, or becomes me. The unavailability of matter, or at least an appropriate analogue, would therefore preclude this option in a pre-Cartesian philosophy. I believe that there is no matter at all in Plato that could serve in this way as the something which becomes Socrates. And because I think there is no matter that can become, say, a particular man by dint of its 'essential relation' to *Man*, I will argue that Socrates is not essentially related to *Man*, though he is related to *Man*. I will contend, therefore, that Platonic particulars are bare particulars. They have all their properties via participation, they
have no essential properties in any way, and they are nothing besides or before partaking in some Form(s). There are at least three ways to ground particulars as capable of being something prior to their participation in Forms. The first alternative looks to the Phaedo’s distinction between what Simmias is in his own right and what he is in virtue of his relation to Largeness (102b8-c4). I do not wish to debate this controversial passage, since the Greek does not decide how we are to understand the notion “what he is in his own right”. Suffice it to say that if Plato at one time thought that particulars should be treated as essentially something in their own right apart from participating in some property, he appears to have rethought this view by the time of the Timaeus. This dialogue provides the evidence for the other aforementioned ways. Here scholars have found matter or something which can serve as the particular independent of and prior to its partaking in Forms; for instance, something which partakes of properties, such as being extended, for which there are no Forms. Having already discussed why I find the theoretical presuppositions behind such views questionable, let me now address the textual evidence furnished by the Timaeus. What evidence is there that particulars of any kind exist prior to their participation in Forms? Since we are looking for particulars, I ignore the receptacle. My question concerns the textual support for the view that either discrete particulars of some kind, e.g., fire atoms or water atoms, or matter are available in the Timaeus to stand in as a relatum in the participation relation.

Two passages have been adduced in support of the notion that some particular-like entities predate the intrusion of Forms into the receptacle. The first is the so-called much-misread passage (49c7-50c4). The second is the description of the precosmos at 52d2-53b5. In the former, some of those who would find matter or primitive particulars of some kind argue that the moral of the much-misread passage is that there are samples of the traditional elements. However, because they are ‘impure’, i.e., mixed with the other elements, when we point at such a sample and call it ‘fire’ we should not be misled into thinking that we have identified what fire is. Rather, since all sensible fire samples are impure, we must say not ‘that is fire’ but ‘that sort of thing is fire’, so as to avoid the implication that there are pure samples of Fire in the sensible world. Another tack is taken by those who would argue that there is some kind of primitive matter, or some principle, that is permanent and stable and, because it is a constituent of the sensible or phenomenal bits of fire or water, confers upon them sufficient stability and permanence that our words can hook on or refer to the phenomena. Finally, there is the line of interpretation that saves the phenomena by arguing that Plato here wants us to reconstrue or to change the construal of our statements, from identifying statements to attributive statements, all the while maintaining that the nature of the phenomena does not change when we do so. The assumption common to all three positions is that sensible fire and the other sensible elements are not reducible to or eliminable in favor of the receptacle. They all want to deny that ‘sensible fire does not really exist’, a view they associate with Chemiss. The second passage (52d2-53c3) is far too controversial to address adequately in this section of the paper. Suffice it to say that the traces, ἡχόν (53b2), present in the primordial or precosmic chaos are thought to support the claim that there is something that can serve as the relatum on the left side of the participation relation, or which can possess extension or some other property for which there are no Forms. These traces, by participating in Forms, become sensible particulars of the traditional sort.

As for the notion that there is matter in the Timaeus, perhaps it is sufficient to note that the term ὤλη occurs only once (69a6) and carries the non-technical sense of wood or woody stuff, not the technical sense introduced by Aristotle. Of course, this is not what the believers stake their claim on. They would insist rather that unless we introduce matter, or ultimate material simples, or some kind of material principle, we cannot make sense of the two passages discussed above. Instead of ‘matter’, ὤλη, the term that carries the sense of ‘matter’ is σῶμα, or ‘body’. The connection between body, matter, and extension is surely close, and to this extent the idea of grounding the independence of particulars or sensibles in the primitive status of extended bodies is unattractive. Sensibles are then viewed as bodies occupying (a place in) space, and the receptacle is accordingly viewed as introduced into the discussion in order to provide a place or space for the primitive, ineliminable swmata of the traditional elements. It is the swmata that stand in the participation relation to the Forms or to quasi-properties, and they are located in the receptacle. To the objection that this is just to ignore all of Plato’s talk of μίμημα or form-copies of Forms entering and exiting the receptacle, perhaps the reply would be that this is just metaphor, whose cash value is just that these bodies have or acquire properties, and that forms are responsible for the properties in some hard to explain way.

To the extent that proponents of the view that sensibles are irreducible or ineliminable take issue with Chemiss’ interpretation of the much-misread passage and the Timaeus in general, I cannot
specifically address there counter-arguments. The thrust of the criticism is encapsulated in the claim that Chêmis introduces a fourth primitive into the Timaeus. It seems to me a curiosity that one would fault a position for trying to eliminate something or reduce something to something else by claiming that the position adds an additional primitive. It suggests that some aspect of the argument was unclear or perhaps missed by the critics. Such is the case, I believe. Since I am not interested so much in the details of Chemiss' papers, or those of his critics, let me call the view I will defend the reconstructionalist position. The key claim of this position is that body, swma, is not a primitive in Plato's ontology; or equivalently, that matter is not a primitive notion for Plato. Along with this claim, the reconstructionalist also takes issue with the notion that the receptacle is introduced as a third primitive merely added to Forms and sensibles in order to provide for place or space. We maintain rather that the receptacle is introduced as the first element in a new non-reductive analysis of the phenomena. In support of this reading of the role of the receptacle, consider the criticism of the previous cosmologists (48b3-c2). They had gone wrong in thinking that the four traditional elements were either atoms or molecules, letters or syllables. According to the reconstructionalist, to allow the phenomena to be (or remain) uninfluenced in their internal make-up by the receptacle is to allot them the same status as had the earlier cosmologists and as had Timaeus himself in his first account. What then are the phenomena according to the reconstructionalist? They are compounds of the receptacle and Form-copies. Here of course is where the charge of a new fourth primitive seems to have bite: for are not the form-copies a new fourth primitive where only three are available? The answer of course is yes: they are new to the account and are viewed by Timaeus as something like a primitive, but no, they do not constitute a fourth primitive. Rather, they along with the receptacle replace the phenomena on the list of primitives, so one still is left with only three.

If we reconstructionists can defend ourselves against the charge of ontological inflation in this manner, are we not guilty of reducing or eliminating the sensibles? I am not sure what reduction or elimination amounts to in the hands of these critics, but I do not believe a reconstructionist eliminates the phenomena or the sensibles, and I certainly do not think we must or do reduce them to something in any objectionable sense. Perhaps the best way to approach this topic is to refocus attention on the status of body in the Timaeus. And perhaps the best way to do that is to consider what will strike many as the difference in respect of status between Timaeus' traditional elements and the elements of the previous cosmologists, those which enjoyed the status of atom or molecule. What Timaeus does of course is to geometrize the elements. Fire is not a στοιχείον or a συλλαβή because it is a construction of many different triangles. It is a pyramid, whose faces are 4 in number, each of which itself is composed of 6 half-equilateral elements. The geometrization of the elements takes us to the heart of the controversy. Those who would have the receptacle be the basic particular concede that one must somehow divide the homogeneous space of the receptacle into places. Similarly, those who would have body be a primitive in Plato must admit that the best account of these bodies views them not as the bodies of the elements as such, but as the shaped matter posited in the geometrical account. However, the geometrical bodies or shapes, the allegedly basic elements of the traditional elements, are themselves not unanalyzable. Timaeus, when he begins his geometrical account, states clearly that "it is obvious to anyone that fire, earth, air, and water, are bodies; and all body has depth. Depth, moreover, must be bounded by surface." (33c4-7) The critical elements in this account are depth (βαθύς) and being bounded by surface, not body as such. It is the function of the Geometrical forms to account for the bounding of surfaces to provide for depth and thereby make available to the natural philosopher the elementary bodies which he can use to construct the traditional elements. That these are the fundamental notions is further indicated by Timaeus' concession that perhaps the two kinds of triangles he will use are not necessary, that is, that perhaps one can build the bodies of the four elements and, hence, everything else from other geometrical figures.

If all body must have depth and depth must be bounded by surface, what is bounded? The answer is the receptacle in its role as space or χώρα. The bounding of space creates both place, τόπος, and geometrically shaped figures with depth. The different geometrical Forms provide what heretofore in the Timaeus was merely assumed, namely the vehicle to bound space. So the analysis of body into Receptacle and geometrical Forms is a new feature of the account begun at 48e2. That these geometrical Forms provide for the bounding of space also explains how the homogeneous receptacle comes to have or be places, for the bounded areas will be discrete and distinct from one another. But these geometrical Forms only tell half the story of the nature of sensible particulars. For while they provide for the quantitative dimensions of the particulars,—and I might add thereby show that there is no need to appeal to a Form-less property like being extended,—they do not account for the qualitative features of the sensible particulars. These features, e.g., being fiery, or being watery, are instead assigned by Timaeus to the traditional Forms, Fire itself, Water itself, etc. Instances of these Forms, as well as instances of the geometrical Forms, enter and exit the
receptacle. In the full analysis of a sensible particular appeal will be made therefore to both kinds of Forms, the geometrical and the traditional. The two accounts, which I will call the Formal and the Geometrical, turn out to be complementary. The geometrical Forms provide for the places where the various form-copies of the traditional Forms enter and exit the receptacle. The form-copies of the traditional Forms, on the other hand, provide for the qualitative or phenomenal features of the particular instances of fire, water, air and earth. Thus the full analysis of a phenomenal instance of fire, or a sensible fire (instance), will mention both types of Forms, or better, form-copies of both types of Forms, and the receptacle.

Does this account of sensible particulars eliminate them from the ontology or reduce them to the receptacle or anything(s) else? No. It does not eliminate them; Plato feels no compunction about talking in terms of sensibles and particulars. Nor do I think we reconstructionists have reduced sensible particulars to anything else. I have certainly offered an analysis of sensible particulars in terms of form-copies and the receptacle. However, I have not argued that a particular is reducible to the receptacle and the Forms. I do not believe that Plato tried, or that one can, reduce particulars to Universals or properties, even bundles of them. Plato does not try to reduce or account for the particularity of the particulars. On the contrary, he accepts particularity as a primitive notion. But instead of granting primacy or primiveness to particular bits of matter or particulars as they are traditionally conceived, i.e., spatio-temporal continuants or the primary substances of the *Categories*, he accords it to the form-copy or property-instance of Forms. They provide for the partitioning of the receptacle and the particularity of the sensible particulars. Of course, the varieties of reduction so often discussed in modern articles and books is not to be found in Plato. The only potential reduction, it seems to me, is a reduction of the traditional Forms, e.g., Fire itself or Man itself, to geometrical Forms. As for the sensible particulars themselves, what they are is nothing less than, but also nothing more than, a collection of form-copies of the traditional forms, including form-copies of Man and other 'highly complex' Forms, in a field defined by the form-copies of the geometrical Forms.

Naturally, the more complex the particular, the more complex will be both the form-copies present to the field and the number and combination of triangles composing that particular. The persistence of particulars will then be explained both through appeal to the persistence of certain geometrical shapes and the coincidental conjunction of the appropriate form-copies for the 'same length of time'. One can, I believe, sophisticate the account so that it is not merely coincidental that the form-copy, say, of Bipedality accompanies the form-copy of Man, by developing an account of necessary having based on the implication relations obtaining between Forms.

The intuitive problem with this story is that it makes it seem all too convenient that the right form-copies should be matched up with the right geometrical shapes so that the phenomenal properties and the material aspects or properties of man are co-instantiated in the same place or contiguous places for the same length of time. One cannot dispel entirely the air of *ad-hocness* here. But nor should one have to. The fact that the appropriate shapes have the appropriate causal properties is not simply a function of geometry. Considered from the demiurgic point of view, the shapes are chosen and put together in the appropriate way because the demiurge knows the Form, Fire itself, and thus knows what characteristics the triangular elements must produce in the sensible fire molecules.

The account presented in the *Timaeus*, if I am right, yields particulars that are nothing but bundles of Form-copies. Because they are bundles of Form-copies or property-instances, some traditional objections to bundle particulars are obviated. Because they are property-instances, more than one form-copy can occupy the same place at the same time. Because no two instances are identical, nothing could share all the properties of anything else—they cannot even share one—even though two particulars could be indiscernible in that they each have the same properties, i.e., because they each have property-instances of the same traditional Forms. Any given particular would be a collection of form-copies of the traditional Forms residing in or located in a particular region of the receptacle. A region would be demarcated by the form-copies of the appropriate geometrical Forms, which constitute the (outer edges of the) body of the particular. Participation by the particular in a Form thus amounts to the addition of a form-copy to the collection of form-copies that comprise the particular. Strictly speaking, the addition or loss of a form-copy amounts to the coming-into being of a new particular and the destruction of the old one. Plato might justifiably consider this state to be one of flux. But I do not believe that Plato regards all the properties of a particular as on a par. By the later dialogues, if not before, he realized that Forms come in families and that some Forms implicate others. Hence some particulars will lose and gain some properties in groups. Moreover, once he has satisfactorily constructed the bodies of particulars from geometrical shapes, the persistence of certain configurations will allow him to fix certain properties as stable and persisting and others as more transient. Finally, if he can work out an account of how soul infuses or invades these regions of the receptacle where there are bodies of the requisite sort, he can gain added stability for some particulars.
Yet, no particular configuration of triangles nor any collection of properties will remain totally frozen. The impermanence of these constituents of the particular are one reason behind Plato's denial of essential properties to them. This picture will not delight those enamored of Aristotle's hylomorphic compounds. But Plato is not attracted to his student's views on the matter. The implication relation holding between Forms allows him to claim that there are what we might call conditional necessities true of particulars; for example, the claim that as long as Socrates is a man he is rational, or necessarily rational, or that as long as this water is snow it is cold. But it is not metaphysically necessary that Socrates be a man, or that this water be snow. The flux of particulars is grounded in this absence of necessity, this transience of properties, and finally in the characterlessness of the receptacle, which is the foundation for all the material aspects of a particular. Looked at from the other direction, the flux of particulars is due to their dependence on Forms for all their properties. Here flux just is the lack of independence that distinguishes Platonic particulars from Aristotelian particulars. In one sense of Necessity, Plato thinks that particulars are totally contingent creatures. It is not necessary that the demiurge construct the world, or that Form-copies congregate in the appropriate fashion. However, this is to take too dim a view of the creation myth. Given the nature of the Demiurge, or if, like me, you view the creation as mythical, given the nature of the receptacle and the Forms, particulars are the inevitable result of the natures of these two primitive elements of the Ontology. Forms beget from-copies and the form-copies in conjunction with the receptacle produce particulars. Essence remains locked in the Forms and in their immediate offspring, inaccessible to, though strived after, by sensible particulars.


3Ibid. pp.414-16.

4For his own qualifications see, e.g., p.414, note 11, note 24 and pp.424-29. The incorporation of form-copies as the things that particulars Have will necessitate some emendations to the logic.


7See Fine, SEP, pp.45ff. for this account and further references.

8On this line of reasoning, the dispute between Plato and his most famous student boils down to whether being a substance, an ousia, entails that that entity is a particular. Aristotle says yes, Plato says no.

9On this line of reasoning, the dispute between Plato and his most famous student boils down to whether being a substance, an ousia, entails that that entity is a particular. Aristotle says yes, Plato says no.

10Cf. Code, p.46.

11Cf. Fine, SEP, p.35.

12Code would reply, I think, that the linguistic predicability of the definition is sufficient to show that the essence is ontologically I-predicable of the item defined, but it does not follow from the fact that some particular Has (ontologically) an essence that the linguistic definition is predicatable of the (name of the) particular. The definition is viewed as only I-predicable. Hence the definitional separation of Forms is preserved because the I-definition is predicable only of the Form. Note that the problem generated by the identity of Form and essence is not restricted to Forms of natural kinds: Whiteness is identical with its essence. Since Socrates Has whiteness, he should also Have the essence of Whiteness and hence the definition of Whiteness should be I-predicable of Socrates. But it is not, which gives Code reason to argue that H-predicability is independent from definitional separation. While this is a plausible account of Aristotle's position, it is difficult to see why Plato would be moved to adopt it. Lacking the notion of 'paronymy' and the attendant machinery of the Categories, it would mean that Plato is moved to separate Forms because a linguistic predicate can not be properly attached to a subject-term, even though the property introduced by the predicate does belong to the referent of the subject-term. Since I believe that the linguistic predicability of a predicate is explained by the metaphysical facts, I discount the option offered by Code. See F. Lewis, 'Plato's Third Man Argument and the "Platonism" of Aristotle,' in J. Bogen and J.E. McGuire, How Things Are, (Dordecht, 1983), pp.000.

13The causal efficacy of the property seems to require that whatever aspect of the property is immanent should be responsible for the causes in the physical world.

14If Time permitted, I would here introduce the second hypothesis of the Parmenides into the discussion. What we make of the claim that while Unity and Being are never found apart nonetheless we can grasp each by itself in thought, (143a6-9) is liable to have profound consequences for any account of separation of Forms from one another, and for my account of the possibility of (I-)predicating essences of both Forms and form-copies.


17See, for instance, Armstrong, p.70-71: 'It appears, then, that the Relation regress holds against all relational analyses of what it is for an object to have a property or relation.' (underlined phrase is my emphasis)

18For instance, in both cases English speakers use the expression 'is', although the two cases represent different kinds of predication or different relations.

19I blush to confess that I am relying on my notes here for my portrayal of Frede's account in Praedikation und Existenzaussage. My university library has been so far unable to find its copy or acquire one through inter-library loan.

Another option is to allow all forms to self-predicate. Another traditional interpretation of this passage is that what is being marked off is two kinds of predicates, namely complete predicates and incomplete ones. Complete predicates are those that can be the predicate in a statement of the form ‘a is b’ and yield a sense such that the statement can be understood as is. Incomplete are those predicates which yield statements that cannot be so understood, because they must be added on to in some sense. This approach is neutral with respect to the predication relation utilized in these statements. On the other hand, it is silent about the notion of predicate being used here and the eligible substituenda for the name-variable ‘a’. Can the predicates ‘large’ or ‘equal’ or ‘good’, three admittedly incomplete predicates, be subjects in sentences of the form ‘Good Itself is...’? Since there are Forms correlated with these predicates they can occur as subjects. But if they can occur as subjects, then what are we to say about sentences where the predicate appears on both sides of the ‘is’? Is it used there incompletely or not? Here too then we might find appeal made to different senses of the copula, depending upon how these different kinds of predicates are being used, assuming that they are different kinds of predicates.

For Plato, if some property-like entity turns out not to be definable, then it lacks an essence—and, hence, cannot be said to be ἀκά, and it fails to exist in any way that he would have us understand the Greek expressions equivalent to this use of ‘exist’. Such is Plato’s problematic of ‘being’, not our problematic of ‘existence’.

Here, again, the pattern of inferences in the second hypothesis of the Parmenides needs to be considered: starting from a one-being, Parmenides/Plato ‘generates’ Difference through consideration of our conceptual abilities to at once isolate and consider in tandem Unity and Being.


This would be consonant with Nehamas’ reading. It is suggested by the argument at 256d11-257a6.

Recall that Ising or I-predication links an essence to a subject. Note also that nothing precludes a subject from necessarily Having or being characterized by some property. Necessity is neutral with respect to the predication relations.

The completed reconstruction of a hierarchy will begin from the genus and descend to the infima species.

Scholars are split over this issue. Code, pp.426-9, allows that a Form Has the elements of its definiendum. Meinwald, Plato’s Parmenides, (Oxford, 1989) (following Frede?), I think, would claim that the elements of the definition are essentially or I-predicated (my phrasing) of the definiendum. Moravscik’s intensional mereology also should be read as having ontological force, ‘Plato’s Method of Division,’ in Patterns In Plato’s Thought, (Dordecht, 1973) p.166.


‘Being constituted’ has the advantage of not having a counterpart in Plato’s Greek, but it is problematic nonetheless. First, it is not just all receiving, but shapeless and invisible, so it would seem to be equally constituted by these properties. Second, it does receive the whole gamut of form-copies and throughout itself, so there are reasons to think it is related to these properties (too) via constitution. Cf. McPherran, art.cit.

Following Fine, RE p.229, especially note 8.

Additional references for further reading:


Fine also appeals to the relation ‘being a copy of’ with reference to a picture of Reagan. Since this example introduces many additional concerns, e.g., the image analogy in Plato, the nature of representations, I cannot go into the details of this example.

I concede that some philosophers have thought that an object can come into being simultaneously with or in virtue of some relation. I have difficulty understanding how this can be. Cf. The objection of John Boler discussed in RE, p.236 note 23.

I omit from the discussion the nature and role of souls.

In order to generate particulars we would somehow have to ‘divide’ the receptacle. See below pages....

Fine, RE, p.239.


53d4-54a6. See also the initial account of the construction at 31-2.
Forms included among the 'et cetera' are Forms of all the traditional elements, Forms of all the kinds of things 'constructed' from these elements, e.g., metals and liquids, and Forms of more complex entities such as Man and Horse.

Such a Pythagorized Plato would be congenial to many. Robert Turnbull has advocated this approach in my presence continuously over the years.