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The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter

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## SAGP Newsletter 2008/9.2 Central

Anthony Preus

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# SOCIETY FOR ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Founded 1953

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## NEWSLETTER 2008/9.2

You are cordially invited to the meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy with the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association, Thursday, February 18, 2009, 5:15-8:15 p.m., Palmer House Hilton, Chicago.

Chair: Fred Miller, *Bowling Green State University*

Elliot C. Welch, *University of Maine at Farmington*, "On the Property Identity Requirement in Socratic Definitions"

Anna Greco, *University of Guelph*, "Philosophers and the Job of Ruling in Plato's *Republic*"

Edward C. Halper, *University of Georgia*, "Aristotle's Generic Being"

These papers are attached.

Later in the semester, we will be distributing the papers for the meeting with the Pacific Division: April 8-12, 2009, at The Westin Bayshore, Vancouver.

Chair: Deborah Modrak, *University of Rochester*

Mason Marshall, *Pepperdine University*, "Democracy in Plato's *Republic*: How Bad Is It Supposed to Be?"

Aimee Koeplin, *Loyola Marymount University*, "The Persuasive Force of Preambles in Plato's *Laws*"

Ian Flora, *University of Michigan*, "Aristotle on [Part of] the Difference between Belief and Imagination."

Members of the Society will receive those papers in advance of those meetings.

### SAGP DUES (FYI)

Dues for electronic receipt of the papers are \$10 per year US. Dues for hard copy receipt of papers is \$20 per year US. Make out your check to SAGP. We honor multi-year dues payments. Those who do not have a US funds checking account are especially encouraged to pay by credit card, since that avoids bank charges.

### SAGP Speaker Policy

The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy sponsors sessions with the annual meetings of the Eastern, Central, and Pacific Divisions of the American Philosophical Association, and the annual meeting of the American Philological Association. There is also an annual meeting with the Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science and other groups. Occasionally the SAGP meets with various other societies. Those wishing to present a paper at any meeting of the SAGP are requested to contact [apreus@binghamton.edu](mailto:apreus@binghamton.edu). Membership in SAGP is required for consideration of papers by the SAGP program committees.

Submitters of papers for the meetings with the two APAs should include their name and address directly below the title of the paper on a separate title page, and nowhere else; that allows for anonymous review by the Program Committee. Submitters should also include a cover indicating the meeting(s) of the Society at which they would like, or be willing, to present the paper. We very much prefer electronic submissions; make the email message itself the "cover

page”, and attach the paper. We prefer attachments in Word (“.doc”) or “Rich Text Format” (“.RTF”); if you have some other program that you want to use, please contact [apreus@binghamton.edu](mailto:apreus@binghamton.edu) first. A word to the wise – electronic transmission tends to garble Greek (because not all the reviewers have the same Greek fonts installed), so please transliterate. **The Program Committee has requested that submissions be limited to 3000 words MAX, and suggests that submissions less than 1000 words are too short to be evaluated effectively.** Accepted papers may be revised up to a max of 5000 words for distribution.

If you must submit in paper copy, we require 7 copies of the paper.

**Deadlines:**

**February 1** for Eastern Division meeting following December and/or the American Philological Association meeting the following January.

**June 1** for the annual SAGP/SSIPS meeting, held in October of each year, scheduled this year for Oct. 16, 17, 18, Fordham Lincoln Center. An abstract, by email, is sufficient, but the June 1 deadline is important. Abstracts for this meeting will be reviewed by a program committee chaired by Thornton Lockwood; there will be a CFP before June 1, 2009, with instructions about how to submit.

**August 1** for Pacific and Central subsequent Spring Semester.

These deadlines reflect the necessity for a month turnaround to the Program Committee and a month to put the program together. Submitters should expect a response about six weeks after each of the deadline dates. The members of the Program Committee are: the President (Deborah Modrak) and Secretary (A. Preus), ex officio; John Anton, Elizabeth Asmis, Fred Miller, Julius Moravcsik, and Thomas M. Robinson.

## On the Property Identity Requirement in Socratic Definitions

Elliot C. Welch, *University of Maine at Farmington*

*For presentation at the meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy*

*With the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association,*

*February 2009*

### I. Introduction

In some recent discussions of the requirements for Socratic definitions, the property identity condition is conspicuously absent.<sup>1</sup> *Charmides* 160E3-161B2, I maintain, is textual evidence of the following commitment for Socratic definitions: that the definiens and the definiendum are identical properties. In brief, Socrates asks Charmides to look into himself and say what temperance (*sophrosune*) is. Charmides replies that it is modesty (*aidos*). But temperance is always good whereas modesty is not always good. So, modesty cannot define temperance. Why does this argument imply that Socrates is committed to property identity between definiens and definiendum? Because the argument relies on the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals. The puzzle of this interpretation, however, is that it is a textual counterexample to reading expressions like, “temperance is good” as Pauline predications, i.e. “Temperance is such that anyone who possesses it is necessarily good.”

This is not to say that the definiens expression and the definiendum expression must be synonymous. Socrates allows for a wide linguistic variability in *how* one might indicate the property in question, as at *Charmides* 163D1-E2, where he gives Critias permission to define each word the way he likes so long as he makes clear its application.

The historical precedent for taking *Charmides* 160E3-161B2 as evidence of the property identity requirement in Socratic definitions comes from Nakhnikian; he observes that the argument at this passage develops in the following way:

“Socrates is not content merely with the observation that there is no perfect coincidence between the class of temperate men and the class of modest men. He goes on to argue to the conclusion that the property of temperance is not the same as the property of modesty.”<sup>2</sup>

The suggestion is that if Socrates hadn't meant to bring to light that he expects a property identity relation to obtain in an adequate definition of temperance, he would have criticized Charmides' answer differently. How would he have criticized it differently?

Some examples from other dialogues can illustrate how the argument might have gone.

Socrates' typical criticism in a number of the so-called early dialogues is to provide a counterexample to the proposed definition, showing that the definition fails to provide either a necessary or sufficient condition for the application of the definiendum. In other words, the definiens fails to be extensionally equivalent to the definiendum. At *Meno* 73C9-D1, for example, being suited to ruling over others cannot apply to virtuous

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<sup>1</sup> See Dancy's *Plato's Introduction of Forms* (2004: 80-81) for an identification of the conditions to which Socrates is committed. In a more recent article, Gerson defends the thesis that the *logos* of an *ousia* is an expression of the understanding of the material identity between an instance of the *definiendum* and some property or properties and all other instances of the *definiens*. See Gerson's "Definition and Essence in the Platonic Dialogues," *Methexis* 19 (2006) p. 21-39.

<sup>2</sup> See Nakhnikian (1971) "Elenctic Definitions," in *The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by G. Vlastos. 125-157.

slaves; thus being suited to ruling over others is not necessary for being virtuous. At *Republic* I.331D1-2, speaking the truth and giving back what one has taken cannot in all cases be a just thing to do, as in returning the weapons you've borrowed from someone out of his mind; thus speaking the truth and giving back what one has taken is not sufficient for being just. And so, it would have been sufficient to undermine Charmides' answer if Socrates were merely to cite a modest man from ancient history who happened also to be intemperate, provided that Charmides, too, would agree that this person was indeed modest, but not temperate. Nakhnikian claims that indeed a stronger relationship than merely extensional equivalence is what Socrates is after: he expects an identity relation between the definiens and definiendum to obtain, if the definition is adequate.

As Santas points out, only two possibilities are available for the relationship between definiens and definiendum:<sup>3</sup>

- (1) the class of things that have the definiendum as an attribute is identical to the class of things that has the definiens as an attribute. (This doesn't require that the definiens and definiendum be identical.)

Or:

- (2) The attribute that is the definiendum is identical with the attribute that is the definiens.

We can see that (2) entails (1), but (1) does not entail (2). The well-worn renate/chordate example will serve as an illustration of this distinction. Renates (creatures with kidneys) and chordates (creatures with hearts) are extensionally equivalent. Every creature that has a kidney also has a heart, and every creature that has a heart also has a kidney. Yet the property of having a kidney is distinct from the property of having a heart. If Socrates were to ask Charmides what a renate is, and Charmides were to say that it is a creature with a heart, which is a definition for chordate, Socrates would be unable to cite a counterexample, in his typical manner, to the proposed definiens because of their extensional equivalence.<sup>4</sup> He would have to criticize Charmides answer in a different way.

Now, it is clear from the myriad examples that Socrates must at least think that (1) holds. But why should Socrates expect a stronger logical relationship, i.e. (2), to hold between definiens and definiendum? According to Santas, for example, *Charmides* 160E3-161B2 does not show that Socrates believes something stronger, i.e. (2), is an adequacy condition in Socratic definitions. This is because a crucial premise in the argument that temperance is good is ambiguous: it can be read as a straightforward subject-predicate expression, or as a Pauline predication, i.e. "Temperance is such that anyone who has it is necessarily good." *Charmides* 160E3-161B2 is evidence for the property identity condition only if the claim that temperance is good is unambiguous. Since it isn't, the passage can be evidence for property identity.

I argue against Santas' claim that *Charmides* 160E-161B can be read ambiguously. Thus, I provide additional support for the Nahknikian interpretation. Of course, defending this position requires a discussion of Pauline predication as well, which I do in section III. In section IV of the paper, I explain a puzzle in my interpretation. As it turns out, if *Charmides* 160E3-161B2 expresses a commitment to property identity, then

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<sup>3</sup> See Santas (1979) *Socrates: Philosophy in Plato's Early Dialogues*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

<sup>4</sup> For Socrates' own example of an answer to "What is shape?" that only meets extensional equivalence, see *Meno* 75A8-C1.

it works as a counterexample to the Pauline predication reading of such expressions as “temperance is good.”

## II. The Basic Argument

I point out that the property identity condition is read from this argument indirectly: in order for it to develop successfully, the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals is implied. The explicit text of the argument at *Charmides* 160E-161B is as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- [1] “Well, temperance seems to me to make people ashamed and bashful, and so I think modesty must be what temperance really is.” (160E3-5)
- [2] “But didn’t we agree just now that temperance was an admirable thing?” (160E6-8)
- [3] “And it would follow that temperate men are good?” (160E9-10)
- [4] “And could a thing be good that does not produce good men?” (160E11-12)
- [5] “Then not only is temperance an admirable thing, but it is a good thing.” (160E13-160A1)
- [6] “Well then, you don’t agree with Homer when he said that ‘modesty is not a good mate for a needy man’?” “Oh but I do,” (161A2-5)
- [7] “So it seems to be the case that modesty both is and is not a good.” (161A6-7)
- [8] “But temperance must be a good if it makes those good in whom it is present and makes bad those in whom it is not.” “Why yes, it seems to me to be exactly as you say.” (161A8-10)
- [9] “Then temperance would not be modesty if it really is a good and if modesty is no more good than bad.” (161A11-B2)

An abbreviated version of this argument might go something like this (I indicate upon which statements these premises rely):

- [1\*] Temperance=<sub>df</sub>Modesty (Charmides’ definition from [1])
- [2\*] Temperance is (always) good (conclusion at [5], supposedly derived from [2], [3], and [4])<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See the Sprague translation in (1997) *Plato: Collected Dialogues*, edited by Cooper. Hackett.

<sup>6</sup>The textual difficulties of this part of the argument are imposing. For a discussion, see Dancy (2004: 109-114).

[3\*] Modesty is not (always) good (articulated at [7], but derived from [6])

[4\*] If  $a=b$ , then for any  $F$ ,  $a$  has  $F$  iff  $b$  has  $F$ . (Indiscernibility of Identicals)<sup>7</sup>

[5\*] Temperance  $\neq_{df}$  Modesty

In this argument, Socrates and Charmides establish that temperance – a character trait or quality – is good in all circumstances, i.e. good because it makes those who possess it good, and anything that makes those who possess it good must be good (see [8] above.) Modesty-also a character trait or quality – is not good in some circumstances, i.e. when possessed by a needy man. This is what distinguishes these two qualities: temperance is always good, but modesty is not. So, being unqualifiedly good is something temperance has but modesty lacks. Let's now turn to Santas' objection to this reading.

According to Santas, the claim “temperance is (always) good” may be read ambiguously either as “temperance is good” or “anyone who has temperance is necessarily good.” In other words, this passage could be an instance of Pauline predication, where the attribute is not predicated of the property in the subject term of the expression, but rather of the unnamed members of the class of things indicated by the subject term of the expression. For support, he compares *Charmides* 160E-161B to *Laches* 192CD, which are similar in all the right respects: It is clearly indeterminate whether “Courage is admirable,” which is a premise at *Laches* 192C-D should be read as “Anyone who is courageous is necessarily admirable.” But to understand Santas' objection more clearly, we must understand what Pauline predication is, and the motivation for thinking such predications are Pauline.

### III. Pauline Predication

In passages like *Laches* 192C-D, we have an option of reading a premise in an argument in two different ways, so Santas suggests. But, strictly speaking, there is no such option, once we recognize that if we can read such sentences as Pauline predications, we must so read them.

A long history of scholarship debate in Plato concerns how to interpret statements like, “Justice is just,” or “Beauty is beautiful.” At one time, there were only two possibilities in the literature: Either such statements are read as straightforward subject-predicate statements, or they are read as identities. Read as an identity, “Justice is just” would simply be “Justice is Justice.” The straightforward reading was apparently the more natural of the two.

Turning to analogous statements like, “Justice is pious,” which appears at *Protagoras* 331B2, or “Piety is just,” which appears at *Euthyphro* 11E7-12A2, we recognize that the identity reading is not available. Thus, we are forced to read such statements as straightforward subject-predicate statements. This is problematic since to do so would be to suppose that Plato wants an abstract form to have a property that only concrete individuals would have, which was absurd. It became evident to Vlastos that in “Piety is just” the copula was not meant to assign the predicate to the *eidōs* itself, but rather to the unnamed instances of that *eidōs*. Thus, a more satisfactory reading of the

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<sup>7</sup> See Lowe (2002) *A Survey of Metaphysics*. Oxford, pg. 23.

statement, “Justice is pious” becomes “Justice is such that anyone who has this property is necessarily pious.”<sup>8</sup> This analysis takes its name from St. Paul, who, when he wrote that charity is kind meant that charity is such that anyone who is charitable is necessarily kind.

A commitment to Pauline predication implies that any statement in the dialogues whose subject term is one of the virtue-terms in the dialogues, and whose predicate term is evaluative and not cognate with the subject-term must be read in this way. Thus, such expressions are *not* ambiguous, as Santas would have it. Rather “temperance is good,” at *Charmides* 160E13-A1 they *must* be read as “Temperance is such that anyone who possesses it is necessarily good.” To read these phrases straightforwardly would be to commit “egregious nonsense.”<sup>9</sup> To apply a predicate to the abstract term “Piety” would be as absurd as applying a predicate to the division sign.

The ambiguity (perhaps the one that Santas suggests) of such statements, however, comes in to this discussion in a different way. If we are materialists, then we can read statements like, “Gold is yellow” straightforwardly because we are predicating the property of being yellow to all that stuff out there in the universe. Thus, we are not forced to read, “Gold is yellow” as “Gold is (a Form) such that any (material) instance of it is necessarily yellow.” But this is because we are not Platonists about the Form of Gold. Vlastos’ point is that if we are like Plato, and believe that the thing indicated by the subject term is an abstract universal, then we have to read “Piety is just” as a Pauline Predication.<sup>10</sup> We have no other option.

So, against Santas’ charge of ambiguity, the argument at *Charmides* 160E3-161B2 is not ambiguous at all. According to Vlastos’ analysis the claim, “Temperance is good” *must* be read as a Pauline predication in this passage. In keeping with the spirit of Vlastos’ analysis, let’s suppose that we read “temperance is good” as he suggests. What follows is that this premise becomes redundant in the argument. If the premise becomes redundant, then it’s an uncharitable interpretation. And as Allen carefully observed, common sense dictates that a man is innocent until proven guilty; common charity requires that we not make exceptions for philosophers.<sup>11</sup>

If we were to read “Temperance is good,” which is entailed by “Temperance is not only admirable but also good” (*Chrm.* 160E13) as a Pauline Predication, as Santas’ objection suggests, this would make other premises in the argument redundant. So, how does Santas’ suggestion result in redundancy?

(1a) Well, I said, did you not just now agree that temperance is admirable?

(1b) Then are temperate people also good?

(1c) Could what does not make people good be good?<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Vlastos (1974), “A Note on ‘Pauline Predications’,” in *Platonic Studies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Princeton, p. 407.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> See Allen (1971), “Participation and Predication in Plato’s Middle Dialogues,” in *Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology, a Collection of Critical Essays*. Doubleday, p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> Some scholars suppose there is a corruption in the text is at this passage. At 161A8-9, Socrates says, “If indeed it makes good men who have it, then temperance is good, and not bad.” So the question becomes, “Could what is not good make men good?” And the answer is no, of course. If we read the problematic

(1d) Not only is temperance admirable then, but it is also good.

For the conclusion that temperance is (always) good to follow, we need two premises: (a) Temperance makes people good, (b) What makes people good is (always) good. Socrates might mean that temperate people are good because of temperance, and not just accidentally. But he doesn't say that. The resources for (b) are likely to be contained in his question at 160E11, and since it can be assimilated to what he says later, it is at least plausible.

Suppose now that we read (1d) as a claim about the class of temperate people being good, i.e. as a Pauline predication.. Socrates already asks at (1b) if temperate people are good. So, he already distinguishes between temperate people, on the one hand, and the property of temperance later in the argument. Thus, if we were to read (1d) as a Pauline predication, we could substitute "temperance is good" with "Temperance is such that anyone who is temperate is necessarily good." This would make Socrates repeat himself, but to no effect. If we are to be charitable, then we cannot interpret the passage this way. But since this avenue of interpretation is closed, we are left with a puzzle.

#### IV. The Puzzle

The purpose of this paper was to bring to reinvigorate the textual evidence for the property identity condition in Socratic definitions. One of the main objections to reading this passage is the charge of ambiguity. I argued against that charge pointing out that interpreting expressions like, "Temperance is good," as Pauline is *required* whenever such expressions appear, as at *Protagoras* 331B2 where Justice is pious, or at *Euthyphro* 11E7-12A2, where piety is just since the other alternative, i.e. what occupies the subject term to be a member of the class of things to which the predicate applies, is supposed to be nonsense. But now we are left with a puzzle. On the one hand, reading *Charmides* 160E3-B2 as evidence of the property identity condition violates just the sort of interpretive problem that Vlastos tried to avoid: making a sort of category mistake. Since Plato believes that the things named by virtue terms are abstract universals, applying a predicate like, "good," to the abstract term, "temperance" is as ridiculous as apply a predicate to the division sign. However, since the text won't permit us read "temperance is good," as a Pauline predication because doing so would make Socrates repeat himself, *Charmides* 160E3-B2 constitutes a counterexample to the Pauline predication approach. So, either we attribute to Plato a far-fetched category mistake, as Vlastos maintains, or we charge him with being redundant. Neither option seems promising.

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premise at step 3 as the logical equivalent of 161A8-9, this earlier claim is rephrased later. After turning the question at 160E11 into a statement, we have: (1) If it is not good, then it doesn't make good men (160E11). This is logically equivalent to: (2) If temperance makes good men, then it is good (161A8-9). This would make the phrase at 161 A8-9 a reiteration of this earlier question, though it makes sense for there to be a reiteration at the conclusion of the argument.

If what Socrates claims in *Charmides* is that temperance is good without qualification because what is good *simpliciter* cannot then produce things or men that are not good, then the statement at 160E11 may be left alone. It is as if Socrates is asking, "Could what is good (without qualification) result in people not being good?" And I think that we can get this understanding of 160E11, leaving it as it is.

## Philosophers and the Job of Ruling in Plato's *Republic*

Anna Greco

*For presentation at the meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy  
With the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association,  
February 2009*

Plato devotes large sections of the *Republic* to describing in some detail the long and varied education of the rulers, whose expertise includes in an essential way philosophical knowledge. But precisely because of this knowledge, the future rulers would be reluctant to rule and, Plato claims, they should be compelled (519d-521b). Independently of how such compulsion might be implemented, the implication is that the obligation to rule seems to trump the philosopher-ruler's best interest, in pursuing excellence in philosophical knowledge. Most of this essay is devoted to a discussion of the *nature* of the 'compulsion to rule', and I argue that it is fundamentally no more than the moral force of the principle of specialization as it applies to the rulers. At the end, I briefly discuss the tension with the philosopher-ruler's best interest, and suggest how best to interpret it.

The implementation of the principle of specialization throughout society entails a careful program of education resulting in each citizen working at a *techne*, the training for which appropriately builds on and develops the citizen's natural qualities and inclinations. Not only do different *technai* require different knowledge and skills. These, for Plato no less than for us, can also apply differently in different job situations. For Plato, the *techne* of ruling can be characterized as *specific* and *partly transferable*, according to the following distinctions.

Sometimes the expertise developed with a view to performing a certain type of work cannot be directly applied to any other type. The knowledge and skill involved in hair-cutting or house painting, for example, cannot easily be applied to other activities. But somebody who specializes in accounting and works as a tax consultant could, in a pinch, work as a bank clerk. Whereas the knowledge of hair-cutting is in this sense *specific* to one occupation and *non-transferable*, the knowledge of accounting is *general* and *totally transferable*. The difference has to do with the fact that the knowledge of accounting includes some basic knowledge that can be drawn upon in a number of different jobs while, at the same time, any other job-specific skill needed for the tasks at hand can be acquired through on-the-job training.

Another type of transferable knowledge is one that involves the combination of the knowledge and skills from two or more 'lower' specializations: the knowledge and skills required to work as a pediatric surgeon, for example, combine and build on the knowledge of pediatric medicine and the knowledge and operational skills of surgery. Just like the accountant who could work in a variety of different occupations, the pediatric surgeon could (in a pinch, as it were) work as a pediatrician or as a general surgeon, or even as a surgical nurse. But there is an important difference: the pediatric surgeon possesses a type of knowledge which, when considered in its entirety, is *highly specific and necessary for one type of job*: neither a mere pediatrician nor a general

surgeon would be able in some circumstances to perform the pediatric surgeon's job, namely certain surgical procedures on tiny infants. Whereas accounting involves a type of knowledge that can be applied in more than one job, none requiring more than that knowledge, pediatric surgery calls for a specialized type of knowledge far beyond the requirements of any of the other jobs that a pediatric surgeon could do just in virtue of being a pediatrician and a surgeon. Were a pediatric surgeon to work as a surgical nurse she would apply only part of her specialized knowledge. Hence I refer to this type of knowledge as *specific* and *partly transferable*.

What we find in Plato is for the most part reference to *technai* that involve a *specific* type of knowledge, either *non-transferable* or only *partly transferable*.<sup>13</sup> Because of its sophistication and complexity, the knowledge required of a ruler is of the sort that builds on multiple kinds of learning and expertise (from astronomy to mathematics to dialectic, just to mention a few) – without necessarily being a mere sum of its parts. It's a *specific* and *partly transferable* knowledge, like the knowledge and skills required of a pediatric surgeon. However, if we develop a little further this analogy between the ruler in Plato's ideal city and a pediatric surgeon, we'll see that in one all-relevant respect the analogy breaks down.

In both cases, the required knowledge is of sufficient complexity that it is attainable only after long and intense training. However this training is carried out, it requires the use of extensive societal resources. At the very least, an educational system needs to be in place to allow young people to build on their natural qualities towards attaining the necessary qualifications for such a specialized training, and both students and teachers at all stages of this education ought to receive adequate material support. Society's investment in the training of a highly specialized professional may be greater than it invests in training any other *technites*, but it is not different in kind. The whole set-up is feasible if, in accordance with the principle of specialization, each citizen is given the opportunity to specialize in and practice one *techne*, on the premise that all of his other needs are satisfied through the work of other *technitai*.<sup>14</sup>

Suppose now that Claire, a newly minted pediatric surgeon, has a change of heart and refuses to take on the expected job (perhaps during her training she has developed an overwhelming interest in general pediatrics). Having a specific, partly transferable knowledge, she might opt to work as a pediatrician, assuming there is a social demand for one such. One might even assume that she can somehow 'repay' society for the additional

<sup>13</sup> There is one notable exception, namely the expertise – it does not really amount to knowledge for Plato – associated with the *misthotike techne* or art of wage-earning, which is described as producing for all the artisans a benefit that they “receive in common” as a result of their “joint practice” of it (346c). The standard translation of *misthotike techne* as the “craft of wage-earning” might make it more mysterious than it is. In its ordinary use, *misthos* refers to the *monetary* wage, or fee, or allowance paid in return for a service. To the extent that it is common to all *technai*, it has the function of earning for the worker the money that he can exchange his product or service for. It requires the ability to assess the value of one's product or service *vis-à-vis* the market value of what it is to be exchanged for as well as the urgency and priority of one's needs, and it may require some negotiation and mathematical skill. The *misthotike techne* is not a *techne* because of any specific knowledge: whatever knowledge it involves is common to all *technai*. However, its knowledge is comprised of the basic set of skills required of those whose *job* it is to exchange money for goods and goods for money: the retailers and the merchants. I surmise that Plato calls it a '*techne*' only in this transferred or extended sense. Under the conceptual classification outlined above, the *misthotike techne* would be general and transferable.

<sup>14</sup> This is the fundamental reason for the coming to be of a civic association, according to the lines of development presented by Plato in describing the formation of the Healthy City in book II.

cost of her unutilized training. And if other pediatric surgeons are on hand to do the job she would have done, there is no reason – economic, political, or moral – why she has to work as a pediatric surgeon.<sup>15</sup>

Consider now Aristides, a newly trained philosopher-ruler, who is unwilling to rule and go ‘back down into the cave’ once he has discovered the true happiness that comes from contemplation of the Forms. To make the case parallel with Claire’s, let’s assume that there are other guardians on hand who can rule in his stead, and also that he might be able to find a way to ‘repay’ the city for his unutilized training. Plato seems to suggest that the city has a specific claim against the ruler, given that it has borne the cost of his training, and that this gives rise to his obligation to rule.<sup>16</sup> However, the obligation to repay a debt fails to justify the philosopher-ruler’s *preference* for not ruling despite the recognition of the obligation.<sup>17</sup> In this respect, the philosophically interesting issue is how to reconcile two incompatible but apparently equally valid claims. On the one hand, (i) it is rational for the philosopher-ruler to pursue the contemplation of the Forms above all else. On the other hand, precisely because he has contemplated the Forms and the Form of the Good in particular, he understands better than anyone else the justice of realizing the good in society, through his activity of ruling. And so, (ii) it is irrational for the philosopher-ruler to pursue the contemplation of the Forms above all else. One way to solve the problem is to make the preference in (i) necessary for having the preference in (ii), paradoxically making the reluctance to rule as part of the job requirements.<sup>18</sup>

At any rate, Plato does not say that it is *only* by ruling that the philosopher-ruler could repay his debt. Let’s assume, for the sake of the argument, that such debt could be repaid in a different way. I will show that, even in that case, the philosopher-ruler still should be ‘compelled’ to rule.

When Socrates says that the philosophers must be compelled to go back down into the cave, the language of compulsion here can be interpreted in a variety of different ways.<sup>19</sup> Yet whether the philosopher-ruler is physically coerced or legally bound or

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<sup>15</sup>Note, however, that even if Claire were not to work as a pediatric surgeon, she still has all the expertise and skill to operate on an infant. If, outside of her regular work occupation, she happened to be present in circumstances requiring the intervention of a pediatric surgeon, it would not be out of line for others to expect her to intervene – simply because of her specialization. And yet this expectation may not suffice to say that she has a full-fledged moral obligation to intervene.

<sup>16</sup>“We’ll say that it is reasonable that those who come to be such (as them) in other cities do not take part in their labours; for they grow spontaneously there, against the dispositions of the constitution in each city. And so it is just that the one who so grows spontaneously in no way owes a debt for his upbringing, and that he is not eager to pay for his upkeep. But we’ve brought you forth as kings and leaders in the beehive, as it were, both for yourselves and for the rest of the city. Having been educated in each of the two ways of life in a better and more complete fashion, you are better able to partake of both. Therefore each of you in turn must descend into the common dwelling of the others” (520a9-c2). Some take this passage to show that the activity of ruling is the way the philosopher-ruler would be paying his debt to the city, thereby grounding the obligation to rule, e.g. R. Kraut “Return to the Cave: Republic 519-521”, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1991), 43-62, esp. 52-3.

<sup>17</sup>As E. Brown points out in “Justice and Compulsion for Plato’s Philosopher-Rulers”, *Ancient Philosophy* 20 (2000), 3-17.

<sup>18</sup>“[...] Socrates’ point is that, in the interests of good government itself, things have to be set up so that there is something better that the ruler could have been doing. For – so Plato’s great political insight runs – the only good ruler is a reluctant ruler” (D. Sedley “Philosophy, the Forms, and the Art of Ruling” in G.R.F. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*, Cambridge [2007] 256-283, 274-5).

<sup>19</sup>Brown, for example, takes it as the expression of the laws, which Socrates thinks ought to be included in the city plan. (op. cit. 9 ff.). This is thought by some to be insufficient to explain why the philosophers

persuaded or simply spontaneously recognizes the justice of the obligation, the 'compulsion' minimally reflects a morally justified obligation.

Already in Book II, when introducing the principle of specialization, Plato used the language of 'compulsion' with reference to *technitai* such as farmers, cobblers, weavers and builders:

[...] we prevented (*diekoluomen*) a cobbler from trying to be a farmer, weaver, or builder at the same time, but he [had to be] a cobbler so that we would have a fine work of cobbling [...] (374b6-9).

The reason why the cobbler should be prevented from trying to be a farmer (or a weaver or a builder) is that he possesses the *techne* necessary for cobbling, but not for farming or weaving or building. And society needs him to be a cobbler in order to "have a fine work of cobbling".<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, it is good for society that each does his or her own job: all individual needs and all that is socially demanded for the smooth working of the *polis* would be satisfied by means of high-quality products and services, because provided by specialized professionals. On the other hand, it is also good for the cobbler to do "a fine work of cobbling", because it is his venue for pursuing excellence.<sup>21</sup> And it comes with a moral responsibility, that of abiding by one's professional standard. This is partly the idea behind Plato's notion of the *techne* 'in the precise sense', which aims at what is best not for the *technites*, but for the *techne*'s subject.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, the doctor who practices his *techne* well would not prescribe anything less than the best treatment he knows of for what ails his patient, and would think he *ought* to do so. The doctor *qua* doctor has the obligation to work according to the standards of his profession, where the standards are designed so as to benefit his patients.

If so, one might wonder how really peculiar or different the situation of the philosopher-ruler really is from that of other *technitai* in the ideal city. To be sure, the technical knowledge required of the ruler is far more sophisticated and exacting with respect to natural abilities, character strengths, and intellectual education than any of the

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should be compelled to return to the cave. So argues Sedley: "The compulsion that drives the best men to rule is there [in Book I] explained, not as a coercion institutionally applied by threats and other forms of political leverage, but as consisting in the stark nature of the choice that faces them. For if they decline to govern, they will suffer the worse fate of having to be ruled by their inferiors" (op. cit. 280). I agree that the compulsion has to do with the fact that the ruler does not have a choice, but I take that literally: I will argue that the option of doing philosophy without ruling is just not open to them in the ideal city, and not because other less qualified people might take on the job of ruling.

<sup>20</sup> This does not mean that someone may be 'compelled' to work as a cobbler, regardless of what other occupations he might have engaged in otherwise or before embarking on any specialized training. The 'compulsion' kicks in, as it were, as soon as there is evidence of accomplishment and demonstrated suitability for the occupation in question. I argue elsewhere that it is a mistake to interpret Plato's talk of natural inclinations as implying that people have *unique* natural aptitudes for specific jobs. I believe that what Plato writes in the *Republic* can be interpreted so as to claim that there are no natural cobblers or natural warriors or natural rulers, but only people who could more easily than others be turned into cobblers and warriors and rulers.

<sup>21</sup> However, only if coupled with a suitable infrastructure of educational and social programs would the professional specialization provide opportunities for all citizens' pursuit of excellence, at least within the sphere of their productive activities.

<sup>22</sup> As introduced in Book I. Here it is Thrasymachus who defines the professional of a *techne* in the precise sense – any professional – as one who never errs (340d-341a). However, the idea is taken up by Socrates and underlies the vision of the ideal state as one in which people engage in *technai* understood in the precise sense, and especially rulers. At 503b4-5, Socrates says: "Let's now dare to say this, that the guardians in the most precise sense must be philosophers".

other *technai*. Yet to the extent to which it is a *techné* developed in response to a social demand, its practitioner should be subject to no less social, legal or governmental pressure than other *technitai*. In Book IV, Adeimantus protests that the Guardians would not be very happy, given the austere lifestyle Socrates is planning for them. But Socrates points out that if, out of a concern for individual happiness, *any of the citizens* were allowed not to do the job he is supposed to be doing, the city would be harmed – albeit less by disobliging *technitai* than by disobliging guardians.<sup>23</sup>

In Book VII, Socrates repeats for Adeimantus the same clarification he had given him in Book IV.<sup>24</sup> Whereas in Book VII the focus is on the philosophers, and their unwillingness to rule for the sake of doing philosophy instead, in Book IV Plato simply insists that everybody in the city should do his own job, regardless of what he might like to do or be instead. The farmers who prefer to party over farming or the potters who make pots only when it pleases them won't be farmers or potters any more.<sup>25</sup> Similar considerations would apply to the guardians who are given “the kind of happiness that would make them something other than guardians” (420d5-e1). In context, the ‘happiness’ that Plato denies to the guardians is the ordinary enjoyment of comforts and wealth, rather than the real happiness they would attain by philosophizing. Yet the general principle – that each should do his job and be denied anything that would make him something *other* than the professional he has to be in order to do his job – should hold, regardless of personal motivations.

As Plato envisions the job of the philosopher-rulers, once they have completed their training, each of them will take turns ruling the city for a period.<sup>26</sup> Before and after the period of governmental activity, the philosopher-rulers will do philosophy and, finally, “having educated others like themselves in such a way as to leave them in their stead as guardians of the city, they will depart for the Isles of the Blessed” (540b3-7). The two

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<sup>23</sup> [...] in establishing our city, we aren't aiming to make any one group outstandingly happy but to make the whole city so, as far as possible” (420b5-8). Socrates also says: “[...] we must compel (*anankasteon*) and persuade the auxiliaries and guardians to follow our other policy so as to have the best craftsmen (*demiourgoi*) at their own work, and *the same with all the others*” (421b7-c3).

<sup>24</sup> *A*: Then will we do them an injustice, and will we make them live a worse life when they could live a better one? *S*: You forgot again that the law is not concerned with how any one class in the city will be outstandingly happy, but with contriving that happiness be brought forth in the city as a whole [...] (519d8-e3).

<sup>25</sup> “We know how to dress farmers in rich garments, adorn them with gold, and tell them to work the land *at their pleasure*. And as the potters recline by the fire, feasting and drinking, [we know how] to set *the wheel by their side for them to make pots whenever they like*. And [we know how] to make all the others happy in a similar way, so that the whole city is happy. But... [if so], *a farmer won't be a farmer, nor a potter a potter, nor any of the others will have any of the patterns [of work] out of which a city comes to be.*” (420e1-421a2).

<sup>26</sup> Note that Plato makes them ‘go down into the cave’ even as part of their training. After about five years of strenuous practice of dialectic, “[...] they must be made to go down (*katabibasteoi*) into that cave again, and must be compelled (*anankasteoi*) to command in matters of war and occupy offices suitable for young people, so that they won't be inferior to the others in experience” (539e2-5). Even at this early stage, the future philosopher-ruler may be unwilling to go down to the cave, but we can't justify this unwillingness by reference to his desire to live the contemplative life. He has not yet begun the last stage of the philosophical training and has not been led yet to the contemplation of the Forms and of the Form of the Good in particular. Perhaps more has been made of the guardians' unwillingness to go back down into the cave than is called for.

activities, *doing philosophy* and *ruling*, are sufficiently distinct that they can be exercised at different times and, at least when doing philosophy, only part of the specialized knowledge is exercised. On this score, the specialized knowledge of the philosopher-ruler is both specific and partly transferable, just as the knowledge of our pediatric surgeon. Moreover, just as the specialization in pediatric surgery is not a mere sum of the knowledge of pediatrics and that of surgery, similarly the specialized knowledge of the philosopher-ruler builds on the political and philosophical training in order that he may work towards the imitation of the Form of the Good in the political community he would be ruling.

Back now to Claire and Aristides. Our pediatric surgeon's unwillingness to practice the job for which she has been trained (whatever her motivations) can be reconciled both with her choice of working in a field in which she utilizes only part of her specialized knowledge and, arguably, with her discharging the obligation to repay the city, assuming of course that there is a social demand for whatever profession she decides to work in. Independently of her highly specialized training in pediatric surgery, her work as a pediatrician or as a general surgeon or even as a surgical nurse may fulfill a determined social demand in any of those areas. And here is where the difference lies. Our prospective philosopher-ruler, Aristides, does not have the option of doing philosophy without ruling.

The whole structure of the ideal city in Plato's *Republic* is designed to bring it about that its rulers have the required intellectual, moral and physical education, living conditions, and social relations that foster suitable virtues, excellent theoretical knowledge, and sufficient political experience. Both the pre-philosophical training, inclusive of mathematical studies and dialectic, as well the higher philosophical studies culminating in the contemplation of the Forms, are justified to the extent that they contribute to the making of the philosopher-ruler. It is true that, for Plato, the philosopher-ruler will devote some time to ruling and some time to doing philosophy, but this does not mean that ruling is a job that can be done properly without the necessary philosophical knowledge, nor does it mean that doing philosophy is a job in its own right. There is no social demand, and hence no job as such, for the occupation of doing philosophy that is not somehow a function of ruling. Doing philosophy is either part of one's training for the job of philosopher-ruler, or part of one's job of educating others for the job of philosopher-ruler (540b).<sup>27</sup>

Plato's suggestion that the easiest way for an ideal state to come to be is if philosophers got to be rulers or rulers became philosophers refers to those who in his current times were philosophers or rulers. That suggestion, together with the use in the literature of the unfortunate phrase (for lack of any better) of "philosopher-ruler", have perhaps contributed to the misguided ideas that the job of philosopher-ruler is something like the *combination of two jobs* (wouldn't this be a blatant violation of Plato's principle of specialization?), and that the *job* of doing philosophy is obviously better than the *job* of ruling.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Note that the utilization of philosopher-rulers as teachers or as being involved in the education of the next generation of philosopher-rulers does not constitute a job different from the one the philosopher-rulers have been trained for. It is only one of the various tasks that only people with their type of specific training can do, and it is part of the overall job description, as it were.

<sup>28</sup>R. Kamtekar believes that were a philosopher in Plato's city to suffer a stroke that leaves her able to continue contemplating, but unable to communicate with or train others, "Plato should surely judge that her

Aristides then should be compelled to work as a ruler when his turn comes, in just the same way that, for Plato, any *technites* should be compelled to do his job, i.e. at least according to the principle of specialization. Otherwise, as a result “he will become other than what he is” in the social productive context. And it really does not matter whether what he might like to do instead is what he erroneously believes to be in his self-interest or what really is in his self-interest. It does not matter at least to the issue of why philosopher-rulers should be ‘compelled’ to go back down to the cave. It is the same ‘compulsion’ that Plato is invoking for all citizens: no more than the moral force of the principle of specialization.

If the language of compulsion merely reflects the moral force of the principle of specialization in its application to all citizens, we may minimize somewhat the contrast between the compulsion to rule and the philosopher-ruler’s best interest.

First of all, the metaphor of the cave is meant to illustrate the radical difference between the epistemic condition of the unenlightened and that of those who have seen the Forms. The contrast is the starker in social realities like Plato’s historical situation in which the philosophers’ wisdom was not recognized and the possibility of their being rulers tended to be ridiculed and rejected by the rest of the population (see the ‘parable of the ship’ at 488a-489c). And so the ‘reluctance’ to rule may be justifiably stronger and even inherent in the very consideration of doing something other than philosophizing in a social context where ruling is a job that is seen as not requiring philosophical knowledge. But this is not so in the ideal state, where all are supposed to accept its structure of command, and so there may be less reason there for reluctance to rule.

Secondly, philosophizing without ruling might be in the philosopher-ruler’s best interest, but only outside of his social role. Our sympathy with the philosopher-ruler’s *preference* for philosophizing rather than ruling should not blind us to the possibility that, for Plato, we might not really need to explain the philosopher’s decision to rule any more than we need to explain the excellent weaver’s decision to weave. And so the question is whether one can really pursue one’s best interest outside of one’s role and function in society. And whatever else Plato may suggest to the contrary, it’s not clear that for him one can.<sup>29</sup>

The principle of specialization merely ‘requires’ of the philosopher-rulers that they abide by the moral call of their professional occupation which is, we might say, to ‘rule philosophically’. And in the ideal state it ‘compels’ them to pursue excellence in this occupation: for Plato, it’s only in less ideal states that some are allowed to devote themselves exclusively to philosophy.

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life continues to be valuable to herself, since contemplation is a (supremely) intrinsically valuable activity. How could Plato think that this philosopher should receive no social goods? One might be tempted to say that the philosopher *is* doing her work, which is contemplating” (“Social Justice and Happiness in the Republic: Plato’s Two Principles”, *History of Political Thought* 22 (2001), 189-220, at 199-200). But one should resist this temptation. Contemplation can certainly be an intrinsically valuable activity, but so is playing the piano: neither one by itself meets a social demand. By contrast, contemplation in the service of ruling and playing the piano as a concert pianist in the employment of the local symphony orchestra do. The philosopher affected by a stroke as described by Kamtekar would be unable to do her job even if she could still engage in contemplation, just as a similarly affected employed concert pianist would be unable to do her work, even if she could still continue in her appreciation of music in all ways except reproducing it on a piano.

<sup>29</sup> This is not unlike the issue of whether for Aristotle the best life is the contemplative or the political life.



## Aristotle's Generic Being

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Aristotle begins *Metaphysics* Γ with a bold assertion: there is a science that contemplates being *qua* being and what belongs to it *per se* (1003a21-22). The claim is bold because according to the requirements that Aristotle sets out for a science in *Posterior Analytics* and according to a persistent strand of argument in *Metaphysics* B, there ought not to be such a science. Simply stated, the reason is that one science knows one genus, the subject matter of this science, metaphysics, is all beings, but being is not a genus. That there is a science of metaphysics is a dramatic claim, and metaphysics is the only science that investigates its own existence. The argument for why metaphysics exists is long and detailed. Most scholars suppose it has been told many times—so many times that nothing new could possibly remain. I think essential details have been entirely missed and that Aristotle's argument is generally misunderstood, but the text is too complex to do it justice in a brief paper.<sup>30</sup> Instead, I focus on a small but significant part of the argument here, the generic character of being.

Why does Aristotle insist that one science knows one genus? The idea is that a genus is a common nature shared by its instances, and it is in respect of this nature that an attribute belongs to these instances. That is to say, the generic nature functions as the middle term in respect of which *per se* attributes belong to instances of the genus.

Being is not a genus because there is no nature that is common to all beings. The reason is easy to see. Start with two distinct beings. If they have a common nature, then they will also share any attributes that belong in respect of that nature. They differ only in respect of their accidents. But what if all these accidents had the same nature? They would not differ from the initial beings, nor would the initial beings differ from each other because all their "accidents" are now the same. Suppose, then, that there is a nature common to *all* beings. These beings could only differ from each other by their accidents, but their accidents are also beings that differ only in their accidents, and so on. In short, there is no accident that could distinguish one being from another because all accidents are equally beings. The accidents would share the nature common to all beings. Hence, all would be alike, not only in their natures, but in the natures of their accidents. We could not distinguish between the nature and its "accident" because both alike would be beings. The point here is that if we try to imagine all beings having a common nature, we find ourselves unable to say anything else about them than that they are, for whatever other character we ascribed to all things would also be a being.

Suppose, though, that a thing were not only a being, but also something else, say, a color. We might think that a color would differ from something that was, say, a being and a quantity. But how will we distinguish color and quantity from each other and from being? We need to find two characters that are not beings, but clearly this is impossible. There is nothing that is not a being and, so, nothing that could distinguish one being from another.

Aristotle makes this argument by asking whether being is a genus. In order to distinguish types of being, it would be necessary to differentiate this genus, but the differentia must lie outside the genus because an instance of the genus will not be able to distinguish one being from another—the instance

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30. For a detailed discussion of this argument as well as the subject of the present paper, see my *One and Many in Aristotle's Metaphysics: Books A-Δ* (Las Vegas, Nev.: Parmenides Press, 2009).

does not make something else differ in its being. Of course, we could imagine all beings having a common generic character while different beings had different specific characters, as if being were a genus that had species. However, the problem here would be finding a way to distinguish one species of being from another. We need a differentia. It cannot be *in* the genus. It is clear that we could not divide being into kinds if all beings were the same: there would be nothing to divide it because there is nothing that is not a being.

All this is to show the difficulty of conceiving of characters that are common to all beings. This is why it is so surprising that Aristotle claims that there is, after all, a science of being. Since he never gives up the idea that one science treats one genus (e.g.,  $\Gamma.2.1003b19-20$ ), being must be a genus of some sort. Aristotle's claim that being is *pros hen* is the essential premise for showing the generic character of being. He reasons: there is a science of a *kath'hen*, a *pros hen* is a kind of *kath'hen*; therefore, there is a science of a *pros hen* (1003b11-16). More specifically: healthy is a *pros hen*, and there is a science of the healthy; hence, it is possible for a science to know a *pros hen*. The import of the argument is obscured by Aristotle's speaking of *kath'hen* here instead of genus, but there is no doubt that a *kath'hen* is a genus. The phrase refers to the one character in respect of which each instance of the genus is said. In the *pros hen* genus, the one character is not common to all the instances, but the character to which all instances are related.

So, being is a genus of some sort, and therefore the object of a science. The text is straightforward, and Aristotle refers to being as a "genus" (1004b22).<sup>31</sup> But nearly all readers have spoken of being as a *pros hen* that is beyond the bounds of a genus.<sup>32</sup> The question I want to pursue here is whether it makes a difference to say that being is a genus. Or, rather, what I want to show here is that it does indeed make a difference.

Let's begin with the standard question about the meaning of "being *qua* being": does this phrase refer to the whole of being or to some proper part of being, namely, *ousia*? This chestnut has been so thoroughly discussed<sup>33</sup> that it seems almost inconceivable that anyone could say anything new—a notion that I shall put to rest shortly. Let us begin by noting that, at first glance, there is strong support for both answers. Since metaphysics is the highest science, the science that knows all beings to the extent

31. Aristotle cannot be speaking of the genus of *ousia* in this passage because his point is that sophists treat being without discussing *ousia*. Another place where "genus" has a broader sense than usual is 1005a1-2's claim that one and many are genera of contraries.

32. There are other passages where Aristotle uses "genus" to refer to a class that is well beyond a categorical genus. At I.4.1055b26-29, as well as at  $\Gamma.2.1004b33-1005a2$ , for example, he suggests that one and many are the genera of the contraries, after having claimed that there is a primary contrariety in each categorical genus.

33. Those who identify "being *qua* being" as being include: Auguste Mansion, "L'Objet de la Science Philosophique Suprême d'après Aristote, *Métaphysique*, E, 1," in *Mélanges de Philosophie Grecque Offerts à Mgr. Diès par ses Élèves, ses Collègues, et se Amis* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1956), 156–57; W. D. Ross, ed., *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), I, 251; Günther Patzig, "Theology and Ontology in Aristotle's 'Metaphysics'," in *Articles on Aristotle: 3. Metaphysics*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield, and Richard Sorabji, trans. Jennifer Barnes and Jonathan Barnes (London: Duckworth, 1979), 33–49; Pierre Aubenque, *Le Problème de l'Être chez Aristote: Essai sur la Problématique Aristotélicienne*, Bibliothèque de Philosophie Contemporaine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 35–36; Christopher Kirwan, ed. and trans., *Aristotle's Metaphysics: Books  $\Gamma$ ,  $\Delta$ , and E*, 2nd ed., Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 77. On the other side are: Asclepius, in *Aristotelis Metaphysicorum Libros A-Z Commentaria*, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca (Berlin: George Reimer, 1888), 225.14–17; Albert Schwegler, trans. and ed., *Die Metaphysik des Aristoteles: Grundtext, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, vol. 4 v. in 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1960; rpt. of 1847–48 ed.), III, 152; P. Natorp, "Thema und Disposition der Aristotelischen Metaphysik," *Philosophische Monatshefte* 24 (1888): 37; Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian 'Metaphysics': A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 267; Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), 160–220, esp. 161–62 [also on this issue: Philip Merlan, "o!n h[ o!n und prw&th ou]si/a: Postskript zu einer Besprechung," *Philosophische Rundschau* 7 (1957): 148–53; and Philip Merlan, "On the Terms 'Metaphysics' and 'Being *qua* Being'," *Monist* 52 (1968): 174–94]; and Giovanni Reale, *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. John R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 144–45.

possible, it must include within its scope all of being. On the other hand, since metaphysics is the science of first principles, and *ousia* is the first principle, it is clear that metaphysics is principally a science of *ousia* and that it knows other beings through them. Hence, being *qua* being should be *ousia*.

Recently, it has become popular to say that the phrase “*qua* being” is adverbial and used mostly with a verb for know or study.<sup>34</sup> The assumption is that whereas many sciences study the same subject, being, only metaphysics studies this subject “*qua* being.” It is inferred that the phrase describes how metaphysics is to study being and that it, therefore, does not limit the scope of being.

This is one of those arguments that, despite being repeated frequently, is transparently mistaken. In *Metaphysics* K.4, Aristotle contrasts metaphysics with physics: physics studies being *qua* motion. It is obvious that not all beings move, and that physics is only concerned with that part of being that does move, sensible *ousiai*. Likewise, mathematics studies being *qua* quantity, but this is another way of saying that mathematics studies quantity.<sup>35</sup> In other words, it is true only “in a way” that metaphysics, physics, and mathematics treat the same subject, being, in different ways. More properly, each treats its own proper subject.<sup>36</sup> So, it is simply wrong to reason that “*qua* being” does not restrict the scope of being because it is adverbial. The most we can say is that “*qua* being” need not restrict the scope of being.

The other side does not fare much better. The thought here is that being *qua* being is *ousia* and the science that treats “being *qua* being and what belongs to it *per se*” treats *ousia* and all the other categories. This is consistent with *Categories* 2 where Aristotle claims that everything else is present in or said of *ousia*. So by treating *ousia* and what belongs to it, Aristotle can treat all beings. However, there is an obvious problem here: the other categories do not belong to *ousia per se*. They are often called the “accidental categories.” In fact, Aristotle makes clear what the *per se* attributes of being *qua* being are at the end of  $\Gamma$ .2: contrary, complete, one, being,<sup>37</sup> same, other, prior, posterior, genus, species, whole, and part (1005a11-18). All these are treated in book  $\Delta$ ; and this book is not a “dictionary,” as it is usually called, but a treatment of attributes. Quality, quantity, and relation also appear in  $\Delta$  (in chps. 13-15), but Aristotle includes senses of each of them that extend well beyond the categorial genera they usually denote, senses that allow them to be attributes of all beings.<sup>38</sup>

There is another problem here. Aristotle is claiming that everything, *ousia* and all that belongs to it, can be known, somehow, by metaphysics; but the *accidents* of *ousia* cannot be known by the science that treats it, any more than the accidents of triangles are known by geometry. It is not enough to include accidents in the scope of the science that treats an *ousia*.<sup>39</sup> The task of metaphysics requires not just including all beings in its scope but also being able to know them. And it is obviously unclear that beings

<sup>34</sup> This view was enunciated by Auguste Mansion, “Philosophie Première, Philosophie Seconde et *Métaphysique* chez Aristote,” *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 56 (1958): 217. It has since been endorsed by Christopher Kirwan, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics, Books  $\Gamma$ ,  $\Delta$ , and E*, Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 77, Jonathan Lear, “Aristotle’s Philosophy of Mathematics,” *Philosophical Review* 91 (1982): 168–69, Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle, Past Masters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 25–26, and many others.

<sup>35</sup> At one point, Aristotle says that arithmetic treats man *qua* indivisible and the geometer treats man *qua* solid (M.3.1078a21-26). However, his point is that although mathematical objects are not separate, mathematicians treat them as if they were separate and are justified in doing so. Hence, to treat man *qua* solid is to treat a geometric solid. Again, the arithmetician and geometer have the same subject, the man, only “in a way”; more properly, each treats its own proper subject, discrete or continuous quantity.

<sup>36</sup> *De Anima* A.1.402a11-22 suggests that each science studies some *ousia* with a method that is proper to it. Numbers and surfaces are examples of such *ousiai*; that is to say, they are treated by the sciences that study them as if they were *ousiai*.

<sup>37</sup> The inclusion of being in the list of attributes might seem inappropriate especially to those who identify “being *qua* being” as being or a way of treating being.

We can recall that Aristotle includes a thing’s genus among its *per se* attributes (*An. Po.* A.4.73a34-37).

<sup>38</sup> The discussions of what appear to be categories, namely, quantity, quality, and relative in  $\Delta$ .13-15 are much broader than the comparable chapters of the *Categories*. For example, the differentia is one of the things called “quality,” and Aristotle’s examples are differentiae of man, horse, and circle (1020a33-b1). Here, “quality” characterizes *ousiai* and quantity, and it would characterize every being with an essence.

<sup>39</sup>  $\Delta$ .30.1025a30-34 claims that “accident” can mean essential attribute. Other categories are not “accidents” of *ousia* in this sense.

can be known: think only of Plato's denials of such knowledge of what he calls "becoming" and Aristotle includes under "being." What metaphysics really needs to show is that there can be sciences not only of zoology, but of color, music, and the senses.

In short, being *qua* being cannot in its initial usage in  $\Gamma.1$ , refer to either *ousia* or being simpliciter. Fortunately, we have a clue about what it means in the *Posterior Analytics*. There Aristotle speaks of triangle *qua* triangle and what belongs to it: he means what belongs to triangles in virtue of their essence. When, accordingly, he mentions being *qua* being, he must mean what belongs to being in virtue of its essence. It all seems straightforward, but wait: can being have an essence? This is where we need to recall the earlier argument that a *pros hen* is a kind of *kath' hen*. The latter is the single nature that is the essence of a genus. Being has no such single nature, but *ousia* is, in a way, common to all beings. So we can say that the essence of being is *ousia* or, more perspicuously, the essence of being is essence or, alternatively, the *ousia* of being is *ousia*.

It would, seem, then, that being *qua* being is, again, *ousia*. But that depends on what *ousia* means, and Aristotle is notoriously elusive about meanings, despite his careful attempts to distinguish senses of terms. A triangle can have an essence, as Aristotle confirms later in the *Metaphysics*. That's why it makes sense to talk about the essence or even *ousia* of a triangle. The essence of being is the same. It is something that every being has.

What does all this mean? To call something a being is not to say anything in particular about it. Aristotle's point is that all beings also have essences: to be is to be something. Often ascribed to Aristotle, this notion is, I am suggesting, the very point Aristotle is making, the crucial claim that allows there to be a treatment of all beings that does not reduce to knowledge of a single character.

Again, my proposal here is that the *ousia* to which all beings are related is not the categorial genus of *ousia*—not, at least, here in this passage—but simply essence. And the point is not that all beings are or are related to a *single* essence, but that all beings are related to *some* essence. Aristotle's description of the ways that things are related to *ousia* fits much better with this broad understanding of *ousia* than with the categorial genus of *ousia*. Consider what is related to *ousia*:

For some are said to be beings because they are *ousiai*, others because they are affections of *ousiai*, and others because they are ways into *ousiai*, or corruptions, or privations, or qualities, or productive or generative of *ousiai* or of what is said in relation to *ousiai*, or else denials of any of these or of *ousiai*. Therefore, even what is not we say to be what is not (1003b6-10).

It is an essence or form that, as we know from the *Physics* (B.1), comes to be in a matter or is corrupted, and not just the essence of a nature, but that of a quality or of another category (*Phys.*  $\Gamma.1$ ). Everything mentioned here is related to essence rather than to categorial *ousia*. Indeed, only two of the items our passage mentions as related to *ousiai* even *could* be other categories, the qualities and affections of *ousia*. But both are discussed in book  $\Delta$ , in chapters 14 and 21, respectively, where Aristotle treats them more broadly than categorial genera. Most of the other relations to *ousiai* mentioned here are also treated in  $\Delta$ : privations and denials are types of opposites that appear in  $\Delta.10$  (also in  $\Delta.22$ ), and he alludes to corruptions and generations in this chapter (10.1018a20-22) and to the ways into *ousiai* in the discussion of prior and posterior in the next (11.1018b19-21). Finally, the false is discussed in  $\Delta.29$ . In short, what is related to the *ousia* of any being is discussed in book  $\Delta$ . Indeed, reading  $\Gamma.2$ 's description of the ways things are related to *ousia*, a casual reader would never suppose that Aristotle was speaking about other categories' relation to the category of *ousia* in 1003b5-10.<sup>40</sup> His emphasis is the way any *ousia* comes to be and ceases to be.

There is another passage here that is consistent with the notion that essence is the character common to all beings. Aristotle famously declares that whatever is is also one because being and one make clear the same "*nature*" (1003b22-25). The nature that they make clear is the essence that is and is

40. Christopher Shields, *Order in Multiplicity: Homonymy in the Philosophy of Aristotle*, Oxford Aristotle Studies (Oxford New York: Clarendon Press, 1999), 217–67, interprets being as a relation of categories (he terms it a "core-dependent homonym") and argues at length that Aristotle did not defend this character of being that those he have attempted to do so on his behalf have been unsuccessful. Shields thinks the doctrine false because he understands it as asserting degrees of existence.

one. This nature is not confined to the categorial genus of *ousia*; *every* being has a nature. This nature is its essence.

On the other hand, because *every* being has a nature or an essence, it may seem wrong to say being is a *pros hen*, for this would mean that some things are called “beings” because they are *ousiai* and other things because they are merely *related* to *ousiai*. Someone might object: (1) If every being is an *ousia*, then what comes under the heading of being related to *ousia*, but not being *ousia*? Moreover, (2) this account of being is scarcely consistent with Aristotle’s emphasis on the categorial genus of *ousia* in the central books and in book  $\Lambda$ .

These two objections are easily answered, but there is another objection that I cannot address here. As for (2), in the first chapter of book  $Z$ , Aristotle emphasizes the dependence of the other categories on *ousia*. Categorial *ousia* is prior in formula, knowledge, and time. In particular, the formula of *ousia* is present in the formulae of each of the other categories. So the essences of other categories depend on the essence of *ousia*. Thus, *ousia* does stand in some sort of *pros hen* relation with other categories. The issue for us is not the truth of the standard interpretation, but whether it is what Aristotle is claiming in  $\Gamma.2$ . The striking difference in the way this latter chapter expresses the priority of *ousia* suggests it is not making the same point as  $Z.1$ . Moreover,  $Z.1$  is casually assuming the point I think  $\Gamma.2$  is making: that each being *has* an essence. The other objection (1) was: if being *qua* being is the essence that *each* being has, how could there be beings related to *ousia* and how could there be *per se* attributes of beings? I think that Aristotle is answering this question when he describes what is related to beings as a path into *ousia*, a destruction of *ousia*, and a privation of *ousia*. All these are defined through the essence. They are in some very broad sense negations of essence. The point is that what has an essence is a being, but that its having an essence requires some process of acquisition and, ultimately, a process of loss, neither of which is identical with essence and both of which are understood in terms of the essence. (Indeed, something’s having an essence becomes meaningful because it must acquire and lose that essence.) A negation of essence is itself an essence and thus counts as a being. Hence, what belongs to being *per se* is not something that is other than being—there is nothing besides being. What belongs to being *per se* is rather what depends on essence. We could gather this from Aristotle’s examples of *per se* attributes of being: same, contrariety, being, one, and so forth. These characters do not belong exclusively to one genus. They do not fall under one category because they do not have a particular categorial nature of their own. Yet, all of them depend on essences. They are, I think, the reason that Aristotle adds that even what is not also, in some way, is; for to the extent that they negate essences, they are not; but in negating essence, they are defined through it, and therefore are.

It is evident that the doctrine of being I am ascribing to Aristotle is not easy. In contrast, the notions that being *qua* being is simply being and, alternatively, that it is categorial *ousia* are both relatively simple. It would be better if I could argue for my interpretation through its simplicity. Moreover, although there is scarcely any text in Aristotle’s corpus that has been discussed more than the opening of *Metaphysics*  $\Gamma$ , I am proposing an interpretation that has not been seriously considered in the extant literature. Hence, I find myself in the uncomfortable position of trying to convince you that the proper understanding of being *qua* being is more difficult and complex than what you have learned elsewhere. In a way, my task here is impossible because, if I am right, then being is just barely intelligible.

I suggest that this last criticism really counts in my favor. It has generally been assumed that Aristotle’s account of being will be transparently intelligible. But why should it be? Being is at the lowest rung of reality—it is just barely the object of science and, as such, it *should be* barely intelligible. My understanding of being *qua* being makes clear the limited intelligibility of being and allows for the possibility of attributes of the sort Aristotle describes in  $\Gamma.2$  and book  $\Delta$ . Being is the object of a science that seeks to know that it has an essence, and the essence that being has enables it to be known. Only this is an essence that is not a real essence, but something that is more like a similarity or analogy. The type of intelligibility I am ascribing to being is not adequate, but for this very reason, when we try to grasp it more carefully, we are led to higher causes.

Aristotle treats being as some sort of genus, I have been arguing. What is the advantage of calling it a genus? On the two alternative views, being is not a genus. Because a *pros hen* extends beyond a genus, and because the only thing that Aristotle describes beyond the genus is analogy, it is plausible to assume that being is some sort of analogy. This is Thomas Aquinas' move. Aristotle talks about analogy as a similarity in relation; it requires *four* terms ( $\Delta$ .6.1016b34-35). Aquinas invents another kind of analogy that he ascribes to Aristotle. Instead of a similarity in relation, it consists of a similarity of term; thus, when two things are related to one term, even though the relation be dissimilar, they are analogous. This relation between *three* terms has come to be called the "analogy of attribution."

Aquinas is concerned with privations because he assumes that being is a positive character, an act. In my view, the real challenge for Aristotle is not a privation like blindness but a denial like not-sighted. Blindness is an attribute of animals that is known through its genus; not-sighted includes not only what could have sight but plants, rocks, chairs, sweet, and loud—all of which are beings in other genera. Not-sighted belongs to every being that is not in some genus; because it spans beings in different categorial genera, there would seem to be no possibility of knowing not-sighted. (Recall that one science [=one knowledge] knows one genus.) But if we cannot grasp not-sighted, then we also cannot know the principle of non-contradiction, the claim that the same thing cannot be sighted and not-sighted in the same way, at the same time, etc. Or, rather, the PNC would need to belong to the order of knowing and have no real ontic import. It is here that it becomes important that being is a genus. As Aristotle says, even what is not is a being (1003b10).<sup>41</sup> He goes on to explain that denials are like privations: both are said in respect of something one; either this something is absent simply or it is absent to a genus (1004a13-16). The point is that the one science that knows the something must also know *both* its privation and its denial (1004a10-12). Again, this is possible because the denial is also a way of knowing what is denied. We know the denial as a being from which a particular essence is absent—just as we know blindness as a state of a *genus* or as an individual in a genus who, by nature, should be capable of seeing. Hence, the denial of some nature is the state of *generic* being that is not that nature. The denial can be known because it is a determination of being. Insofar as knowing the PNC depends on knowing denials, the PNC can only be grasped by a science that can treat being as a genus.

I am referring here to very difficult discussions that Aristotle includes in *Metaphysics*  $\Gamma$ .2 in conjunction with the *pros hen* doctrine of being, discussions that are rarely considered. They support very nicely the picture I am painting of being as a genus. Aristotle's being is a kind of super-genus that is further determined into by the categorial genera and their species. This genus has as its essential nature just "to have an essence," precisely the character that is further determined by the specific characters that constitute categorial genera. To be sure, "having an essence" is not a real character that is common to all beings. But it serves as the basis of all science and all further determination of essence.

If being is a genus whose generic character is the essence of each being, then the first question is not how secondary beings are related to primary beings but how there could be secondary beings at all, for all beings have their own essences. The answer is simple: the secondary beings are various sorts of negations of the primary beings. What, after all, is a path into or out of being other than an essence not fully realized and, thus, in some respect negated. As long as being constitutes some sort of *generic* character, the negation of any essence will also belong to the genus. And just as the negation of white in the genus of color is another color, black, so too the negation of some being should always be another instance of the *genus* of being. Now, as a being, black or any other privation, has an essence, and its essence includes its relation to white or that of which it is the privation. So, too, the denial, not-white, also has some sort of essence. The relation of a privation to the essence is essential to what it is, but many denials belong accidentally: it is essential to black not to be white, but accidental to a table or a rock. So, too, of things related to some primary being, some must be understood through it, and others can be understood independently of it—or, as the medievals might have put it, beings are not related to primary being exclusively "intrinsically" or exclusively "extrinsically." Primary being here is not a single real

41. It is significant here that Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. John Patrick Rowan (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1961), IV. L.1:C 539–40, claims that negation exists only in the mind.

nature, but merely the essence of whatever has an essence. If this is right, to be related to primary being is not to be related to a nature with a single essence. As a result, there is no danger that all being would be a strict *kath'hen* genus through their relation with primary beings, nor that their relationship with primary being be merely the superficial extrinsic relations.

It is because all beings have essences that all of them can be known in a single science. Just what does that science know? In *Metaphysics* Γ, it does not know very much. It knows that beings can be known. That is important because among being are quantities and colors, objects of the sciences of mathematics and color: we need to know that these latter sciences have objects that can be known. In knowing that beings can be known, metaphysics provides the basis for the particular sciences. For every science has as its subject matter an *ousia* or, as in the case mathematical, what can be treated as an *ousia*. *Metaphysics* shows that these particular sciences are legitimate. Second, it shows that beings have essential attributes. These attributes include one, difference, contrariety, and the other terms that give us a handle on the generic structure and, thereby, explain the possibility of there being definitions of essences. Third, metaphysics knows the principle of non-contradiction. This is the principle of all knowledge and it depends on and, I have argued, is virtually equivalent to each being's having an essence and *ousia*. None of this counts as complete knowledge of being, but it is important.

The interpretation of being *qua* being that I have offered here is well-supported by *Metaphysics* Γ, but the real issue is not whether Aristotle said it, but whether it is right. Do things have to have essences? It is worth recalling that, in the Parmenidean world that is probably Aristotle's target here, there are no individual essences and all is one because no being differs from any other. This is the problem I opened with: if all beings are alike, we could never be in a position to say what their similarity is, nor consequently could we ever have knowledge of them. Knowledge requires differentiations. We need a more refined way to grasp things, and beings must exist with characters more finely delimited than simple being: they must exist with essences. Whether these characters are plants and animals, matter and soul, or the atomic elements and particles is a separate question.

There remains, however, one central difficulty with my analysis here. As I understand it, being *qua* being is not a real character, but the essence that each being has, and these essences are many. If this is right, then being would seem closer to proportionate analogy; so that in arguing against an analogy of attribution, I will end up with something still more problematic. This problem deserves more attention than I can give it here. Let me simply note that Aristotle does discuss a proportionate analogy at some length in conjunction with his discussion of one, and we can learn a lot about *being* by seeing how it differs from one. Aristotle describes the one as a qualitative or quantitative measure in each genus; so it is clear that one differs in each genus and that the term "one" refers collectively to particular ones (I.2). He claims that "the essence of one" (τοῦ εἰναι ἐιναι) is either some *thing* that is one, that is, an individual or a motion, or it is something "closer to a *word*," just as "element" could refer to, say, a thing like fire, or more generally to being a constituent (I.1052b5-9). There is nothing in common among all ones. Being is not like this. The essence of being, that is, being *qua* being, is simply essence, I have been arguing, and that is important because it allows being to have the character of a quasi-genus and, thereby, to be treated by one science; that is to say, it allows metaphysics to exist. But every essence contains some reference to the categorial genus of *ousia*. So, any more precise knowledge of essence makes clear the priority of categorial *ousia*, and ultimately sensible *ousiai*'s dependence on immaterial *ousiai*. The issue here is not where the *Metaphysics* ends up, nor is it the dependence of beings on categorial *ousiai*. The issue is, rather, what, in the first instance it means to be, and the answer is that it means to be something, that is, to have an essential nature. In the first instance, before its subsequent refinement, this is what "being *qua* being" means.

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