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Essentialism in Late Plato and Aristotle's Categories

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Essentialism in Late Plato and Aristotle's *Categories*

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Abstract

The central contention of this dissertation is that Plato, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, and Aristotle, in *Categories*, have fundamentally different ways of drawing the distinction between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features. Plato distinguishes the essential features of a thing from its non-essential features by reference to the different roles they play in metaphysical explanations, whereas Aristotle draws the distinction by contrasting two irreducibly different relations between objects and their features.

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Introduction

1. The Question

Suppose that you want to know what something is, say justice. You might begin by writing down a list of facts—or claims you take to be facts—about justice. If you are a student of Plato or Aristotle, your list might look a bit like this:

1. Justice is a condition of the soul,
2. Justice is a disposition to act in a certain way,
3. Justice is necessary for living the best human life,
4. Justice is distinct from temperance,
5. Justice is a major focus of Plato's *Republic*,
- ...

Your next task is to cross off some of the items on your list. You may feel that some of the items on your list should stay—that they get at *what justice is*. So, for example, you might find it intuitive that being a condition of the soul and disposing one to act in a certain way are part of the very nature of justice, that they make it what it is. But this is not so for every feature on your list. Some merely tell us *something about justice* and not *what justice is*. So, for example, although Plato's *Republic* provides a powerful description of justice, it does not make justice what it is. Even if Plato had never written the *Republic*, the correct answer to his question, “what is justice?”, would be the same. You can safely cross #5 off the list. The challenge, then, is to figure out which of the features of justice mentioned on your list—being a condition of the soul, being necessary for living the best human life, etc.—*define* justice and make it what it is rather than merely happen to belong to justice. In other words, the challenge is to distinguish the essential features of justice from its non-essential features.

This dissertation is about the distinction between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman* and Aristotle's *Categories*. Both Plato and Aristotle rely on some form of this distinction in a wide range of contexts to raise and to answer a great variety of philosophical questions. Plato depends on the distinction in more than a dozen of his works, including several of his Socratic, "middle", and "late" dialogues.¹ He deploys it in discussions of, for example, justice, love, knowledge, courage, moderation, and, as we will see in more detail, sophistry, political expertise, and philosophy. Aristotle relies on the distinction no less heavily and he employs it no less widely. He uses it liberally in working out—among other things—his metaphysics, logic, epistemology, philosophy of science, physics, philosophy of mind, natural sciences and, as we will see in more detail, his ontology and theory of predication. Even his account of wisdom and its role in the good life depend on the idea that objects have essential features.

But what, exactly, is the difference between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing? What distinguishes the features that determine *what something is* from the features that determine merely *something about it*? The goal of this dissertation is to identify the answers to this question in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman* and Aristotle's *Categories*. According to the standard view of the early history of ancient Greek essentialism, Plato and Aristotle agree on the answer to our question: they share a conception of the difference between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing. On one version of this standard story, Plato has an intuitive grip on this distinction, which he uses to great effect, but Aristotle is the first to systematically study Plato's intuitive contrast.² On this view, Plato's and Aristotle's answers to our question differ in degree of

¹ I do not mean to endorse any particular view of the chronology of the composition of Plato's dialogues, I mean only to note that the distinction in question is found in those works grouped together as Socratic, "middle", and "late" Platonic texts.

² See Chapter 1 section 1 below.

detail, but they are fundamentally the same. According to another version of this standard view, Plato and Aristotle share a fairly well-worked out answer to our question: they agree on a relatively detailed account of the difference between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features. On this view, to the extent that the two disagree about the essential and non-essential features of a thing, their disagreement is explained by reference to independent disagreements about, for example, the existence of Forms or the metaphysics of individuals.³

The central contention of this dissertation is that Plato, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, and Aristotle, in *Categories*, have fundamentally different ways of drawing the distinction between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features. Plato distinguishes the essential features of a thing from its non-essential features by reference to the different roles these sorts of features play in metaphysical explanations, whereas Aristotle draws the distinction by contrasting two irreducibly different relations that an object can stand in to its features.

2. The Strategy

As I noted, both Plato and Aristotle rely on some form of the distinction between features that determine *what something is* and those that determine merely *something about it* in a wide range of texts and philosophical contexts. There are, then, many ways that one might fruitfully study essentialism in Plato and in Aristotle. One might, for example, take an epistemological approach and focus on how Plato and Aristotle think one comes to know definitions that state what something is or what type of cognitive state grasps these definitions. Alternatively, one might approach Ancient Greek essentialism from the perspective of ontology and focus on questions like which objects have essences and what type of things essences themselves are.

³ For example, Code (1985) locates the divergence between Plato and Aristotle in their disagreement about Forms and Meinwald (1991, 71) explains it in terms of their different views of individuals.

This dissertation approaches Plato's and Aristotle's essentialism from the perspective of their respective theories of property possession. On Plato's view, perceptible objects have their features in virtue of participating in Forms. Thus, for example,

Naomi Osaka is wise in virtue of the fact that she participates in the Form of Wisdom.

In *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato extends this account of property possession to explain the features of Forms as well. Thus, for example,

Motion is different from Being in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in the Form of Difference in relation to Being.

According to Aristotle in *Categories*, objects have their features by standing in the "said-of" relation or the "present-in" relation to predicable entities. For example,

Naomi is wise in virtue of the fact that wisdom is *present-in* her,
and

Naomi is a human in virtue of the fact that the species, human, is *said-of* her.

I will approach the distinction between a thing's essential and non-essential features by situating it in the context of these two theories of property possession. In Part I, I focus on Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*. In Part II, I focus on Aristotle's *Categories*.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the rest of Part I by providing several pieces of evidence for thinking that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is relying upon a determinate conception of the distinction between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing. It first shows that, at least with respect to questions concerning definition and dialectic, we should read *Sophist* and *Statesman* together. It then outlines the basic mechanics of the method of division and argues that the sophistication and complexity of Plato's method as well as its commitments regarding the underlying metaphysics support the thought that Plato has a reasonably well worked out view of

the metaphysics of definitions. This is further supported by the somewhat surprising fact that definitions by division in *Sophist* and *Statesman* share a standard form: this standard form appears to be an expression of a determinate and somewhat surprising view about which features *define* a subject. Finally, I argue that the standard form for definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* are puzzling in two different ways. First, they appear to contain *too much information*, insofar as they appear to be highly redundant. Second, they appear to contain *too little information*, insofar as they do not provide one with all the information required for being an expert in defining: Plato identifies expertise in defining with expertise in dialectic and holds that expertise in dialectic requires involves possessing information—about which kinds can (cannot) combine and which kinds are (are not) identical—that is not contained in definitions. The texts of *Sophist* and *Statesman*, I conclude, call for a reconstruction of Plato's conception of the metaphysics and epistemology of definitions that draws on the conceptual resources developed in these two dialogues and can resolve these two puzzles.

In chapter 2, I offer such a reconstruction. I begin by arguing that we can make sense of Plato's apparent identification of expertise in defining and dialectical expertise by looking to the model of *epistēmē* in *Meno* and *nous* and *epistēmē* in *Posterior Analytics*. On this approach, expertise in defining is an *other-involving* cognitive state: one expertly grasps the definition of x just in case one grasps the definition of x in such a way as to see how certain other facts about x are metaphysically explained by the definition of x. If this is Plato's view of expertise in defining, I argue, there is nothing problematic in claiming that expertise in defining is identical to dialectical expertise. Thus, on this *other-involving* reading of the expertise in defining, we can resolve the problem of *too little information* posed in chapter 1 and make good sense of Plato's frequent slides between talk of expertise in defining and dialectical expertise.

This account of the epistemology of definitions puts us in position to reconstruct Plato's *metaphysics* of definitions—that is, his account of being an essential feature of a thing. According to this account, the essential features of *x* are those features that play a particular metaphysical role: roughly,

the essential features of *x* are the features of *x* that **metaphysically explain** which further features *x* can and cannot possess as well as which objects *x* is identical to and which it is distinct from.

As I will argue, this account has the distinctive and attractive feature of attributing to Plato *only one* basic relation between an object and its features—namely, participation. This is distinctive because standard accounts of essential features in Plato take him to posit *two* basic relations. On this “Two Relations” approach, Plato accounts for the distinction between a thing's essential and its non-essential features by positing two *fundamentally different* relations that an object can stand in to its features. On my account, by contrast, Plato neither needs nor does he use two fundamentally different relations between an object and its features to account for the difference between an object's essential features and its non-essential features. I close chapter 2 by providing some reasons to think that this distinctive feature of my account is an *advantage* over other accounts in the literature.

Chapter 3 further supports this account in two crucial respects. First, it provides an independent and more extensive defense of the idea—relied upon but not comprehensively defended in Chapter 2—that Plato employs on the concept of metaphysical explanation in his theory of property possession and his account of the epistemology of definitions. Second, it argues that a key series of passages, which have been presented as evidence for attributing the Two Relations View to Plato, provide no such evidence. Even in these passages, sometimes offered as key witnesses, Plato

only ever needs and only ever uses one relation between an object and its features—namely, participation. Chapter 3 provides this support for the account presented in chapter 2 by giving a detailed analysis of a pivotal and particularly difficult series of passages in *Sophist* 256-7. In these passages, the Eleatic Visitor faces up to three apparent inconsistencies in his position concerning the “great kinds”: Motion is the same and not the same, it is different and not different, and it is being and not being. The Visitor proposes a resolution to each of these apparent inconsistencies in turn. According to the standard reading of these passages, he offers accounts of the meaning of each conjunct of his apparently inconsistent claims. I argue that this is not so: the strategy for resolving these apparent inconsistencies is resolutely metaphysical. The Visitor means to show that the apparently inconsistencies are not inconsistent after all by using his theory of property possession to give *metaphysical explanations* of the apparent inconsistencies. On the view I defend, the Visitor makes clear that the explananda are consistent by showing that their explanata are consistent. I close the chapter by drawing out some implications for Plato’s participation-based theory of property possession.

Part II turns to Aristotle. In *Categories*, Aristotle distinguishes two relations, the *said-of* relation and the *present-in* relation that can obtain between an object and its features—or, to use Aristotle’s terminology between a “subject” (ὕποκείμενον) and its “predicates” (κατηγορούμενα). The focus of Chapter 4 is the *said-of* relation, about which there is substantial scholarly disagreement. Accounts of the relation disagree on four basic questions concerning *said-of*. They disagree about what it is, whether it is an essential relation, how it is related to predication, and whether it is definable in more basic terms. In Chapter 4, I argue that

(Formal Part) A is *said-of* B just in case A is a formal part of B,

where the formal parts of B are the proper parts of B that determine *what B is*. The formal parts of B, then, are the essence of B, in cases where B is distinct from its own essence, and the parts of the essence of B. It follows that the *said-of* relation is an essential relation and that, in general, if A is *said-of* B, then A is an essential feature of B's. I go on to argue that *said-of* is not defined in terms of the more general notion of predication but rather that predication is (partly) defined in terms of *said-of*. Finally, I argue that **Formal Part** should be understood as a *definition* of *said-of* in more basic terms. Thus, the *said-of* relation can be defined in more basic terms. On each of these four questions, my answer diverges from that of a prominent, existing account of the *said-of* relation. I close the chapter with a discussion of the relationship between my view and three other accounts.

Chapter 5 further explores the theory of property possession and the distinction between the *said-of* and *present-in* relations in *Categories*. It focuses on claims about the metaphysical status of their subjects, like “Socrates is an individual” and “human is a species.” Aristotle relies on the truth claims such as these throughout the *Categories*, but they pose a problem. It is not clear how terms like “species” and “differentia” fit into the framework of the *Categories*. Indeed, terms like “species” and “individual” present a dilemma. On the one hand, Aristotle's realist theory of truth appears to commit him to the view every predicate term in a simple, affirmative predication corresponds to a being. Thus, since he accepts the truth of “Socrates is an individual” and “human is a species”, he must accept the existence of *individuality* and *species-hood*. On the other hand, terms like “individual” and “species” appear not to be related in the right way to substances: “species” is not predicated of any primary substance and “individual” is not predicated of any secondary substance. Since Aristotle claims that everything else—every entity that is not a primary substance—is predicated of a primary substance, it follows that “species” cannot correspond to

any entity. *Species-hood* does not exist. A similar argument appears to show that *individuality* does not exist either.

I resolve this dilemma by arguing that Aristotle's claims (a) that "everything else" is predicated of a primary substance and (b) that "everything else" is predicated of a secondary substance should be understood to have *limited scope*. They only apply to entities in the ten categories. Thus, I argue, Aristotle accepts that *individuality* and *species-hood* do exist, but he thinks that they are *extra-categorical entities*. A consequence of this view is that claims like "Socrates is an individual" and "human is a species" express predications, but they do not correspond to instances of the *said-of* relation or the *present-in* relation. Aristotle accepts a third type of predication, which I call "higher-order predication". Aristotle's distinction between *said-of* and *present-in* is not meant to capture every instance of property possession. Nevertheless, the higher-order predications are grounded in the instances of *said-of* and *present-in*. In an important sense, then, *said-of* and *present-in* are the only two *fundamental* predication relations.

Part I

Essentialism in *Sophist* and *Statesman*

Chapter 1

Two Puzzles about the Definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*

1. Introduction

In at least a dozen of his dialogues, Plato relies on the distinction between *what something is* and *what it is like*—that is, between the feature or features that *define* a thing and determine what it is, on the one hand, and those features that, while they may flow from definitions, do not themselves define the thing, on the other hand. In the language of contemporary metaphysics, Plato distinguishes between a thing’s essential features and its non-essential features. Consider, for example, *Euthyphro* 11a6-b1:

And, Euthyphro, it seems likely that, although you are asked what the pious is (τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν), you are not willing to reveal (δηλῶσαι) its essence (τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ) to me, but [only] to mention an attribute (πάθος) of it—that the pious has this quality (πέπονθε τοῦτο): to be loved by all the gods. But what it *is* you have not yet said.

καὶ κινδυνεύεις, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, ἐρωτώμενος τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν μοι αὐτοῦ οὐ βούλεσθαι δηλῶσαι, πάθος δέ τι περὶ αὐτοῦ λέγειν, ὅτι πέπονθε τοῦτο τὸ ὅσιον, φιλεῖσθαι ὑπὸ πάντων θεῶν· ὅτι δὲ ὄν, οὐπω εἶπες.

While being loved by all the gods may be a *feature*—or, as Socrates puts it, a mere “attribute” (πάθος)—of piety, it is not an *essential feature* of piety. It does not define or “reveal the essence of” piety (δηλῶσαι τὴν οὐσίαν).

It is not safe to rely on substantive philosophical views found in one Platonic dialogue in reading another; so, we cannot assume that Plato's position on the distinction between essential and non-essential features remains entirely fixed throughout his corpus. Nevertheless, a distinction of some sort between a thing's essential and non-essential features is found in almost all of Plato's works. Consider just a few examples. In *Meno* Plato has Socrates distinguish between what virtue is (τί ἐστίν)—i.e. what its essence is (οὐσίας) (72b1)—and what it is like (ὁποῖόν τι) (71b3-4)—e.g. whether or not it is teachable (71a3-7) and how many types of virtue there are (72b1-3). Likewise, we find in *Republic* I (354b4-5, c1-3) the distinction between what justice is (τὸ δίκαιον ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν) and whether a person who possesses justice is happy (πότερον ὁ ἔχων αὐτὸ οὐκ εὐδαίμων ἐστίν ἢ εὐδαίμων); in *Phaedrus* (237d1-3), the distinction between the definition (ὄρον) of *eros* and whether *eros* is advantageous or harmful (εἴτε ὠφελίαν εἴτε βλάβην παρέχει); in *Theaetetus* (146e7-10), we find the distinction between, on the one hand, *what knowledge is* (ἐπιστήμην αὐτὸ ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν) and, on the other hand, *what subjects there is knowledge of* (τίνων ἡ ἐπιστήμη) and how many kinds of knowledge there are (ὅπόσαι τινές); and, in *Sophist* (217b1-4), the distinction between what sophistry, political expertise, and philosophy *are* and whether they are the distinct from each other.

While it is clear *that* Plato relies on some distinction—or a family of distinctions—between the essential and non-essential features of a thing, it is much less clear *what* exactly Plato takes this distinction to amount to. Indeed, according to a familiar and highly influential story about the early history of essentialism, Plato never articulated a determinate or well-worked out account of his distinction. On this view, Plato had an intuitive grip on the distinction between a thing's essential and non-essential features and employed this intuitive grip to great effect, but it was Aristotle who first regimented, systematized and theorized the distinction. Plato was an early

pioneer, so the story goes, but Aristotle was the first to offer a systematic and well-worked-out theory of philosophical essentialism.

Take G.E.L. Owen's Dawes Hicke lecture, "The Platonism of Aristotle", presented to the British Academy in 1965. According to Owen, Aristotle was dissatisfied with Platonism, in part because Plato's theory of predication could not handle the Third Man Argument. Aristotle's "own positive account of the matter, and therewith his first move towards a new theory of predication and the categories, came when he considered" how a theory could avoid the Third Man Argument, and

Aristotle's criticism of Plato led him to draw some distinctions in his account of predication... [which] enabled him to divide all the predicates of any individual into two groups: those which hold good essentially or *per se* of their subject, as *man* does of Socrates; and those which merely happen to be true of their subject, as *white* does of Socrates. (Owen, 1965, 137).⁴

As Owen sees it, Aristotle moves past the problems he identified with Plato's metaphysics by developing a theory of predication that distinguishes between what a subject is *essentially* and what it is *accidentally*.⁵

Some version or other of this familiar narrative is fairly common among analytic metaphysicians, who often associate sophisticated essentialism with Aristotle rather than Plato.

⁴ Owen's variant on the familiar narrative is especially strident: he appears to think that Plato never manages to draw any distinction between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features. A milder variant of this narrative can still be detected among prominent scholars of Aristotle. For example, David Bronstein (2018, esp. 48-50) offers Aristotle's essentialism as evidence that Aristotle was the more a systematic and greater philosopher than Plato. In particular, Bronstein argues that Aristotle—but, the implication is, not Plato—molds Socrates's "what is it?" questions into a systematic and sophisticated essentialism. Indeed, Bronstein does not attribute to Plato any substantive advance over Socrates's intuitive essentialism. Rather, it is Aristotle who "in the *Posterior Analytics* ... developed the Socratic 'what is it?' question into a deep and powerful philosophical theory of the connections among essence, necessity, and explanation" (2018, 49).

⁵ For analysis and critical discussion of Owen's paper, see Fine (1982), Kung (1981, esp. 227-32), and Code (1985).

Quine, for example, uses the name “Aristotelian Essentialism” for “the doctrine that some of the attributes of a thing (quite independently of the language in which the thing is referred to, if at all) may be essential to the thing and others accidental” (1966, 173-4). A similar association between robust, sophisticated essentialism and Aristotle still often informs contemporary metaphysicians’ understanding of the history of their own field. Thus, for example, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on “Essential vs. Accidental Properties”, updated in 2020, remarks regarding the various ways of characterizing essential properties, “it seems that the root of each of the characterizations goes back at least to the work of Aristotle.”⁶ Plato, by contrast, is not mentioned. Moreover, the strong and still growing interest in the distinction between the essential and non-essential features of a thing—especially where, following Kit Fine and contra Quine, this distinction is not analyzed in modal terms—is a mark of “Neo-Aristotelian” metaphysics and not “Platonist” or “Neo-Neo-Platonist” metaphysics.

Scholarship on Plato has challenged this narrative. Indeed, since Owen’s lecture, scholars have defended sophisticated reconstructions of Platonic essentialism by drawing on at least two different sorts of historical and textual evidence. First, Code (1986) draws on evidence from Aristotle and Alexander of Aphrodisias to reconstruct a determinate and well-developed Platonic account of the distinction between the essential and non-essential features of a thing. On this reconstruction, both Plato and Aristotle distinguish two ‘basic’—i.e. unanalyzable—worldly relations between an object and its features: *Being* and *Having*. If Y is a feature of X’s, then, in Code’s notation, either X *Is* Y or X *Has* Y. The distinction between essential and non-essential features of a thing is defined in terms of these two basic, worldly relations: if X *Is* Y, then Y is an essential feature of X’s; and if X *Has* Y, then Y is a non-essential feature of X’s. On this view,

⁶ See Robertson Ishii, Teresa & Atkins, Philip (2020)

Plato and Aristotle agree on the basic logic of these relations, but they differ on the ontological backdrop and, in particular, on whether to accept the existence of Forms. Code's work has proved seminal to both the study of Platonic and Aristotelian essentialism, and it stands in sharp contrast to the familiar narrative. If Code is right, then Aristotle inherited an already determinate and well-worked-out distinction between essential and accidental predication from Plato. Nevertheless, as Code (1986, 423-5) describes in some detail, the account he offers of Plato's distinction "is seen through Aristotle's eyes" (423). To mention just one reason for caution, Aristotle's willingness to reformulate the claims of his predecessors to conform to his own technical vocabulary and conceptual framework means that Aristotelian and Peripatetic testimony about Platonic essentialism must be taken with a heap of salt.

The familiar narrative has also been challenged by a large body of literature grounded in Plato's own dialogues. Here there are two main groups of scholars. One group of scholars, led by Alexander Nehamas (1979 and 1982), argues—drawing especially on evidence from *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and several Socratic dialogues—that Plato draws a distinction between two relations: an essential *being* relation involved in self-predication claims and a non-essential *participating* relation involved in cases of more ordinary predication.⁷ Plato's "self-predication" claims like

(1) Justice is just

and

(2) The Form of Beauty is beautiful,

are analyzed as instances of *being F* and are given the essentialist paraphrases,

(1a) Justice is what it is to be just

⁷ See Silverman (2002, 90-4) and Leigh (2012). While the *locus classicus* for this distinction is the *Phaedo*, proponents of this reading find evidence for it in many dialogues, including *Hippias Major*, *Euthyphro*, *Symposium*, *Protagoras*, *Parmenides*, and *Sophist*.

and

(2a) The Form of Beauty is what it is to be beautiful.

According to proponents of this view, these are instances of Plato's *being* relation between an object—always a Form—and a feature. Whereas, ordinary cases of property possession, like

(3) Socrates is wise

are analyzed as

(3a) Socrates partakes in wisdom.

Thus, ordinary cases of property possession, like 3, which say nothing about the essence of Socrates or the essence of wisdom are grounded by instances of the participation relation.⁸ This interpretation goes a long way toward making Platonic essentialism intelligible, it is rooted firmly in several of Plato's dialogues, and it remains a touchstone for scholarship on Platonic essentialism and Platonic metaphysics generally. It does not, however, provide an account of the Platonic distinction between a thing's *essential features* and its *non-essential features*. Claims like 1a and 2a tell us that a Form is identical to the essence of a feature. 2a, for example, claims that the Form of Beauty is identical to the essence of the feature, being beautiful. Thus, self-predications, like 1 and 2, do not make a claim about what features their subjects possess. In particular, they do not claim that Justice possess the property of being just or that the Form of Beauty has the feature of being beautiful. For all its advantages, then, Nehamas's distinction between *being* a feature and *participating in* a feature does not capture the difference between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features, and it does not—nor is it designed to—provide a direct rebuttal to the familiar narrative about the sophistication of Plato's account of the distinction between essential and non-essential features and his place in the history of essentialism.

⁸ See Nehamas (1979 and 1982), Silverman (2002, 90-94), and Leigh (2012).

A second group of scholars—including Frede (1967 and 1992), Meinwald (1991, 1992), Mann (2000), Silverman (2002), and Crivelli (2012)—identify in *Sophist* 255c9-d7 a different distinction between relations that an object, *x*, can stand in to a property, *F*.⁹ On their view, Plato thinks that, in some cases, *x* is *F kath' auto*—i.e. by itself, in virtue of its own nature—and that, in other cases, *x* is *F pros allo*—i.e. by participating in *F-ness*. On this view, Plato uses the expression *kath' auto* and *pros allo* to contrast two fundamentally different relations in virtue of standing in which an object can possess a property: an object, *x*, can be *F* in virtue of the fact that *x* participates in *F-ness* or in virtue of the fact that *F-ness* is part of the essence of *x*.¹⁰ This account of Plato's theory of property possession, very much like those of Nehamas (1979 and 1982) and Code (1986) outlined above, reconstructs the core of Platonic essentialism by attributing to Plato two fundamentally different relations between objects and properties.¹¹ This reading of *Sophist* has many advantages and it has illuminated some of the dialogue's most difficult and important passages. Nevertheless, it also has significant drawbacks. First, it turns on a highly controversial reading of *Sophist* 255c9-d7, which is itself a short and especially difficult passage. Despite vigorous defenses of this reading, there is no scholarly consensus that, in that passage, Plato means to distinguish two way in which an object can have a feature.¹² Second, even if we grant that the

⁹ Some of these scholars—including, Frede (1992); Mann (2000); Meinwald (1991 and 1992), who also finds this distinction in *Parmenides*; Pelletier and Zalta (2000); and Thomas (2014)—think that *X* can be *kath' auto Y* even if *X* and *Y* are distinct. According to others—including Silverman (2002), Crivelli (2012), and Frede (1967)—if *X* is *kath' auto Y*, then *X* and *Y* are identical. I am inclined to think that *Sophist* 255c-d does not introduce Frede's distinction—however it is related to identity—but rather introduces a version of the distinction between relative and non-relative properties or predications like the one found in *Charmides* 167b2-e8 and *Republic* 438a7-439b1. I will not defend this reading in this dissertation, but see chapter 2 section 4 below as well as Leigh (2012) and Duncombe (2012) for more discussion of it.

¹⁰ On the second view mentioned in the previous note, since *x* can be essentially *F* even if *x* and *F-ness* are distinct, it is less plausible that Plato is drawing the general distinction between essential and non-essential features.

¹¹ Some but not all proponents of this view explicitly claim that *being kath' auto* and *being pros allo* are fundamental relations, but it seems to be at least an *implicit* commitment of all proponents of this view that *being kath' auto* and *being pros allo* are fundamentally different, in the sense that neither can be analyzed in terms of or reduced to the other.

¹² For a criticism of this reading, see Leigh (2012); for survey of other options, see Crivelli (2012, 140-9).

passage in question does distinguish between *being F kath' auto* and *being F pros allo*, it is not clear that the distinction tracks the distinction between two fundamentally different relations or that it tracks the difference between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features. Finally, even if we grant to Frede and his allies their reading of *Sophist*, this reading does not show much more than that Plato has a clear label for an intuitive distinction between essential and non-essential features. Thus, it does not—and was not designed to—do much to resist the familiar narrative about the early history of essentialism.

These three pioneering projects on Plato's theory of property possession—the one grounded in Aristotle's testimony and the others in Plato's own dialogues—and the large literatures that they have inspired have, in many ways, substantially advanced our understanding of Plato and his essentialism. Here, however, I want to take a crack at the familiar history of early essentialism from a different angle. Rather than starting from Aristotelian sources, evidence from a wide range of dialogues, or evidence from a short and controversial passage in the middle of the *Sophist*, I will start from the definitions that Plato presents and the comments *about* definitions that Plato makes in *Sophist* and *Statesman*.¹³

I will argue that, in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is operating with a single, sophisticated and philosophically attractive account of the distinction between a thing's essential and non-essential features. On the view that I will defend, the distinction between a thing's essential features—those that determine *what it is*—and its non-essential features—those that merely determine what it is like—is one of *metaphysical role*. In particular, on the reconstruction I will offer,

¹³ For convenience, I will talk as if Plato's position is that of the Eleatic Visitor who serves as the dialogue's main protagonist. I do not mean to take any strong stand on the relationship between Plato's official views and those defended by the Visitor.

(Platonic Essentialism) F is an essential feature of x's iff (i) x is F, (ii) the fact that x is F is not metaphysically explained, and (iii) the fact that x is F *partly* metaphysically explains the range of further features x can and cannot possess and the items from which x is distinct.

In short, there is nothing in virtue of which x possesses its essential features, but x's essential features determine its identity and its range of possibilities.¹⁴ This approach to Platonic essentialism does not attribute to Plato a distinction between two fundamentally different relations in virtue of which objects have their features. To distinguish a thing's essential features from its non-essential features, Plato needs *only one* relation—participation—between an object and its features and the notion of metaphysical explanation. In terms of these notions, he can define *being an essential feature of* and *being a non-essential feature of*.

I make the case for this reconstruction in two stages over two chapters. In this chapter, I present evidence that Plato operates with a determinate conception of which features of a thing are essential to it. First, I argue (§2) that *Sophist* and *Statesman* should be read together, at least when it comes to reconstructing Plato's thinking about the metaphysics and epistemology of definitions and the method of division. Next, (§3) I canvass the basic mechanics of the method of division—using which the interlocutors in *Sophist* and *Statesman* discover their subjects' defining features—and then (§4) reconstruct the standard form of the definitions in the two dialogues. The consistency of the standard *form* for definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* suggests that Plato has a determinate view concerning what information defines a definiendum. Even so, I argue (§5) that the standard form for definitions is highly surprising and give rise to two puzzles: given Plato's epistemological

¹⁴ “In virtue of which” and “determines” are meant as glosses for metaphysical explanation. I will have more to say about metaphysical explanation below.

commitments, definitions of the standard form seem both to include unnecessary information and also not enough information.

In chapter 2, I will propose resolutions to these two puzzles. I first offer an account of the epistemology of definitions and, in particular, of the relationship between expertise in defining and expertise in dialectic. Next, I offer an account of the metaphysics of definition and, in particular, of the notion of an essential or defining feature. Together, these accounts of the metaphysics and epistemology of definition explain why definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* take the standard form and contain the information that they do.

2. The Aims of *Sophist* and *Statesman*

In this section, I argue that the *Sophist* and *Statesman* provide valuable evidence about Plato's thinking on definition and essence. Each dialogue is organized around an attempt to give a definition, and both present general remarks on the nature of definition and its epistemology. What is more, their narrative and philosophical continuity invite us to read them as a pair. We should—with due care—use material from each dialogue to inform our understanding of the other, especially regarding their shared conception of definition.¹⁵

The *Sophist* and *Statesman* are organized around the search for definitions. The *Sophist* begins with the introduction of a mysterious visitor from Elea, who is asked to report on the views in Elea regarding whether *sophists*, *statesmen* and *philosophers* belong to three distinct kinds (γέννη) or one kind with three different names (216d3-217a4, 217a7-9).¹⁶ The Visitor replies with a remark that guides the conversation of the *Sophist* and *Statesman*:

¹⁵ For a related approach to the philosophical methodology in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, see Lane (1998, esp. 13-33).

¹⁶ At the end of *Theaetetus*, Socrates and Theodorus arrange to meet again the following day (210d2-4). At the start of *Sophist*, the same group—including Socrates, Theodorus, Theaetetus, the younger Socrates, and possibly some unnamed others—reassembles on the next day as agreed and are joined by the Eleatic Visitor (henceforth, “EV” or

[T1] It is not difficult to say that [in Elea] they consider them three kinds, but it is no small nor easy task to define clearly for each of them what it is (διορίσασθαι σαφῶς τί ποτ' ἔστιν) (*Soph.* 217b1-4).

οὐδὲ χαλεπὸν εἰπεῖν ὅτι γε τρί' ἡγοῦντο· καθ' ἕκαστον μὲν διορίσασθαι σαφῶς τί ποτ' ἔστιν, οὐ σμικρὸν οὐδὲ ῥάδιον ἔργον.

As I noted above, the concept of defining a thing by stating clearly *what it is* (τί ἔστι)—i.e. giving a “real definition”—is familiar from other Platonic dialogues. In certain details, the conception of real definition varies between dialogues, but the core of the idea is stable: an account of *what x is* is a linguistic expression that states the nature or essence of x. A real definition is not an account of how we use a word for x nor is it an account of the concepts that we use to think about x. So, for example, a real definition of sophistry is not a linguistic analysis of how we use the words “sophist” and “sophistry” nor is it a conceptual analysis of the concepts we (pretheoretically) employ to think about sophists and sophistry. Rather, it is a definition of the thing itself—the expertise, sophistry—possession of which makes one a sophist. For Plato, real definitions play a rich theoretical role: the definition of x explains (at least certain) features of x¹⁷ and it differentiates x from other objects.¹⁸ Thus, knowing the real definition of x puts one in position to explain why x has the features it has and why x is distinct from other objects. With this background in view, we can better understand the Visitor’s remark: the Visitor is saying that it is not hard to report that sophist, statesman, and philosopher are of three different kinds, but it is much more difficult to explain *why* this is the case by giving a real definition of each.

simply “Visitor”) (216a1-4). In *Statesman*, the conversation of *Sophist* continues without a break. See Lane, (2005, 326-9) for more discussion of the intertextual relationship between these dialogues.

¹⁷ See *Phaedrus* 237c-d, *Meno* 71b, *Protagoras* 361d, *Republic* I 354b-c. I will argue below that this thought is also operant in *Sophist*.

¹⁸ See *Statesman* 267d10-268c11 and 279a1-5.

This remark structures the conversation of the *Sophist*, in which the discussants take up the first part of their three-fold task by defining the sophist (ὁ σοφιστής) and sophistic expertise (ἡ σοφιστική). Their goal is “searching out and making clear what it is by means of an account” (ζητοῦντι καὶ ἐμφανίζοντι λόγῳ τί ποτ' ἔστι) (218b8-c1; cf. 218c7, 221c6, 264e4-265a1). If successful, this account will allow them “to agree on the thing itself (τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ), rather than on the name alone (τοῦνομα μόνον)” (218c4-5): at the start of the conversation they both use the linguistic expressions, “σοφιστής” and “σοφιστική”, but they do not know, and therefore cannot agree upon, *what a sophist is* or *what sophistry is*. The immediate goal of the dialogue, then, is to give an account of the thing itself (τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ) that will make clear what it is and “point out” its “own nature” (τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν) (264e3-265a1). Note that Plato slides often and freely between talking as if the target of the inquiry is the sophist and talking as if the target is the expertise of sophistry. These two goals are intimately related: a sophist just is a person who possesses the expertise of sophistry; so, while the inquiry focuses on identifying the *kind of expertise* that is sophistry, a definition of sophistry will also make clear the nature of the sophist.¹⁹

Plato begins the *Statesman* by emphatically marking it as the immediate continuation of the *Sophist*.²⁰ It opens with a brief interchange between Socrates and Theodorus expressing gratitude for the earlier discussion of *sophistry* and urging the Visitor to continue on to investigate the philosopher or the statesman next (*Stm.* 257a1-6, 257c). Theaetetus served as Socrates’s interlocutor in *Theaetetus* “yesterday” (χθές; *Stm.* 258a4) and the Visitor’s interlocutor in *Sophist* “just now” (νῦν; *ibid.*). Since he is tired out by the exertions of defining sophistry, he is given a rest (διαναπαύσωμεν, *Stm.* 257c7; ἀναπαυομένῳ, c10) and replaced with the Socrates the Younger.

¹⁹ See chapter 2 section 3.4.2 below for further discussion.

²⁰ This is presumably why the first order of business in *Statesman* is to give Theaetetus a break and replace him with the younger Socrates (257c5ff.): he had the evening off between the discussions of *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* but no break between *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

The inquiry resumes with the Visitor's pronouncement that "after the sophist ... we must search out the statesman (τὸν πολιτικὸν ἄνδρα)" (258b2-3).²¹ Given the emphasis with which Plato situates the discussion of the *Statesman* as an organic part and continuation of the discussion of *Sophist*, it is clear that the immediate goal of the conversation is to give a real definition of political expertise, which will, by extension, reveal the nature of the possessor of that expertise—namely, the statesman.

Later in the *Statesman*, Plato represents the overall goal of the discussion in *Sophist* and *Statesman* in broader terms: the aim is to make the discussants—and presumably the readers—better at division, definition, and dialectic.²² Although both dialogues are organized around the search for real definitions, in both progress towards these definitions is peppered with false starts, extensive digressions, and programmatic remarks.²³ The Visitor frequently pauses to make a point about one of their divisions (e.g. *Stm.* 258e8-259c4), consider an objection to the definition under construction (e.g. *Soph.* 236c9-237a1; *Stm.* 267d11-268c11), offer general remarks about the nature of division and definition (e.g. *Statesman* 262a5-263b10), or digress at length about an issue that has come up along the way (e.g. *Soph.* 237a3-264d12; *Stm.* 268e4-274e3, & 279b8-283b3).

Some of these interruptions are so extensive that at *Stm.* 285c5-287b2 the Visitor and Socrates the Younger pause to reflect on the goals of their conversation.²⁴ The Visitor summarizes their reasons for digressing yet again to discuss their past digressions as follows:

[T2] Not least because of that discomfort we felt concerning the length of our talk (μακρολογία) about weaving, the length of our talk about the reversal of the universe, and

²¹ Reading "τὸν πολιτικὸν ἄνδρα" with Duke et al. (1995) and Rowe (1995).

²² For a helpful discussion of this passage in its immediate context, see Barney (2021).

²³ Commentators have sometimes found these interruptions more philosophically significant than the discussion that they interrupt. As Frede (1996) has argued, the middle section of the *Sophist*, could have been written as a self-standing treatise on the nature of false statements.

²⁴ Cf. *Stm.* 283a3-c6 and 277a-c.

the length of our talk about the sophist (τοῦ σοφιστοῦ) concerning the being of non-being (τῆς τοῦ μὴ ὄντος οὐσίας), thinking that it was too great in length, and [because] we rebuked ourselves for all these cases, out of fear that what we were saying would turn out to be superfluous (περίεργα) as well as long. (*Stm.* 286b6-c3)

Ταύτης τε οὐχ ἥκιστα αὐτῆς ἔνεκα τῆς δυσχερείας ἦν περὶ τὴν μακρολογίαν τὴν περὶ τὴν ὑφαντικὴν ἀπεδεξάμεθα δυσχερῶς, καὶ τὴν περὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀνείλιξιν καὶ τὴν τοῦ σοφιστοῦ πέρι τῆς τοῦ μὴ ὄντος οὐσίας, ἐννοοῦντες ὥς ἔσχε μῆκος πλέον, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτοις δὴ πᾶσιν ἐπεπλῆξαμεν ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς, δείσαντες μὴ περίεργα ᾄμα καὶ μακρὰ λέγοιμεν ...²⁵

The inquiry into sophistry and political expertise has been interrupted so often and at such length that explicit comment is warranted.²⁶ Plato can be understood as taking on a critic who argues that his writing in *Sophist* and *Statesman* is so self-indulgent as to produce disunified dialogues.²⁷ He directs such a critic to reflect on the goals of the discussion: once one understands the goals of the conversation, one will understand that this criticism is misplaced and that the dialogues have substantial unity.

[T3] ... as for what contributes towards the inquiry into the subject set before us, what we have said commits us to making a second and not a first priority of the question how we might find it most easily and quickly, and to give by far the greatest and primary value to the pursuit itself of the ability to divide by classes ... [Critics must show that a different

²⁵ For discussion of several difficulties presented by the Greek of this sentence, especially concerning the τε in b6 and the πέρι in b9, see Rowe (1995, 212-3). None of these difficulties bear the point at hand.

²⁶ Lane (1998, 72-5) notes that there are two challenges here: first that the discussion involved digressions of excessive length and second that some or all of these digressions were superfluous.

²⁷ Commentators often argue that *Sophist* is disunified, at least in the sense that its middle section stands alone as a quasi-treatise on false statements. Thus, Burnet (1914, 223) writes, “the *Sophist* appears to be made up of two wholly disparate sections bound together in an accidental way. It consists ... of a kernel and a shell.” Frede (1996, 139-42) spends considerable time on the question of why Plato wrote the *Sophist* as a dialogue rather than as a stand-alone treatise on false statement consisting in the philosophical argument of the *Sophist*’s middle section. His answer is not that Plato views the discussion of the definition of sophistry and the material of the middle section of the dialogue as a unified whole but rather that Plato does not want to take a position of authority on the questions.

approach to the conversation would] make the partners in the discussion better dialecticians and better at finding how to display in words the things that are; and our instruction will be to take no notice at all of the other sorts of censure and praise, relating to some other criteria, nor even to seem to hear such things at all when they are said.

(286d6-9 & 287a2-6; Rowe translation slightly emended)

τό τε αὖ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ προβληθέντος ζήτησιν, ὥς ἂν ῥᾶστα καὶ τάχιστα εὔροιμεν, δεύτερον ἄλλ' οὐ πρῶτον ὁ λόγος ἀγαπᾶν παραγγέλλει, πολὺ δὲ μάλιστα καὶ πρῶτον τὴν μέθοδον αὐτὴν τιμᾶν τοῦ κατ' εἶδη δυνατόν εἶναι διαιρεῖν, ... γενόμενα τοὺς συνόντας ἀπηργάζετο διαλεκτικωτέρους καὶ τῆς τῶν ὄντων λόγῳ δηλώσεως εὐρετικωτέρους, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων καὶ πρὸς ἄλλ' ἅττα ψόγων καὶ ἐπαίνων μηδὲν φροντίζειν μηδὲ τὸ παράπαν ἀκούειν δοκεῖν τῶν τοιούτων λόγων.

Sophist and *Statesman*—including both the sections of those dialogues engaged in inquiry about sophistry and political expertise *as well as* the digressions and asides—are meant *primarily* to teach division, definition, and dialectic.

For our purposes, there are three main upshots. First, T2 and T3 give us further reason to read *Sophist* and *Statesman* together: referring explicitly to both discussions, Plato represents these dialogues as working together as a guide to division, definition, and dialectic. Second, these passages invite—even urge—the reader to carefully study the many digressions about and examples of definition, division, and dialectic in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Indeed, they invite the reader to take the two dialogues as a whole as expressing reasonably well-worked-out conception of division, definition, dialectic and the relationship between these three. This reading is buttressed by the fact that, in the opening to the *Sophist*, the Eleatic Visitor is presented as possessing a

determinate view on the nature of philosophy (see *Soph.* 217b1-218a1 and *Stm.* 257b5-c6), which, as I will note below, is closely linked to dialectic, division, and definition.²⁸

Third, these passages suggest that Plato's views on division, definition and dialectic should harmonize with the positions he defends in these dialogues concerning metaphysics, language and epistemology—especially where those positions obviously bear on division, definition or dialectic. In some cases, it is clear how this is supposed to work. The definitions Plato works out in *Sophist* and *Statesman* are models of how to formulate, challenge, refine and defend a real definition and his remarks about the nature of kinds and the importance of models clearly provide resources for a student trying to master division. Other cases are less clear. How does the account of the great kinds, the account of false statement, and the puzzles of being and non-being in *Sophist* promote the interlocutors' goal? I suggest that these discussions promote definition, division and dialectic in at least two ways. In some places, Plato describes dialectic in detail and contrasts it with eristic. In these cases, Plato is teaching us to be better dialecticians by telling us what dialectical expertise is and how it relates to other intellectual skills. In other places, Plato is sketching a theory of metaphysics, epistemology and language that is the backdrop for his conception of definition, division and dialectic. He is giving a partial account of *how the world must be* in order for definition, division, and dialectic, as he sees them, to be successful.

3. The Basics of Division

Sophist and *Statesman* are not unique among Platonic dialogues in being structured around the search for a definition. They are, however, unique in the method that they consciously and

²⁸ This point is strengthened if, as Lane (2005, 337-8 and 2018), and other have argued, the *Statesman* represents the political expertise as a role that can only be successfully filled by a philosopher. On this reading, the descriptions of dialectic and philosophy in the middle section of the *Sophist* are important for understanding the account of political expertise in *Statesman*.

explicitly employ to arrive at these definitions.²⁹ This is the much-discussed method of “division according to kinds” (διαίρεσις κατ' εἶδη; διαίρεσις κατὰ γένη). Plato seems to think that a successful application of the method of division will bring to light the features that *define* the subject at hand. In other words, applying the method of division successfully distinguishes an object's *essential* features from its other features. Thus, the sophistication, complexity and systematicity of Plato's method and his apparent confidence in it further support the idea that Plato is operating with a determinate and reasonably well-worked out conception of the distinction between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features.

In order to get clear on the method, let's first distinguish three Platonic uses of “division according to kinds” (διαίρεσις κατ' εἶδη) and related language. As Plato uses it, “division” can refer to an objective relationship that obtains between objects in the world.³⁰ In this sense, divisions are joints in nature (ἄρθρα ἣ πέφυκεν) (*Phaedrus* 265e1-2): a kind divides into subordinate kinds whether or not any rational agents represent or attend to this fact.³¹ Second, “division” can refer to

²⁹ It is only in *Sophist* and *Statesman* that the interlocutors explicitly and self-consciously “divide according to kinds” in order to arrive at the definitions they propose. Something roughly corresponding to division as we find it in *Sophist* and *Statesman* is found in *Republic* 454a1-9, *Cratylus* 424b-425c, *Philebus* 16b-19c, and *Phaedrus* 265c-266d; some commentators also find division in *Gorgias* 454d-455a & 463e-466a although I am not sure; for discussion, see Moravcsik (1973, 325) whose doubts I share. In *Philebus* and *Cratylus*, division is paired with “collection”—by which various items are recognized as belonging to a single kind—and is aimed at producing a classification of a domain that maps out the relationships between the domain's members—i.e. it brings to light which objects of a domain exists, “how many” of them there are, and “what sort” they are (see *Philebus* 17b & 19b). In *Phaedrus* (265c-266d), Socrates, reflecting on his two earlier speeches about *eros*, claims that these speeches constituted examples of “collecting” and “dividing” to produce definitions. As Hackforth (1972, 131 n. 1) and Rowe (1986, 200) have pointed out, however, this is a retrospective re-description of what happened in these earlier speeches rather than a report of the method explicitly or consciously employed in them. In *Sophist* and *Statesman*, by contrast, the use of division is explicit from the outset and aimed at giving definitions of particular targets rather than classifying a domain in its entirety.

³⁰ Divisions, in this sense, are “out there” to be discovered. See e.g. *Soph.* 229d6: “But we still must inquire whether [education] is indivisible or it has some division (διαίρεσιν) worthy of a name.” (ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἡμῖν ἔτι καὶ τοῦτο σκεπτέον, ἄρ' ἄτομον ἢ διή ἐστὶ πᾶν ἢ τινα ἔχον διαίρεσιν ἀξίαν ἐπωνυμίας). See also, *Soph.* 267b8, *Stm.* 258b10, 262b4, 265b8-9.

³¹ On this point, I differ from Vlasits (forthcoming) who thinks that worldly divisions need not track essential connections or joints in nature. As he sees it, only a certain subset of divisions, which he calls “scientific divisions” track joints in nature. I am skeptical that Plato would call the Vlasits's non-scientific divisions “divisions” and I am confident that he would not call the “divisions according to kinds”. In any case, I am interested only in *division according to kinds*. This difference between by approach and Vlasits's, I believe, explains why he denies that division obeys the principles I set out below.

the cognitive activity by which one grasps and represents objective divisions.³² In this sense, our mental act of grasping, say, that the geometrical kind, triangle, falls into three sub-kinds—namely, scalene, isosceles, and equilateral—is an episode of division. Third, division can refer to the result of this cognitive process.³³ In this sense, the mental representation that productive expertise and acquisitive expertise are kinds of expertise is a division (cf. *Stm.* 262a3-c1).

Here, we are primarily concerned with division in the first sense. Our goal is to reconstruct Plato's concept of *what a thing is*. Roughly speaking, we are looking for the set of objective facts about *x* that *define* *x* or constitute *x*'s essence. Division is relevant because Plato thinks that knowing certain objective divisions—or, as I shall call it, the “divisional information”—puts one in position to state *what x is*. For our purposes, then, we care about the divisions in nature—the relationships that obtain between kinds and their subordinate kinds.

Scholars generally agree on the basic mechanics of objective division (henceforth, simply “division”): one kind divides into two or more immediately subordinate kinds, which are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive.³⁴ Slightly more formally, division is governed by the following principles:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| (one-many) | one kind divides into more than one kind, |
| (immediate subordination) | if A divides into B (and some other kind or kinds), then there is no kind, C, such that C is subordinate to A and B is subordinate to C. |

³² Divisions, in this sense, is a cognitive process or activity. See *Soph.* 235c8-d1: “According to our earlier manner of division (τρόπον τῆς διαιρέσεως), I seem to now see two kinds of imitation” (Κατὰ δὴ τὸν παρεληλυθότα τρόπον τῆς διαιρέσεως ἔγωγέ μοι καὶ νῦν φαίνομαι δύο καθορᾶν εἶδη τῆς μιμητικῆς). In this sense, Plato often uses verbal forms—e.g. forms of διαιρεῖν, διαχωρίζω, and τέμνειν—to talk about the cognitive activity of dividing.

³³ See *Stm.* 276a1-2: “But how would the division (διαίρεσις) after this one come about (ἐγίγνετ')?” (ἀλλ' ἢ μετὰ τοῦτο διαίρεσις αὐτὴ τίνα τρόπον ἐγίγνετ' αὐτῇ). In the next line, the Visitor explains that this division comes about by dividing in a way they have before, so “division” does not refer to the activity itself. It also cannot refer to objective division; objective divisions are not created by rational agents. See also *Soph.* 264c1-2.

³⁴ See, e.g., Crivelli (2012, 15-16) and Rickless (2010); cf. Bluck (1975, 34-5) and Taylor (1926, 377); Grams (2012) and Vlasits (forth.) challenge the standard reading. I do not find their arguments compelling, but a fuller consideration of the matter would be welcome.

- (exclusive) if A divides into $B_1, B_2, \dots$, and B_n , then $B_1, B_2, \dots$, and B_n are pairwise disjoint—i.e. for $1 \leq i, j \leq n$, no kind subordinate to B_i is also subordinate to B_j .³⁵
- (exhaustive) if A divides into $B_1, B_2, \dots$, and B_n , and C is distinct from $B_1, \dots$, and B_n and is subordinate to A, then C is subordinate to B_1 or $\dots$, or B_n .

To illustrate, consider Plato's first example of division in *Sophist* (with Theaetetus's responses deleted):

[T4] Well now, of all skills (τεχνῶν) there are two kinds (εἶδη), I suppose. ... Farming and all care (θεραπεία) concerned with mortal body as a whole, and again [care] concerning compound and malleable body—which, of course, we call “an implement”—and the expertise of imitation; it would be right to apply a single name to all of these. ... Whenever someone should bring into being (εἰς οὐσίαν ἄγειν) later anything which did not exist before μὴ πρότερόν ὄν), we say, I suppose, that the one who brings [it into being] produces and the thing brought [into being] is produced. ... All the things we just now went through possessed their own ability to do that [viz. produce] (δύναμιν εἰς τοῦτο).³⁶ ... Therefore, let us, gathering them under a single heading, call them productive expertise (ποιητικὴν). ... Again, after this, there is the whole kind [of expertise] in learning, and the [one] to do with coming to know, as well as the [one] to do with money-making and [the one] to do with combat and [the one] to do with hunting. Since none of these create (δημιουργεῖ)

³⁵ Note that this does not mean that the same object cannot have B_i and B_j as features. For example, expertise divides into productive and acquisitive, but the same person can have both a productive expertise—e.g. carpentry—and also an acquisitive expertise—e.g. angling.

³⁶ The complement after εἰς in the expression “δύναμιν εἰς ...” picks out what the ability does or accomplishes. Compare *Soph.* 247d8-e3.

anything, but in some cases they master things that are and things that come to be using words or actions and in other cases they do not allow the mastery [of things that are and things that come to be]—for this reason, perhaps, it would be most appropriate for each of these parts to be called an acquisitive expertise [τέχνη τις κτητική]. Since all kinds of expertise are [part of] acquisitive expertise or productive expertise, Theaetetus, in which of these two should we place angling? (219a8-d3)

{ΞΕ.} Ἀλλὰ μὴν τῶν γε τεχνῶν πασῶν σχεδὸν εἶδη δύο. ... {ΞΕ.} Γεωργία μὲν καὶ ὄση περὶ τὸ θνητὸν πᾶν σῶμα θεραπεία, τό τε αὖ περὶ τὸ σύνθετον καὶ πλαστόν, ὃ δὴ σκεῦος ὠνομάκαμεν, ἥ τε μιμητική, σύμπαντα ταῦτα δικαιοτάτ' ἂν ἐνὶ προσαγορεύοιτ' ἂν ὀνόματι.... {ΞΕ.} Πᾶν ὅπερ ἂν μὴ πρότερόν τις ὄν ὕστερον εἰς οὐσίαν ἄγῃ, τὸν μὲν ἄγοντα ποιεῖν, τὸ δὲ ἀγόμενον ποιεῖσθαι ποῦ φαμεν. ... {ΞΕ.} Τὰ δέ γε νυνδὴ <ᾶ> διήλθομεν ἅπαντα εἶχεν εἰς τοῦτο τὴν αὐτῶν δύναμιν. ... {ΞΕ.} Ποιητικὴν τοίνυν αὐτὰ συγκεφαλαιωσάμενοι προσεῖπωμεν. ... {ΞΕ.} Τὸ δὲ μαθηματικὸν αὖ μετὰ τοῦτο εἶδος ὅλον καὶ τὸ τῆς γνωρίσεως τό τε χρηματιστικὸν καὶ ἀγωνιστικὸν καὶ θηρευτικόν, ἐπειδὴ δημιουργεῖ μὲν οὐδὲν τούτων, τὰ δὲ ὄντα καὶ γεγονότα τὰ μὲν χειροῦται λόγοις καὶ πράξεσι, τὰ δὲ τοῖς χειρουμένοις οὐκ ἐπιτρέπει, μάλιστ' ἂν που διὰ ταῦτα συνάπαντα τὰ μέρη τέχνη τις κτητικὴ λεχθεῖσα ἂν διαπρέψειεν. ... {ΞΕ.} Κτητικῆς δὲ καὶ ποιητικῆς συμπασῶν οὐσῶν τῶν τεχνῶν ἐν ποτέρᾳ τὴν ἀσπαλιευτικὴν, ᾧ Θεαίτητε, τιθῶμεν;

Expertise (τέχνη), itself a kind, divides into two subordinate kinds, which together cover all kinds of expertise. One of these two sub-kind is called “productive expertise” because it is the expert ability to bring something into being; the other is the expert ability to accomplish something with an already existing object, and, since several prominent members of this type of expertise involve taking possession of their target, it is called “acquisitive.” It follows, then, that the two kinds into

which expertise divides are exhaustive and mutually exclusive: every expertise is either acquisitive or productive and no expertise is both.

This account of the basic mechanics of division is widely accepted, but it deserves further defense and it raises several important questions. For example, what is a kind and what is it for one kind to be subordinate to another? Here, I will follow the majority and leave these important questions for another day.³⁷ Instead, I turn to the relationship between division and definition.

In *Sophist* and *Statesman*, the interlocutors attempt to track objective divisions in order to arrive at and propose a real definition nine times. These nine examples form a pattern. In each, the interlocutors first fix on a target for division. These are the expertise of angling, sophistry—for which seven definitions are proposed—political expertise, and weaving. They next identify a very general kind to which the target is subordinate. In *Sophist* and *Statesman*, this kind is always a kind of expertise (τέχνη) or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). They divide the general kind into sub-kinds and identify one of these sub-kinds as superordinate to the target for definition. This step is repeated until the target for definition is identified as one of the sub-kinds into which its immediately super-ordinate kind divides. The discussion of angling is Plato's official model for this procedure.³⁸ To open the *Sophist*, Visitor offers a series of divisions culminating in a definition of angling as a model before turning to the more difficult task of defining sophistry.

³⁷ For a recent paper on these issues, see Muniz, & Rudebusch (2018).

³⁸ See Lane (1998, 33).

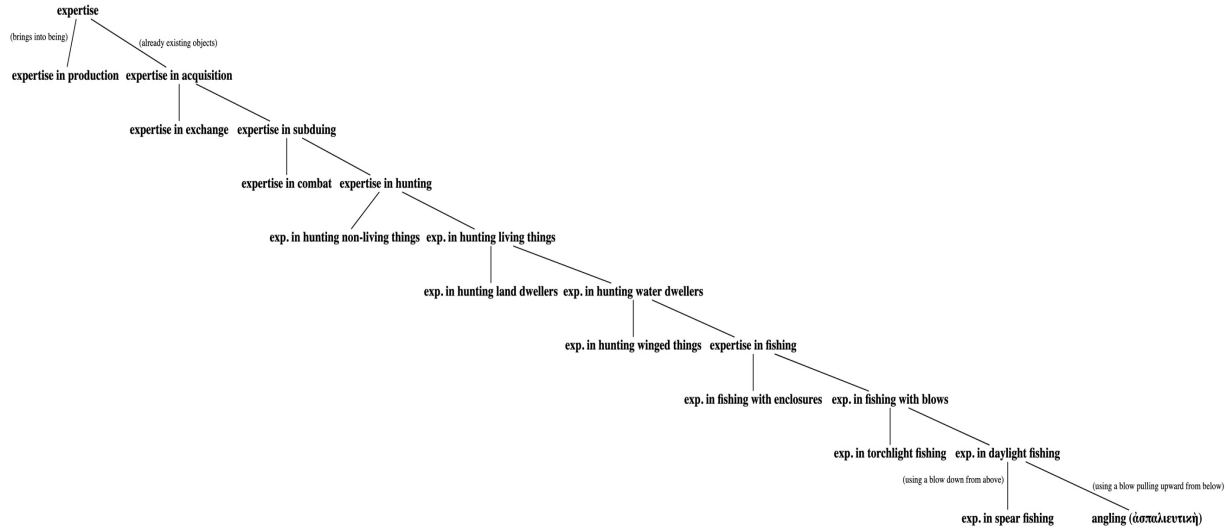


Figure 1: Divisions leading to Angling

Once they follow the chain of divisions down to angling, the interlocutors are ready to give their definition.

4. Definition and its Standard Form

In this section, I reconstruct the logical and grammatical form of definitions-by-division in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. While these definitions fall into two grammatical families, they all appear to convey the same sort of information about their *definienda*. In other words, they all share a complex, standard form. The fact that there is a standard form for definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, I will argue, distinguishes these dialogues from other Platonic works centered on the search for definitions. This, I contend, further supports the view that Plato is operating with a determinate view of definition and—by extension—of the distinction between essential and non-essential features. In the following section (§5), I will argue that, in virtue of their standard form, these definitions present two serious puzzles.

4.1 No Standard Form in Other Dialogues

Given that the nine examples of definition-by-division in *Sophist* and *Statesman* are proposed using the method of division, it is not altogether surprising that the definitions themselves take a similar logical form. This fact is, however, surprising from the perspective of Plato's practice across his corpus.

Elsewhere in Plato, there is no standard form for definitions. In *Meno*, Socrates proposes two very different accounts of what shape is (τί ἐστὶν σχῆμα) (75b8). According to the first proposal,

M1 [T5] Let us say that shape is that which alone of existing things always follows color ...

ἔστω γὰρ δὴ ἡμῖν τοῦτο σχῆμα, ὃ μόνον τῶν ὄντων τυγχάνει χρώματι ἀεὶ ἐπόμενον
(75b9-10; adapted from Grube in Cooper, ed. 1997)

and according to the second,

M2 [T6] [...] shape is the limit of a solid [...]

στερεοῦ πέρας σχῆμα εἶναι (76a7; adapted from Grube Cooper, ed. 1997)

Grammatically, the *definiens* of M1 is a demonstrative pronoun “that thing” (τοῦτο), specified further by a relative clause. We can gloss M1 by replacing this complex *definiens* with a definite description: shape is the only thing that always follows color. M2 takes the familiar form of a definition by genus and differentia: its *definiens*—στερεοῦ πέρας—is composed from a term that picks out the general kind of thing that shape is—namely, “limit”—and a modifying expression—namely, “of a solid”—that differentiates shape from every other kind of limit.

In both M1 and M2, shape is defined with a sentence that takes “shape” as its grammatical subject. This is not always the case. Sometimes, Plato defines F-ness with a sentence of the form

x is F when x is Φ . Take an example the definition of individual courage in *Republic* IV.³⁹ Socrates says that

R1 [T7] We call a single individual courageous, I think, because of that part [viz. the spirited part] when his spirited part preserves through pain and pleasures what has been declared by reasons (ὕπὸ τῶν λόγων) fearful and [what has been declared] not [fearful]. (442b11-c3)

Καὶ ἀνδρεῖον δὴ οἶμαι τοῦτῳ τῷ μέρει καλοῦμεν ἓνα ἕκαστον, ὅταν αὐτοῦ τὸ θυμοειδὲς διασώζη διὰ τε λυπῶν καὶ ἡδονῶν τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων παραγγελθὲν δεινὸν τε καὶ μὴ.

Here, Socrates states what courage (ἀνδρεία) is by stating the conditions under which one is courageous (ἀνδρεῖος). It is notable that this definition of courage specifies the proper subject of courage: a person is courageous in virtue of the courage in the spirited part of her soul (cf. 441d1-3). The spirited part of the soul is the primary bearer of individual courage. The definitions of wisdom (422c5-8) and temperance (422c10-d1) take a similar logical form and share this feature with the definition of courage. In *Republic* IV, then, it appears to be part of the business of a definition to specify the *proper subject* of the *definiendum*.

The above examples show that Plato is open to definitions of several logical and grammatical forms. Indeed, these definitions are also different in the *kind of information* they provide about their *definienda*. Contrast M1 to R1. In R1, courage is defined by giving conditions under which a person is courageous and by identifying the proper subject of courage. M1 gives no indication that *having a shape* has a *proper subject* at all and no hint at what its proper subject might be.

³⁹ For evidence that this is meant to be a *definition* of courage, see the parallel passages in the same context about moderation (*Rep.* 442c10-d3), where sentences with a parallel structure are taken to say what moderation is (τί ἐστιν σωφροσύνη).

Moreover, it is not clear whether we can extract from M1 any but the most trivial conditions for *having a shape*. M1 entails that *x has a shape* when *x* has the only thing that follows color, but this is far from informative. The difference between R1 and M2 is striking: to define courage by genus and differentia—as shape is defined in M2—we would need to make reference to the more general genus of which courage is a species. But R1 itself does not say and it does not entail that there is a more general kind or genus, of which courage is a species. Likewise, M2 gives no indication *whether* shape has a proper subject or *what* that proper subject might be.

4.2 The Two Families of Definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*

The Platonic definitions quoted in the previous section share no standard form, and none of them conforms to the standard form for definition in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Outside of *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is open to definitions of different grammatical and logical forms, and he even seems open to definitions that contain different types of information about their subjects. It is significant, then, that there is substantial uniformity to the nine definitions proposed in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. The literature on division and definition in *Sophist* and *Statesman* is extensive, but it generally passes quickly over the *form* of these definitions.⁴⁰ As far as I know, there is no detailed reconstruction of the logical form of these definitions in the literature. Our first task, then, is to give an account of this standard form for definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Once we have this standard form in view, I will, in §5 below, highlight two puzzling features that these definitions have in virtue of their form.

⁴⁰ The standard view is, as far as I can tell, still the one put forward in Taylor (1926, 377). Taylor characterizes the form of definitions in Aristotelian terms as definitions by genus and a series of differentiae. He may well be influenced by Aristotle's own critical discussion of division. Cf. Bluck (1975, 34)

The definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* fall into two families. Family A is exemplified by the definition of angling (221b2-c3)—which is the first definition in *Sophist* and is set up as the model for the ensuing discussion (221c5-6; cf. 218c7-219a2)—and it also includes the sixth definition of sophistry (*Soph.* 231b3-8) and the first definition of political expertise in the *Statesman* (267a4-c3). Family B is exemplified by the first proposed definition of sophistry (223b1-6). It also includes the second (224c9-d2), third and fourth (224e1-4)⁴¹, fifth (226a1-4) and seventh (268c8-d4) definitions of sophistry proposed in *Sophist*. (I will not discuss all members of Families A or B, for more see Appendix A).

For convenience, I will use abbreviations to talk about the various definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. For example, “Sα” refers to the definition of angling (ἄσπαλιευτική) in *Sophist*, “Sσ1” refers to the first definition of sophistry in *Sophist*, and “Pπ1” is the first definition of political expertise in *Statesman* (Πολιτικός).

Let’s begin with Family A and the definition of angling. Plato prefaces the definition of angling (Sα) with a remark indicating that the interlocutors, through their application of the method of division, at this point in the discussion, not only use the same word for the angler (τῆς ἄσπαλιευτικῆς) but have “grasped the definition (τὸν λόγον) concerning the activity itself (περὶ αὐτὸ τοῦργον)⁴² sufficiently well” (221a7-b2).⁴³ The definition proper follows:

Sα [T8] For, of all expertise one half is the acquisitive part (τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ μέρος κτητικὸν ἦν); and of the acquisitive part⁴⁴ [one half is] the subduing part; and of the

⁴¹ The third and fourth definitions are given by a single sentence with a disjunctive clause—“κατηλικὸν εἴτε αὐτοπωλικόν”. They are counted separately in the summary at 231d-e.

⁴² I’ve translated Plato’s use of *ergon* here as “activity,” though the distinction we would expect him to make is between the name for a thing (object, being) and the thing itself. This is the second time he has marked this distinction with the language of “τοῦνομα” and “τοῦργον” (see 217b-c). The Fowler and Nicholas White translations both give us “the thing itself” for “αὐτὸ τοῦργον.”

⁴³ Νῦν ἄρα τῆς ἄσπαλιευτικῆς περὶ σύ τε κἀγὼ συνωμολογήκαμεν οὐ μόνον τοῦνομα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν λόγον περὶ αὐτὸ τοῦργον εἰλήφαμεν ἱκανῶς.

⁴⁴ Alternatively, “of the acquisitive half”.

subduing part [one half is] the hunting part; and of the hunting part [one half is] the animal-hunting part; and of the animal-hunting part [one half is] the water-dweller-hunting part; and of the water-dweller-hunting part the whole lower cut is the fishing part; and of fishing expertise [one half is] the striking part;⁴⁵ and of striking expertise one half is the hooking part, and of this the part concerning a blow pulling upward from below—to this activity we make the name similar—is the angling which we now sought by name. (221b2-c3)

{ΞΕ.} ... συμπάσης γὰρ τέχνης τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ μέρος κτητικὸν ἦν, κτητικοῦ δὲ χειρωτικόν, χειρωτικοῦ δὲ θηρευτικόν, τοῦ δὲ θηρευτικοῦ ζωοθηρικόν, ζωοθηρικοῦ δὲ ἐνυγροθηρικόν, ἐνυγροθηρικοῦ δὲ τὸ κάτωθεν τμήμα ὅλον ἀλιευτικόν, ἀλιευτικῆς δὲ πληκτικόν, πληκτικῆς δὲ ἀγκιστρευτικόν· τούτου δὲ τὸ περὶ τὴν κάτωθεν ἄνω πληγὴν ἀνασπωμένην, ἀπ' αὐτῆς τῆς πράξεως ἀφομοιωθὲν τοῦνομα, ἢ νῦν ἀσπαλιευτικὴ ζητηθεῖσα ἐπὶ κλην γέγονεν.

It is striking that, unlike the definitions from *Meno* and *Republic* discussed in 4.1 above, this definition is composed from several grammatically complete units. The account is, in other words, a long conjunctive series of independent clauses. It is also striking that, unlike the definitions we saw above, the clauses that make up this definition express *mereological* claims. Plato's neuter adjectives (in the nominative or genitive)—namely, κτητικὸν/κτητικοῦ, χειρωτικόν/ χειρωτικοῦ, θηρευτικόν/ θηρευτικοῦ, ζωοθηρικόν/ ζωοθηρικοῦ, ἐνυγροθηρικόν/ ἐνυγροθηρικοῦ, ἀλιευτικόν, πληκτικόν, ἀγκιστρευτικόν—should be construed with μέρος (part).⁴⁶ While striking when

⁴⁵ The definition here skips the division offered above (at 220d5-10) between night-fishing (fishing with torches, which presumably relied on phototaxis) and daytime fishing. This may be a corruption; see notes to T9 for parallels.

⁴⁶ It is grammatically possible to construe them with ἥμισυ taken as a substantive, but this is less likely. Also, Plato often uses μέρος as the complementary noun with neuter -ικόν adjectives in his definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Finally, μέρος is an important semi-technical term in the context of the method of division, whereas ἥμισυ is not.

compared to definitions in other dialogues, the prominent role of *parthood* in this definition is easily intelligible. The method of division, as we have seen, proceeds by dividing a kind into parts.⁴⁷ The definition by division, then, simply collects the mereological facts that have been brought to light and link the first kind divided to the definiendum. The result is an ordered list of the kinds to which the definiendum is subordinate or of which it is a subkind. In the case of angling, it is subordinate to expertise as a whole, as well as acquisitive expertise, etc.

Although the series of clauses that make up $S\alpha$ express mereological facts, it is worth emphasizing that they express claims *about different subjects*. For example, the first—namely, “one half of all expertise is the acquisitive part” (συνπάσης γὰρ τέχνης τὸ μὲν ἥμισυ μέρος κτητικὸν ἦν)—is a claim about expertise in general and its relationship to acquisitive expertise, whereas the final clause is about *angling* and expertise in hooking (τούτου). Each of the successive claims made in the definition build on and presuppose the last. Together they take roughly this form:

half of x is the F_1 part; half of the F_1 part is the F_2 part; ; y is the F_i part of the F_{i-1} part
(where x is the most general kind divided and y is the kind defined).

This highlights a further striking feature of $S\alpha$: its redundancy. In separate clauses, the account indicates that angling is subordinate to, or a subkind of, expertise in fishing (ἀλιευτικῆς), to expertise in water-dweller hunting (ἐνυγροθηρικοῦ), to animal-hunting (ζωοθηρικοῦ), and to hunting (θηρευτικοῦ). Why do we need to be told that it is subordinate to animal-hunting expertise *and* hunting expertise? The latter entails the former: trivially, any subkind of animal-hunting expertise is also a subkind of hunting expertise. The inclusion of the clause about hunting expertise

⁴⁷ This is not to say that it divides kinds into just any part, but rather parts that are also themselves kinds; see *Stm.* 262c10-263b10.

in addition to the clause about animal-hunting expertise appears to be entirely unnecessary: once we have the latter clause, the former does not provide us with any further information.

The fact that $S\alpha$ is composed of a series of clauses and the fact that these clauses are so strikingly redundant might be taken to suggest that Plato does not intend his definition to include all of T8. Rather, one might think, it is only the *final* clause that defines angling. If this is right, then the intended definition is simply as follows:

Angling is the part of hooking concerning a blow pulling upward from below.

If this is the definition, then it has a familiar form: much like M1, the definiens is a definite description of angling, one which mentions the *kind* of expertise of which angling is a subkind or part. The rest of the sentence, one might maintain, simply trace the steps taken to arrive at the definition, expressed by the final clause. If so, then we can account for the definition without worrying about it taking a highly irregular logical form.

Though this line of thinking is *prima facie* attractive, there is decisive reason to reject it stemming from the second family (“family B”) of definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Family B is exemplified by the first definition of sophistry proposed in *Sophist* (S σ 1).

Here is 223b1-7 from the Duke, et al., OCT edition of the text, with their brackets:

Sσ1: [T9] {ΞΕ.} Κατὰ δὴ τὸν νῦν, ὃ Θεαίτητε, λόγον, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡ τέχνης οἰκειωτικῆς,⁴⁸
 θηρευτικῆς, ζωοθηρίας,⁴⁹ χειρσαίας, ἀνθρωποθηρίας, <πιθανοθηρίας>⁵⁰,
 ιδιοθηρίας, νομιζματοπωλικῆς,⁵¹ δοξοπαιδευτικῆς, νέων πλουσίων καὶ ἐνδόξων
 γιγνομένη θήρα προσρητέον, ὡς ὁ νῦν λόγος ἡμῖν συμβαίνει, σοφιστική.

I translate the OCT text, but see the notes for a discussion of their editorial decisions.

According to the present account, Theaetetus, as it seems, the (ἡ, b2) hunting (θήρα, b6) belonging to expertise in appropriation, hunting, animal hunting, terrestrial animal hunting, hunting humans, hunting with persuasion, hunting in private, selling for money, and opinion teaching, which targets wealthy and reputable young men, ought to be called, as our current account turns out, sophistry.

Let's start by discussing some grammatical points regarding T9.

(1) The defiendum in T9 contains two sets of genitive expressions. “νέων πλουσίων καὶ ἐνδόξων” specifies the objects or targets of the kind of hunting described. The long

⁴⁸ Duke et. al do not accept the addition of χειρωτικῆς after οἰκειωτικῆς proposed by Burnet, who follows a corrector of Venetus 186; see Robinson (1999, 142). I am sympathetic to Burnet's addition because it reflects the division at 219d5-8 (cf. 2213-4 and 222a11). Contra Robinson (1999, 142), 223c6 clearly refers to χειρωτική (expertise in forceful acquisition), although not by name. κτητικῆς appears in the manuscripts after οἰκειωτικῆς, but it seems to simply repeat οἰκειωτικῆς, using the expression Plato has used until now for acquisitive expertise (see T3 = 219a8-d3). For this reason, Duke et al., Robinson (1999) and Schleiermacher delete κτητικῆς, taking it to be the insertion of a scribe, who did not realize that Plato had used οἰκειωτικῆς as a synonym to vary his language. I do not see any way to avoid the problem they identify without deletion.

⁴⁹ All the manuscripts have πεζοθηρίας after ζωοθηρίας and ἡμεροθηρικῆς after χειρσαίας. Duke, et al., Robinson (1999), and Schleiermacher delete both πεζοθηρίας and ἡμεροθηρικῆς for the sorts of reasons cited in the previous note. Diès retains both. I think there is room to retain the manuscript reading in both cases. Plausibly, πεζοθηρίας covers the hunting of all terrestrial animals, including the forms of hunting, like pheasant shooting, that target terrestrial animals in flight. If so, then χειρσαίας might further narrow the field to those forms of hunting that target terrestrial animals, while on the ground. This division is not in the text, but it bears resemblance to the parallel division of aquatic-animal hunting into a part that hunts under-water animals and another that hunts winged animals (220b1-7). Similarly, while there is no explicit division of ἡμεροθηρικῆς to which ἀνθρωποθηρία corresponds, at 222a7-c2 Plato indicates that he recognizes that there might be tame animals besides humans that might be hunted. Thus, he should not identify ἡμεροθηρικῆς with ἀνθρωποθηρία.

⁵⁰ Burnet, Heindorf, and Robinson add πιθανοθηρίας to reflect the division at 222c5-d1.

⁵¹ The manuscripts have μισθαρνικῆς before νομιζματοπωλικῆς. As with κτητικῆς and ἡμεροθηρικῆς, Burnet, Duke, et al., Robinson (1999) and Schleiermacher delete μισθαρνικῆς, taking it to be a synonym for νομιζματοπωλικῆς. I cannot think of a rationale for keeping both.

series of genitives, “τέχνης ... δοξοπαιδευτικῆς”, however, functions in some other way. In some sense the hunting in question is “of” or “belongs to” expertise.⁵² Given that Sσ1 is modeled on Sα (see 221c5-6), where the force of similar genitives was to specify the *whole* of which the subject in question was *part*, it is likely that this long series of genitives in T8 also qualify the subject of their clause by specifying the whole (or wholes) of which that subject is a part.

- (2) The long series of genitives, “τέχνης ... δοξοπαιδευτικῆς”, raises another question. Should we construe this series of genitives as a single long expression (as the OCT punctuation suggests) in which the noun (τέχνης) in the genitive is modified by a series of adjectives (οικειωτικῆς ... δοξοπαιδευτικῆς)? Or should we construe the adjectives following τέχνης substantively and as parallel to rather than modifying τέχνης? On the latter reading, each of these adjectives refer to forms of expertise—e.g., “οικειωτικῆς” means “of acquisitive expertise.”⁵³ If so, then the definition specifies a long series of wholes to which the relevant type of hunting is a part, and Sσ1 fairly closely follows Sα. What is more, on this construal Sσ1 closely parallels the form of Sσ5 (226a1-4), which is another member of Family B. This second reading would be preferable if, as LSJ takes it, some of the genitives in the long list *must* be nouns. In particular, LSJ takes the *hapax legomena*, ζωοθηρίας and ἀνθρωποθηρίας, to be nouns—although they could be adjectives in -ιο, -ια.⁵⁴ If they are indeed nouns, then we must take the rest of the expressions in the list following τέχνης as substantives. On the other hand, χερσαίας (b3) *must* be an adjective here and is much harder to take as a substantive than the -

⁵² On this point, I follow White’s translation.

⁵³ Substantive uses of -ικός adjectives are often but not always signaled with a definite article (see 222c3 and c5-7).

⁵⁴ For some helpful remarks about the significance of Plato’s “concerted linguistic innovation” in a similar context in *Statesman*, see Lane (2013, 55-6 and n. 8).

υκος adjectives in T9 since as a substantive it usually means ‘peninsula’.⁵⁵ Due to this pressure, I prefer to construe our long series of genitives as containing one substantive (τέχνης) and a list of adjectives that modify it (οἰκειωτικῆς ... δοξοπαιδευτικῆς). Note, however, that either of these readings is consistent with what I say in what follows.

- (3) For our purposes, the most important point is this: the complement of ἡ in b2 is θήρα in b6. There are, thus, eighteen words standing between the definite article and its complement.⁵⁶ One effect of this striking hyperbaton is to neatly demarcate the definiens: the defining expression begins with ἡ and ends with its complement, θήρα. In this way, Plato unequivocally signals that each stage of the preceding division is to be represented in the definition, and that his definition is *meant* to contain the same sort of redundancy found in Sα. Even more striking is that this hyperbaton is repeated in other members of family B—namely, Sσ2, Sσ3/4 and Sσ7.

With this understanding of the grammar of T9, in hand, we can see that it takes roughly this logical form:

The x, which is a part of the $F_1 \& F_2 \& \dots \& F_j$ y, and is F_{j+1} just is z.⁵⁷

As I’ve argued, this regimentation captures the form of Sσ1, but it is worth emphasizing that it also closely matches the form of Sσ2 and Sσ3/4 and slightly less closely matches Sσ5 and Sσ7 (see Appendix A). What is more, given the explicit connection between Sα and Sσ1, this provides strong reason to take the whole of T8, rather than just its final clause, as part of the definition of

⁵⁵ See LSJ.

⁵⁶ This count is based on the text found in all of the primary manuscripts, but the point stands no matter which text we read.

⁵⁷ Sσ5 takes the form of an identity claim of the form “sophistry is nothing other than ...”. On this basis, I think it is likely that the other definitions should also be construed in this way. Nothing in what I say below hangs on this claim.

angling. Plato clearly intends his definitions to be highly redundant, and he emphasizes this with explicitly redundant language and hyperbaton.

One might object that I've identified two grammatical families of definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* and, thereby, shown that these definitions do *not* take a single standard form. Here, it is important to clarify that I do not mean to claim that the definitions of *Sophist* and *Statesman* share a single *grammatical* form. What I mean to claim is that, *mutatis mutandis*, they express the same information—the same set of facts—about their definienda. In other words, they all define x by telling us that it is the part of the kinds under which it falls that has feature F. That is, they all take the following form:

x just is the part of G₁, which is part of G₂ ..., which is part of G_j, that has feature F

(where G_j is the first kind divided and G₁ the last).

If this is right, then Family A and Family B both teach us something critical about the definitions of *Sophist* and *Statesman*. On the one hand, Family B shows that the definitions are meant to include the entire collection of superordinate kinds mentioned in the defining paragraphs rather than just the final clause of those paragraphs. This means two things: the definitions are *meant to be* highly redundant and they are designed to mention each step of the definitions that precede them. On the other hand, Family A teaches us how to understand the rather mysterious uses of the genitive in the *definientia* of Family B: these genitives express the parthood relations brought to light by the method of division. In short, the genitives express the relation of *being a subkind of*.

If what I have said is right, there is a striking contrast between the definitions of *Sophist* and *Statesman* and the definitions in other Platonic dialogues. Not only does Plato use a standard form for definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* and does not do so elsewhere, but the standard form in *Sophist* and *Statesman* is both highly complex and quite surprising. This uniformity and peculiarity

of the dialogues' definitions further supports the idea that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is operating with a determinate and reasonably well-worked out conception of definitions. Note also that one cannot account for this standard form simply by pointing out that all the definitions in question are based on applications of the method of division: nothing in the method of division requires that definitions take a standard form, nothing in the method requires that each stage be represented in the definition, and nothing in the method requires that definitions take an odd or redundant form. The explanation—whatever it is—must be found elsewhere. In chapter 2, I will suggest that this explanation is to be found in Plato's views of the epistemology and metaphysics of definitions. Before doing so, however, I want to draw out two puzzles raised by the standard form.

5. Two Puzzles

We've seen that the definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* take a standard form. But why is it so important to Plato to present his definitions in this form? Indeed, as I will argue in this section, definitions that take this standard form share at least two very puzzling features. First, as we have seen, their structure makes them highly redundant: they seem to contain more information than is necessary for stating clearly *what the definiendum is*. As I shall argue, this is a problem: they contain *too much* information. Second, as I shall argue, in *Sophist* and *Statesman* Plato thinks, roughly, that

- (1) an expert in defining is also an expert in dialectic
- (2) to be an expert in dialectic one must know, for each kind, K, which features K can have, which K cannot have, which kinds are identical to K, and which are distinct from K.

But standard form definitions do not contain information about what features the definiendum can or cannot have nor do they tell us which objects are identical and which distinct. It seems, then, that definitions of the standard form contain *too little* information. I do not mean to suggest that these problems are devastating to Plato or that they cannot be resolved. Indeed, in chapter 2 I will propose just such a resolution. Instead, I mean to show that a reconstruction of Plato's thinking about definitions—and essence—in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, must have something to say about these two puzzles.

5.1 Too Much Information

We have already seen that the definitions arrived at by division in *Sophist* and *Statesman* are strikingly redundant. The first definition of *Sophistry* (Sσ1), for example, specifies that sophistry is a kind of hunting of young men (νέων ... θήρα) *and also* that it is a kind of hunting (θηρευτικῆς), animal hunting (ζωοθηρίας), terrestrial animal hunting (πεζοθηρίας), tame animal hunting (ἡμεροθηρικῆς), and human hunting (ἀνθρωποθηρίας).⁵⁸ It is perfectly obvious that sophistry is a kind of animal hunting from the fact that sophistry is a kind hunting that targets young men. Why, then, does Plato include both a reference to the hunting of young men and also animal hunting in his definition? It does not seem that the reference to animal hunting—not to mention the references to terrestrial animal hunting, tame animal hunting, and human hunting—provides any information about *Sophistry* beyond what is entailed by the fact that sophistry is a kind of hunting of young men. Yet, Plato appears committed to including these redundant expressions in this definition, and generally in definitions of the standard form. What is more, in Sσ1, he emphasizes both the inclusion of these unnecessary expressions—with a striking hyperbaton—and their redundancy—

⁵⁸ This is according to my preferred text. See notes to T9 above. On all versions of the text, my point stands.

with the repetition of words built on the stem *θηρ*- (hunt). What, then, is Plato up to? Why do the definitions by division in *Sophist* and *Statesman* take a form that involves this strange and striking redundancy?

These redundancies only seem more puzzling when one reflects on the fact that a good definition is maximally perspicuous and precise.⁵⁹ Plausibly, expressions that do not provide any new information about the definiendum—in the sense that they fail to provide information that is not obviously entailed by other expressions in the definition—do not make the definition any more perspicuous or any more precise. If this is right, then, in principle, redundant expressions should not be included in definitions: unnecessary expressions can *only* serve to make a definition less perspicuous or less precise. Plato's redundant expressions, then, can only make his definitions worse. Thus, the definitions of *Sophist* and *Statesman*, appear to include too much information: these definitions include expressions that *only* provide information that is trivially entailed by other parts of the definition.

5.2 Not Enough Information

Given Plato's claims about the relationship between definitions and dialectic, the definitions of *Sophist* and *Statesman* appear to leave out information that they ought to include. This puzzle arises if, as I will argue, Plato accepts that

(1) an expert in defining is also an expert in dialectic,
and that

⁵⁹ The idea that real definitions ought to be perspicuous is reflected in Plato's repeated insistence on clarity (*σαφῶς*, see, e.g., 217b3) in definitions. The idea that they must be precise is reflected in the remark that the definition of political expertise in *Statesman* will not be "finished off with precision until" (*ἀπειργασμένοι ... δι' ἀκριβείας τὸν πολιτικὸν ἕως*) the account can separate off all the pretenders to political expertise and "display him [the political expert] alone, unalloyed" (*καθαρὸν μόνον αὐτὸν ἀπορήνωμεν*) (268c5-10 cf. 268b8-c3 & 279a1-5).

- (2) to be an expert in dialectic one must know, for each kind, K, which features K can have, which K cannot have, which kinds are identical to K, and which are distinct from K.

From (1) and (2) it follows that an expert in *defining* knows which features each kind can have and which it cannot have, which kinds are identical and which are distinct. Since the expert in defining just is the person who knows (or can reliably discover) the definitions of things, it seems that definitions should include information about which features a kind can have and which other kinds it is identical to. But this does not seem to match Plato's practice of giving definitions: the standard form definitions do not tell us, e.g., which kinds can combine or which kinds are distinct.

Let's start with (1). The most explicit and sustained discussion of the ability to define in *Sophist* and *Statesman* appears in *Stm.* 285c4-287b2 in the course of a long digression on the goals of the conversation and the appropriate standards for assessing it. The Visitor leads Young Socrates to agree that the goal of the inquiry about the political expert (ἡ περὶ τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ζήτησις) is not to understand political expertise itself, but “to become better at dialectic about all things” (ἔνεκα ... τοῦ περὶ πάντα διαλεκτικωτέροις γίνεσθαι) (285d4-6). *A fortiori*, the Visitor continues, the “definition of weaving” (τὸν τῆς ὑφαντικῆς λόγον) (worked out earlier at 279b8-283a9), was not for the sake of weaving itself (αὐτῆς ταύτης ἔνεκα)—i.e. for the sake of understanding weaving (d8-9).⁶⁰ Instead, such easy, trivial examples are valuable because “one must practice being able to propose and to receive definitions of each thing” (δεῖ μελετᾶν λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατὸν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι) (286a4-5).⁶¹ The whole conversation (πάντ' ... τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα), he claims,

⁶⁰ The Visitor begins this speech with the relatively rare combination of particles, “ἥ που ... γε”, which Denniston (p. 281) notes is used to mark an argument *a fortiori*. The only other uses of this combination of particles that I could find using a TLG search in Plato are at *Phaedo* 84d9-e2 and *Gorgias* 469b3. In both of these passages, the speaker is presenting an argument *a fortiori*. Our passage (285d8-9) features this combination of particles and makes good sense as an argument *a fortiori*. Therefore, I read it as such.

⁶¹ Compare the language at *Republic* 531e4-5 and *Protagoras* 336b9-c1, both of which explicitly connect dialectical skill with the ability to give and take λόγοι. In *Republic* these λόγοι are definitions of forms, whereas in *Protagoras*—where the connection is placed in the mouth of Alcibiades—they are probably arguments. It is possible that in *Republic*

was for the sake of clearly pointing out (σαφῶς δείκνυται)—i.e. defining—the greatest and most beautiful things (286a5-b2). In sum, since the objects really worth knowing are the most difficult to define, they need to practice on easier subjects like weaving and political expertise (286a7-b2).

What matters for present purposes are the Visitor's two descriptions of the point of the conversation. At first, the Visitor tells us that the goal of the conversation is to become better at dialectic about all things (τοῦ περὶ πάντα διαλεκτικωτέροις γίγνεσθαι). However, he goes on to say that the point of the account of weaving was to practice being able to define each thing (μελετᾶν λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατόν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι), and generally that the point of everything they have said was to practice for greater things—i.e. for defining the objects that are most difficult to define.

The Visitor is trying to be precise about the goal of the conversation. As we shall see, the goal of the conversation will set the standard by which it should be assessed; so, it is important, in the context, to differentiate the instrumentally valuable tasks, like defining political expertise and weaving, from the ultimate goal of the conversation. But in describing that goal, the Visitor slips between identifying it as *becoming better at dialectic about everything* and as *becoming better able to define each thing*. It appears, then, that something promotes expertise in dialectic about everything *if and only if* it also promotes the ability to give definitions about each thing.

We find the same sort of slide a few lines down at 286d4-287b2. Here, the Visitor is specifying the standard by which we are to judge the length of each part of the conversation. He tells us that “how we might discover” the definition of political expertise “in the easiest and fastest way” (ὥς ἂν ῥᾶστα καὶ τάχιστα εὔροιμεν) is of secondary importance (d6-8). The primary standard is whether the conversation “makes the person listening more expert at discovery” (τὸν ἀκούσαντα

and *Statesman*, Plato is playing on an existing description of dialectical skill as being able to give and take arguments (λόγοι) by inflecting it for his own purposes with a different sense of λόγοι—namely definitions.

εὐρετικώτερον ἀπεργάζεται) (e1-2). Thus, the only admissible sort of criticism about the length of the discussion bears on whether, if it had been shorter or longer, “it would make those present more expert in dialectic and better at discovering a way to make known the beings by means of an account” (τοὺς συνόντας ἀπηργάζετο διαλεκτικωτέρους καὶ τῆς τῶν ὄντων λόγῳ δηλώσεως εὐρετικωτέρους).⁶² Here, as in the lines above and elsewhere in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, the language of “discovering” is used to talk about identifying a *definition*.⁶³ The implication of this slide between the two descriptions of the standard for criticism is that the things that promote expertise in dialectic are all and only the things that promote the ability to define.

Indeed, if this were not the case, then the Visitor’s position would be highly problematic, if not incoherent. Suppose promoting dialectical expertise and promoting the ability to define can come apart. Suppose, for example, that knowing which facts fall under the purview of dialectic would help one become more expert in dialectic but would not make one better at giving definitions. It would follow that a lengthy digression about which facts fall under the purview of dialectic would be perfectly appropriate according to one statement of the standard for the conversation of *Sophist* and *Statesman* but inappropriate according to the other. Presumably, then, the Visitor does not think that these two standards can come apart. In short, the assumption is that

(Same Means) x promotes expertise in dialectic iff x promotes expertise in defining.

What, then, is the relationship between expertise in dialectic and expertise in definition?

One possibility, which some readers may find initially attractive, is that expertise in definition is a prominent *proper part* of expertise in dialectic. On this view, there is more to dialectical expertise than just expertise in defining. Thus,

⁶² The word δηλώσις literally means “disclosure” or “revelation” but “discovering the disclosure ...” and “discovering the revelation ...” are confusing and odd in English in a way that Plato’s Greek is not. See other uses of δηλώσις in Plato at *Cratylus* 435b6 and *Laws* 942c1.

⁶³ See *Soph.* 221c6 and *Stm.* 279a8; cf. *Phaedrus* 266a5 & 7.

(Requirement) x is an expert in dialectic *only if* x is an expert in definition.

This does not entail Same Means, but—one might think—that in order to be an expert at dialectic one must first become an expert in definition and, thus, that developing expertise in definition is the *first step* to dialectical expertise. In other words,

(Definition First) at the early stages of philosophical training, x promotes one's expertise in dialectic iff x promotes one's expertise in defining

On this interpretation, **Same Means** holds only in the context of a conversation in which the discussants are at the early stages of philosophical training. For people at this early stage—plausibly, including the discussants in and the intended audience of *Sophist* and *Statesman*—something promotes dialectical expertise if and only if it promotes expertise in definition.

I will return to this part-whole conception of the relationship between definition and dialectic in chapter 2 below. For present, I just want to briefly point out two of its drawbacks. First, **Definition First** is not very plausible. Suppose we grant that one part of dialectical expertise that is not covered by expertise in defining is the ability to tell whether apparent inconsistent claims are genuinely inconsistent. But surely one can practice discriminating between genuine and merely apparent inconsistencies without thereby practicing one's ability to define. In general, why think that one cannot improve at identifying merely apparent inconsistencies only while also improving at defining or only at a later stage in philosophical training? This simply seems wrong. But if **Definition First** is implausible, then it is hard to see how the part-whole interpretation of definition and dialectic can explain the **Same Means** principle. The second problem is simply that a part-whole relationship is not what we should expect given the way that Plato slides between describing the goal of the conversation in terms of dialectic and in terms of definition. Plato talks as if the two are identical or, at least, that one is an expert in definition if and only if one is an expert in dialectic.

Setting aside the part-whole interpretation for now, there remain two *prima facie* plausible hypotheses about the relationship between expertise in definition and expertise in dialectic:

(Identity) expertise in dialectic is identical to expertise in defining,

(Coincidence) x is an expert at dialectic iff x is an expert at definition.

Both **Identity** and **Coincidence** can explain why expertise in dialectic and expertise in defining have the same means. **Identity** provides a more natural explanation of the reason that Plato slides between talk of defining and talk of dialectic. Nevertheless, for the purposes of raising our second puzzle, even the weaker principle, **Coincidence**, suffices. In chapter 2, I will return to the question of whether **Identity**, **Coincidence**, or **Requirement** provides a better account of Plato's view of the relationship between expertise in dialectic and expertise in definition.

Let's now turn to premise (2), the second claim in our second puzzle. In the middle section of *Sophist*, Plato describes dialectic. The Visitor and Theaetetus have agreed that some but not all kinds "combine"⁶⁴ (252e1-8)—which, roughly speaking, is the claim that for some but not all pairs of kinds, G and H, there is a fact of the form G is H.⁶⁵ The Visitor next argues that just as knowing which letters can combine and which cannot requires the expertise of literacy (γραμματική) (253a8-12) and knowing which tones can combine and which cannot requires musical expertise (μουσική) (253b1-4), so too there is an expertise by which one knows which *kinds* combine and which do not.

⁶⁴ Plato talks about what I will call "combination" using many different expressions—including, "συνμείγνυσθαι", "κοινωνεῖν" and "μετέχειν". His argument for the idea that some but not all pairs of forms combine requires that these expressions all stand for a single relation. What is more, although, as I will argue in chapter 2 section 3.4.1 below, he uses the language of combination to cover several rather different types of cases, his argument requires that there is a single, general combination relation that covers all these types of cases.

⁶⁵ This characterization is rough because Plato appears to think that the fact that G combines with H *makes it the case that* G is H. In chapter 3, I argue that a consequence of this view is that "G combines with H" does not mean the same thing as "G is H."

[T10] What then? Since we have agreed that kinds also mix with each other on the basis of considerations of these sorts (κατὰ τὰ τοιαῦτα)⁶⁶, is it not necessary that the person, who will correctly show which sorts of kinds harmonize with which sorts and which sorts do not admit each other, progress through the arguments with some knowledge? And especially [such a person will know] whether there are some kinds [that extend] through everything and hold them together with the result that they are capable of combining, and again, in the instances of separation, whether others are responsible for the separation. (253b9-c3)

{ΞΕ.} Τί δ'; ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὰ γένη πρὸς ἄλληλα κατὰ ταῦτα μείξεως ἔχειν ὡμολογήκαμεν, ἄρ' οὐ μετ' ἐπιστήμης τινὸς ἀναγκαῖον διὰ τῶν λόγων πορεύεσθαι τὸν ὀρθῶς μέλλοντα δείξειν ποῖα ποίοις συμφωνεῖ τῶν γενῶν καὶ ποῖα ἄλληλα οὐ δέχεται; καὶ δὴ καὶ διὰ πάντων εἰ συνέχοντ' ἅττ' αὐτ' ἐστίν, ὥστε συμμείγνυσθαι δυνατὰ εἶναι, καὶ πάλιν ἐν ταῖς διαιρέσεσιν, εἰ δι' ὅλων ἕτερα τῆς διαιρέσεως αἷτια;

There is some expertise—identified as “dialectical knowledge” (τῆς διαλεκτικῆς ἐπιστήμης) at 253d2-3—the possession of which puts one in position to know which kinds can combine with each other and which kinds cannot combine with each other. In other words, dialectical knowledge puts one in possession to know what I will call “combination facts”—i.e. facts of the form

(a) that G can combine with H,

and

(b) that G cannot combine with H

What is more, the possessor of this expertise knows whether there are any kinds that explain the combinations and separations. Presumably, the expert dialectician does not *merely* know whether

⁶⁶ Reading “κατὰ τὰ τοιαῦτα” with Rowe and manuscripts **β**W against the OCT and T, which read “κατὰ ταῦτα”.

there are kinds that explain the combination facts (and separations) but also knows, in general, how to explain combination facts (and separations). That is to say, the expertise in question puts one in position to know

(c) why G can combine with H,

and

(d) why G cannot combine with H.

Finally, if separation, which is mentioned only in the second part of the description, is distinct from *not combining*, then the expert in question also knows

(e) why G can be (or must be) separate from H,

and, presumably, also

(f) that F can be (or must be) separate.

After pausing to note with some surprise that, possibly, they “in searching for the sophist, have found the philosopher” (ζητοῦντες τὸν σοφιστὴν πρότερον ἀνηυρηκέναι τὸν φιλόσοφον) (253c6-10), the Visitor augments his initial description of dialectical expertise by asking,

[T11] Won’t we say that it belongs to dialectical knowledge to divide according to kinds and never think that the same form is different or that a different form is the same?
(253d1-3)

{ΞΕ.} Τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι καὶ μήτε ταὐτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἡγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ὄν ταὐτὸν μὲν οὐ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς φήσομεν ἐπιστήμης εἶναι;

The dialectical expert is in position to divide according to kinds—which, as we have noted, is closely associated with being able to define—and always know whether kinds, G and H are identical or distinct. In other words, dialectical expertise puts one in position to know, what I will call the “identity facts” about each kind—i.e. facts of the form

(g) that G is the same as H,

and

(h) that G is different than H.

In the lines (253d5-e2) following T11, the Visitor offers a highly condensed and controversial sketch of the types of judgments involved in knowing which kinds can combine with each other. As I read this passage, the Visitor is describing four types of ways in which kinds can combine. For present purposes, however, we need not venture into this difficult and controversial territory. We already have everything that we need. Clearly, the expert in dialectic is in position to know which kinds can combine and which cannot (a, b) as well as which kinds are identical and which distinct (g, h). In other words,

(2) to be an expert in dialectic one must know, for each kind, K, which features K can have, which K cannot have, which kinds are identical to K, and which are distinct from K.

But, as we have seen,

(1) an expert in defining is also an expert in dialectic, and definitions of the standard form do not contain all the combination facts or identity facts about a kind. It seems, then, that definitions of the standard form contain *too little information*. Knowing the definitions of things does not put the expert in defining in position to know everything she must know as an expert in dialectic. In short, definitions of the standard contain *too little information*.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has done two things. First, it has presented several pieces of evidence to support the idea that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is operating with a determinate and reasonably well-

worked out conception of definitions, their metaphysics and their epistemology. This evidence includes (i) the fact that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato develops and systematically applies the method of division to discover definitions, (ii) the fact that the definitions of *Sophist* and *Statesman*—but not other dialogues—take a standard form and that this form is surprising in several ways, (iii) Plato explicitly represents the entirety of the discussion of *Sophist* and *Statesman*—including its many lengthy digressions—as aimed at promoting the expertise to define. This all suggests that Plato is working with a coherent and substantive conception of definitions, what information they ought to contain and how they contribute to dialectical—that is, philosophical—knowledge. Second, it also brought to light two puzzles concerning definitions of the standard form. Since they are highly redundant, these definitions contain too much information. Since they do not put one in possession of all the information required to be an expert in dialectic, they contain too little information. These two puzzles set out two desiderata for a reconstruction of Plato's views on definitions: a good reconstruction of Plato's views on definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* should provide an attractive resolution to each of these two puzzles.

The job is not done. We turn now—in chapter 2—to the task of reconstructing a determinate theory of definition, its epistemology and metaphysics. I will first offer such an account and then argue that it resolves our two puzzles.

Chapter 2

Epistemology and Metaphysics of Definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*

1. Introduction

This chapter picks up where the previous one left off. There, I presented evidence that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is operating with a determinate and reasonably well-worked-out view of definitions, their metaphysics and their epistemology. I also presented two puzzles about the definitions-by-division proposed in those dialogues. First, these definitions appear to contain *too much information*: they appear to be highly and problematically redundant. Second, they appear to contain *too little information*: they do not provide one with all the information that one needs in order to have dialectical expertise.

Taking these two puzzles as a starting point, I offer a positive account of the epistemology and metaphysics of definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. On the view I favor, Plato distinguishes between the essential features of a thing and the non-essential features of a thing by their different *metaphysical roles*. The essential features of a thing, I suggest, are those that metaphysically explain, or ground, that thing's range of possibilities—what further features it can and cannot have—and its identity—what it is distinct from and what it is identical to. On this view, Plato can coherently distinguish between essential and non-essential features and account for why certain features but not others define a subject without positing two fundamentally different relations between an object and its properties. All he needs, as I shall argue, is the participation relation and the notion of metaphysical explanation, two notions that he explicitly relies upon in the middle section of *Sophist*.

In section 2, I start with our second puzzle—the problem of *too little information*—and propose an account of expertise in defining and its relationship to dialectical expertise. In section 3, I offer a reconstruction of Plato’s view of the metaphysics of definition—i.e. his distinction between essential and non-essential features. In section 4, I argue that the reconstruction I’ve offered resolves our two puzzles and I contrast it with other reconstructions of Platonic essentialism.

2. The Epistemology of Definitions

Let’s begin with our second puzzle. The challenge we face is to give an account of expertise in defining that can explain how it could be that

(**Coincidence**) x is an expert at dialectic iff x is an expert at definition,

even though definitions do not themselves contain the information that one must know in order to be an expert in dialectic. We want to know how knowing the *definitional* facts about each thing puts the expert in defining in position to know the *dialectical* facts as well.

The answer I favor hinges on two closely connected ideas. The first is that expertise in definition involves more than simply being able to accurately state and comprehend the definitions of things. It *also* involves seeing how other facts *flow from* definitions. In other words, my proposal is that expertise in defining is what I will call, adapting terminology from Morison (2019), an ‘other fact involving’ grasp of definitions. The second idea is that the expert in defining is in position to know dialectical facts because there is a tight relationship between definitional facts and dialectical facts. It is only because this relationship, which I will call ‘R’ as a placeholder, obtains between definitional facts and dialectical facts that the expert in defining is in position to know identity facts and combination facts *on the basis of* her knowledge of the definitions of things. I will further develop these ideas in 2.1 and 2.2 respectively.

2.1 ‘Other-involving’¹

A cognitive state, ϕ , is ‘other involving’ just in case to ϕ one thing, x , involves knowing some other thing, y . It is ‘other fact involving’ just in case to ϕ one fact, p , involves knowing some other fact, q . Consider some examples.

In *Meno*, Plato characterizes the difference between *true doxa* and *episteme* as follows:

[T1] True opinions (δόξαι), for as long as they stay in place, are a fine thing and they produce all manner of good things; but they do not consent to stay in place for long ... so that they are not of much value until one ties them down with a reasoning out of the explanation (αιτίας λογισμῷ). ... Once they are tied down, they first become instances of *espitēmē* (ἐπιστήμαι) and then they become fixed in place. And, for these reasons, *espitēmē* is held in higher esteem than correct opinion, and *espitēmē* differs from correct opinion by being tied down. (97e6-98a8; trns. adapted from Grube in Cooper, ed. 1997)

καὶ γὰρ αἱ δόξαι αἱ ἀληθεῖς, ὅσον μὲν ἂν χρόνον παραμένωσιν, καλὸν τὸ χρῆμα καὶ πάντ' ἀγαθὰ ἐργάζονται· πολὺν δὲ χρόνον οὐκ ἐθέλουσι παραμένειν, ἀλλὰ δραπετεύουσιν ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὥστε οὐ πολλοῦ ἄξιαί εἰσιν, ἕως ἄν τις αὐτὰς δῆσῃ αιτίας λογισμῷ. ... ἐπειδὴ δὲ δεθῶσιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐπιστήμαι γίνονται, ἔπειτα μόνιμοι· καὶ διὰ ταῦτα δὴ τιμώτερον ἐπιστήμη ὀρθῆς δόξης ἐστίν, καὶ διαφέρει δεσμῷ ἐπιστήμη ὀρθῆς δόξης.

According to this characterization, to have episteme of x involves *reasoning out the explanation of x* (αιτίας λογισμῷ). Given that—either always or typically—the explanation of x is distinct from

¹ My discussion of ‘other-involving’ cognitive states is heavily indebted to and influenced by Morison (2019). In conversation, Ben helped me see that what I wanted to say about expertise in defining and expertise in dialectic had strong parallels to Aristotle’s accounts of *nous* and *episteme*. His paper further shaped my thinking and helped me connect these ideas to *episteme* in *Meno*.

x itself, it follows that, according to this characterization in *Meno*, *episteme* is *other-involving*. Having *episteme* of x involves grasping some y that is distinct from x.²

Aristotle offers a broadly similar account of *episteme* in *Posterior Analytics* I.2 (71b9-12):

S has *episteme* of (ἐπίστασθαι) p when S knows (γινώσκειν) why p is the case and knows that p is necessary.

On this view, *episteme* is *other fact involving*. Having *episteme* that p consists in part in knowing some further fact or set of facts that explain why p is the case. In both *Meno* and *Posterior Analytics*, to have *episteme* of something involves grasping that thing in its explanatory context. It requires seeing how the object of *episteme* is explained by other, more basic, things.

As a final example, consider the companion to Aristotelian *episteme*—namely, *nous* as conceived in *Posterior Analytics*. Aristotle does not define *nous*, but it has received substantial attention in the recent literature. According to both Bronstein (2016, 56) and Morison (2019), *nous* is an *other involving* cognitive state.³ To illustrate, consider Morison’s account of *nous*:

You have *nous* of the proposition that P just in case:

- (i) You know that there is nothing that explains why P (i.e. you know that the proposition that P is an immediate proposition);
- (ii) You know how to use the proposition that P to explain the truth of other propositions;
- (iii) You know that it is necessary that P. (Morison, 2019, 29)

² Officially, I mean to stay neutral on the question of what sort of thing—an object or a proposition—*epistēmē*, as characterized in this passage, grasps. Given the connection of true opinion, however, it is most natural to take the object to be one or more propositions.

³ Morison makes this point explicitly and in detail, but it is also a consequence of Bronstein’s account.

On this view, *nous* is the grasp *of* first principles, but it involves seeing how these first principles fit into their explanatory contexts—i.e. seeing how other facts flow from them.⁴

As we saw, Aristotle draws from Platonic resources to develop his *other involving* account of *episteme*. Might something similar not be the case regarding the optimally expert grasp of definitions? Might there not be a similarly strong resemblance between Aristotelian *nous* and Plato's expertise in defining? I suggest that there is. Expertise in defining—like *episteme* in *Meno* and *Posterior Analytics* and like *nous* in *Posterior Analytics*—is an *other involving* cognitive state. In particular, *expertise in defining* involves not only grasping the definitions of things but *also* seeing how dialectical facts flow from these definitions. To put this more precisely (using “G” and “H” as variables for Kinds),

one is an expert in defining when one grasps the definitions of kinds⁵ in such a way as to see how facts of the forms

- (a) that G can combine with H,
- (b) that G cannot combine with H
- (c) that G is the same as H,

and

- (d) that G is different than H

flow from those definitions.

This resolves our second puzzle. If what I've said is correct, then there is a straightforward and perfectly sensible explanation for why

⁴ Cf. Lorenz (2013, 300-301).

⁵ The objects of dialectical expertise are kinds (see T10 and T11 in Chapter 1). While Plato never clearly takes a stand in *Sophist* or *Statesman* about which objects can be defined, (i) the prominence of the method of division according to kinds, (ii) its connection to definition, and (iii) the examples of definitions that we have in *Sophist* and *Statesman* suggest that definitions are always or primarily of kinds as well. I will assume that this is so in what follows.

(**Coincidence**) x has dialectical expertise iff x has expertise in defining.

The expert in defining is the person who knows how identity facts and combination facts flow from the definitions of things. Thus, if x has expertise in defining, then x has dialectical expertise.⁶

What is more, it is plausible that an expert in dialectic must know not only the combination facts and identity facts about kinds, but also the definitions of kinds. In particular, it is plausible that the expert in dialectic must know not only the combination and identity facts but also how these facts flow from definitions. Even outside of *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato often emphasizes the centrality of definitions in dialectical practice and expertise.⁷ Thus, it is reasonable to think that, on Plato's view, if x has dialectical expertise, then x has expertise in defining.⁸

What about **Identity**? In chapter 1, I noted that Plato's language in *Statesman*—in particular the way that he slides between talk of dialectical expertise and talk of expertise in defining—strongly suggests that Plato does not *merely* endorse **Coincidence** but that he also thinks that

(**Identity**) expertise in dialectic is identical to expertise in defining.

One might think that what I've said in defense of **Coincidence** makes **Identity** unattractive. If expertise in defining grasps definitions in such a way as to see what flows from them and dialectical expertise grasps combination and identity facts in such a way as to see how they flow from definitions, then it seems that these two cognitive states *have different objects*. Expertise in defining *is about definitions* even if it involves grasping dialectical facts; dialectical expertise *is about* identity and combination facts, even if it involves grasping definitions. This way of thinking is encouraged by the model of Aristotelian *episteme* and *nous*. *Episteme* and *nous* coincide but are

⁶ I am assuming here that in order to see how identity facts and combination facts flow from the definitions of things, one must also know, e.g., whether there are any kinds responsible for combinations or separations. If so, then the expert in defining would also know everything Plato claims the expert in dialectic must know.

⁷ *Republic* 531d-532b suggests that dialectical knowledge just is knowledge of the definitions of Forms; note also the similarity in language between *Republic* 531e4-5 and *Statesman* 286a5, and see *Phaedrus* 265d-266c.

⁸ As I noted in Chapter 1, this is also strongly supported by the Same Means principle and, what is more, it is accepted by the part-whole reading of the relationship between dialectical expertise and expertise in defining.

distinct. *Episteme* requires that one grasp first principles and demonstrate theorems that flow from them, so one must have *nous*. And *nous*—at least on Morison’s account—requires that one know how to demonstrate theorems that flow from first principles, so one must have *episteme*. But there is nothing in Plato’s text, or in what I’ve said, that requires *expertise in defining* and *expertise in dialectic* to have different objects. Consider first dialectical expertise: we do not need to think that dialectical expertise is defined as the grasp of combination and identity facts. Plato only claims that it is by using the knowledge that is dialectic that one is in position to know combination and identity facts. Indeed, the text suggests that *kinds*—rather than combination facts and identity facts—are the objects of dialectical expertise: the parallels between dialectical expertise, literacy (γραμματική), and musical knowledge (μουσική) suggest that, as the objects of literacy are letters and the objects of musical knowledge are tones, the objects of dialectical expertise are kinds (see 252e9-253c5; cf. 261d1-2). If this is right, then the dialectical expert grasps *kinds* by knowing the combination facts and identity facts about kinds in such a way as to see how they flow from the definitions of kinds. Consider next expertise in defining. Again, there is room to think that the objects of expertise in defining are, properly speaking, the kinds defined, and is also suggested by Plato’s text. Definitions, as we have seen, are the optimal way to “find” and “clearly reveal” an object of inquiry, so—plausibly—Plato thinks of expertise in defining as the optimal way to grasp definable objects. All indications in *Sophist* and *Statesman* point toward the idea that kinds are the definable objects. If this is right, then the expert in defining grasps *kinds* by knowing their definitions and seeing how the combination facts and identity facts about kinds flow from those definitions.

But if, as I have suggested, both dialectical expertise and expertise in definition are *about* kinds and they consist in knowing the definitions of kinds in such a way as to see how combination facts

and identity facts flow from those definitions, then they are *about* the same things and they have the same content. There seems no reason, then, to deny that these two cognitive states are identical. **Identity** is, therefore, perfectly consistent with the text and is entailed by a philosophically attractive account of the natures of expertise in defining and dialectical expertise. What is more, **Identity** makes best sense of the way that Plato talks about dialectical expertise and expertise in defining—sliding between the two even when he is trying to be precise. The weight of evidence, then, supports **Identity** over mere **Coincidence**.

What about the part-whole interpretation of the relationship between expertise in defining and dialectical expertise that I discussed in chapter 1? Recall that, on this interpretation, expertise in defining is a *proper part* of dialectical expertise: there is more to expertise in dialectic than being an expert in defining. In chapter 1, I raised two problems for this interpretation. First, it does not give a satisfying explanation of Plato's way of talking about dialectical expertise and expertise in definition. Plato slides freely between expressions for the former and expressions for the latter, even in contexts where precision is quite important to the point he is making. Second, the part-whole interpretation struggles to explain the **Same Means** principle, according to which *x* promotes expertise in dialectic iff *x* promotes expertise in defining. If dialectical expertise involves competencies that are not covered by the expertise in defining, then one should be able to practice or otherwise work towards those competencies without also promoting expertise in defining. But if that is right, then **Same Means** is false.

Even in the face of these objections, the part-whole interpretation might have remained attractive. After all, this interpretation has strong *prima facie* appeal: it attributes to Plato the position that (i) expertise in definitions just is knowing how to define things and (ii) there is more to dialectical—i.e. philosophical—knowledge than knowing how to define things. Surely,

proponents of this view might insist, dialectical—i.e. philosophical—expertise involves more than just being able to expertly define. There is more to philosophy than a set of definitions! When I first discussed these issues, in chapter 1, it was not clear that there was any plausible alternative. In principle, one might have thought, Plato *could* endorse **Coincidence** or **Identity**, but why would he? Indeed, attributing **Coincidence** or **Identity** to Plato gives rise to our second puzzle; so, there may have appeared to be good reason to prefer the part-whole interpretation over either of these alternatives. Now, however, I hope to have dispelled this appearance along with any lingering attachment to the part-whole interpretation. I have offered a competing interpretation involving **Identity** that, I believe, is equally attractive on philosophical grounds and is free of the problems plaguing the part-whole reading.

2.2 ‘Flows From’

If what I’ve said is correct, then to have expertise in defining one must be able to grasp the definition of each thing *and also* see how the combination facts and identity facts about each thing, in some sense, “flow from” these definitions. But what sense? What is the relationship between definitional facts, on the one hand, and combination facts and identity facts, on the other? For convenience, let’s call this relationship—whatever it turns out to be—“R”.

In principle, R might be a relatively weak, non-explanatory relation. Recall the first definition of sophistry, according to which sophistry is a type of hunting. If accurate, this definition of sophistry *provides evidence about* which things sophistry is distinct from and which features it is possible for sophistry to have. For example, the fact that sophistry is a type of hunting is strong evidence that sophistry is distinct from literacy and it is some evidence that mastering sophistry requires practice. Evidence in favor of the truth, however, can be swamped by misleading

evidence. Even if our dialectical expert sees that the claim that mastering sophistry requires practice is evidentially supported by the definition of *sophistry*, she may also have stronger, misleading evidence against this claim. In such a case, it would be irrational for her to nonetheless conclude that mastering sophistry requires practice. But surely, the expert in defining is never irrational in believing the truth about combinations and identifications.

Perhaps *R* is entailment. The definition of sophistry *entails* that *sophistry* is distinct from hunting generally (as it is a *proper part* of hunting), and it entails that sophistry combines with hunting (as it is, necessarily, a kind of hunting). It is far from clear, however, how definitions could entail all combination facts. Suppose, for example, that one of the combination facts is that that *sophistry can combine with carpentry*—i.e. that an expert sophist can be an expert carpenter.⁹ How do the *definitions* of sophistry and carpentry—or the definitions of other kinds—entail this fact?¹⁰

There is another problem for both of these proposals: they make *R* too weak. Dialectical expertise is an especially exalted and, we can assume, demanding form of *episteme* (253b10, d3). Theaetetus is so impressed with the Visitor’s description of the dialectical expert’s cognitive task that he takes such a person to require “perhaps the greatest” (ἴσως τῆς μεγίστης) kind of *episteme* (253c4-5). The Visitor goes on to describe dialectical expertise as “the *episteme* of the free people” (τὴν τῶν ἐλευθέρων ἐπιστήμην) and the *episteme* characteristic of a “philosopher” (φιλόσοφον)—i.e. the person who “purely and justly loves wisdom” (τῷ καθαρῶς τε καὶ δικαίως φιλοσοφοῦντι) (253e5-6). Indeed, this dialectical *episteme* deals with things so “divine” (θεῖον) that the folk cannot even turn their minds toward it (254a8-b1). To possess such an expertise, then, should require that one really *understand* the subject matter. Plausibly, then—given the exalted status of

⁹ I will argue in section 3.4.1 below, that cases like this one are genuine cases of combination.

¹⁰ Perhaps, if there are definitions of possibility and combination, then the fact that sophistry can combine with carpentry is entailed by the definitions of possibility, combination, sophistry, and carpentry. However, Plato seems to think that only kinds can be defined, and it is unlikely that combination and possibility are themselves kinds.

dialectical expertise—the dialectical expert should have an especially demanding and, perhaps, the optimal grasp of kinds and their relationships to each other. We should expect, then, that a genuinely expert philosopher will not merely be able to see how definitions provide evidence about combination facts and identity facts. Likewise, such an expert will not merely be in position to see how definition entail these facts.

More likely, the genuine expert sees *why* the combination facts and identity facts obtain. They see how these facts obtain *because of* the relevant definitions—i.e. how these definitions *explain* these facts.¹¹ In other words, R is an explanatory relation. Here is some evidence for taking R to be an explanatory relation:

(1) For both Plato and Aristotle, the point of introducing other-involving cognitive grasps is to work explanation of a subject into a (demanding and high-grade) cognitive grasp of that subject. Recall that, in *Meno*, *episteme* involves grasping not only x but also the explanation of x. As we have seen, in *Sophist* Plato emphasizes that expert dialectical grasp is a kind of *episteme* and that it is extremely high grade. The analogy between expertise in dialectic and high-grade other-involving cognitive states, like *episteme* in *Meno* and *Posterior Analytics*, suggests that expertise in dialectic involves knowing combination and identification fact on the basis the definitions that explain them. Along similar lines, Plato sometimes holds that *techne* must—or at least paradigmatically does—involve the grasp of explanations (see *Gorgias* 465a2-6). Since dialectical expertise and expertise in defining are forms of *techne*, this suggest that they too involve at least some sort of explanatory grasp. Both these facts suggest that optimal expert grasp of a subject involves grasping that

¹¹ Note that I do not have in mind an epistemic or psychological notion of explanation associated with the phenomenon of responding to the questions of an inquirer in a satisfying or compelling way. Rather, I have in mind here a worldly notion of explanation according to which whether x explains y is entirely a question about the relationship between x and y in the objective order of things and not at all about how agents feel about y when they consider x.

subject *in its explanatory context*. Thus, expertise in defining would turn out to be the grasp of definitions in such a way as to see how they explain combination and identification facts.

(2) This interpretation is further supported by Plato's characterization of dialectical expertise in *Sophist* 253-4. As we saw in chapter 1, dialectical *episteme* puts one in position to know “especially whether there are some kinds [that extend] through everything and hold them together with the result that they are capable of combining, and again, in the instances of separation, whether others are responsible (αἴτια) for the separation” (253c1-3). Strictly, these lines only require that the expert in dialectic know whether certain kinds explain combinations and separations. However, the idea is presumably that it is part of the purview of dialectical expertise to *explain* why certain kinds can combine (separate) and others cannot. This, I take it, is the *point* of knowing whether certain kinds are responsible for others being able to combine.

(3) Later, the Visitor, referring back to the earlier conclusion that some but not all kinds combine as follows, says that they should not be concerned that being itself is different from the other Forms “on the condition that the nature of kinds is able to combine with each other” (ἐπεὶπερ ἔχει κοινωνίαν ἀλλήλοις ἢ τῶν γενῶν φύσις.). Admittedly, this remark is rather cryptic: it is not immediately clear how to understand the singular “nature” in “the nature of kinds” (ἢ τῶν γενῶν φύσις) nor is it immediately clear whether to read ἔχει with modal force, as I have. Still, it is very natural to read this sentence as saying that *what kinds are*—i.e. the essences of the various kinds—enable them to combine. That is, it is in virtue of their natures that some kinds can combine (and it is in virtue of other kinds’ natures that they cannot). Since definitions of kinds specify what those kinds are—i.e. they make clear

the natures of kinds—it would follow that, at least in general, the fact that some kinds can combine is explained by the definitions of kinds.

(4) The discussion of the *greatest kinds* immediately follows the description of dialectic in *Sophist* and is often thought to provide an example of high-level dialectic. As I will argue in detail in chapter 3, this discussion turns on giving metaphysical explanations of combination and identity facts about the five great kinds, like *motion is the same*, *motion is not difference* and *motion is a being*.¹²

For all these reasons, I will assume that R is indeed an explanatory relation. It remains to say *what sort of explanatory* relation R is. R is certainly not a causal relation. One cannot explain why sophistry is distinct from carpentry by pointing to a causal process that results in their being different, for there is no such causal process. Dialectical expertise and expertise in definition concern *kinds* and metaphysically *necessary* facts about them. If two kinds are distinct, then this is a metaphysically necessary fact about immaterial and intelligible objects (νοητὰ καὶ ἀσώματα) (see 246b7-8; cf. b1-2). Likewise, if two kinds can combine, then this is a metaphysically necessary fact. These sorts of objects and facts are not, presumably, subject to changing or undergoing causal processes. Thus, they cannot be explained by reference to *causes* or *causal processes*.

If R is not a causal relation, then what sort of explanatory relation is it? I suggest that R is metaphysical explanation—i.e. the *in virtue of* relation, or what is known in contemporary metaphysics as “grounding.” To clarify this concept, consider an example: suppose that, unknown to you, the famous thief, Arsene Lupin has breaks into your house at night and knocks over a chair, waking you up. You turn to your partner and say, “someone is downstairs.” What you’ve said is

¹² Those passages also give arguments for the distinctness of the great kinds which can be read as providing *explanations* of their distinctness that make reference to the *natures* of the distinct kinds. The argument at 255a10-b6 explicitly appeals to the “nature” of motion and rest in question.

true, it is a fact that someone is downstairs. This fact can be explained in several different sorts of ways: one can explain the fact that someone is downstairs by pointing to some causal process or some part of a causal process that lead to the burglar gaining entry. But in a different way, the fact that someone is downstairs is obtained *in virtue of the fact that* Arsene Lupin is downstairs. This explanation is not causal. Instead, it points out the metaphysical grounds of the fact that someone is downstairs. I suggest that this is the sort of explanation Plato thinks is at play in the relationship between definitional facts and dialectical facts (i.e. combination and identification facts).

First, metaphysical explanation seems like the *right kind of explanation* for necessary facts about immaterial objects. There is no (efficient) causal story that explains why sophistry is different from carpentry. But, plausibly, there is a metaphysical explanation. Sophistry is distinct from carpentry *in virtue of the facts* that (A) sophistry is an *acquisitive* expertise, (B) carpentry is a *productive* expertise, and (C) productive expertise *brings something into existence* and *acquisitive expertise* does so (see T3 above). A, B and C entail that sophistry and carpentry are distinct, but they also explain why they are different—together A, B and C makes it the case that sophistry is distinct from carpentry. What is more, facts A, B and C are definitional: A is part of the definition of sophistry, B is part of the definition of carpentry, and the conjuncts of C are parts of the definitions of *productive expertise* and *acquisitive expertise* respectively.

Metaphysical explanation, then, seems like the right kind of explanation for dialectical facts. But is there any reason to think that Plato had this notion or that he thought that it was relevant to the knowledge of *kinds* involves in dialectical expertise and the expertise in defining? As I will argue in Chapter 3, the answer is yes. There I argue in detail for the idea that metaphysical explanation in particular is critical to the discussion of the *greatest kinds*, which immediately

follows the characterization of dialectic and which is widely thought to constitute an example of dialectical practice.

I propose, then, that we take R to be the relation of metaphysical explanation. If this is right, then Plato thinks that definitional facts *metaphysically explain* identity and combination facts. This metaphysically ambitious thesis is striking and worthy of careful consideration. I will work it out in more detail in section 3.3 and 3.4 below. For now, let's grant that R is an explanatory relation and that it is metaphysical explanation in particular. Thus, on the account of expertise in defining that I have proposed, the expert in defining grasps *kinds* by grasping their definitions in such a way as to see how they metaphysically explain the identity facts and combination facts about kinds.

This account of the epistemology of definition in *Sophist* and *Statesman* leaves us with two questions. First, we want to know how to spell out the idea that definitions metaphysically explain identity and combination facts. How exactly do these explanations work? Second, we want to know how this helps resolve our first puzzle. What should we say about the apparent redundancy of standard form definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*? These are tasks for section 3, where I turn to the metaphysics of definitions.

3. The Metaphysics of Definitions

In this section, I offer an account of the distinction between features that determine *what something is*—which are often called its 'essential properties'—from its other, non-essential features. This account, I argue, will provide the resources for explaining the apparent redundancy of standard form definitions.

3.1 Is Plato Interested in the Metaphysics of Definitions?

First a bit of ground clearing. It is uncontroversial that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is interested in epistemic questions related to definitions and the practice of defining. As we have seen, *Sophist* and *Statesman* clearly thematize the questions of how one arrives at definitions, how one comes to have expertise in defining, and how expertise in defining is related to other cognitive states. But is Plato also interested in the *metaphysics* of definitions? What reason is there to think that Plato, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, is relying upon a determinate view concerning what definitions are and how the defining features of a thing differ from its other features?

While it is true that Plato never explicitly puts forward or defends such a view in *Sophist* or *Statesman*, there are strong reasons for thinking that the two dialogues are alive to these—and perhaps other—questions about the metaphysics of definitions. In chapter 1, I presented several pieces of evidence to support just this idea. First, I pointed out that Plato explicitly represents the entirety of the discussion of *Sophist* and *Statesman*—including its many lengthy digressions—as aimed at promoting the expertise to define. Second, I argued that this thought is supported by the fact that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato develops and systematically applies the method of division to discover definitions. Plato's application of what is clearly a well-worked out method and his remarks about the method itself indicate that he has a determinate view of the metaphysical relations between kinds and of which facts specify the nature of a definiendum. Third, I argued that the definitions of *Sophist* and *Statesman*—but not other dialogues—take a complex and surprising, standard form. This fact further supports the idea that Plato has a determinate and reasonably well-worked out view of which facts specify the nature of a definiendum. In other words, he has a determinate view concerning the distinction between a thing's defining, i.e. essential, features and its non-essential features.

These facts alone provide strong evidence in favor of thinking that Plato is relying on a determinate understanding of the distinction between defining features and non-defining features of a thing. Viewed in the light of two further points, however, these considerations weigh even more heavily. The first is that the *Sophist*—and, thereby, the *Statesman*—is framed as the continuation of the discussion in *Theaetetus*.¹³ This dramatic link is significant because the final part of the *Theaetetus*—in which Socrates and Theaetetus discuss the proposal that knowledge is true opinion with an account (λόγος)—is, in large part, an investigation into what a λόγος that upgrades true opinion into knowledge is.¹⁴ The challenge is to say what information one must possess about a thing in order to count as possessing an account of it that upgrades one's true opinions to knowledge. This investigation ends in *aporia*, and the *Sophist* begins with an inquiry into *what sophistry is* (217b1-4) the initial aim of which is to make clear “what it is by means of an account” (ἐμφανίζοντι λόγῳ τί ποτ' ἔστι) (218c1). As *Theaetetus* shows, to accomplish this goal properly—indeed to even understand the task—one must have a determinate conception of what such an account is. In particular, one must know what information such an account will contain about its subject. In *Statesman*, as we have seen, we are told that the entire discussion was for the sake of promoting the ability to give and receive “accounts” (λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατόν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι) (286a4-5).¹⁵ This thought is later rephrased in term of becoming more expert in defining (εὐρετικώτερον) (286e2, 287a4). Again, against the backdrop of the end of the

¹³ In the final words of the *Theaetetus* (209d), (the elder) Socrates asks Theodorus to meet him again in the morning to continue the conversation; and with the opening words of *Sophist* (216a), Theodorus announces that he and his company have returned as (the elder) Socrates requested. See Frede (1996, 145-8) and Lane (2005, 326-9) for a further discussion of the inter-connections between *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

¹⁴ I am building on the point made convincingly by Lane (2005, 326-9) that the *Theaetetus* is “*proleptique*” to the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Lane uses this point to examine the political dimension of the *Theaetetus*'s forward-looking connection to *Statesman*. Here, I suggest another way in which *Theaetetus* is forward-looking: it raises questions about the nature of a *logos*—both in the sense of speech and in the sense of account—that are taken up in *Sophist* and *Statesman* in the discussion of speech and in the pursuit of definitions.

¹⁵ Note that the language here echoes that of *Theaetetus* (202c2-3), where we get the claim that one who is not able to give and receive accounts lacks knowledge of a thing even if they have true beliefs about it.

Theaetetus, the idea that the whole discussion of *Sophist* and *Statesman* is aimed at becoming better at giving and receiving accounts suggest that there is a well-thought-through conception of accounts and how they provide knowledge in play. The second point is that Plato—at least sometimes—thinks that optimal expertise requires not only reliably being able to do something but possessing an account or explanation of what one is doing (*Gorgias*, 265a). If expertise in defining is to be optimal in this way, then—plausibly—the expert must not only comprehend definitions but *understand why they are accounts*. An expert in defining should have a clear idea about which features define their subjects and which do not.

For these reasons, I will assume in what follows that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is operating with and relying upon a fully determinate and reasonably systematic conception of the metaphysics of definitions and in particular in the question of how to distinguish the defining features of a thing from its other, non-defining features. At very least, Plato *owes* us a determinate story that can make sense of his faith in the method of division, his views on the role of definitions in dialectic, his assertion that the discussions of *Sophist* and *Statesman* as a whole can make one better at defining, and his apparent preference for and endorsement of definitions of the standard form despite their redundancies. Plato never explicitly offers us what he owes, but this is not surprising. In his corpus generally and in the “late” dialogues in particular, Plato often raises substantive philosophical questions in such a way that invites, or even urges, the reader to work up a fully determinate story based on the resources he has provided. This is the position we are in regarding the distinction between essential and non-essential features in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Plato puts forward a rich array of views about and related to definitions, their epistemology and their metaphysics, in these dialogues in a way that appears to make progress on the questions of the final section of *Theaetetus*, without ever delivering an explicit account. In the remainder of this

section, I will offer a reconstruction of the distinction between essential and non-essential features that draws from the conceptual resources developed in *Sophist* and *Statesman* and is designed to make sense of Plato's rich, complex and sometimes surprising commitments concerning definitions in these dialogues. I hope to show that this reconstruction provides Plato with an attractive account of the distinction between essential and non-essential features, that satisfactorily explicates his views on definition in our dialogues, and, therefore, that it should be taken as a serious contender as an interpretation of Platonic essentialism in *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

3.2 An account of essential features

What is the distinction between a thing's essential features—those that are part of *what it is*—and its other features? I will try to get clear on the notion of *essential features* by giving an account of the connections between this concept and other concepts that are central to the metaphysics of *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Traditionally, scholars account for Plato's distinction between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing by attributing to Plato two fundamental relations—call them R_E and R_A —that ground property possession.¹⁶ Thus, a property F is an essential feature of x just in case x stands in the R_E relation to F -ness and F is a non-essential feature of x just in case x stands in the R_A relation to F -ness. On this view, the different explanatory or metaphysical roles played by essential and non-essential features is not what makes them essential and non-essential features, respectively, but is a consequence of facts about the two fundamental relations R_E and R_A . As I will spell out in more detail in §4 below, the evidence in *Sophist* and *Statesman* for this “two relations” approach to Plato's distinction is relatively slim. Indeed, in every clear case in

¹⁶ For more discussion of this literature see section 4 below and chapter 1 section 1. Note that, in some cases, scholars do not commit themselves to the view that these two relations are fundamental but only to the idea that they are *fundamentally different* in the sense that they do not share a genus and neither can be defined in terms of the other.

Sophist and *Statesman*, in which Plato specifies a metaphysical explanation for a fact of the form x is F , he does so in terms of combination ($\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omega\nu\iota\alpha\nu$) and related concepts. These two observations put pressure on the idea that Plato distinguishes between essential and non-essential features in *Sophist* and *Statesman* by positing two fundamental relations. But if this is not Plato's strategy, then what sort of account could he give for the distinction between essential and non-essential features so important to *Sophist* and *Statesman*?

We already have the beginnings of such an account. As we have seen, essential facts metaphysically explain identity and combination facts. The idea is that *what x is*—the nature or essence of x —metaphysically explains *what x can (cannot) combine with* and *what x is distinct from (identical to)*. In other words, the essential features of a thing—i.e. those features that are *part of what it is*—are those that play a particular explanatory and metaphysical role:

(Metaphysical Role) the essential features of x metaphysically explain x 's *distinctness from other things* and x 's *range of possible combinations*.

One way to spell out this claim is this: the essential features of x are all and only the features that together *fully* explain the distinctness facts and combination facts about x . In other words,

(Full) F is an essential feature of x iff x is F and the fact that x is F is a member of the minimal set, Γ , of facts that fully metaphysically explain each distinctness fact and each combination fact about x ,

where a set, Σ , of explanatory facts is 'minimal' just in case nothing needs to be added to Σ and nothing can be subtracted from Σ for Σ to metaphysically explain the *explanda* in question. On this view, the essence of x *on its own* is sufficient to explain all the combination and distinctness facts about x . No further facts need to be added to ground x 's identity or range of possibilities. While this view has a certain elegance, it is implausibly strong. Consider one of a distinctness fact about

angling: angling is distinct from carpentry. According to Full, together the essential facts about angling *fully* ground this fact. In virtue of the nature of angling alone, angling is distinct from carpentry. But surely, the real definition of angling—which specifies its nature—says nothing about carpentry.¹⁷ How, then, can the nature of angling alone *fully* metaphysically explain the fact that angling is distinct from carpentry? On this view, the essence of angling would—on its own—fix a fact about the identity of carpentry: the essence of angling would make it the case that carpentry is different from angling. It is more plausible to think that that angling is distinct from carpentry in virtue of the nature of angling *together with* the nature of carpentry. What makes these two different is that carpentry is essentially a form of productive expertise and angling is essentially a form of acquisitive expertise.

We can avoid this problem by interpreting **Metaphysical Role** in terms of *partial metaphysical explanation*. On this view, the essential features of x each *partly metaphysically explain* at least one combination or distinctness fact about x.¹⁸ More precisely,

(**Partial**) F is an essential feature of x iff x is F and the fact that x is F partly metaphysically explains at least one distinctness fact or combination fact about x.

On this interpretation of **Metaphysical Role**, there is no requirement that the essential features of a thing *fully* explain its identity or range of possibility. Rather, the essential features are just those features of x that do some work to metaphysically explain x's identity and range of possibilities. Still, there is a problem. As I will argue in more detail in chapter 3, in the framework of the Sophist, for distinct kinds x and y,

x is different from y in virtue of the fact that x partakes in difference in relation to y.

¹⁷ Indeed, this is the case regarding the definition of angling in *Sophist*.

¹⁸ This is contrasted with **Full**, according to which the essential facts are those that *together fully* metaphysically explain *every* combination fact and identity fact. On **Partial**, the essential facts are those that *each, alone, partly* metaphysically explain *at least one* combination fact and identity fact.

Thus, on Plato's view, carpentry is different from angling *in virtue of the fact that* carpentry partakes in difference in relation to angling. But, then, it looks like *difference* (or *difference in relation to carpentry*)¹⁹ is a feature of angling that metaphysically explains a distinctness fact about angling. This is a problem. The fact that angling partakes in difference in relation to carpentry is not essential to angling. First, neither it nor any similar fact is mentioned in the definition of angling offered in *Sophist*. Second, it is not plausible for carpentry, which is not a kind under which angling falls nor is it especially closely related to angling in some other way, to figure in an account of the essence of angling. In short, *what angling is* has nothing to do with carpentry! Thus, it is implausible that to state the essence of angling one would need to mention that it is different from carpentry. Call this the 'Difference Problem'.

There are at least two ways to deal with the Difference Problem. The first is to insist that essential facts are always *only partial* metaphysical explanations. The essential features alone never fully but always partially metaphysically explain the combination facts and distinctness facts about x. Thus,

(Only Partial) F is an essential feature of x iff x is F and the fact that x is F *only partly* metaphysically explains at least one distinctness fact or combination fact about x.

If this is right, then the fact that angling partakes in difference in relation to carpentry is not essential to angling. This fact *fully explains* why angling is different from carpentry, so according to **Only Partial** it is not part of the essence of angling.

Moreover, **Only Partial** is not unreasonable. Distinctness facts always involve at least *two different* kinds. Plausibly, the explanation why two kinds are different involves essential facts

¹⁹ It is not entirely clear whether Plato's view is that the fact that carpentry is different from angling is explained by the fact that *in relation to angling, carpentry partakes in the form of difference* or the fact that *carpentry partakes in the form of difference-in-relation-to-angling*. Either way, there is a problem for **Partial**.

about *both* kinds. Similarly, combination—at least typically—involves more than one kind. Generally, a combination is a relation between two different kinds. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to think that the explanation why two distinct kinds can (cannot) combine always involves essential facts about *both* kinds.

Nevertheless, it is not clear whether **Only Partial** can succeed in accounting for every combination fact. In particular, it may run into trouble in cases of *self-combination*. On Plato's view, not every combination involves two distinct kinds.²⁰ There are some kinds—Plato explicitly mentions being, sameness, and difference—that combine with themselves. For example, *sameness* partakes in *sameness* (in relation to itself) and *being* partakes in *being*. In cases like these of self-combination, it is hard to see what further facts—besides the essential facts about, the kind in question—are required to explain the possibility of self-combination. Plausibly, the nature of, e.g., sameness determines the conditions under which something partakes in sameness; and, again, the nature of sameness makes it the case that sameness can satisfy those conditions. It is not clear whether this is a devastating challenge. Even if it can be met, however, there is another option that is free from this challenge and can provide us with a response to the Difference Problem by classing *difference in relation to carpentry* as a non-essential feature of angling.

I propose that we resolve the Difference Problem by appealing to the idea that essential facts are not metaphysically explained. In other words, objects have their essential features *fundamentally*: there are no further metaphysical explanation for the fact that—e.g.—literacy is an expertise. That just is part of *what literacy is*. Plausibly, metaphysical explanation ends somewhere—there are certain truths that are not grounded in anything at all—and, plausibly,

²⁰ Plato claims that all kinds participate in Sameness (*Soph.* 256a7-8) and that all kinds participate in Being (*Soph.* 256e3-4). He also claims that Being and Difference are participated in by all forms and by each other and he implies that Difference participates in itself (*Soph.* 259a5-b7).

metaphysical explanation ends with essential facts. These truths are, so to speak, the bedrock of reality. If F is an essential feature of x , then the fact that x is F cannot be metaphysically explained. This notion of fundamentality is readily available to Plato. Once Plato has the notion of metaphysical explanation, he has the resources for the notion that some facts are fundamental, in the sense that they do not have metaphysical explanations. I propose that we specify the metaphysical role of essential features by making reference to their fundamentality.

(Official) F is an essential feature of x iff (i) x is F , (ii) the fact that x is F is not metaphysically explained, and (iii) the fact that x is F *at least partly* metaphysically explains at least one distinctness fact or combination fact about x .

On this view, each essential fact is not itself explained but it explains something further: each essential fact enters into the metaphysical explanation of at least one combination fact or distinctness fact. This resolves the Difference Problem on the condition that truths like the fact that *angling partakes in difference in relation to carpentry* are not fundamental. If facts of this form get metaphysically explained, then **Official** will not count them as essential. More precisely, **Official** resolves the Difference Problem if and only if

(No Fundamental Differences) for all pairs of distinct kinds A and B , the fact that A *partakes in difference in relation to B* is not fundamental.²¹

How plausible is this principle? In the next section, 3.3, I will take up this question.

Before that, however, let's pause to note that note that **Official**—as well as **Full**, **Partial** and **Only Partial**—do not require attributing to Plato two fundamental relations in virtue of which objects have their properties. So, for example, one might think that every feature of kinds is

²¹ After writing the first draft of this material, I learned that there is a debate in recent literature on identity regarding the question of whether any identity or distinctness facts are fundamental. For an overview, see Shumener (2017). Note, however, that the contemporary debate concerns identity and distinctness facts about *all things whatsoever*, it is not limited—as the No Fundamental Differences principle is—to Platonic Forms.

grounded in an instance of the *participation* relation. One can formulate my proposal in line with this idea as follows:

(Official 2) F is an essential feature x iff (i) x *participates in* F-ness, (ii) the fact that x *participates in* F-ness is not metaphysically explained, and (iii) the fact that x *participates in* F-ness *partly* metaphysically explains at least one distinctness fact or combination fact about x.

Thus, the *metaphysical role* approach to Plato's distinction between essential and non-essential features does not rely on the traditional assumption that Plato introduces two fundamentally different relations to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing.

3.3 Explaining Differences

To assess the plausibility of the idea that differences between kinds are never fundamental, we need to give an account of how such differences are metaphysically explained. Let's work through some examples.

[1] Recall the first division presented as a model application of the method of division in *Sophist*: expertise is divided into productive expertise (ποιητική) (219b11) and acquisitive expertise (τέχνη κτητική) (219c7). Every expertise falls under one of these two (different) kinds. But what *makes it the case* that productive expertise and acquisitive expertise are different? Plato tells us about each of them. On the one hand, productive expertise is a capacity to *bring something into existence* (ὅπερ ἂν μὴ πρότερόν τις ὄν ὕστερον εἰς οὐσίαν ἄγῃ) (*Soph.* 219b4-12; cf. 265b8-10). On the other hand, acquisitive expertise effects some change to its object without bringing it

into existence (219c2-7).²² These claims, I take it, are meant to give essential descriptions of productive expertise and acquisitive expertise respectively—they describe *what productive expertise is* and *what acquisitive expertise is*. In dividing *expertise* into two different kinds, acquisitive and productive, Plato is offering an explanation why these kinds are *two different* kinds of expertise:

the fact that productive expertise partakes in difference in relation to acquisitive expertise is metaphysically explained by the facts that

(i) *bringing its object into existence* is an essential feature of productive expertise, and

(ii) *not bringing its object into existence* is an essential feature of acquisitive expertise.

We may assume that this is not a metaphysical anomaly but an instance of a general principle about difference, which can be stated as follows:

(Negation and Difference) if (i) F is part of the essence of x and (ii) $\sim$ F is part of the essence of y, then facts *i* and *ii* metaphysically explain the fact that x partakes in difference in relation to y.

[2] Consider another example. Terrestrial animal hunting (πεζοθηρική) and aquatic animal hunting (ἐνυγροθηρική) are different (220a7-10; cf. 221b5 & 221d8-222a11). What makes this so? Terrestrial animal hunting targets terrestrial animals and aquatic animal hunting targets aquatic animals (220a5-10).²³ The contrast here is not between a feature and its negation: the opposition between the two different kinds of animal hunting lies in the *incompatibility* of being both terrestrial and aquatic—i.e. living predominantly or entirely on land living and living

²² None of the forms of acquisitive expertise create (δημιουργεῖ μὲν οὐδὲν τούτων); their objects are τὰ δὲ ὄντα καὶ γεγονότα (existing things and things that have already come into being) (*Soph.* 219c5). Note the perfect tense of γεγονότα.

²³ I take it that this is what the Visitor means when he says that terrestrial animal hunting is the hunting of the terrestrial kind (πεζοῦ γένους) and that aquatic animal hunting is hunting of [the kind] of animal capable of swimming (νευστικοῦ ζώου) (220a7-10).

predominantly or entirely in water.²⁴ The idea, I take it, is that in cases like aquatic animal hunting and terrestrial animal hunting, the two different kinds are different in virtue of have incompatible essential features. More precisely,

(Incompatibility and Difference) for incompatible features, F and G, if (i) F is part of the essence of x and (ii) G is part of the essence of y, then facts *i* and *ii* metaphysically explain the fact that x partakes in difference in relation to y.

Since contradictory properties (F and $\sim$ F) are incompatible, the **Negation and Difference Principle** is a special case of the **Incompatibility and Difference Principle**.

[3] Consider a third case. Sophistry, according to its first definition, is different from angling. Sophistry and angling, we are told, are of the same kind (συγγενή, 221d8) insofar as they are both kinds of animal hunting, but, “at animal-hunting, they turn their two ways” (ἐκτρέπεσθον δέ γε ἀπὸ τῆς ζῳοθηρικῆς) (222a5). According to the first definition of sophistry, it is part of the essence of sophistry, that it is a form of *terrestrial animal hunting* (πεζοθηρική 223b3); but it is part of the essence of angling that angling is a kind of *aquatic animal hunting* (ἐνυγοθηρική, 221b5). What makes these two different—what makes it the case that they take different paths, to use Plato’s metaphor—is that they have incompatible essential features.

In all three of these cases, I take Plato to be doing more than merely arguing that certain kinds are distinct. To show that, e.g., sophistry and angling are different is relatively easy. There are many features that the two do not share. Angling uses a rod and hook, sophistry does not. Sophists capture their targets with their words, and anglers do not. Plato’s project, I take it, is more ambitious: he want to find the point at which angling and sophistry diverge in the order of nature—

²⁴ I take it that one hunts amphibians in their terrestrial stage with terrestrial animal hunting and one hunts amphibians in their aquatic stage with aquatic animal hunting. The Visitor’s division here seems to presuppose that there are no animals that, during a single life-stage, live equally in water and land. More would need to be said about how to classify the hunting of such animals.

i.e. the most fundamental difference between them. In the case of *sophistry* and *angling*, as we have seen, what differentiates them most fundamentally—according to the first definition of sophistry—is that sophistry is a kind of terrestrial animal hunting and angling is a kind of aquatic animal hunting.²⁵ The difference between them is explained by their definitions—i.e. their essential features. This, I take it, is the thought behind the Visitor’s answer to the question, asked by the elder Socrates, which launches the inquiry of *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Socrates wonders whether those in Elea think that the sophist, philosopher, and political expert are identical or distinct kinds. Theodorus supposes that the Visitor would not mind going through (διελθεῖν) the issues, the Visitor replies,

[T2] Just so, Theodoros. I would not mind it and it is not hard to say that they considered them three [distinct kinds]. However, to define in each case clearly what in the world it is, is neither a small nor an easy task. (*Soph.* 217b1-4).

{ΞΕ.} Οὕτως, ὦ Θεόδωρε. φθόνος μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς οὐδὲ χαλεπὸν εἰπεῖν ὅτι γε τρί' ἡγοῦντο· καθ' ἕκαστον μὴν διορίσασθαι σαφῶς τί ποτ' ἔστιν, οὐ σμικρὸν οὐδὲ ῥάδιον ἔργον.

A critical advantage of employing the method of division, which the Visitor introduces a few lines later, in order arrive at definitions is that this method systematically brings to light all of the difference between things that depend on the natures of kinds. For example, in *Statesman*, the Visitor sets forth the following principle governing the proper application of the method of division and inquiry as a whole:

[T3] it is necessary, when someone first sees the association (κοινωνίαν) of many things, not to leave off before one should see all the differences (τὰς διαφορὰς) in that association,

²⁵ If one balks at the idea that *this* is the right way to explain the difference between sophistry and angling, then one reacts as Plato likely hoped: this is a sign that the first definition *does not really* express what sophistry is. According to the final definition, the most fundamental difference is that sophistry produces (images) and angling acquires.

which depend on kinds (ἐν εἵδεσι κεῖνται); and again, when they see manifold dissimilarities (παντοδαπὰς ἀνομοιότητας) in a plurality of things, [it is necessary] not to be able to be disconcerted and stop until, shutting in (ἔρξας) all the related things (τὰ οἰκεῖα) within a single similarity, one surrounds [them] with the being of a single kind (γένους τινὸς οὐσίᾳ). (*Stm.* 285a7-b6)

δέον, ὅταν μὲν τὴν τῶν πολλῶν τις πρότερον αἰσθηται κοινωνίαν, μὴ προαφίστασθαι πρὶν ἂν ἐν αὐτῇ τὰς διαφορὰς ἴδῃ πάσας ὁπόσαι περ ἐν εἵδεσι κεῖνται, τὰς δὲ αὖ παντοδαπὰς ἀνομοιότητας, ὅταν ἐν πλήθεσιν ὀφθῶσιν, μὴ δυνατόν εἶναι δυσωπούμενον παύεσθαι πρὶν ἂν σύμπαντα τὰ οἰκεῖα ἐντὸς μιᾶς ὁμοιότητος ἔρξας γένους τινὸς οὐσίᾳ περιβάλῃται.

Thus, using the method of division, one arrives at a definition that brings to light all of the substantive, kind-based similarities and differences between the definiendum and other kinds. These, I suggest, are the features of the definiendum in virtue of which it is similar to other kinds and in virtue of which it is distinct from other kinds.²⁶

If this is right, then it is plausible that, for any two distinct kinds, their participation in difference is explained by their essential features.²⁷ As I will argue in more detail in chapter 3, Plato insists that the form of difference plays a role as well. In general,

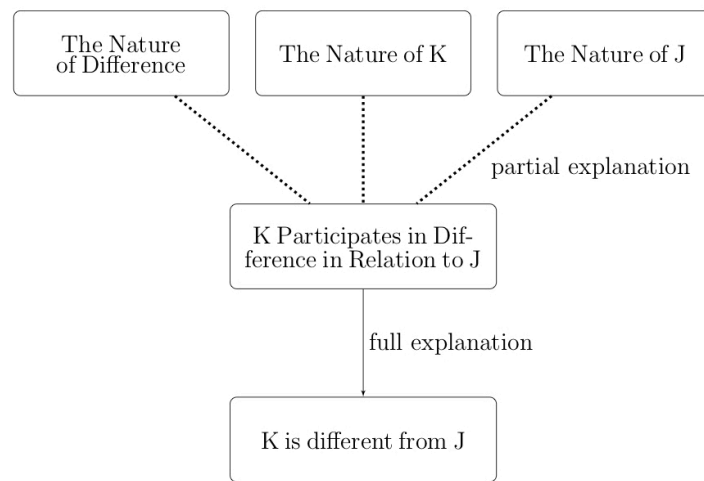
(Difference Principle) if *x* is different from *y*, then *x* is different from *y* in virtue of participation in the form of difference.

How are we to square these two ideas? Recall that, on the view I sketched above, necessary combination facts are explained by the essences of the kinds that combine. The fact that *x*

²⁶ The theoretical task of bringing to light and explaining differences between kinds is central to and drives the philosophical narrative of *Statesman*. For example, the Myth of Cronus is introduced because the initial definition does not separate off the statesman from certain rivals (267c8-268c10). For more discussion, see Lane (1998, 39-46, 99, 117, and 139-142).

²⁷ See Silverman (2004, 178-9) for a version of this idea.

participates in the form of difference (in relation to y) is just such a combination fact. The idea, then, is that the nature of x, the nature of y, and the nature of difference all play an explanatory role. More concretely, I suggest that x is different from y because (i) by its nature, x is F; (ii) by its nature, y is G; (iii) by their natures, G and F are incompatible; and, (iv) by the nature of difference, kinds with incompatible essential features partake in difference in relation to each other. Graphically,



I don't claim that Plato's text *requires* this account of the metaphysics of distinctness. The account I've presented is, however, fully consistent with Plato's text, it is *suggested* by Plato's examples, and it is philosophically attractive. What is more, it has the result that

(No Fundamental Differences) for all pairs of distinct kinds A and B, the fact that A *partakes in difference in relation to B* is not fundamental,

and this result allows us to accept an attractive account of essential features that reflects the theoretical role Plato assigns them.

3.4 Explaining Combination Facts

Combination remains. According to the account of essential features that I've offered, essential features metaphysically explain "combination facts"—i.e. facts of the form

(a) that G can combine with H,

and

(b) that G cannot combine with H.

But what does it even mean for one kind to "combine" with another? And how exactly do essential features explain whether kinds can or cannot combine?

Plato just does not tell us very much about either issue. Rather than attempting a complete account of combination or of how combination facts are metaphysically explained, I will focus on two more modest claims. The first is that Plato distinguishes two kinds of combination: direct combination and distributive combination. The second is that Plato relies on the idea that combination facts flow from definitions. These two ideas, I will argue (in §3.4.1), are key to making sense of Plato's claim, at 260b-261a, that speech (λόγος) and opinion (δόξα) participate in not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν). Moreover, I will argue (in §3.4.2) that these two ideas hold the key to answering the question, posed at 231b-232b but never explicitly answered, of how it could be that the sophist appears to have several incompatible definitions.

Note, however, that I will not attempt to give a general analysis of the logic of combination nor will I have anything to say about the relationship between expressions for combination and other technical Platonic idioms related to predication, like 'F-ness is ἐπί x' and 'F-ness is περί x'.²⁸ Both of these tasks are necessary for full discussion of Plato's notion of combination in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, but they are both beyond the scope of this dissertation.

²⁸ See *Soph.* 257b11 and *Soph.* 256e6-7.

3.4.1 Direct and Distributive Combination

I will not try to give a complete account of Plato's combination relation. Instead, I will argue that there are at least two kinds of situations in which Plato say that one form combines with another. To see this, let's distinguish between cases of "direct" and "distributive" combinations between the form of F-ness and the form of G-ness:

(Direct Combination) if F-ness *directly* combines with G-ness, then F-ness is G

(Distributive Combination) if F-ness *distributively* combines with G-ness, then
(some/all) Fs are G.²⁹

I want to claim that Plato uses "combination" and related language to describe the underlying relationship between the forms of F-ness and G-ness to explain facts of the form F-ness is G *as well as* facts of the form some (all) of the F things are G.

Let's start with direct combination. Plato uses "combination" language to talk about direct combination quite often in *Sophist*. In one such case in *Sophist* 256c-e, the EV and Theaetetus reaffirm that Motion, one of the "greatest" kinds they have been discussing, is different from the four other greatest kinds (c10-d2; cf. 254d4-15; 255e4-6). The Visitor points out a consequence of their position as follows:

[T4] {EV} Shouldn't we say, contending fearlessly, that motion is different from being
(τοῦ ὄντος)?

²⁹ This distinction is closely related to the distinction between 'generalizing' and 'ordinary' readings of sentences and less closely to the distinction between ordinary and Pauline predication. Commentators have drawn both of these distinctions on the basis of *Sophist* 255a4-b7 and related passages. For the former see, e.g., Bluck (1963, 113-4) and Bostock (1984, 104); for the latter see, e.g., Vlastos (1970, 270-4). Crivelli (2012, 118-122) discusses and criticizes these interpretations of 255a4-b7. In what follows, I defend attributing to Plato the distinction between direct and distributive combination on the basis of a different passage, which I believe, are not subject to Crivelli's objections.

{Th} Yes, most fearlessly.

{EV} So then, clearly, motion really is not being (ὄντως οὐκ ὄν ἐστι) and is being (καὶ ὄν), since it partakes in being?

{Th} Most clearly! (256d5-10)

{EV} (a) Therefore, it is of necessity that not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is present in motion (ἐπὶ κινήσεως)³⁰ and in every one of the kinds (κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη). (b) For (γὰρ), in every one, the nature of difference, by making (ἀπεργαζομένη) each different from being (ἕτερον τοῦ ὄντος), makes each not be (οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ), and indeed in this way we will correctly say that all of them are not beings on the same basis (κατὰ ταῦτα οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὁρθῶς ἐροῦμεν), (c) and again (πάλιν), because each partakes in being (ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος), [we will correctly say that] they are and are beings. (256d5-e3)

{ΞΕ.} Ἀδεῶς ἄρα τὴν κίνησιν ἕτερον εἶναι τοῦ ὄντος διαμαχόμενοι λέγωμεν;

{ΘΕ.} Ἀδεέστατα μὲν οὖν.

{ΞΕ.} Οὐκοῦν δὴ σαφῶς ἡ κίνησις ὄντως οὐκ ὄν ἐστι καὶ ὄν, ἐπεὶ περ τοῦ ὄντος μετέχει;

{ΘΕ.} Σαφέστατά γε.

{ΞΕ.} (a) Ἔστιν ἄρα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μὴ ὄν ἐπὶ τε κινήσεως εἶναι καὶ κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη· (b) κατὰ πάντα γὰρ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ, καὶ σύμπαντα δὴ κατὰ ταῦτα οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὁρθῶς ἐροῦμεν, (c) καὶ πάλιν, ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος, εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα.

³⁰ Rowe (2015) and White (1993) translate “ἐπὶ” followed by the genitive here as “in the case of ...”. However, as Crivelli (2012, 167-8)—following Frede (1967, 53) and Lewis (1977, 110 n.14)—points out, the sense of Plato’s remark is that not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) applies to motion and the other kinds. As Crivelli puts it, Plato’s idiom here expresses “the converse of ‘to be’”. To capture this sense, I’ve translated “is present in” although Crivelli himself prefers “is about.”

I will offer a detailed analysis of this passage in chapter 3. What matter for now is that Plato argues that

- (i) motion (and each other kind) is and is a being in because (ὅτι) it partakes in being (μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος)

and

- (ii) motion is not being because of the nature of difference (ἡ θατέρου φύσις), which makes it different from being and not being.

As I argue in detail in chapter 3, in an earlier passage Plato explains that other kinds are different because they partake in difference (see 255e3-e6). Thus, we should construe the idea in (ii) as follows:

- (ii*) motion (and each other form) is not being because it is different from being, and it is different from being because it partakes in the form of difference in relation to being.

The instance of combination—marked with the language of ‘partaking’ (μετέχει)—in both (i) and (ii) must be *direct*. Clearly, the claim in (i) is about the form of Motion—and each other form—*itself* rather than about the objects that are different—or have other properties. The idea is that Motion is a being, not that you are a being when you go jogging. It is even more clear that combination in (ii) is direct rather than distributive. The point of the discussion is to explain the idea that there are five great kinds—including Motion—which are all beings. The aim is to provide an account of the underlying relations between kinds such that Motion is a being but is different from Being. Whether the instances of Motion, i.e. the moving things, are different from Being is beside the point: whether *they* are different from Being does bear on the question of whether Motion itself is different from Being. But if we interpret the claim that motion partakes in difference (in relation to being) distributively, then the passage is about the moving things and not

about motion itself. We must, then, read the claims about combination in T4 as claims about *direct combination*.

Why think that there are any cases of *distributive combination*? Consider the discussion between the Visitor and Theaetetus at *Sophist* 260b-c about whether speech and opinion partake in *not being*.

[T5] [a] [EV.] Not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) was brought to light (ἀνεφάνη) by us as a single kind among the others, which is spread out over all the beings.

[Th.] Just so.

[EV.] [b] Therefore, we must next inquire whether it is mixed with both opinion (δόξη) and speech (λόγῳ).

[Th.] Why?

[EV.] [c] If it does not mix with them, then it is necessary that everything is true; if it does mix, then both opinion and speech come to be false. For to believe or say things that are not, that is, I suppose, falsehood coming to be both in thought and speeches. (*Soph.* 260b7-c4)

{ΞΕ.} Τὸ μὲν δὴ μὴ ὄν ἡμῖν ἔν τι τῶν ἄλλων γένος ὃν ἀνεφάνη, κατὰ πάντα τὰ ὄντα διεσπαρμένον.

{ΘΕΑΙ.} Οὕτως.

{ΞΕ.} Οὐκοῦν τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο σκεπτέον εἰ δόξη τε καὶ λόγῳ μείγνυται.

{ΘΕΑΙ.} Τί δὴ;

{ΞΕ.} Μὴ μείγνυμένου μὲν αὐτοῦ τούτοις ἀναγκαῖον ἀληθῆ πάντ' εἶναι, μείγνυμένου δὲ δόξα τε ψευδὴς γίγνεται καὶ λόγος· τὸ γὰρ τὰ μὴ ὄντα δοξάζειν ἢ λέγειν, τοῦτ' ἔστι πού τὸ ψεῦδος ἐν διανοίᾳ τε καὶ λόγοις γιγνόμενον.

Let's start with [a]. In developing the thought put forward in T5 above, the Visitor and Theaetetus agreed that not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is a part of the form of difference related to being (258a7-c5, d5-e3). In other words, τὸ μὴ ὄν is itself a kind—namely, *difference in relation to being*. What is more, all forms besides being partake in *difference in relation to being*, in virtue of which they are all different from being (see T4 above). Thus, τὸ μὴ ὄν “is spread out over all the beings”—in the sense that all the kinds, besides Being itself, partake in τὸ μὴ ὄν. In the lines leading up to T5, it is clear that speech is a kind (τῶν ὄντων ἓν τι γενῶν at 260a5); and, in [a], the Visitor refers back to their earlier conclusion that τὸ μὴ ὄν—i.e. difference in relation to being—combines with all the kinds besides being itself. It follows, then that all kinds—including speech—combine with τὸ μὴ ὄν. In [b] and [c], however, it is an open question whether certain kinds—namely opinion and speech—combine with τὸ μὴ ὄν. How can we make sense of this?

I suggest that in [a] Plato has in mind the earlier claim that each kind, including speech and opinion, *directly combines* with τὸ μὴ ὄν and that, starting in [b], he is considering the question of whether speech and opinion *distributively combine* with τὸ μὴ ὄν. In other words, he is interested in whether *some speeches* and *some opinions* are false. This is supported by the two conditionals in [c]:

(i) if speech and opinion do not combine with τὸ μὴ ὄν, then everything (i.e. every speech and every opinion) is true,

(ii) if speech and opinion combine with τὸ μὴ ὄν, then there are false speeches and opinions.

Clearly, the question here is not whether the kind, speech, itself *is different from being*. That question has already been settled and it has no bearing on whether some *token speeches* are false. Instead, the question is whether some token speeches and opinions can be *different from being* in such a way as to be false. This reading is confirmed by the use of “everything” (πάντα) and the

plural λόγοις in [c]: a token speech or opinion is false just in case it says or believes what is not.

The assumption, then, is that

the kind, speech, combines with τὸ μὴ ὄν iff some *speeches* differ from what is.

In other words, the passage is about *distributive combination*.

This reading is further supported by what follows.

[T6] But now indeed, it is clear that it [viz. not being] shares in being (μετέχον τοῦ ὄντος); so, while he [viz. the sophist] would probably not fight this point further, he would probably say that some forms participate in not being but others do not and that speech and opinion are among those that do not participate [in not being], with the result that he will contend again that image-making (εἰδωλοποιικήν) and appearance-making (φανταστικήν)—in which we said he is—are not at all, since speech and opinion do not combine (κοινωνεῖ) with not being (τοῦ μὴ ὄντος)—for, without this combination coming together (μὴ συνισταμένης τῆς κοινωνίας), falsehood is not at all. So, for these reasons, we must first discover speech, opinion and appearance—i.e. what they are—so that, once they are revealed, we will see their combination with not being ... (260d5-261a1)

Νῦν δέ γε τοῦτο μὲν ἐφάνη μετέχον τοῦ ὄντος, ὥστε αὕτη μὲν ἴσως οὐκ ἂν μάχοιτο ἔτι· τάχα δ' ἂν φαίη τῶν εἰδῶν τὰ μὲν μετέχειν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, τὰ δ' οὔ, καὶ λόγον δὴ καὶ δόξαν εἶναι τῶν οὐ μετεχόντων, ὥστε τὴν εἰδωλοποιικήν καὶ φανταστικήν, ἐν ἧ φάμεν αὐτὸν εἶναι, διαμάχοιτ' ἂν πάλιν ὡς παντάπασιν οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐπειδὴ δόξα καὶ λόγος οὐ κοινωνεῖ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος· ψεῦδος γὰρ τὸ παράπαν οὐκ εἶναι ταύτης μὴ συνισταμένης τῆς κοινωνίας. διὰ ταῦτ' οὖν λόγον πρῶτον καὶ δόξαν καὶ φαντασίαν διερευνητέον ὅτι ποτ' ἔστιν, ἵνα φανέντων καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὐτῶν τῷ μὴ ὄντι κατίδωμεν, ...

The sophist's imagined argument is not that speech and opinion fail to be different from Being. Rather, her imagined point is that they have not yet shown that speech and opinion *distributively combine* with not being. They have not yet made clear that *speeches* and *opinions* can differ from what is, in such a way as to be false. Given this evidence, we should accept that, in *Sophist*, combination can be *direct* or *distributive*.

Before moving on it is worth commenting on the Visitor's strategy. How does one show that some form can combine with another? One gives *definitions*. The idea appears to be this: to have expert knowledge of combinations in such a way as to be able to respond to skillful objections like those the Visitor puts into the mouth of the sophist, one must know the definitions of kinds. Once we discover *what speech is*, *what opinion is*, and *what appearance is*, we will be in position to see that they combine with not being. As the Visitor puts it, “we must first discover speech, opinion and appearance—i.e. what they are—so that, once they are revealed, we will see their combination with not being” (λόγον πρῶτον καὶ δόξαν καὶ φαντασίαν διερευνητέον ὅτι ποτ' ἔστιν, ἵνα φανέντων καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὐτῶν τῷ μὴ ὄντι κατίδωμεν). Combination facts about speech and opinion *flow from* their definitions. Presumably, there is nothing special about the kinds, speech and opinion, in this regard. In general, combination facts flow from definitions. Combination facts, it is suggested, *flow from* essential facts.

3.4.2 Many Definitions of Sophistry?

The two puzzles put forward in section 5 above have not, as far as I know, received any scholarly attention. Commentators have largely focused on another question about the definitions by division in *Sophist*: what is the relationship between the seven proposed definitions of

sophistry?³¹ In this section, I will flesh out and build on an answer to this question sketched by M. L. Gill (2006 and 2010) according to which the final definition captures the essence of sophistry and explains why the first six definitions provide true descriptions of the sophist. This “explanatory” interpretation has recently been challenged by Rickless (2010) and Vlasits (forthcoming). But, as I will argue in what follows, if we recognize this case as an instance of Plato’s more general view that *combination facts* flow from *essential facts*, then the explanatory interpretation can meet their objection and has the advantage of drawing a clear connection between the definitions in the frame of the dialogue to the discussion of combination of kinds in the dialogue’s middle section.

Plato has Theaetetus raises the question of the relationship between the definitions of sophistry and he has the Visitor give a sketchy and rather obscure response to the problem. The challenge, then, is to identify the problem that Plato means to draw attention to and the solution to this problem that he means to sketch. Let’s turn to the text. After agreeing to the sixth proposal, Theaetetus remarks, “At this point, because of the many appearances [of the sophist] I am at a loss what in the world one, who speaks truly and affirms confidently, must say the sophist really is” (ἀπορῶ δὲ ἔγωγε ἤδη διὰ τὸ πολλὰ πεφάνθαι, τί χρή ποτε ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγοντα καὶ διυσχυριζόμενον εἰπεῖν ὄντως εἶναι τὸν σοφιστήν) (231b9-c2). To take stock, they count up the appearances of the sophist (διαλογισώμεθα ... ὅποσα ἡμῖν ὁ σοφιστὴς πέφανται) (d1-2). The sophist was found to be

(1) a paid hunter (θηρευτής) of young, rich men (d2-3);

(2) an importer (ἐμπορός) of bit of knowledge (μαθήματα) about the soul (d5-6);

³¹ See, e.g., Vlasits (forthcoming), Rickless (2010), Gill (2010, 181-2), Gill (2006, 10), and Notomi (1999, 78-81), Cornford (1935, 186-190), Brown (2010) and Beere (2019). There has also been discussion about the *content* of the definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. For example, Brown (2010) argues that even the final definition of sophistry is inconsistent with Platonic doctrine about expertise. The questions raised by these critiques of the proposed definitions are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

- (3) a retailer (κάπηλος) of the same (d8);
- (4) a seller of his own goods (αὐτοπώλης) selling his own bits of knowledge (d9-10);
- (5) a competitor (ἀθλητής) in verbal contests skilled in eristic (d11-e2);
- and (6) a soul purifier (περὶ ψυχὴν καθαρτὴν) of beliefs that impede learning (e5-6).

After this summary, the Visitor describes the problem they face:

[T7] So then, don't you think that—when someone *seems* to be knowledgeable about many things but is called by the name of one expertise—this phantasm (φάντασμα) is unhealthy, but rather it is clear that one who experiences this [phantasm] in relation to some expertise is not able to see the thing belonging to it [viz. the expertise] to which all those kinds of knowledge (μαθήματα) look, which is why one also calls the person who has them [viz. the kinds of knowledge] by many names instead of one? (232a1-7)

{ΞΕ.} Ἄρ' οὖν ἐννοεῖς, ὅταν ἐπιστήμων τις πολλῶν φαίνεται, μᾶς δὲ τέχνης ὀνόματι προσαγορεύεται, τὸ φάντασμα τοῦτο ὡς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὑγιές, ἀλλὰ δῆλον ὡς ὁ πάσχων αὐτὸ πρὸς τινα τέχνην οὐ δύναται κατιδεῖν ἐκεῖνο αὐτῆς εἰς ὃ πάντα τὰ μαθήματα ταῦτα βλέπει, διὸ καὶ πολλοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀνθ' ἑνὸς τὸν ἔχοντα αὐτὰ προσαγορεύει;

The idea appears to be that one is appropriately called a “sophist” because of a single expertise one possesses—namely, sophistry—but the sophist appears to possess several kinds of knowledge. Corresponding to each of these many kinds of knowledge (ἐπιστήμων πολλῶν) that the sophist possesses, there is a different description that we apply to her. We call her (προσαγορεύει) “hunter of young men”, “importer of bits of knowledge about the soul”, etc.³² But what we are really after is a the single expertise that she possesses in virtue of which she is a sophist. All the other things

³² For this reading of the “many names” we call the sophist, see Gill (2010, 181) and Notomi (1999, 80).

that the sophist knows, in some sense, point towards—or “look to” (βλέπει εἰς)—this single expertise, sophistry, that makes her a sophist.

What is the relationship between the sophist’s other kinds of knowledge and her sophistry? In what sense does the sophist’s expert ability to *hunt young men*, for example, “look to” sophistry? According to Gill (2010, 181-2), as well as several other scholars, the relationship is explanatory: the challenge posed by the several definitions of sophistry is “to recognize that feature of his art ‘toward which all these sorts of learning look’—something about the sophist that explains why he seems to know so much, something about him that would justify our calling him by one name: ‘sophist.’”³³ Elsewhere Gill elaborates that the early definitions

specify some feature of the sophist’s activity that enables one to pick out a sophist, but none of those divisions captures his essence ... Once we finally uncover the essence of a sophist on the seventh round, we see that the first five divisions specified him by accidental features or by some feature that follows from his essence. They failed to specify what it is that makes someone a sophist ... (Gill, 2006, 10).

I think that Gill is right about T7. While it is true that nothing in this passage requires that the final definition *explain why* sophists have types of knowledge besides sophistry—there might be some other sense in which the sophist’s other abilities “look to” sophistry—still, this interpretation has two major advantages. First, if sophists have lots of kinds of knowledge, then an account of sophistry should be responsive to and make sense of this fact. On the explanatory reading, Plato is sensitive to this point. He is telling us that the final definition will explain why the sophist has skills besides sophistry—the skill of hunting young men, of importing teachings about the soul,

³³ See also Gill (2006, 10). More recently, Vlasits (forthcoming, 7) takes the same view: the Visitor is saying that they must find an expertise possessed by the sophist “which would explain why all of those descriptions hold of him.” Cf. Notomi, (1999, 81).

etc. It is true that Plato never fully spells out this explanation, but—as I shall argue—he does give us the resources to spell out these explanations using the apparatus of combination that he develops later in *Sophist*. Second, this explanatory reading coheres with the general view of *Sophist* that the essential facts about a thing explain further, non-essential, facts about it. Indeed, this is just what we saw in the previous section regarding speech and opinion: whether speeches and opinion can combine with not being and can be false flows from the definitions of speech and opinion. In particular, on the version of the explanatory reading that I will develop below, the essence of sophistry explains why sophistry reliably combines with other skills.³⁴

Despite its *prima facie* appeal, this reading has recently been challenged. Rickless (2010) and Vlasits (forthcoming) argue that

(Bad Description) if the first six³⁵ characterizations of sophistry are meant to be definitions, then they do not provide true descriptions of the sophist.

Rickless and Vlasits support this claim with the following sort of argument. If the first six characterizations of sophistry are meant to be definitions, then they make claims about the essence of sophistry that are different from and incompatible with the final definition of sophistry. Plato clearly favors the final definition. Therefore, since nothing has more than one essence and nothing has an inconsistent essence, if the first six characterizations are definitions, then, on Plato's view,

³⁴ For a third reason to like Gill's reading, compare *Phaedrus* 237d1-3. There, in Socrates's first speech on *eros*, the speaker proposes that he and the boy first come to an agreement about the definition (ὅρον) of *eros* and then, "by looking at and referring to it, undertake the inquiry into whether *eros* brings advantage or harm" (εἰς τοῦτο ἀποβλέποντες καὶ ἀναφέροντες τὴν σκέψιν ποιόμεθα εἴτε ὠφελίαν εἴτε βλάβην παρέχει). In other words, the inquirers are to answer questions about the value of *eros* by reference to its definition: they look to the essence of *eros* to determine certain non-essential features of it. In *Sophist*, it is not the inquirers who look to the definition, but, rather strikingly, it is the non-essential features of the sophist—i.e. the types of knowledge that sophists have that do not make them sophists—that look to (βλέπει εἰς) sophistry itself. Still, the parallel is clear enough and it supports Gill's reading.

³⁵ Even if the first five accounts provide accurate description of the sophist, there is some reason to think that the sixth in particular does not. Here, I do not mean to take a stand on this question. For convenience, however, I will talk as if all six are meant to be accurate.

they cannot be true. Vlasits and Rickless conclude that if the first six characterizations are meant as definitions, then they do not provide true descriptions of the sophist.

Rickless and Vlasits use this argument differently from each other. Rickless rightly points out that the first six characterizations are meant to be definitions, so he infers from Bad Description that the first six definitions do not provide true descriptions of the sophist. On his view, these definitions identify ways that the sophist *falsely* appears—for example, the sophist is *merely apparently* an expert hunter of young men. Plato means the accounts formulated in the preceding discussions to be *false* claims about the nature of sophistry. Thus, for example, S σ 1 at 223b1-7, which says, “the hunting belonging to expertise in appropriation ... which targets wealthy and reputable young men, ought to be called, as our current account turns out, sophistry” makes a false claim about *what sophistry is*. Therefore, he infers, relying on Bad Description, the description of the sophist, given in the summary up to T3 cited above, as a paid hunter of young men (231d2) must *also* be false. On this point, I disagree with Rickless. Rather, as Vlasits rightly points out, T7 implies that the sophist in fact has *many types of knowledge* corresponding to the first six characterizations of sophistry.

I also disagree with Vlasits’s reading. Relying on Bad Description, Vlasits concludes that the first six accounts, including S σ 1, make true claims about sophistry but are not meant to be definitions—they are not meant to be statements of the nature of sophistry. On his view, the method of division can yield several different true ‘accounts’ of a single kind because divisions need not be exclusive or track essential relations between kinds. On both these points, I disagree with Vlasits. I think that (i) it is clear that the earlier ‘accounts’ of sophistry, like S σ 1, are statements about the nature of sophistry and (ii) that the first six ‘accounts’ of sophistry are inconsistent with the seventh definition of sophistry. For example, while the S σ 1 claims that sophistry is acquisitive,

Sσ7 claims that it is productive. This view is reinforced by the fact that Plato's definitions by division—in all but two cases—use a name for an expertise (e.g. ἡ ἀσπαλιευτική; ἡ σοφιστική) rather than a term for the possessor of that expertise (ὁ σοφιστής) to pick out their definienda (see Appendix A).³⁶ Thus, on the assumption that Plato endorses the seventh definition, he must deny the first six. In addition, I disagree with Vlasits' claim that division need not be exclusive or track essential connections.

How can one maintain *both* that the earlier characterizations are false claims about the nature of sophistry *and* also that the summary at 231d-e consists in *true* descriptions of the sophist? The problem here is the Bad Description thesis. The Bad Description claim, and the argument for it, slide illicitly between definitions of *sophistry itself* and descriptions of *sophists*—agents who possess sophistry. Clearly, *sophistry* cannot be a kind of hunting—for example—if as the final definition insists it is not a type of acquisitive expertise but rather a kind of image production. Even if the first six definitions are false—because they claim that sophistry is a kind of hunting, or importing, or retailing, etc. and it is not—their *definienda* may still define kinds of knowledge that sophists do in fact possess. It is true that Plato's own language encourages this slide between *sophistry* and *the sophist*. He often talks interchangeably of defining *the sophist* (ὁ σοφιστής) and *sophistry* (ἡ σοφιστική) (see e.g. 221c5-6). Indeed, “the sophist” is the linguistic subject of the fifth definition (226a1-4). Nevertheless, the lines leading up to Theaetetus's puzzlement (231b9-c2) and the summary of appearances of the sophist (c9-e7) prepare the audience to recognize the difference between the expertise of sophistry itself and the sophist, who possesses that expertise.

³⁶ Even in the two exceptions—namely, Sσ5 and Sσ7—there is reason to doubt that Plato means, properly speaking, to define *the sophist* rather than *sophistry*: the definienda of these definitions specify the subject as a *part* or *kind* of expertise. Strictly speaking, I take it, the most perspicuous term for the kind or part of expertise that is associated with sophistic practice is ἡ σοφιστική rather than ὁ σοφιστής. This is in line with the way that Plato talks about kinds of expertise throughout *Sophist* and *Statesman* and it respects his distinction between an expertise and the possessor of that expertise.

The Visitor builds towards the sixth definition by praising the expertise under consideration as involving a type of examination that is “the greatest and most authoritative of all kinds of purification” (μεγίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη τῶν καθάρσεων) (d7-8) and claiming that being subjected to this sort of purification is necessary for happiness. This gives the Visitor pause, and he wonders, “What then? What will we call the people who use this expertise (τοὺς ταύτη χρωμένους τῇ τέχνῃ)? For I am afraid to call them sophists (σοφιστὰς)” (230e5-231a1).³⁷ After some further caveats about calling those who possess the expertise in purification under consideration ‘sophists’, he puts forward the sixth definition of *sophistry* (ἡ σοφιστική). The careful language here reminds us that sophist are agents who possess a certain expertise and sophistry is the expertise itself. With this distinction in mind, it is clear that it may be true to describe sophists as having a certain ability but false to identify that ability with sophistry. This distinction should be clear and present to mind in the lines that immediately follow, where Theaetetus expresses his puzzlement about the sophist (τὸν σοφιστήν; c2) and the interlocutors offer their summary of appearance of the sophist (ὁ σοφιστής; d2) in the form of six descriptions of the sophist.³⁸ The Visitor is not endorsing the earlier definitions of *sophistry*, he is claiming only that the *sophist* possesses each of the abilities picked out by the *definientia* of the preceding definitions.

In sum, even though *sophistry* is not, for example, a kind of hunting wealthy young men—and, therefore, the first definition at 223b1-6 is false—it is still the case that *sophists* have the expertise of hunting wealthy young men—so the first description of the sophist at 231d2-3 is true. While this expertise is not what makes them sophists, it is a skill that they have *because they are sophists*. It is a skill that they have (partly) in virtue of the fact that they possess *sophistry*.

³⁷ Τί δέ; τοὺς ταύτη χρωμένους τῇ τέχνῃ τίνας φήσομεν; ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ φοβοῦμαι σοφιστὰς φάναι.

³⁸ Note the form of the nouns in 1-6 of the summary preceding T7 above.

How does this work? Consider the relationship between (a) sophistry, the kind of image-making expertise defined in the final definition, and (b) the kind of hunting picked out by the definiens of the first definition, which we can call *youth hunting*. Drawing on the resources Plato develops later in the dialogue, we can describe the relationship between sophistry and youth hunting as follows.

(1) sophistry cannot *directly combine* with youth hunting

since sophistry is not a kind of youth hunting, and, properly speaking, sophistry does not *hunt* anything. But

(2) sophistry can *distributively combine with* youth hunting

since *sophists* can possess expertise in youth hunting. Plausibly, both (1) and (2) are partly metaphysically explained by the essence of sophistry. Sophistry, as defined by the final definition, is a productive expertise: it *makes* images. What it is to have sophistry is to be able to create something and what it is to use sophistry is to create something. Sophistry, therefore, is not and cannot be *acquisitive*: sophistry does not endow its possessor with the ability to acquire anything and exercises of sophistry do not acquire things that already exist but bring things into existence. Nevertheless, *sophists* can possess expertise in youth hunting: there is nothing in the nature of sophistry that prevents those who possess it from gaining or using expertise in hunting youths. Indeed, Plato's view seems to be stronger:

(3) sophistry *in fact does distributively combine with* youth hunting

since sophists *do often or typically* possess expertise in youth hunting. On Plato's view, this is no accident. Sophistry allows sophists to make themselves seem to their students to be wise about all things (233c6), and this works best on the young because the young are inexperienced (234c2-

e4).³⁹ Thus, it is not part of the nature of sophistry that it targets young people—after all, it can be used on adults as well. However, sophistry is especially effective on the young because of the nature of image making and facts about human psychology and development. In virtue of possessing sophistry, then, sophists are especially well positioned to seem to be wise to the young. Thus, in virtue of possessing sophistry, sophists are especially well positioned to also possess the skill of youth hunting. Thus, essential facts about sophistry—in particular, the fact that it is a kind of image-making—along with facts about human development explain the truth of (3). I will not work out parallel accounts of the relationship between sophistry and the kinds picked out by the *definientia* of the other five definitions, but I think such accounts can be produced.

I have not given a general account of combination or a general account of how essential facts metaphysically explain combination facts. Instead, I've worked through two case studies from different parts of the *Sophist* that I believe support the idea that combination facts are metaphysically explained by essential facts. In both of these critical passages, the apparatus of (direct and distributive) combination and the thought that combination facts are metaphysically explain by essential facts were at play.

4. Resolutions and Results

Let's finally turn to resolving our two problems—the problems of Too Little Information and Too Much Information. The problem of Too Little Information asks how it could be that

(Coincidence) x is an expert in defining iff x is an expert in dialectic

when definitions—the subject of the expertise in defining—contain strictly less information than one must know in order to count as an expert in dialectic. In particular, definitions do not contain

³⁹ Due to their lack of experience, they cannot recognize the sophists' trick (suggested by 234b5-10) and they do not have a strong grip on the facts about which the sophists exposit (suggested by 234d1-e2).

all of the combination facts and identity and distinctness facts about their definienda; but, in order to count as an expert in dialectic, one must know—or be in position to know—all the combination facts and identity and distinctness facts about kinds.

This problem centers on the epistemology of definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman*; and, to resolve it, I proposed an account of expertise in defining. If, as I've suggested, expertise in defining is—like *episteme* in *Meno* and like *episteme* and *nous* in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*—an *other-involving* cognitive state, then the problem of Too Little Information has a straightforward solution. On the account I've proposed, to be an expert in defining, one must grasp definitions in such a way as to see how other facts—namely combination facts and identity and distinctness facts—flow from them. It follows that the expert in defining is also an expert in dialectic: in order to count as an expert in defining, one must be in position to know the combination, identity, and distinctness facts about kinds. Likewise, the expert in dialectic grasps combination, identity and distinctness facts by seeing how these facts flow from definitions. Thus, it follows that

(Coincidence) x is an expert in defining iff x is an expert in dialectic.

Indeed, as I argued, on this account of expertise in defining, an even stronger view is available. Since expertise in dialectic and expertise in defining have the same content—they cover the same set of facts—it is quite reasonable to think that

(Identity) expertise in defining is identical to expertise in dialectic.

Since, as I've argued, Plato's language strongly suggests that he endorses **Identity** and there is a philosophically attractive account of expertise in defining and dialectic according to which **Identity** is true, I suggested that we attribute **Identity** to Plato.

Now to the problem of Too Much Information. This is the problem that (a) the definitions of the standard form are redundant and that (b) redundancy is a vice in definitions. It seems to follow,

then, that the many definitions of the standard form in *Sophist* and *Statesman* are all, in at least one sense, *bad definitions*. This problem has an attractive solution if, as I've suggested, Plato holds that the defining—i.e. essential—features of *x* are all and only the features of *x* such that (i) *x*'s possession of them cannot be further metaphysically explained and (ii) they each at least partly metaphysically explain some combination, identity, or distinctness fact about *x*. This account has the consequence that all of the features mentioned in the definitions of the standard form *are essential* to the object defined. So, for example, the fact that angling is a kind of *animal hunting* partly metaphysically explains the fact that angling is distinct from the hunting of lifeless things (τὸ ἀψύχου γένους) and from each sub-kind of lifeless-thing hunting, including “diving” (κολυμβητική) (219e4-220a5).⁴⁰ Likewise, the fact that sophistry is a kind of land-animal hunting partly metaphysically explains the fact that sophistry is distinct from angling. In general, since each kind, *K*, mentioned in the definiens of a definition of the standard form corresponds to a division, being a sub-kind of kind *K* differentiates the definiendum from the kinds divided off from *K* in the division.

This shows that each kind mentioned in a definition of the standard form is essential to the definiendum, but it does not yet solve the problem of Too Much Information. We still need to know why everything essential to the definiendum needs to be mentioned in its definition. Why specify every part of the essence of the object defined? The answer, I suggest, is that definitions are meant to provide the information about the definiendum that metaphysically explains its combinations with other kinds as well as its identity and distinctness facts. Since every feature that is essential to an object plays this explanatory role, definitions should mention all of the definiendum's essential features. This is also why expertise in defining involves grasping

⁴⁰ Although he does not explain, Plato presumably has in mind expertise in pearl hunting or diving for other valuables.

definitions in such a way as to see how combination, identity and distinctness facts flow from them. In short, what a thing is—its essence—just is its explanatory core: the features that determine its identity, make it different from everything else, and fix the range of other features it can and cannot have. Since definitions specify *what something is*, they need to mention all of the features that make up its explanatory core.

I've offered a reconstruction of Platonic essentialism in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Let me conclude by contrasting my account with a common interpretation of Platonic essentialism in order to draw attention to what I take to be a particularly distinctive, interesting, and philosophically attractive feature of my account. As I noted in the introduction to chapter 1, accounts of Platonic essentialism often attribute to Plato the following thought:

Cases of property possession are grounded in two fundamentally different relations. In some cases, x is F in virtue of the fact that x *participates* in the Form of F-ness. In other cases, x is F in virtue of the fact that x *is essentially* F—i.e. x is F *in itself*, or by its own nature.⁴¹

Call this the “Two Relations View.” On this view, the distinction between essential and non-essential features of a thing is explained by reference to the *relation* between the thing and the feature:

F is an essential feature of x iff x is F in virtue of the fact that x *is essentially* F,

and

F is a non-essential feature of x iff x is F in virtue of the fact that x *participates in F-ness*.⁴²

⁴¹ Code (1986), Silverman (2002, 90-94), Thomas (2014), Leigh (2012, 19), and Pelletier & Zalta (2000) claim that the two relations they identify are “basic”, “primitive”, “fundamental”, or “irreducible”. Frede (1967 and 1992, 400-402), Nehamas (1979 and 1982), Meinwald (1991 chapter 3 and 1992, 378-84), Mann (88-89 n.18 and 176-83), and Crivelli (2012, 122-127) are more circumspect, but they all appear to assume that the two relations they discuss are *fundamentally different*.

⁴² Note that Meinwald (1991, 71) denies that this holds where x is not a kind but an individual. This nuance need not worry us here.

On this interpretation, Plato is very close to Aristotle, who distinguishes between two relations to capture the difference between essential and accidental predication. In *Categories*, for example, Aristotle introduces his technical locutions “is *said-of*” and “is *present-in*” to talk about two relations—the former essential and latter accidental—that an object can stand in to its features.

The Two Relations View is often associated with Plato’s *Phaedo* and *Parmenides*.⁴³ But there is a powerful interpretive tradition, initiated by Michael Frede (1967 and 1992), that attributes the Two Relations View to Plato in the *Sophist*.⁴⁴ On this interpretation, at 255c12-14 Plato draws a distinction between being $F \kappa\alpha\theta' \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}$ and being $F \pi\rho\delta\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron$. Frede and his allies further claim that, in Plato’s terminology, x is $F \kappa\alpha\theta' \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}$ when being F is part of the nature of x and x is $F \pi\rho\delta\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron$ when x is F in virtue of participating in F -ness. Further, they argue, this distinction holds the key to understanding a wide range of passages in the middle section of *Sophist*, notably including the argument for the claim that motion and rest are distinct from being and the resolution to the apparent inconsistencies that follow from the discussion of the great kinds.

While the expositions and applications of this reading are extensive and sophisticated, the textual basis for it is slim. As Frede (1992, 401) writes, “This interpretation crucially rests on the assumption that Plato in 255c12-13 distinguishes two uses of ‘. . . is’”—one use for cases in which x is F *in virtue of the essence of x* and another use for cases in which x is F *in virtue of the x participating in F -ness*. Here is the passage in question with its continuation (Theaetetus’s responses deleted):

⁴³ See, e.g., Nehamas (1979 and 1982), Code (1985), Meinwald (1991 and 1992), Pelletier and Zalta (2000), and Silverman (2002, 90-4).

⁴⁴ This reading of *Sophist* was pioneered by Michael Frede in Frede (1967 and 1992 400-402). See also Meinwald (1992, 378-84), Mann (88-89 n.18 and 176-83), Silverman (2002, 90-94 and 169-81), Thomas (2014), and Crivelli (2012, 122-127). For another version of the Two Relations View in *Sophist*, see Nehamas (1982) and Leigh (2012). As I noted in the introduction to chapter 1, while Nehamas and those following him hold that Plato distinguishes between two fundamentally different relations between an object and a property one of which is essential and the other of which is connected to participation, their view is most naturally construed as claiming that certain sentences that appear to attribute a property to an object in fact do not do so. In this sense, then, they do not distinguish between a thing’s essential and non-essential features, but between two ways to analyze sentences of the form “ x is F ”—one of which involves x possessing the property of being F and the other of which involves x being (identical to) the nature of being F . For this reason, in what follows I focus on the Fredean reading.

[T8] But I think that you agree that of beings (τῶν ὄντων), some are said αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά and others are always said πρὸς ἄλλα. ... But the different (τὸ ἕτερον) is always [said] πρὸς ἕτερον, isn't it? ... This would not be so, if indeed Being (τὸ ὄν) and Difference (τὸ θάτερον) were not very different (πάμπολυ διεφερέτην); but if Difference (θάτερον) participated in both these forms as Being (τὸ ὄν) does, then there would be something even among the different things (τῶν ἐτέρων) that is different but not in relation to something else (ἕτερον οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον). But now [viz. as things actually are], absolutely whatever we have that should be different happens by necessity to be that which it is [viz. different] *from* something different (ἐτέρου). 255c12-d7

{ΞΕ.} Ἀλλ' οἶμαί σε συγχωρεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι. ... Τὸ δὲ γ' ἕτερον ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον· ἦ γάρ; ... Οὐκ ἄν, εἴ γε τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ θάτερον μὴ πάμπολυ διεφερέτην· ἀλλ' εἴπερ θάτερον ἀμφοῖν μετεῖχε τοῖν εἰδοῖν ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν, ἦν ἄν ποτέ τι καὶ τῶν ἐτέρων ἕτερον οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον· νῦν δὲ ἀτεχνῶς ἡμῖν ὅτιπερ ἄν ἕτερον ἦ, συμβέβηκεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἐτέρου τοῦτο ὅπερ ἐστὶν εἶναι.

It is certainly not obvious Plato means to draw Frede's distinction, and, despite vigorous defenses and sustained argument by Frede and his allies, the Fredean reading of 255c12-13 remains controversial.⁴⁵ Indeed, I strongly suspect—but will not argue in this dissertation—that, as several commentators have argued, the contrast in T8 is between relative properties, or a certain subset of them, and other properties.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, *even if* the distinction in T8 between *being F καθ' αὐτό*

⁴⁵ For an overview of the evidence for this reading and a discussion of alternatives to it, see Crivelli (2012 140-148).

⁴⁶ Setting aside the mechanics of T8 itself, the relative/non-relative reading supported by the fact that Plato has a well-developed distinction between relative and non-relative features and by the interchangeable use of πρὸς and genitive expressions to talk about the second set of predicates or predication. For both points, see *Charmides* 167b2-e8 and *Republic* 438a7-439b1. Also, note that Plato foreshadows this distinction in the frame of *Sophist* (217d1-3): he has Socrates ask whether the Visitor prefers to give long monologues or present his ideas through discussions, and the Visitor replies that conversation 'τὸ πρὸς ἄλλον' is easier than 'τὸ καθ' αὐτόν'. The foreshadowing to T8 works much better on the relative/non-relative reading than on the Fredean two modes of predication reading. For a recent criticism

and *being F πρὸς ἄλλο* amounts to the distinction between essential features and non-essential features, T8 does not require a distinction between two fundamental relations or even to fundamentally different relations—in the sense that neither of the two relations is defined partly in terms of the other. Furthermore, T8 provides no evidence that the *πρὸς ἄλλο* side of Plato's contrast corresponds to or tracks with the participation relation.⁴⁷ What is more, where the *Sophist* defends and elaborates the idea that kinds have features—i.e. that kinds combine with other kinds—it only ever talks about kinds *participating in* other kinds and never explicitly contrasts participation with some other relation between forms in virtue of which they have their features.⁴⁸

The only evidence that commentators have found in *Sophist* or *Statesman* that supports of the idea that participation is contrasted with an essential relation between an object and its properties, comes from the lines immediately following T8. Here is the passage:

[T9] We must say that the nature of Difference (τὴν θατέρου φύσιν) is, being among the Forms which we selected, a fifth. ... And we will say that it passes through them all. For [we will say] each one of them is different from the others not because of its own nature (διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν) but because it participates in the Idea of Difference (διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου).⁴⁹ 255d9-e6

{ΞΕ.} Πέμπτον δὴ τὴν θατέρου φύσιν λεκτέον ἐν τοῖς εἶδεσιν οὖσαν, οἷς προαιρούμεθα. ... Καὶ διὰ πάντων γε αὐτὴν αὐτῶν φήσομεν εἶναι διεληλυθυῖαν· ἐν ἑκάστον γὰρ ἕτερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου.

of Frede's reading and a defense of the relative properties reading, see Leigh (2012); for a further development of this reading, see Duncombe (2012).

⁴⁷ Thus, even if we accept that the *καθ' αὐτό/πρὸς ἄλλο* distinction in T8 tracks the distinction between essential and non-essential features, T8 is fully consistent with my Single Relation account of Plato's distinction.

⁴⁸ Crivelli (2012, 128) finds such a contrast in 255e3-6, but the text does not suggest or presuppose an alternative to *participation*, just an alternative to *participating in the form of difference*.

⁴⁹ Silverman (2002, 178-9)

Commentators—including Crivelli (2012, 128), Nehamas (1982, 352-5), and Silverman (2002, 177-8)—find in T9 an *implicit* contrast here between being F essentially and being F in virtue of participation. On their reading, the expression ‘διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν’ introduces the idea of being something essentially—i.e. *in virtue of one’s own nature*. On this reading, when Plato denies that Forms are different from each other διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, he implies that they have *other features* in virtue of their own natures and contrasts possessing a property in virtue of one’s own nature with possessing a property in virtue of participation. Call this the Essentialist Reading of T9.

Given its importance, this passage deserves careful consideration. One might resist the Essentialist Reading of T9 by accepting the construal of διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν and denying that Plato means to imply any such thing. Instead, I want to challenge the idea that διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν introduces the idea of being something essentially and that it is contrasted with participation. Here are three considerations in support of this challenge.

[1] First, note that in the first line of T9 Plato uses “the nature of Difference” (τὴν θατέρου φύσιν) to refer to the Form of Difference: he is claiming that the Form in question is a fifth great kind rather than saying anything about what it is essentially or by its nature. Indeed, this expression—namely, “the nature of Difference”—is picked up by “the idea of Difference” (τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου) in the final line of T9 in such a way as to suggest that these two expressions are interchangeable in the present context. If so, then in T9 expressions like “the nature of x” may simply be used to talk about the Form of x rather than draw attention to essential facts about x. This reading is supported by the use of “the nature of Difference” in 256d12-e1.

[2] 256d12-e1 is important for another reason. It parallels T9’s appeal to *the nature of x* to explain why something possesses a property. In 256d12-e1, the explanation clearly *does*

not introduce the notion of something being F in virtue of its own nature. The Visitor claims that “the nature of Difference by making each [Form] different from Being, makes each not being” (ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ) (256d12-e1. But, as T9 makes clear, Forms are different from Being in virtue of participating in Difference. Thus, in this later passage, the appeal to *the nature of x* as an explanatory factor introduces the notion of *participating in the Form of x*. If, as seems likely, this is what is going on in T9 as well, the Visitor is claiming that the other great kinds—Motion, Rest, Being and Sameness—are different in virtue of participating in the Form of difference rather than because they participate in Being, or Sameness or Motion or Rest.

[3] The reading of T9 that I sketched in [2] has a major advantage over the Essentialist Reading of T9. On the reading just sketched, there is a clear connection between the thoughts in the first and the second parts of T9: in the first part, we conclude that Difference is a fifth great kind, distinct from the other four. Next, the Visitor draws attention to an attractive consequence of this position: if Difference were identical to, say, Being, then the great kinds would be different from each other by participating in Being. This, to say the least, would be a surprising result. Now that Difference and Being have been shown to be distinct, we can say that it is not because of the nature of any of the other great kinds—i.e. not by participating in Being or Rest or Motion or Sameness—that the great kinds of different from each other. Rather it is because they participate in Difference, which is distinct from the other four. On the Essentialist Reading, there is no clear connection between the first and the second parts of T9: even if Difference were identical to, say, Being it would be equally implausible to think that it is essential to Sameness that it is

different from Rest. On the Essentialist Reading, then, the second part of T9 is a bit of a non-sequitur.

For these reasons, I think that T9 does not introduce an implicit contrast between two ways of possessing properties. Instead, it is all participation in T9. But, since T9 is the only evidence in *Sophist* or *Statesman* for a contrast between participation and some other way that a Kind can have a feature, for all Plato says in *Sophist* and *Statesman* kinds combine *only* by participation. Indeed, as some of the proponents of the Two Relations View point out, Plato sometimes appears to use the language of participation to analyze cases in which an object possesses a feature *by its own nature*.⁵⁰ In short, then, it is all participation in *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

There are also philosophical costs to the Two Relations View. Introducing fundamental relations comes with a serious theoretical cost: the fewer primitive relations that a theory of property possession needs to posit in order to account for objects possessing their features, the better.⁵¹ Thus, attributing the Two Relations View to Plato in *Sophist* (and *Statesman*) without strong textual basis might be thought uncharitable. While these considerations do not refute the Two Relations-style interpretation of *Sophist*, they do provide us with reasons to look for an account of the distinction between essential features of a thing and its other features—a distinction that Plato clearly relies on in *Sophist* and *Statesman* in his careful search for the essences of sophistry and political expertise—that does not rely on the distinction between two fundamental relations between an object and its properties.

⁵⁰ See Crivelli (2012, 128-9); cf. Meinwald, (1991, 165 and n. 3). There is a strong case to be made that Plato uses participation or combination language to talk about possessing an essential feature in *Soph.* 264e2 and *Stm.* 260a1-2. Given that all parties agree about Plato's usage, I will not make that case here.

⁵¹ Even if a proponent of the Two Relations View claims only that Plato's two relations are *fundamentally different* in the sense that neither can be defined in terms of the other and they do not share a genus, their view will still rely on introducing distinct primitive notions in terms of which they define their fundamentally different relations. The cost, then, of multiplying primitives applies to both versions of the Two Relations View.

But what would such an account look like? If Plato does not introduce two fundamentally different relations between an object and its properties, then how does he draw the distinction between a thing's essential and non-essential features? The reconstruction of Platonic essentialism I have offered has the resources to provide just such an account. On this view, we can distinguish a thing's essential features from its non-essential features by their *different metaphysical roles*. Roughly, the essential features of a kind are the features that metaphysically explain what it is identical to, what it is distinct from, what it can combine with, and what it cannot combine with. In a word, the essential features of x are the features of x that fix its identity and determine its range of possibilities. The non-essential features are all the others. Note that this account does not involve any distinction between two fundamentally different relations an object can stand in to its features. On the way I spelled out *metaphysical role*-style account of essential features,

(Official) F is an essential feature of x iff (i) x is F, (ii) the fact that x is F is not metaphysically explained, and (iii) the fact that x is F *at least partly* metaphysically explains at least one distinctness fact or combination fact about x.

But this account can easily be reframed in terms of *participation*:

(Official 2) F is an essential feature of x iff (i) x *participates in* F-ness, (ii) the fact that x *participates in* F-ness is not metaphysically explained, and (iii) the fact that x *participates in* F-ness *at least partly* metaphysically explains at least one distinctness fact or combination fact about x.

Thus, this account is fully consistent with a *one-relation* view of Plato's theory of property possession.

I've argued that this account should be given serious consideration as a reconstruction of Plato's essentialism in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. If it is correct, then Plato—in *Sophist* and *Statesman*—and Aristotle—in *Categories* and elsewhere—take fundamentally different approaches to distinguishing a thing's essential features from its non-essential features. Aristotle's essentialism relies on two basic relations, and Plato's essentialism gets by with just one.

Chapter 3

Meaning and Metaphysical Explanation in *Sophist*

1. Introduction

In the course of his discussion of the five “great kinds” and the relationships they bear to each other in *Sophist* 255e-257a, Plato¹ faces up to a problem. His position contains three apparent inconsistencies:

(C1) Motion is the same and not the same (256a5-7 and 256a10-b4),

(C2) Motion is different and not different (256c4-8; cf. 255a4-5 & 255e4-6), and

(C3) Motion is being and not being. (256d8-9 and 256d11-e4).²

Given his commitment to consistency, Plato needs a strategy for neutralizing these apparent inconsistencies.

Often, the right approach in such a situation is to admit imprecision or error. To take a trivial example, suppose that I reassure my niece by saying, “nobody is here; it’s just us in the house.” Strictly speaking, what I have said is inconsistent and false: if we are in the house, then somebody is in the house. When my precocious niece points this out, I should admit that I was speaking imprecisely. Plato too could admit that his three apparently inconsistent claims are not true after all: strictly speaking, he might say, one of the conjuncts of each of these claims is true and the

¹ For convenience, I will talk as if Plato’s position is that of the Eleatic Visitor who serves as the dialogue’s main protagonist. I do not mean to take any strong stand on the relationship between Plato’s official views and those defended by the Visitor.

² I capitalize translations of terms that are clearly meant to name Forms. However, in many cases, Plato’s Greek leaves open whether a term names a Form or not. For example, in C3 a case can be made that the second use of “being” names the Form, Being. In such cases, I do not capitalize my translations, but I do not mean to take a stand on how to understand these expressions.

other is false. Attractive as this might be, it is not the strategy that Plato adopts. Instead, he argues that C1, C2, and C3 are consistent after all.³

One way that Plato might defend the consistency of his claims is by making a point about language. This strategy is familiar enough: the idea is to show that the sentences apparently expressing inconsistencies are in fact ambiguous. On one possible disambiguation, these sentences express inconsistent claims. But there is another possible meaning to the sentences, which is perfectly consistent and accurately reflects the speaker's usage. If this strategy is successful, then once the sentences are properly disambiguated it is clear that the claims are consistent after all. I will call this the "Two Meanings Approach."

Plato certainly does sometimes employ this strategy to resolve apparent inconsistencies.⁴ But does he use it in our passages of the *Sophist*? According to the dominant interpretation of the *Sophist*, the answer is, "yes." On this reading, which I will call the "Orthodox Reading", Plato means to draw some linguistic distinction or other in order to show that the sentences used to express claims C1, C2, and C3 are ambiguous and that on the intended meaning they express consistent claims. Commentators disagree about *which* linguistic distinction Plato has in mind here, but they agree that Plato's strategy turns on drawing one.⁵

In this chapter, I will defend an alternative reading of our passage, according to which it employs a third, less familiar strategy. On the view I defend, Plato is making a point about

³ For example, he has the Eleatic Visitor first assert and defend the claim that "We ought to agree and not be disturbed that motion is the same and not the same" (256a10-11). The thought is that this and the other apparent inconsistencies are not inconsistent after all.

⁴ For example, see *Euthydemus* 275d-278c, where Plato adopts this approach in response to a pair of arguments, which appear to show that (i) learners (οἱ μαθητὰς) are ignorant (defended at 275d2-276c7), and that (ii) learners (οἱ μαθητὰς) are wise (defended 276d1-277c7). Socrates resolves this apparent inconsistency by arguing that (i) and (ii) are both true but involve different *meanings* of "οἱ μαθητὰς". For a very helpful, comprehensive discussion of this passage, see Campbell (2020).

⁵ For an overview of the relevant literature, see notes 11, 14, and 16 and pages 4-6 below. For a more complete discussion of the scholarship see Crivelli (2012, 154-61).

metaphysical explanation: he means to show that C1, C2 and C3 are each consistent by identifying the facts that metaphysically explain them. His strategy is to show that the claims in question are true in a consistent state of affairs by identifying the consistent set of facts that underly or metaphysically ground that state of affairs. In short, he means to show that, since the explanantia are consistent, the explananda are consistent as well.

To get a grip on this strategy, which I will call the “Two Explanations Approach,” it is helpful to consider an example from *Republic IV*, where Plato uses his Principle of Opposites to argue for the tripartition of the soul. As Hendrik Lorenz (2006, 21-28) has convincingly argued, Plato’s position is that the claim,

(R) Socrates desires to drink and is averse to drink,

attributes to Socrates two opposed properties but that it can, nevertheless, be true. While Socrates is the subject of both of the opposed properties—desire to drink and aversion to drink—he is, as Lorenz shows, not their *proper subject*. Socrates himself desires to drink in virtue of the fact that one part of his soul desires to drink and he is averse to drink in virtue of the fact that some other part of his soul is averse to drink. If so, then the *explanantia* of R are consistent: it is perfectly consistent for one part of the soul to desire to drink and another part of the soul to be averse to drink.⁶ Note that there is no suggestion that “Socrates desires to drink” *means* that some part of Socrates’s soul desires to drink or that it is somehow ambiguous. This examples makes clear that the “Two Meanings” and “Two Explanations” approaches are distinct. To show that the explanantia of R are consistent is not yet to make a point about the meaning of the sentence used to express R.

⁶ As Lorenz would put it, Socrates is characterized by these opposing features only “derivatively” rather than “as a proper subject”—where this means that the derivative subject has the property “in virtue of the fact that a part of the subject is characterized by the property in question as its proper subject” (2006, 27).

Why care whether Plato takes the Two Meanings Approach or the Two Explanations Approach to resolving his apparent inconsistencies in the *Sophist*? There are at least two reasons. The first is that the passages in question are, by all accounts, central to the broader philosophical project of the *Sophist*. It is widely thought that our passage marks a crucial stage in Plato's resolution to the puzzles about non-being raised earlier in the dialogue at 236d9-241d7.⁷ At the same time, the discussion of the great kinds (254b8-259b7), including our passage, is thought to provide an example of dialectic, or proper philosophical practice, which Plato described rather obscurely a couple of pages earlier at 253b9-254b1.⁸ Despite their importance, however, both the argumentative mechanics and the overall point of our passage remain controversial.⁹ Therefore, identifying Plato's strategy in our passage and determining whether it relies primarily on theses about language or about metaphysical explanation, would be a consequential step toward understanding Plato's resolution to the puzzles of non-being and his conception of proper philosophical practice.

The second reason to care whether Plato employs the Two Meanings Approach or the Two Explanations Approach to resolve C1, C2, and C3 is that, depending on which interpretation is correct, Plato's discussion of these apparent contradictions provides important evidence about foundational aspects of his philosophy of language *or* his metaphysics.¹⁰ Since Ackrill's seminal 1957 paper, "Plato and the Copula", and under the influence of the orthodox reading, which he powerfully defends, our passage has been central to the debate about which, if any, distinctions

⁷ This interpretation is suggested by the way Plato announces the discussion of the Great Kinds at 254b8-d2. See, for example, Cornford (1935, 292), Frede (1992, 403), and Brown (2008, 311-12).

⁸ See, for example, Gill (2012, 212 and 226), Crivelli (2012, 117), Gomez-Lobo (1977, 36 and 41), and Notomi (1999, 234-40 and 246).

⁹ For helpful discussions of some of the many controversies concerning the proper interpretation of these passages, see Brown (2008) and Crivelli (2012, 149-76).

¹⁰ I don't mean to commit myself or Plato to any sharp distinction between metaphysics and philosophy of language, I appeal to the contrast merely as a helpful heuristic.

Plato draws between meanings or uses of “is”, or rather the Greek “ἐστί”.¹¹ Thus, if the orthodox reading is correct, then our passage provides crucial evidence about this foundational question concerning Plato’s philosophy of language.¹²

On the alternative reading of the passages, however, Plato neither needs to draw nor means to draw any distinction between meanings or uses of “is”. What is more, on this reading, Plato does not mean to draw *any* general distinction concerning the meanings of linguistic expressions.¹³ Instead, his focus is on metaphysics and, in particular, on applying his participation-based theory of property possession, which, in simplified form, says that if x is F, then x is F in virtue of the fact that x partakes in the Form of F-ness. On the alternative reading that I defend, Plato is extending this theory to apply to cases in which Forms have properties. These passages, then, provide important evidence about Plato’s theory of property possession rather than about his philosophy of language.¹⁴

¹¹ Henceforth, for convenience, I will use English expressions to stand in for the Greek even where, strictly speaking, the claim in question is about the meaning or use of a Greek expression.

¹² For the view that in *Sophist* 255e-257a Plato distinguishes meanings of “is”—namely, “is” used as the copula, the existential “is”, and the “is” of identify—see Ackrill (1957). Vlastos (1973) and Van Eck (2000) see in these passages only the distinction between the “is” of identity and the “is” used for predications. Owen (1970) and Brown (1986 and 2008) argue that in these passages Plato does draw the distinction between sentences expressing predication and sentences expressing identity, but that he locates this distinction in meanings or uses of the predicate terms following “is” rather than “is” itself. Frede, (1967, 70-1) finds in these passages a different distinction, which he locates in “uses” (Verwendungen) but not “referents” (Bedeutungen) of “is”: on Frede’s reading, Plato’s distinction is between “is” used to express a claim about what a subject is “in itself” and “is” used to express a claim about what a subject is “with reference to something else” (see Frede, 1967, 15-30 and 1992 400-402 for the distinction). Crivelli (2012, 154-161) argues that Plato employs a distinction between “definitional” and “ordinary” readings of sentences, which is very close to Frede’s distinction between “in itself” and “with respect to something else” predications, but without a distinction in meanings or uses of “is.” Others have argued that Plato means to draw a somewhat less consequential distinction between relational and non-relational terms (see Gosling 1973, 217-18; Campbell, (forthcoming); and still others have doubted that these passages provide decisive evidence in favor of any determinate reading of Plato’s distinction (see Bostock, 1984; Lewis, 1976).

¹³ What I have in mind here is a claim about linguistic meaning—roughly, the meanings assigned to bits of language independently of the intentions or psychology of particular speakers—rather than speaker meaning—roughly, what a speaker intends to convey or communicate with an utterance on an occasion. though it is not his focus Plato may be relying on some points about speaker meaning

¹⁴ There are, certainly, further reasons to care about the dispute between orthodox and alternative readings of these passages. One of these, for example, is that the question of how to respond to apparent inconsistencies is both philosophically interesting in its own right and a matter of great concern for Plato in particular. According to the orthodox reading, Plato employs what is, by current standards, an eminently reasonable and quite familiar approach to resolving apparently true-but-inconsistent claims: he shows that the appearance of inconsistency is merely linguistic

The plan is as follows. In §2, I discuss the orthodox reading and the evidence in favor of it. In §3 and §4, I turn to the alternative reading and argue that the textual evidence favors it over the orthodox reading: it makes better sense of the argument and language of Plato's analyses of C1, C2, and C3. In §5, I conclude with a discussion of Plato's participation-based theory of property possession and its application in our passage.

2. Orthodoxy

In §3 and §4 below, I argue that my alternative reading should be favored over the orthodox reading. First, however, we need to be clear about the content of the orthodox reading. In this section, I identify two components of the orthodox reading and set out the case in favor of it.

2.1 Two Components of the Orthodox Reading

According to the Orthodox Reading, Plato means to deal with his three apparently inconstant claims by drawing a linguistic distinction. There are several competing variants of the Orthodox Reading, each with its own account of the linguistic distinction that Plato means to draw and the nature of the ambiguity that it gives rise to. Nevertheless, there is wide agreement on two points:

(Disambiguation Thesis) Plato neutralizes his three apparently true-but-inconsistent sentences by drawing a linguistic distinction which shows that these sentences can have consistent (linguistic) meanings.¹⁵

and identifies the culprit by giving an account of the possible meanings of the sentences in question. According to the alternative reading, however, Plato's approach is perfectly cogent but highly unfamiliar.

¹⁵ See, for example, Ackrill (1957, 81-4); Vlastos (1973, 287-292, n. 44, and n. 46); Owen (1970, 440-5); Lockwood (1975 479-80 n. 12); Brown (1986, 470-1); Brown (2008, 317-20); Frede (1967, 70-1); Frede (1992, 400-2); van Eck (2000, 70-1); Gill (2012, 155-6); Crivelli (2012, 154-161); Gosling (1973; 218-19); and Lewis (1976, 127-138). Bostock (1984, 97-8) is neutral as to whether Plato locates an ambiguity in "the same" or fails to locate any ambiguity.

(Ackrill's Thesis¹⁶) Plato's technical expressions involving "participation" and related terms—like "Motion partakes in the Same"—are paraphrases of and mean the same thing as the more ordinary expressions—like "Motion is the same"—with which they are associated.¹⁷

Consider one influential variant of the Orthodox Reading defended by Ackrill (1957), Vlastos (1970) and van Eck (2000). On this reading, Plato distinguishes in our passage between two meanings of "is": the "is" of identity and the "is" of predication. As Ackrill puts it, by paraphrasing statements involving "ἔστιν" with expressions involving "μετέχει"

Plato shows up the difference between the ἔστιν which serves merely to connect two named concepts (copula) and the ἔστιν (or οὐκ ἔστιν) which expresses the concept of Identity (or Difference) and at the same time indicates that something *falls under* the concept of Identity (or Difference)" (pg. 83 in 1997 reprint).

This interpretation offers an account of *how* Plato draws his linguistic distinction: Plato offers semantically equivalent reformulations—glosses or paraphrases—using technical and unambiguous terminology for each of the conjuncts of the problem sentences. In particular, Plato's technical expressions involving "participates" (μετέχει) and related language are semantically equivalent paraphrases for more ordinary expressions involving "is." According to Ackrill (1957, 90), as Plato uses participation language in *Sophist* 251-9, "it is clear that the truth expressed by

¹⁶ I call this Ackrill's Thesis because it was first clearly stated and powerfully defended in Ackrill's seminal 1957 paper, "Plato and the Copula."

¹⁷ See Ackrill (1957); Malcolm (1967); Vlastos (1973, 287 and n. 44); Owen (1970, 440-441, cf. n. 62); Lockwood (1975 479-80 n. 12); Lewis (1976, 126); Bostock (1984, 95-6); Brown (1986, 461, 472-3, 477); Brown (2008, 316, 320, & 323); van Eck (2000, 70-1); Gosling (1973, 220-21); and M. L. Gill (2012, 174 & 155-6). Frede (1967, 70-71) appears to accept Ackrill's Thesis, but Frede (1992, 400-2) seems to reject it: he asserts without explanation or argument that "we are not even tempted to think that 'Socrates is a man' means that Socrates is different from man, or that Socrates participates in man." Some of Crivelli's comments can be taken to suggest Ackrill's thesis, (cf. 2012, 128-9), but officially he holds that in our passage the claims formulated using participation language are meant to provide justifications for the claims expressed with more ordinary language (2012, 149). My position is substantively different from this reading as well.

‘A-ness *μετέχει* B-ness’ is that A-ness is (copula) B-ness.” Equally, when it comes to the statements “Motion is the same” and “Motion is not the same”, Ackrill claims that “Analysis of the statements ... will show exactly what is being asserted in each... The first statement means *κίνησις μετέχει ταύτοῦ* (change share in sameness). The second means *κίνησις μετέχει θατέρου πρὸς ταυτόν* (motion shares in difference with respect to the same)” (1957, 82). On Ackrill’s view, then, Plato’s holds that expressions of the form “... partakes ...” mean the same thing as expressions of the form “... is ...”.¹⁸ This allows Plato to distinguish between two meanings of “is”: when “is” is used as the copula it is synonymous with “partakes” and when it is the “is” of identity it is synonymous with “partakes in the same.” Ackrill illustrates and celebrates Plato’s point by comparing it with Frege’s discussion of meanings of “is”:

With Plato’s procedure here [viz. in 256a10-b4], one may compare a passage in Frege’s ‘Über Begriff und Gegenstand’ ... Frege explains the copula by talking of something’s *falling under* a concept: Plato uses for this the term *metechein*. Frege expands the ‘is’ of identity into ‘is no other than’, in which phrase the ‘is’ is simply the copula (‘falls under the concept’), and ‘no other than’ stands for a concept. Plato expands the *ἔστιν* of identity into *μετέχει ταύτοῦ* ... (shares in sameness) (and *οὐκ ἔστιν* into *μετέχει θατέρου* (shares in difference)), where *μετέχει* does the copula’s job (‘falls under’) and *ταυτόν* (or *θατέρου*) names a concept (sameness (or difference)). In offering the analyses that he does, it seems to me that Plato, no less clearly than Frege, is engaged in distinguishing and elucidating senses of ‘is.’ (Ackrill 1957, 83-4)

¹⁸ Strictly, Ackrill is only committed to the view that expressions like “A partakes in F-ness” express the truth that A is F (where “is” functions as the copula) and that expressions like “A is F” *mean* that A partakes in F-ness. I take it, however, that Ackrill uses “expresses the truth that” and “means that” interchangeably.

Both Plato and Frege distinguish the “is” of identity from the “is” used as the copula by giving semantically equivalent paraphrases for each. Armed with this Fregean distinction, Plato can show, for example, that there is no inconsistency between his uses of “Motion is the same” and “Motion is not the same”: he uses the first to assert that Motion has the feature of being identical (to itself) and he uses the latter to deny that Motion is identical to the Form of Sameness. Once we see the linguistic distinction Plato has in mind between meanings of “is”, we are in position to give an account of the meanings of C1, C2, and C3 which vindicates their truth and consistency. Clearly proponents of this reading—including Ackrill (1957), Vlastos (1973), and van Eck (2000)—accept both components of the orthodox reading.

Brown (1986, 471-2; 2008, 318-20)—following a suggestion first made by Owen (1970, n. 62)—attributes to Plato a different linguistic distinction.¹⁹ On this view, Plato locates the ambiguity of C1, C2 and C3 in the expressions that follow “is”—i.e. in terms like “the same” (*ταὐτόν*), “different” (*βατέρον*), and “being” (*τὸ ὄν*). These expressions, she claims, can serve two linguistic functions: they can function as adjectives or as names for abstract entities. When these terms function as adjectives, sentences like “Motion is the same” express predications; but when they function as names for abstract entities, the same sentences express identifications. Thus, Plato distinguishes between sentences expressing identifications and sentences expressing predications without distinguishing between meanings or uses of “is.”²⁰ This linguistic distinction would allow Plato to give an account of the meanings of C1, C2, and C3 on which they are true and consistent. For example, in “Motion is the same and not the same”, the first instance of “the same” functions

¹⁹ See also Lockwood (1975, n 12).

²⁰ Brown (2008, 320) proposes a second, “holistic” reading, which she contrasts with her first “atomistic reading, according to which Plato’s distinguishes between sentences expressing identifications and sentences expressing predications without locating this ambiguity in any element of the relevant sentences.

as an adjective and the second functions as a name: the result is that Plato's assertion in C1 is that Motion has the feature of being the same (as itself) and Motion is not the Form, Sameness.

Other variants of the orthodox reading attribute to Plato still further linguistic distinctions: Frede (1967, 71-2), for example, finds in our passage a distinction between an "in itself" use of "is" and an "in relation to something else" use of "is"²¹; and, in a similar spirit, Crivelli (2012, 161) argues that Plato resolves his apparent inconsistencies by distinguishing between "definitional" and "ordinary" readings of sentences.²² There are yet further variants of the orthodox reading²³, but what is important for present purposes is that according to all of these very different interpretations of our passage Plato draws a linguistic distinction—a distinction in the meanings, uses, or linguistic functions of some expression(s)—that is meant to resolve his three apparent inconsistencies by disambiguating two possible meanings of sentences like "Motion is the same" and "Motion is not the same".²⁴ In other words, all of these interpretations accept the first components of the Orthodox Reading—i.e. the "Disambiguation Thesis". What is more, there is also widespread agreement with Ackrill concerning *how* Plato means to draw his distinction: commentators generally agree with Ackrill's proposal that Plato uses paraphrases to draw his

²¹ For this terminology see Frede (1992, 400-2). I cannot do justice to Frede's subtle distinction between uses of "is"; but, roughly speaking, it tracks the difference between essential and accidental features (assuming that only Forms have essential features).

²² See Crivelli (2012, 122-7). I cannot do full justice to this reading here, but the basic idea is that a sentence of the form "A is B"—or, rather, "A is B" where A and B range over names of kinds—is true on its ordinary reading iff A has the feature of being B, and it is true on its definitional reading iff A and B signify the same kind (where not all co-referring terms signify the same thing). The result is that the same sentence can have two very different meanings: it can, roughly, express a definitional or essential claim about its subject or it can express a standard predication claim about its subject.

²³ See Crivelli (2012, 154-161) and Lewis (1976, 130-136). See Campbell (forthcoming) for a view centering on "relational" terms.

²⁴ It is important that these authors attribute to Plato a linguistic distinction that gives rise to a difference in *linguistic* or *sentence* meanings. For their purposes it would not be sufficient if Plato were to draw a distinction in *speaker* meanings of the relevant sentences—i.e., roughly, a distinction in what speakers intend to communicate with their token utterances. Showing that what a speaker intends to communicate is consistent does not suffice to show that the sentence they have used is consistent; for an example, recall the conversation with my niece described on page 1.

linguistic distinction, whatever that is. Thus, we have the second component of the Orthodox Reading—i.e. “Ackrill’s Thesis”.

2.2 The Case for the Orthodox Reading

The textual basis for the Orthodox Reading derives from the much-discussed passage at *Sophist* 265a10-b4, in which the Eleatic Visitor analyzes the apparently true-but-inconsistent claim expressed by C1: “Motion is the same and not the same”. This passage comes in the course of the discussion of the five “great kinds”—Motion, Rest, Being, Sameness and Difference. The Visitor and Theaetetus have agreed that these kinds are distinct from each other (254a4-255e1). They then proceeded to discuss the relationships between these five kinds by taking up the case of Motion. Having previously agreed that

(i) Motion is different (from the others) (255e4),

they next agree that

(ii) Motion is not rest (255e14),

(iii) Motion is (256a1),

(iv) Motion is not the same (256a5), and

(v) Motion is the same (256a7).

Here the Eleatic Visitor pauses to consider the apparent contradiction between (iv) and (v):

[T1] We ought to agree and not be disturbed that Motion is the same and not the same. For whenever we should say that it is the same and not the same, we have not spoken similarly. Rather, whenever [we say that it] is the same, we speak thus because of the participation in the same in relation to itself; and when [we say that it] is not the same, [we speak thus] because of the communion with difference— because of which, having been separated

from the same, it comes to be not that but different, with the result that it is correct to say again that it is not the same. (Sophist, 256a10-d4)²⁵

{ΞΕ.} Τὴν κίνησιν δὴ ταὐτόν τ' εἶναι καὶ μὴ ταὐτὸν ὁμολογητέον καὶ οὐ δυσχεραντέον. οὐ γὰρ ὅταν εἴπωμεν αὐτὴν ταὐτόν καὶ μὴ ταὐτόν, ὁμοίως εἰρήκαμεν, ἀλλ' ὁπότε μὲν ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν μέθεξιν ταύτου πρὸς ἑαυτὴν οὕτω λέγομεν, ὅταν δὲ μὴ ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὐτῷ θατέρου, δι' ἣν ἀποχωριζομένη ταύτου γέγονεν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο ἀλλ' ἕτερον, ὥστε ὀρθῶς αὖ λέγεται πάλιν οὐ ταὐτόν.

According to the Orthodox Reading of T1, the Eleatic Visitor intends to resolve the apparent contradiction by drawing a linguistic distinction. In uttering the sentence

(C1) Motion is the same and not the same,

“we do not speak similarly” in its two conjuncts, in the sense that what we assert when we say Motion is the same is not what we deny when we say it is not the same. To support and explain his claim that the *meanings* of the two conjuncts of C1 are compatible, according to the orthodox reading, the Eleatic Visitor gives a gloss, or paraphrase, of each conjunct. In particular, “motion is the same” is given the technical paraphrase, “motion partakes in the same in relation to itself” and “motion is not the same” is given the technical paraphrase, “motion associates with difference [viz. in relation to the same]”. Since it is perfectly compatible for motion to share in sameness in relation to itself and share in difference in relation to difference and since this is just what C1 means (on its intended interpretation), the Visitor has shown that once we understand the *meaning* of this sentence, we see that C1 is consistent after all.

In showing that C1 can express a consistent claim, the Visitor has also shown that each of the conjuncts of C1—or, more precisely, claims (iv) and (v)—are ambiguous. “Motion is the same”

²⁵ Translations of *Sophist* are my own.

can mean “motion partakes in sameness in relation to itself”—which is true—or it can mean “motion partakes in sameness in relation to sameness”—which is false. Similarly, “motion is not the same” can mean “motion partakes in difference in relation to sameness”—which is true—or it can mean “motion does not partake in the Form of sameness”—which is false. As noted above, there is significant disagreement concerning the nature of the ambiguity that Plato means to identify in this passage, and it is not obvious how best to spell this out. Still, T1 appears to support both of the components of the orthodox reading: the claim that the two conjuncts of C1 are “not said similarly” appears to indicate that the explanation that follows will spell out an ambiguity, and Plato’s technical expressions “participation in the same in relation to itself” and “communion with difference” appear to spell out this ambiguity by paraphrasing the two conjuncts of C1.

3. Metaphysical Explanation vs. Paraphrase

In this section, I challenge the second component of the orthodox reading, Ackrill’s Thesis—according to which Plato takes his technical “... partakes in ...” expressions to mean the same thing as the more ordinary “... is ...” expressions with which they are associated.²⁶ I will argue that, on Plato’s view in the middle portion of the *Sophist*,

(Metaphysical Explanation) the fact²⁷ that x partakes in F-ness metaphysically explains

(grounds) the fact that x is F,

and, given that Plato also holds that

²⁶ Strictly speaking, this claim and the argument that follows should be nuanced to account for the variation in Plato’s formulation—e.g. Plato sometimes says that x is F because of participation in F-ness.

²⁷ For convenience, I am helping myself to “fact” talk. I do not mean to commit Plato to an ontology of facts, states of affairs, or true propositions. One could reformulate the argument by replacing “the fact that ...” with “what is expressed by the claim that ...” or “what is expressed by the sentence, ‘ ... ’”.

(Irreflexivity of Ground) if A metaphysically explains (grounds) B, then A and B are distinct,

it follows that

(Distinctness) the fact that x partakes in F-ness is distinct from the fact that x is F, and this entails that

(Non-Synonymy) “x partakes in F-ness” does not mean the same thing as “x is F”.²⁸

But Non-Synonymy is inconsistent with Ackrill’s Thesis.

3.1 Clarification

Before moving on to argue that Plato accepts Metaphysical Explanation rather than Ackrill’s Thesis, let’s get clear on the difference between these options. Consider an example:

Aisha and Leslie are members of the resistance. They arrange to meet alone in Leslie’s apartment to discuss their next move. At the apartment, Leslie is about to share a bit of

²⁸ The inference to Distinctness is slightly complicated by a disagreement about the relata of the grounding relation. On one view, the relata are facts, or true Russellian propositions (Rosen 2010, 114-15, cf. Fine 2012, 43). On this view, it follows from the irreflexivity of ground that if p grounds q, then p and q are distinct propositions. Thus, “x is F” and “x partakes in F-ness” cannot express the same proposition, and, presumably, they cannot *mean* the same thing as required by Ackrill’s Thesis. On another view, however, the relata of the grounding relation are propositions expressed in some way (see discussion in Fine 2012, 46-7). Thus, if p grounds q, then p and q can be the same proposition *expressed in different ways*. One might think that on this second view, “x is F” and “x partakes in F-ness” can mean the same thing even if *x is F* is grounded by *x partakes in F-ness*. This is not a problem: even on this view of grounding, the sentence expressing the ground and the sentence expressing what is grounded cannot *mean* the same thing in the sense of “mean” relevant to Ackrill’s Thesis. Even on this view of grounding, one still cannot infer anything non-trivial about the semantics of sentences ϕ or ψ from the truth of “ ϕ grounds ψ ”. As an example, one cannot infer anything about the semantics of the indexical terms “here” or “I” from the fact that *I am here* is grounded by *the atoms comprising [Redacted] are in location L*. Since Ackrill’s Thesis is meant to specify the way in which Plato draws his linguistic distinctions, then, it must make a claim about the relation between “x is F” and “x partakes in F-ness” that is stronger than *expressing the same proposition in different ways*. Plausibly, Ackrill’s Thesis requires that “x is F” is paraphrased by or means the same thing as “x partakes in F-ness” in the strong sense that they express the same proposition *in the same way*—i.e. using the same concepts. This, I think, is what Ackrill has in mind when, for example, he says that the “is” of identity, just like the phrase “partakes in the same” “expresses the concept of Identity ... and at the same time indicates that something *falls under* the concept of Identity” (83-4). Commentators following Ackrill are generally less explicit than he is on this issue, but to the extent their arguments require the same view and they explicitly adopt Ackrill’s language of “reformulation”, “paraphrase”, and “meaning” without noting any disagreement with him about Ackrill’s Thesis it is reasonable to assume that they take the same view.

crucial information when, hearing something in other room, Aisha stops her with a gesture and whispers, “someone else is here.” As it happens, Aisha is correct: Jason Bourne, the notorious spy, is in the kitchen and just knocked over a chair.

What does Aisha’s sentence, “some else is here”, mean? One way to answer this question is to offer an alternative sentence in English, or some other natural language, that has the same meaning as Aisha’s sentence. So, for example, we might say that her sentence means the same thing as the sentence “there is some person in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie.” Another way to accomplish the same task is to translate and regiment Aisha’s original sentence into a formal language or a formal extension of natural language: in this spirit, we might say that Aisha’s sentence means the same thing as the sentence in the language of first order logic, $\exists x(Hx \wedge x \neq a \wedge x \neq b)$, where H is assigned to the predicate *is in the apartment*, “a” is a constant for Aisha and “b” is a constant for Leslie. On both of these approaches, we provide a semantic analysis of Aisha’s statement by giving a translation, gloss, or paraphrase in unambiguous terms.

Once we are satisfied that Aisha’s sentence means that someone is in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie and we have established that it is true when Aisha utters it, we might turn to a different question: in virtue of what is there someone in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie? Given the facts, the answer is clear: there is someone in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie *because* Jason Bourne is in the apartment. In the language of contemporary metaphysics, the fact that Jason Bourne is in the apartment “metaphysically grounds” the fact that someone besides Aisha and Leslie is in the apartment.

Now, in invoking grounding language and using it to describe Plato’s position, as I will in what follows, I do not mean to take a stand or claim that Plato takes a stand on how exactly we ought to construe grounding talk. Indeed, this question has not been settled by contemporary grounding

theorists: it is controversial, for example, whether there is a single generic grounding relation or several distinct determination relations that we get at with the language of grounding.²⁹ However, nothing in what follows hangs on how we understand grounding, as long as we agree on two widely accepted points.

The first point that really matters for our purposes is that questions about meaning are distinct from the questions about metaphysical ground. When Aisha says that someone else is in the apartment, she cannot mean that Jason Bourne is in the apartment: according to the above analysis, she just means that *someone* besides herself and Leslie is in the apartment.³⁰ She doesn't know *who* else is in the apartment, so what she says cannot be taken to *mean* that Jason Bourne is in the apartment. Nevertheless, Bourne's presence *grounds*, or metaphysically explains, the fact that someone is in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie. It follows that, at least sometimes, the meaning of a true statement and its metaphysical grounds come apart.

The second critical point is that grounding is irreflexive: the grounded and the grounds *must* be distinct.³¹ In short, nothing makes itself the case. This is not a peculiar or *recherché* fact about grounding, it amounts to the intuitive position that no fact obtains in virtue of itself and that nothing makes itself the case. Crucially, this idea has good Platonic credentials: it follows from Plato's general rule, asserted in *Philebus* 26e-27a, that a maker (τὸ ποιοῦν)—i.e. the "cause" (τὸ αἴτιον)—

²⁹ For the view that our grounding talk does not track any single relation but rather a class of more determinate relations, see Wilson (2014). For the idea that we can distinguish several distinct conceptions of ground, see Fine (2012, 48-54).

³⁰ Even setting aside this analysis, there are further reasons to reject the claim that what she *means* involves Jason Bourne. Here are two reasons. (1) On the assumption that she *means* that Bourne is in the apartment, then what she says—"someone else is here"—would be false if, rather than Bourne, some other interloper were in the kitchen. But clearly this is not the case. (2) Aisha can say what she says and mean what she means by it without having any cognitive access to or acquaintance with Jason Bourne or his presence in the apartment at all: plausibly she cannot form thoughts or assert propositions about Bourne without cognitive access to him.

³¹ Rosen (2010, 115-6), Schaffer (2016, 55). In the language of Fine (2012, 51-3), we are interested in cases of "strict" ground, for which irreflexivity holds, rather than weak ground, for which it does not.

is distinct from the “thing made” (τὸ ποιούμενον) (cf. *Hippias Major* 296e-297b).³² In our example, the fact that Jason Bourne is in the apartment *makes it the case that* someone is in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie. From this it follows that the fact that someone besides Aisha and Leslie is in the apartment is distinct from the fact that Jason Bourne is in the apartment. In general, if G grounds F, then G and F must be distinct.

Let’s now return to and elaborate on the argument against Ackrill’s Thesis sketched at the beginning of §3. According to the Ackrill Thesis, Plato’s technical expressions of the form “x partakes in F-ness” clarify the meaning of the more ordinary expressions of the form “x is F” in the same sort of way that “there is some person in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie” clarifies the meaning of Aisha’s sentence, “someone else is here”: the former and the latter expression are supposed to have the same meaning. According to the Metaphysical Explanation thesis, which I will defend in §3.2, however, Plato thinks that what is expressed by “x partakes in F-ness” metaphysically explains, or grounds, what is expressed by “x is F.” If this is so, then he is committed to the position that what is expressed by “x partakes in F-ness” is distinct from what is expressed by “x is F.” From this it follows that “x partakes in F-ness” does not mean the same thing as “x is F”. Put more simply, if x is F *in virtue of the fact that* x partakes in F-ness, then the two expressions “x partakes in F-ness” and “x is F” must express different truths. Otherwise, it would follow that a single truth makes itself the case. So, the Metaphysical Explanation thesis, which I will defend, is inconsistent with Ackrill’s Thesis, according to which Plato offers “x partakes in F-ness” as a semantically equivalent alternative formulation for “x is F.”

³² See Sedley (1999, 131-2).

3.2 Textual Evidence

Let's turn to the text. There are several pieces of evidence that strongly support attributing to Plato the view that

(Metaphysical Explanation) the fact that *x* partakes in *F*-ness metaphysically explains (grounds) the fact that *x* is *F*.

The first piece of evidence, to be discussed presently in 3.2.1, derives from 256d11-e4 in which Plato addresses his third apparent inconsistency (C3)—namely, the claim that motion is being and not being (οὐκ ὂν ἐστὶ καὶ ὂν). Plato's remarks, I will argue, are strong evidence in favor of Metaphysical Explanation and, therefore, against Ackrill's Thesis. This passage also provides preliminary support for the thought that Plato's general strategy for resolving his apparent inconsistency involves giving *metaphysical* rather than *linguistic* analyses.

3.2.1 256d11-e4

The Visitor and Theaetetus have agreed that Motion is different from the four other great kinds—Rest, Difference, Sameness, and Being—and they have discussed the fact that Motion is different from and therefore is not the first three. They next turn to the relationship between Motion and Being, and reaffirm their previous positions that Motion is different from Being (cf. 254d4-15; 255e4-6) and that Motion is a being (cf. 254d10, 256a1).

[T2] {EV} Shouldn't we say, contending fearlessly, that Motion is different from Being (τοῦ ὄντος)?

{Th} Yes, most fearlessly.

{EV} So then, clearly, Motion really is not being (ὄντως οὐκ ὂν ἐστὶ) and is being (καὶ ὂν), since it partakes in being?

{Th} Most clearly! (256d5-10)

{ΞΕ.} Ἀδεῶς ἄρα τὴν κίνησιν ἕτερον εἶναι τοῦ ὄντος διαμαχόμενοι λέγωμεν;

{ΘΕ.} Ἀδεέστατα μὲν οὖν.

{ΞΕ.} Οὐκοῦν δὴ σαφῶς ἡ κίνησις ὄντως οὐκ ὄν ἐστι καὶ ὄν, ἐπείπερ τοῦ ὄντος μετέχει;

{ΘΕ.} Σαφέστατά γε.

Their commitments about the relationship between Motion and the other great kinds has turned up a third apparent inconsistency:

(C3) Motion is not being and is being.³³

The Visitor next addresses each of the conjuncts with the aim of defending each and also, implicitly, defending the consistency of C3 as a whole:

[T3] {EV} (a) Therefore, it is of necessity that not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is present in Motion (ἐπὶ κινήσεως)³⁴ and in every one of the kinds (κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη). (b) For (γὰρ), in every one, the Nature of Difference, by making (ἀπεργαζομένη) each different from being (ἕτερον τοῦ ὄντος), makes each not be (οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ), and indeed in this way we will correctly say that all of them are not beings on the same basis (κατὰ ταῦτα οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὁρθῶς ἐροῦμεν), (c) and again (πάλιν), because each partakes in Being (ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος), [we will correctly say that] they are and are beings. (256d11-e3)

³³ The expression “ἐστι ὄν” can be translated in several ways because “ὄν” might be the name of the Form, Being, or a participle *being* or it might function as a substantive *a being*. The Visitor clearly means to formulate his claim in such a way as to make it seem contradictory, so I have as well.

³⁴ Rowe (2015), White (1993) and Frede (1992, 403) translate “ἐπὶ” followed by the genitive here as “in the case of ...”. However, as Crivelli (2012, 167-8)—following Frede (1967, 53) and Lewis (1977, 110 n.14)—points out, the sense of Plato’s remark is that not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) applies to motion and the other kinds. As Crivelli puts it, Plato’s idiom here expresses “the converse of ‘to be’”. To capture this sense, I’ve translated “is present in” although Crivelli himself prefers “is about.” Compare Frede (1992, 403), who holds that this expression is not the converse of “to be”: “Plato seems to be using an expression like ‘F (or: F-ness) is in the case of a’ if it is true that a is F. Underlying this language there seems to be the notion that *one way* for F to be is for there to be some a that is F” (emphasis added).

{ΞΕ.} (a) Ἦστιν ἄρα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μὴ ὄν ἐπὶ τε κινήσεως εἶναι καὶ κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη·
 (b) κατὰ πάντα γὰρ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ,
 καὶ σύμπαντα δὴ κατὰ ταῦτα οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὀρθῶς ἐροῦμεν, (c) καὶ πάλιν, ὅτι μετέχει
 τοῦ ὄντος, εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα.

The passage has three parts. In part (a) The Visitor draws attention to a surprising result of their position: not being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) is present in (i.e. applies to) Motion and the other kinds (presumably, besides being itself).³⁵ I follow the majority of commentators in understanding this to be a reformulation and a generalization of the first conjunct of the apparent contradiction under consideration—namely, “Motion is not being.”³⁶

For present purposes parts (b) and (c) are more important. In part (b) the Visitor carefully explains and justifies the correctness of saying that each kind is not being, and, thereby, the correctness of saying that not being is present in each. In part (c) he more quickly explains and justifies the correctness of saying that each kind is a being and that it is. Thus, since the explanations given in (b) and (c) respectively are perfectly consistent, the passage explains and justifies the correctness of asserting C3 as a whole.

Let’s start by analyzing the argument in (b) into its three component claims. The first two claims concern the Form of Difference and what it does to the other Forms:

(Claim 1) The Form, or “Nature”, of Difference, makes Motion and the other kinds different from being (ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον ...).

(Claim 2) The Nature of Difference makes each of the kinds not being (οὐκ ὄν ποιεῖ).

³⁵ For the idea that this claim is implicitly restricted to all the kinds *other than being itself* see Crivelli (2012, 168). This is surely right given that the argument for this claim—especially the idea that the Form of difference makes each kind different from being—must be restricted to kinds *other than being*.

³⁶ It is a reformulation because it uses ἐπὶ + genitive and κατὰ + accusative constructions. It is a generalization because it applies to all kinds, or all kinds besides being, rather than just to motion. For this reading, see, for example, Vlastos (1970, 289 n.44), Brown (1986, 473), Frede (1992, 403) and Crivelli (2012, 168). For an alternative reading, see van Eck (2002); for more references and discussion, see Crivelli (168-175, especially n. 189).

The final stage is a claim about what it is correct to say:

(Claim 3) For each kind, K, other than Being, it is correct to say that K is not being.

In part (c) of his remark, the Visitor gives a more compressed argument in two claims for the correctness of saying that motion and the other kinds are and are beings.

(Claim 4) Each kind partakes in being.

(Claim 5) It is correct to say that each kind *is* and *is a being*.

Both of these arguments require some fleshing out. Let's start with **Claim 1**. The thought appears to be that the Form of Difference makes it the case that Motion—and the other kinds—are different from Being. This claim is not new: in language and substance, it echoes an earlier passage. After concluding that “the Nature of Difference” (τὴν θατέρου φύσιν) must be counted as the fifth “great kind” (255d9-e1), the Visitor argues that it is responsible for the other “great kinds” being different from each other.

[T4] And we will say that it [viz. the Nature of Difference] passes through them all. For [we will say] each one of them is different from the others not because of its own nature (οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν), but because of the participation in the Idea of the Different (διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου). (255e3-e6)

{ΞΕ.} Καὶ διὰ πάντων γε αὐτὴν αὐτῶν φήσομεν εἶναι διεληλυθυῖαν· ἐν ἑκαστον γὰρ ἕτερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου.

Each of the “great” kinds is different from the others (ἕτερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων) because (διὰ) it participates in the “Idea”, or “Nature”, of Difference (διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ιδέας τῆς θατέρου).³⁷ It

³⁷ I take the finite verb supplied in the latter part of the remark—i.e. “we will say” (φήσομεν)—to have wide scope over the rest of the sentence that follows it. This is the more natural construal, and it also has textual support. On the narrow scope reading of “we will say”, the explanation following “διὰ” gives a *justification* for our saying that each kind is different. If so, then the Visitor asserts here that the nature of each of the great kinds does not provide

follows that Motion is different from Being because of participating in the Nature of Difference. In the language of T3, the Nature of Difference *makes* motion different from Being. The “because” (διὰ) of T4 is replaced with the more determinate language of accomplishing and doing (ἀπεργαζομένη, ποιεῖ) in T3, where it clearly indicates that the Form of Difference plays an active causal or explanatory role. The background of T4 allows us to fill in the *way in which* Difference is responsible for, or “makes,” Motion (and the other kinds) different from Being: it is by participating in Difference that Motion is made different from Being. This reading has the advantage of bringing out the parallel between part b and part c of T3: in part c we are told that it is correct to say that Motion (and each of the other kinds) is a being because it *participates* in Being (ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος). Given the parallel between part b and part c of T3 and the connection between part b of T3 and the claim made in T4, we should understand the same sort of explanation to be in play regarding the Form of Difference and the fact that Motion (and each of the other kinds) are *different* from Being: each kind is *different* from the others because of participating in Difference.

Thus, reformulating **Claim 1** to make the role of participation explicit in the way that Plato does in part c of T3 and T4, we have the following:

(Claim 1*) for each kind, K, besides Being, the fact that K participates in Difference makes K different from Being.

If this is right, then Claim 2 of T3 should also be filled out with a reference to participation, as follows:

justification for saying that it is different from the other great kinds. But this cannot be the Visitor’s view: at 255a10-b1 he gives an argument for the thesis that the kinds, rest and motion, are different from the kind, the same, which relies on the claim that if either rest or motion were identical to the same, then “the other (of the two) would change into the opposite of its own nature (μεταβάλλειν αὐτὸ θάτερον ἐπὶ τοῦναντίον τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως)”. Thus, the nature of rest and the nature of motion are invoked in justifying the claim that they are different from the same, and this is inconsistent with the narrow scope reading of T4.

(Claim 2*) for each kind, K, besides Being, the fact that K participates in Difference makes K not being.

Claim 3 can stand as originally stated:

(Claim 3) For each kind, K, other than Being, it is correct to say that K is not being.

If these reformulations are accurate, then T3 is inconsistent with Ackrill's Thesis. Recall that Ackrill's Thesis is the claim that expressions of the form "x participates in y" mean the same thing as expressions of the form "x is y". From this it follows that "Motion is different from Being" expresses the same thing as "Motion partakes in difference in relation to Being." But nothing—no object, event, fact, or state-of-affairs—can *make, accomplish, or bring about* (ἀπεργαζομένη, ποιεῖ) itself.³⁸ Therefore, Ackrill's Thesis entails that whatever is expressed by "Motion participates in Difference in relation to Being" *does not make* Motion different from Being. But, on the reading of T3 I have defended, this is inconsistent with what the Visitor means to assert when he says that the Nature of Difference *makes* Motion different from Being: this remark means that Motion's participation in Difference *makes* Motion different from Being. In other words, T3 requires that whatever is expressed by "Motion is different from Being" is distinct from whatever is expressed by "Motion partakes in Difference in relation to Being". Therefore, Ackrill's Thesis should be rejected.

This argument shows that Plato's explanatory idioms in passages like T3 (ἀπεργαζομένη, ποιεῖ, ὅτι) and T4 (διὰ) cannot be taken to give linguistic analyses or paraphrases.³⁹ What, then, is the sense in which participating in Difference *makes* Motion and the other Forms different? Plato certainly does not have in mind the idea that Motion's participation in Difference *causally brings*

³⁸ As noted above, Plato makes this point in *Philebus* 26e-27a and *Hippias Major* 296e-7c.

³⁹ The argument of the previous paragraph goes through *no matter how* we interpret Plato's explanatory language in part b of T3 (ἀπεργαζομένη, ποιεῖ). It relies only on the general principle that a *maker* and a *thing made* cannot be the same. Since this principle applies to all sorts of explanatory relations, it applies to the relations in T3 as well.

about—in the modern sense of cause—Motion being different.⁴⁰ In the modern sense, causal relations track physical processes that bring about (metaphysically) contingent events or states of affairs. Plausibly, however, all facts about the distinctness of Forms are (metaphysically) necessary facts, and, in particular, the fact that Motion and the other Forms are different from Being is a necessary fact. What is more, these facts are not the result of physical processes. Thus, Plato's explanatory idioms in T3 and related passages are not meant to express causal relations.

Perhaps, then, Plato has in mind something like the truth-maker relation. After all, the ultimate explanada in part b and part c of T3 are the correctness, or truth, of saying that Motion is not being and saying that Motion is (a) being. Perhaps, then the explanatory language in these passages should be taken to express the relation of *making true*.⁴¹ This proposal, however, cannot account for the explanatory relations *internal* to **Claim 1*** and **Claim 2***: in these cases, the explanada are not the *truth* or *correctness* of some sentence, assertion, or proposition. Rather, the explanadum in **Claim 1** is *that Motion and the other kinds are different from Being* and the explanadum in **Claim 2** is *that Motion and the other kinds are not being*.

I propose, then, that Plato's explanatory idioms in our passages introduce metaphysical explanations. Broadly speaking, *Motion partakes in Difference* stands to *Motion is different* in the way that *being H₂O* stands to *being water* and *Jason Bourne's presences in the apartment* stands to *someone is in the apartment besides Aisha and Leslie*. In each case, the former expression and the latter expression do not *mean* the same thing. Nor do the explanatia *cause* the explanada in a modern sense of cause. Rather, the latter property or fact is grounded by or obtains in virtue of the former property or fact. If this is right, then in our passages Plato endorses instances of the scheme:

⁴⁰ Leigh (2012, 254-256) shows convincingly that, in *Sophist*, Forms are causes “in the broad ancient sense” of “the thing responsible” but are not causes in the narrower modern sense.

⁴¹ This would bring our passage in line with Sharma's reading of closely related explanatory idioms in *Phaedo* (2009, 158-60).

(Metaphysical Explanation) x is F in virtue of the fact that x partakes in F-ness.⁴²

The explanatory language *internal* to **Claim 1*** and **Claim 2*** should be understood in terms of this schema. If this is right, then we can articulate the explanatory connection between **Claim 2*** and **Claim 3** as follows: it is true to say that K is not being *in virtue of the fact that* K is not being. This is an instance of an attractive general principle about truth:

(Truth Schema) it is true to say that x is F if and only if and because x is F.⁴³

With these clarifications in place, it is clear that **Claim 1*** and **Claim 2*** are missing something. The fact that K participates in Difference is not sufficient to make K different from Being or to make it not being. Consider the Form of Being. According to T4, the Form of Being participates in Difference, but, clearly, the Form of Being is not different from Being, nor is it not being. It follows that in general, in order for K to be different from Being or to be not being it is not sufficient merely that K partakes in Difference. What is missing? How should we fill in the rest of the story? In the next section, I will return to this question in more detail, but for now, I will assume that, strictly speaking, K is different from Being in virtue of the fact that K partakes in the Form of Difference *in relation to Being*.

In view of all this, we are in position to restate the argument of T3. The Visitor argues that

(Claim 1)** For each kind, K, besides being, K is different from Being in virtue of the fact that K participates in the Form of Difference in relation to Being.

(Claim 2)** For each kind, K, besides Being, K is not being in virtue of the fact that K participates in the Form of Difference in relation to Being.

⁴² In some cases, the property, *being* F, will exactly correspond to the Form of F-ness. For example, in Claim 1*, motion is *different* in virtue of the fact that motion partakes in difference. But Claim 2* shows that F *need not* exactly correspond to F-ness: motion is *not being* in virtue of the fact that motion partakes in *difference* in relation to being.

⁴³ Aristotle has something like this in mind in *Categories* 5 (4b8-10) and 12 (14b14-22). This thought is also common among contemporary grounding theorists, see e.g. Fine (2012, 43).

(Claim 3) It is correct to say that K is not being.

Given what we have said, we can see how Plato's analysis is meant to work. In **Claim 1**** and **Claim 2****, Plato asserts instances of his Metaphysical Explanation principle, and the connection between Claim 2** and Claim 3 is supported by an instance of the **Truth Schema**.

This reconstruction works neatly to explain the more compressed argument in part c of T3, which is composed of two claims:

(Claim 4) Each kind K partakes in being.

(Claim 5) It is correct to say that K is and is a being.

Given what he says in the first part of the passage, we should understand Plato's explanation as follows: the fact that each kind partakes in Being *makes it the case that* each kind is and is a being. This, in turn, makes it correct to say that K is and is a being.

If all this is right, then Plato adopts the Metaphysical Approach to neutralizing his third apparent inconsistency. His strategy for defending the consistency of saying that

(C3) motion is not being and is being

is to show that the metaphysical explanation of the truth of saying that motion is not being is consistent with the metaphysical explanation of the truth of saying that motion is being. In short, he shows that the *explananda* are consistent by showing that the *explanantia* are consistent. This raises a question. Is this a good strategy? If G_1 grounds F_1 and G_2 grounds F_2 , does the consistency of G_1 and G_2 entail the consistency of F_1 and F_2 ? On the plausible assumption that metaphysical explanations *necessitate their explananda*, the answer is “yes.”⁴⁴ To see this, suppose that G_1 and G_2 are consistent, that G_1 necessitates F_1 , and that G_2 necessitates F_2 —that is, suppose that $\Diamond(G_1$

⁴⁴ This is why it is important to add the “in relation to being” qualifications in Claim 1** and Claim 2**: otherwise the explanans is not sufficient for and does not necessitate the explanandum.

$\wedge G_2$), that $\Box(G_1 \supset F_1)$, and that $\Box(G_2 \supset F_2)$. It follows that there is some possible situation in which both G_1 and G_2 obtain, that whenever G_1 obtains F_1 also obtains, and that whenever G_1 obtains F_1 also obtains. Therefore, there is a possible situation in which G_1 , G_2 , F_1 and F_2 all obtain. Thus, trivially there is a possible situation in which F_1 and F_2 both obtain. It follows that they are consistent. So, the Metaphysical Approach that Plato employs to resolve his third apparent inconsistency is a good one.

4. The First and Second Apparent Inconsistencies

The analysis of Plato's discussion of his third apparent inconsistency offered in the previous section should make us suspicious of the orthodox reading. After all, it showed that according to Plato in the *Sophist*, at least in some cases,

(Metaphysical Explanation) the fact that x partakes in F -ness metaphysically explains (grounds) the fact that x is F ,

and, therefore, on the assumption that nothing grounds itself, it shows that we should reject one component of the orthodox reading—namely, the claim that, according to Plato in the *Sophist*,

(Ackrill's Thesis) " x partakes in F -ness" means the same thing as " x is F ".

This raises a question. What about the *second* component of the Orthodox Reading? This is the claim that

(Disambiguation) Plato neutralizes his three apparently true-but-inconsistent sentences by drawing a linguistic distinction which shows that these sentences can have consistent (linguistic) meanings.

In principle, one can maintain Disambiguation without accepting Ackrill's Thesis, so the argument against the latter does not refute the former. Nevertheless, in the previous section we saw that

Plato's analysis of C3 should be understood in terms of metaphysical explanation rather than any linguistic distinctions. If this is right, then the previous section provides some initial evidence against Disambiguation. Still, it remains to be seen whether Plato's discussions of C1 and C2 support Disambiguation.

In this section, I argue that they do not. I argue that Plato addresses C1 and C2 in much the same way as he addresses C3: he adopts the Two Explanations Approach rather than the Two Meanings Approach. Thus, these passages do not support either Ackrill's Thesis or Disambiguation. I conclude the discussion of these passages in §4.3 by arguing that Plato's language supports *rejecting* Disambiguation, and, thus, rejecting the orthodox reading as a whole.

4.1 C1: The Same and Not the Same (256a10-b4)

Recall the context of C1. Having previously agreeing first that

(i) Motion is different (from the others) (255e4),

they next establish that

(ii) Motion is not rest (255e14),

(iii) Motion is (256a1),

(iv) Motion is not the same (256a5), and

(v) Motion is the same (256a7).

Here the Eleatic Visitor pauses to consider the apparent contradiction between iv and v:

[T1] (i) We ought to agree and not be disturbed that Motion is the same and not the same.

(ii) For whenever we should say that it is the same and not the same, we have not spoken similarly. (iii) Rather, whenever [we say that it] is the same, we speak thus because of the participation in the same in relation to itself; and when [we say that it] is not the same, [we

speak thus] because of the communion with Difference—because of which, having been separated from the same, it comes to be not that but different, with the result that it is correct to say again that it is not the same. (*Sophist*, 256a10-d4)

{ΞΕ.} (i) Τὴν κίνησιν δὴ ταὐτόν τ' εἶναι καὶ μὴ ταὐτὸν ὁμολογητέον καὶ οὐ δυσχεραντέον. (ii) οὐ γὰρ ὅταν εἴπωμεν αὐτὴν ταὐτόν καὶ μὴ ταὐτόν, ὁμοίως εἰρήκαμεν, (iii) ἀλλ' ὅποταν μὲν ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν μέθεξιν ταυτοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν οὕτω λέγομεν, ὅταν δὲ μὴ ταὐτόν, διὰ τὴν κοινωνίαν αὐτῷ θατέρου, δι' ἣν ἀποχωριζομένη ταυτοῦ γέγονεν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο ἀλλ' ἕτερον, ὥστε ὀρθῶς αὐτῷ λέγεται πάλιν οὐ ταὐτόν.

The structure of the Visitor's remark is clear enough. He first asserts, in part (i) of the passage, that despite the appearance of contradiction, we should assert that

(C1) Motion is the same and is not the same.

In part (ii), he supports his view that we can and should endorse C1—and that it is not genuinely inconsistent—by claiming that we “do not speak similarly” in asserting its two conjuncts. And in part (iii) he supports his claim that “we do not speak similarly” in asserting each conjunct with an argument. I will work backwards, starting with an analysis of the argument in part (iii) and then moving on to discuss how this argument supports the claims made in (ii) and (i).

Part (iii) is composed of two analogous explanations, the first concerning the claim that Motion is the same and the second concerning the claim that Motion is not the same. On the reading that I favor, the Visitor aims to explain *why it is correct* to assert that Motion is the same and that Motion is not the same—that is, he attempts to say what makes each of the two conjuncts *true*. He is more explicit and more emphatic on this point in his second explanation, where he sums up the result of his argument as follows: “... with the result that it is correct to say again that it is not the same” (ὥστε ὀρθῶς αὐτῷ λέγεται πάλιν οὐ ταὐτόν). This militates strongly in favor of understanding

the *explanandum* of the second explanation to be the fact that it is correct (or true) to say that motion is not the same. Furthermore, Plato's use of "again" (πάλιν) in this recapitulation and the close parallel between his comments concerning the first and second conjuncts show that we should read his *first* explanation in the same way. That is, we should take the first explanation to be aimed at explaining why it is correct, or true, to assert the *first* conjunct—i.e. the first explanation says *what makes it correct*, or true, to say that motion is the same. This reading is further supported by the fact that this is also exactly what we saw in the Visitor's remarks about the third inconsistency—namely, Motion is being and is not being—where his response to the apparent inconsistency consisted in an account of what makes it correct to assert each conjunct. Finally, this reading is also supported by a passage that intercedes between the discussions of C1 and C2: at 256b6-8, the Visitor and Theaetetus agree that "if Motion had also partaken (μετελάμβανεν) in some way (πη) in Rest, then it would not be strange (ἄτοπον) to call (προσαγορεύειν) it at rest (στάσιμον)." In all three of passages, then, participation entails or explains *correct* or true speech. For these reasons, I think that we should read the Visitor's two claims of the form "we say x because y" in the present passage as offering explanations of *what makes x true* rather than giving the speakers' reasons or justifications for asserting x.

What, then, is the Visitor's account of why it is true to say that motion is the same and also true say that motion is not the same? Just as he did concerning the third apparent contradiction, the Visitor appeals to "participation":

(A) it is true to say that Motion is the same because of (διὰ) participation in the Same in relation to itself (τὴν μέθεξιν ταύτου πρὸς ἑαυτήν).

(B) it is true to say that Motion is not the same because of (διὰ) participation in Difference (τὴν κοινωνίαν αὐτῷ θατέρου).⁴⁵

When it comes to the second conjunct—Motion is not the same—the Visitor significantly expands on his explanation. To paraphrase this expanded explanation: because of its participation in difference, Motion is separated from the same (ἀποχωριζομένη ταύτου) and has come to be not the same but different (ταύτου γέγονεν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο ἀλλ' ἕτερον), and the result of this is that it is true to say that Motion is not the same. Thus, Plato articulates B into three stages:

(B1) it is true to say that Motion is not the same

(B2) because Motion is different from the same and not the same

(B3) because Motion partakes in Difference.

Note that the structure of this explanation and the language Plato uses to express it are strikingly similar to the structure and language in T3, discussed in the previous section, where Plato explains why it is correct to say that Motion is not being. In both these passages, “the Form of Difference” or “participation in Difference” (ἡ θατέρου φύσις; τὴν κοινωνίαν) makes or explains why (ἀπεργαζομένη, ποιεῖ; διὰ) Motion is different from something (ἕτερον ... τοῦ ὄντος; ἕτερον) and not that thing (οὐκ ὄν; οὐκ ἐκεῖνο), and this explains why it is correct to say (ὀρθῶς ἐροῦμεν; ὀρθῶς λέγεται) that Motion is not that thing. In both passages, the proximate explanation for the truth of saying that Motion is not Y, is the fact that motion is not Y, and this fact is explained in turn by Motion’s participation in Difference. Thus, we have strong reason to think that the *kinds of explanations* Plato provides in these two passages are the same: in both, Plato is giving *metaphysical explanations* or *grounds*.

⁴⁵ Note that Plato’s language varies here: in expressing A he uses “τὴν μέθεξιν” and in expressing B he uses “τὴν κοινωνίαν.” I take this to be merely a terminological variance. Both expressions refer to the participation relation.

Given this expansion and articulation of B, we should expect that the Visitor also has in mind a parallel expansion and articulation of A—i.e. his account of why it is correct to say that motion is the same. If so, then A should be expanded as follows:

(A1) it is true to say that Motion is the same

(A2) because Motion is the same

(A3) because Motion partakes in the Same in relation to itself.

If this is right, then Plato is elegantly leveraging the parallel between A and B to communicate his thought concisely: he relies on his audience's ability to fill in his account of the truth of saying that Motion is the same by reference to more fully articulated explanation of the truth of saying that Motion is not the same.

This elegant use of parallelism goes both ways: we can also fill in *B* by reference to A. In particular, while in A the Visitor specifies *in relation to what* Motion partakes in the Same—namely, Motion partakes in the Same *in relation to itself* (πρὸς ἑαυτὴν)—he does not, in B, specify *in relation to what* Motion partakes in Difference. This gives rise to a potential problem: B3 does not give a sufficient condition for B2. In other words, participating in Difference is not sufficient for being different *from the Same*. To see why this is a serious issue, consider the kind, the Same (τὸ ταὐτόν). The Same participates in Difference (255e3-6), but it is not different from the Same. To avoid the untenable result that the Same is different from itself, then, I suggest that we fill in B3 by reference to A3 as follows: Motion is different from the Same because it partakes in difference *in relation to the Same*.⁴⁶ Indeed, the passage immediately preceding our own provides strong evidence in favor of adding just this sort of “in relation to...” (πρὸς) qualification to B3.

⁴⁶ As I noted above, an analogous problem arises about being: the Form of being participates in difference but being is not different from being. My suggestion about how to resolve the problem in T3 also works for T1—that is, in T1 we should take Plato to have in mind the idea that motion participates in difference *in relation to being*.

There, the Visitor argues that Difference and Being are distinct in part on the basis of the claims that “what is different is always *in relation to* something else (τὸ δὲ γ' ἕτερον ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον)” (255d1) and that nothing can be different but “not in relation to something else (οὐ πρὸς ἕτερον)” (255d5-6). For these reasons, then, I suggest that, strictly speaking, Plato’s view is that Motion is different from the Same because Motion partakes in Difference *in relation to* (πρὸς) *the Same*.⁴⁷

With this analysis of A and B in place, we can see how these explanations neutralize the appearance of inconsistency in C1. Ultimately, the fact that it is true to say that Motion is the same is metaphysically explained by the fact that Motion partakes in the Same in relation to itself. The fact that motion is not the same is metaphysically explained by the fact that Motion partakes in Difference in relation to the Same. The explanantia are perfectly consistent: Motion can both participate in the Same in relation to itself and participate in Difference in relation to the Same. Therefore, the explanada are consistent: one can correctly say that Motion is the Same and correctly say that Motion is not the Same. C1 is not inconsistent after all! If this is right, then the strategy for dealing with C1 is the same as the strategy for dealing with C3: in both cases, Plato shows that both conjuncts can be *metaphysically explained* by a consistent set of *explanantia*, specified in terms of participation. To pursue this strategy, Plato relies on his Metaphysical Explanation principle and his Truth Schema.

One interpretive question remains: what are we to make of Plato’s claim, in T1, that “we have not spoken similarly” in saying “Motion is the same” and “Motion is not the same”? If what I have

⁴⁷ Campbell (*forthcoming*) has brought to light independent and highly compelling textual evidence for the view that both in the *Sophist* and elsewhere in his corpus, Plato often understands *genuine* contradiction to involve opposition in relation to the same thing. For example, Campbell draws attention to the fact that the Visitor’s characterization of genuine contradiction in his discussion of the “noble sophist” at 230b4-8 employs just these sorts of qualifications: in refuting their interlocutors the noble sophists collect their target’s beliefs, “place them side by side, and in so doing show that they are opposed to each other at the same time, on the same subjects, in relation to the same things, and *in the same respects*” (Campbell’s translation, slightly revised). In addition, Campbell argues that the key difference Plato identified at 259c1-5 between genuine refutations and unserious refutations is that the unserious refutations do not specify about what, when, in what respect, or in relation to what the putatively incompatible claims hold.

said is right, then there is an attractive reading of the Visitor's remark available. The thought is that in saying that Motion is the same we are talking about Motion in relation to itself and in saying that Motion is not the same we are talking about Motion in relation to the Same. These are two different ways in which to talk about Motion. This is not yet to make any explicit claim about the meanings of the two conjuncts. Compare two different ways to talk about an act of civil disobedience in the service of a just cause: it may be that from the legal perspective one's act is impermissible but from an ethical perspective it was permissible or even obligatory. The lawyer who tells you that your act is impermissible is correct, *relative to the legal facts*, and the moral advisor who tells you that your act is permissible is right, *relative to the ethical facts*. In this sense, the moral advisor and the lawyer are speaking in different ways about the same subject. This description of the situation does not entail anything about the meaning of the lawyer's assertion or the meaning of the moral advisor's assertion: what they mean is a further question that will depend, presumably, on further facts about them and about the nature of meaning. Similarly, distinguishing the way in which one speaks about motion when one speaks about it in relation to itself from the way in which one speaks about motion when one speaks about it in relation to the same does not commit Plato to any explicit or determinate claim about the meaning of the relevant assertions. Crucially, then, this reading of T1 does not commit Plato to any explicit claim about the *meanings* of the two conjuncts of C1. Some upshots concerning the meaning of these conjuncts might follow from the accounts he gives of their truth—for example, it follows that the second conjunct does not mean the negation of the first conjunct—but Plato is not focused on these upshots or on any claim about meanings here.

4.2 The Second Apparent Inconsistency

So far, I've argued that Plato takes the Two Explanations Approach to neutralizing his first and third apparent inconsistencies. In this section, I briefly discuss the second apparent inconsistency, C2, which is the claim that

(C2) Motion is not different and is different.

His discussion of this apparent inconsistency is concise, and there is relatively little to say about it. The Visitor introduces this claim as follows:

[T5] [EV] Shall we say again, Motion is different (ἕτερον) from the Different, just as it was other (ἄλλο) than the Same (ταὐτοῦ) and Rest (τῆς στάσεως)?

[TH] Necessarily.

[EV] Therefore, it is in a way (ἐστὶ πῃ) not different and different according to the present account.

[TH] True. (256c5-10)

{ΞΕ.} Λέγωμεν δὴ πάλιν· ἡ κίνησις ἐστὶν ἕτερον τοῦ ἑτέρου, καθάπερ ταὐτοῦ τε ἢν ἄλλο καὶ τῆς στάσεως;

{ΘΕ.} Ἀναγκαῖον.

{ΞΕ.} Οὐχ ἕτερον ἄρ' ἐστὶ πῃ καὶ ἕτερον κατὰ τὸν νυνδὴ λόγον.

{ΘΕ.} Ἀληθῆ. (256c5-10)

The Visitor does not need to dwell long on this apparent inconsistency: the strategy developed for C1 applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to C2.⁴⁸ Earlier we had the claim that Motion is the same in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in the Same in relation to itself. Here, the idea must be that Motion is different in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in Difference in relation to Difference,⁴⁹ in

⁴⁸ “The present account” in T5 probably refers to the strategy for dealing with C1 developed in T1.

⁴⁹ See T4—i.e. *Sophist* 255e3-6.

relation to the Same, and in relation to Rest. Additionally, we saw in the analysis of C1 that Motion is not the same in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in Difference in relation to the Same. In the case of C2, the thought must be that motion is not different in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in Difference *in relation to Difference*. It is notable that in this passage Plato does not appeal explicitly to participation. Presumably, however, Plato thinks that, since this case parallels the case of Sameness discussed just above in T1, his audience can fill in the details.

4.3 Meaning or Metaphysical Explanation?

My claim that *metaphysical explanation* rather than *meaning* is the focus of Plato's response to his apparent contradictions puts my alternative account in sharp contrast to the orthodox reading. Recall that according to the second component of the orthodox reading, Plato's strategy for neutralizing apparent contradictions is to specify the meaning of each of the conjuncts of the apparently true-but-contradictory sentences. Doing this is meant to show that, on their intended meanings, these sentences are not inconsistent. On the alternative account I have offered of Plato's response to C1 and C3, meaning is not the focus: Plato's metaphysical analysis of the problematic truths may entail this or that claim about the meaning of certain sentences or terms, but this is not what Plato is trying to show. In this subsection, I briefly argue that comparing our passages to those in which Plato *does* make a claim about meanings of words or concepts provides strong evidence that in our passages, Plato is not focused on meaning. Thus, all things being equal, we should prefer my alternative account *because* it does not make meaning the focus of our passages.

Take, for example, the account of negation that follows our passages:

[T6] [EV] For example, when we say something is not large, at that time do we seem to you to reveal (δηλοῦν) by this expression (τῷ ῥήματι) the less any more than the equal?

[Th.] How do you mean?

[EV] Will we not admit that, whenever a negation (ἀπόφασις) is spoken, it means (σημαίνειν) an opposite (ἐναντίον),⁵⁰ but this much only: that when “not” (τὸ μὴ καὶ τὸ οὐ) is prefixed it indicates (μηνύει) one of the things different from the names that come after it (τῶν ἐπιόντων ὀνομάτων)—or rather different from whatever objects the names uttered (τὰ ἐπιφθεγγόμενα ὀνόματα) after the negation are set upon. (257b6-c3)

{ΞΕ.} Οἷον ὅταν εἰπωμέν τι μὴ μέγα, τότε μᾶλλον τί σοι φαινόμεθα τὸ σμικρὸν ἢ τὸ ἴσον δηλοῦν τῷ ῥήματι;

{ΘΕΑΙ.} Καὶ πῶς;

{ΞΕ.} Οὐκ ἄρ', ἐναντίον ὅταν ἀπόφασις λέγεται σημαίνειν, συγχωρησόμεθα, τοσοῦτον δὲ μόνον, ὅτι τῶν ἄλλων τι μηνύει τὸ μὴ καὶ τὸ οὐ προτιθέμενα τῶν ἐπιόντων ὀνομάτων, μᾶλλον δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων περὶ ἅττ' ἂν κέηται τὰ ἐπιφθεγγόμενα ὕστερον τῆς ἀποφάσεως ὀνόματα.

In this passage, Plato gives an account of the meaning of “not”, the negative participle. He indicates that this is what he is doing by signaling his interest in the term “not”, which he refers to in both of its Greek forms (τὸ μὴ καὶ τὸ οὐ). Plato’s language also makes clear that the subject of his remark is the *meaning* of this term: the subject here is what the negative particle “reveals” (δηλοῦν), “means” (σημαίνειν), and “indicates” (μηνύει). What is more, the account itself is couched in the highly technical language of “prefixing to words which follows” and “the objects to which these words, when uttered (ἐπιφθεγγόμενα), are set upon (κέηται)”. This passage shows that Plato has at his disposal the linguistic and conceptual resources to make a subtle semantic distinction and that he uses these resources where he means to talk about or offer such a distinction.

⁵⁰ Crivelli (2012, 178) suggests an alternative construal, which I think is also possible: “when the negative is said to means a contrary, we shall not agree ...”.

A similar point holds regarding an earlier passage at 237b10-c4, which foreshadows the account of the negative particle given in T5. In this earlier passage, the Visitor raises the question “whither” (ποῖ) one ought to “apply” (ἐπιφέρειν) the term “not being” (τοὔνομ' τοῦτο, τὸ μὴ ὄν). The term “not being” would be “revealed” (δεικνύναι), the Visitor says, if one were to say “to which thing and upon which sort of thing” (εἰς τί καὶ ἐπὶ ποῖον) we should “apply” (καταχρήσασθαι) it. In both of these passages, Plato is unequivocal *that* he has the meanings of terms or concepts in mind and *how* his questions about meanings are to be answered: one answers these questions by identifying the objects or types of objects to which the terms or concepts apply or refer.

It is striking that Plato does not deploy this technical terminology in his discussions of the apparent inconsistencies. Indeed, the language of terms, objects, revealing, referring, and meaning is entirely absent from the passages in which Plato addresses and responds to his apparent inconsistencies. If he meant to resolve these inconsistencies by distinguishing two meanings of “is”, or the substantive from the adjectival uses of terms like “the same”, or the definitional reading of sentences from their ordinary readings, or by making some other semantic distinction, then he surely would have deployed the impressive array of technical concepts and terms he uses for talking about meaning in other part of *Sophist*. The fact that he does not do so strongly supports the view that his main focus in these passages is not to give a linguistic distinction. These considerations count strongly against the second component of the orthodox reading of our passages, according to which Plato means to resolve the apparent contradiction in C1, C2, and C3 by drawing a single determinate semantic distinction. Plato’s language does not bear out the idea that his main focus in the crucial passages is on the meanings of words or concepts. This is,

however, just what we should expect if my alternative account of the passages is correct: on the view I have defended, no reference to meaning is necessary, and none is made by Plato.

5. Inconsistency and Plato's Theory of Property Possession

On the interpretation that I have defended, Plato does not intend to offer an analysis of the *meaning* of the apparently inconsistent sentences he discusses: his strategy does not involve drawing linguistic distinctions in order to neutralize his apparent inconsistencies. Rather, his strategy is to give a *metaphysical* analysis that brings to light consistent metaphysical explanations for truly asserting each of the conjuncts of apparently inconsistent sentences.

I'd like to close this chapter by discussing two questions raised by my analysis of Plato's strategy. First, why does Plato pursue this strategy rather than taking a more semantic approach? He does sometimes draw linguistic distinctions as a way of dealing with apparently inconsistent claims, and this linguistic approach seems like the right way to resolve the problem presented by sentences like "motion is the same and not the same".⁵¹ Surely, in one sense of the words, motion is the same and, in another sense, it is not. Why, then, does Plato pursue a different strategy? The second question is this: on the interpretation I defended, expressions about participation of the form "x partakes in F-ness" do not mean the same thing as expressions involving "is" of the form "x is F." But if this is right, then what *do* expressions like "x partakes in F-ness" mean?

The heart of the answer to both of these questions, I believe, is that in the middle section of the *Sophist*—and in particular, 251d1-257a12—Plato is largely, or even primarily, engaged in giving a metaphysical theory of property possession for Forms. Let me explain what I have in mind.

⁵¹ See n. 4 above.

5.1 Participation

It is often thought that Plato has a relational account of property possession. On a simple version of this view, there is some two-place relation, *R*, such that

if *x* is *F*, then *x* is *F* in virtue of the fact that *x* stands in *R* to *F*-ness.

Plato famously describes and, perhaps, endorses a theory of roughly this sort in *Phaedo* (100c-d), *Republic* X (596a6-8), and *Parmenides* (130e5–131a2) where the relation—the value of “*R*”—in question is participation.⁵² According to a simplified version of this theory,

if *x* is *F*, then *x* is *F* in virtue of the fact that *x* partakes in the Form of *F*-ness.

Indeed, we have already seen that, at least in certain cases, Plato appears to endorse this sort of relational analysis in the *Sophist*. For example,

Motion is the same in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in Sameness in relation to itself (256a7-9, b1-2),

Motion is different in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in the Form of Difference (255e4-6, 256b2-4, 256d12-e2),

and

Motion is a being in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in the Form of Being (256a1, e3-4).

Of course, these few cases in the *Sophist* do not commit Plato to a *general* relational account: he need not think that *every* fact of the form *x is F* is grounded in a fact of the form *x partakes in F-ness*. Indeed, there may be some reasons to attribute to Plato only a restricted or modified version

⁵² See Vlastos (1969), Fine (1980), and Fine (1983), Sharma (2009), and Thomas (2014, esp. 174 and 187-191). Note, however, that there is also a tradition of reading these passages as saying that Forms are meanings of predicates. For discussion see Crivelli (2008) and Fine (1980). I include the *Republic* passage because, although it does not mention participation, it is central to discussions of Plato’s theory of property possession.

of this view: it is often thought that there are properties that do not correspond to Forms.⁵³ So, for example, while there are Forms of justice, largeness, and goodness, there may not be a Form corresponding to the property of *being my favorite color*. If so, then the fact that my raincoat is my favorite color cannot be grounded in a fact about the Form of *my-favorite-color-ness*—for there is no such Form. It is true that restricting the participation account of property possession to apply only to certain cases incurs a significant theoretical cost: a theory of property possession which gives different sorts of accounts in *prima facie* similar situations is comparatively less simple and less elegant than its unitary competitor. Regardless, this may well have been Plato's position, and I will not try to decide the matter here.⁵⁴

Whatever the scope of Plato's participation-based account of property possession, it raises a question: what is participation? Regrettably, Plato does not offer much help. In *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates hedge on the nature of participation: a beautiful thing is beautiful because of "the presence of, or the sharing in, or however you may describe its relationship to that Beautiful we mentioned, for I will not insist on the precise nature of the relationship ..." (100d, trans. from Cooper ed.). In *Parmenides*, a youthful Socrates proposes several accounts of participation, but none can be made to withstand the scrutiny of Parmenides's questioning (131a-133a). In *Sophist*, there is no attempt at all, as far as I can see, to give an account of the crucial relation. Indeed, it may well be that Plato does not work out an account of participation in his dialogues because he never settled on one:

⁵³ This may be Plato's view in, e.g., *Statesman* (262c10-263a4) and *Parmenides* (130c1-d9). For discussion see Harte (2008, 460-4), Silverman (2002, 53, 299-309), Fine (1980, 212-227), Fine (1993, 110-113), and Crivelli (2008, 218-20).

⁵⁴ Note that if Plato has a restricted relational account of this sort, then we have a further reason to deny that sentences of the form "x is F" have the same meaning as sentences of the form "x partakes in F-ness." If this is Plato's view, then "my raincoat is my favorite color" is true but "my raincoat participates in the form of my-favorite-color-ness" is not true). So, this instance of "x is F" cannot have the same meaning as the relevant instance of "x participates in F-ness."

Aristotle criticizes Plato's language of "participation"—as well as talk of Forms as paradigms—as empty and merely metaphorical (*Metaphysics* A9, 991a20-22).⁵⁵

Even so, we can get a better sense of the contours of Plato's relational account of property possession by elaborating one conception of participation often associated with Plato.⁵⁶ According to this conception, for *x* to participate in *F*-ness just is for *F*-ness to be a model and for *x* to be a likeness or copy of that model. One of the many ways to elaborate this idea is that the Form of *F*-ness is a model in the sense that it fixes a set of standards or sufficiency conditions for *being F* in roughly the way that we might imagine that the original recording of Beyonce's *Black Parade* sets the standards for bits of musical expression to count as tokens of the song. Plausibly, to be an token of *Black Parade* a musical episode must be appropriately related to the original recording, and, what is more, *being appropriately related to the original recording* is what makes something an token of *Black Parade*. If (and only if) it is so related, there is a sense in which the token is a *copy* of the original recording of *Black Parade*. Similarly, one might think that the Form of Justice sets the standards for something *being just* and to be just one must be appropriately related to the model of justice, i.e. the Form. If *x* is just, then *x* is just in virtue of the fact that *x* is a "copy" of the Form of Justice.

This is at best an impressionistic and sketchy description of participation. Rather than trying to work out an account in the absence of textual resources, however, I want to suggest that it can, impressionistically and sketchily, help us understand some important points about Plato's use of participation in the *Sophist*.

⁵⁵ Fine (1983, 235) takes this comment as evidence that Plato does not work out a theory of participation in detail. It is possible, however, that Aristotle is giving a targeted criticism of just one way that Plato sometimes talks about Forms and participation—namely, as paradigms from which their participants are copied—rather than a general criticism to the effect that Plato fails to explicate the notion of participation.

⁵⁶ I was inspired to adopt this strategy by what I take to be a similar move in Fine (1983, 235-6). I will put it to different work.

The first point is that expressions of the form “x partakes in the Form of F-ness” do not mean the same thing as expressions of the form “x is F.” “Susan is a copy of the Form of Justice” is not a good candidate for being a paraphrase or analysis of the meaning of “Susan is just.” For one thing, the expressions are not about the same objects: the former is, in part, about the Form of Justice while the latter is not. Similarly, the claim that Susan is a copy of the Form of Justice, *entails* that there is a Form of Justice and that it has at least one copy. The claim that Susan is just does not—by itself—entail that there is a Form of Justice, nor does it entail anything about copies. Furthermore, we should expect competent speakers to have access—at least in ideal circumstances—to the meanings of the expressions that they use. But most competent speakers of English would not accept that when they say “Susan is just” they mean that Susan is a copy of the Form of Justice.⁵⁷

This “model” model of participation also shows that—at least on some conceptions—it makes sense to talk about *ways* in which one thing participates in another. There are many different sorts of copies of Beyonce’s *Black Parade*: there are acoustic covers, a cappella covers, and bass-heavy club remixes. Similarly, if the Form of Justice is a model by determining the criteria for being just, then—plausibly—there are different sorts of criteria for actions, policies, and persons. Susan will participate in the Form of Justice in one way, and your fight for racial equity will participate in the Form of Justice in another. In some cases, one might suppose, there are even several ways to participate in a Form available to a single object. If this is right, then it is coherent for something to fail to participate in—e.g.—the Form of Justice in one way and yet succeed in another.

⁵⁷ Analogous arguments apply for other conceptions of participation. For example, according to Thomas (2014, 185), “we can understand the claim ‘x participates in F’ to mean ‘x exemplifies the structure encoded in F’.” But surely, “Susan is just” does not *mean* anything quite so theory laden as “Susan exemplifies the structure encoded in the Form of justice.”

We are now, at last, in a position to explain why Plato does not use the Two Meanings Approach to deal with his apparently inconsistent sentences. He prefers the Two Explanations Approach because his primary focus is on the metaphysics of property possession: he is focused on defending and explaining the thought that Forms can have features, or rather, in his preferred formulation, that Forms can partake in or combine with other Forms (251d5-e, 252d12-e7, 256b8-c2, 257a8-11, 259a3-b1). As Plato says, understanding which pairs of Forms can combine, which cannot, and the metaphysical explanations for these facts is the job of philosophy (253b9-c9). In this context, Plato appeals to his participation-based theory of property possession: this account, he argues, can be extended to account for the properties of Forms themselves. What is more, this theory has the resources for resolving apparent contradictions: when Plato's participation-based theory provides consistent metaphysical explanation of the truth of both conjuncts of an apparently inconsistent sentence, it follows that what sentence asserts is perfectly consistent after all.

Conclusion to Part I

Part I has offered a reconstruction of the distinction, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing by situating that distinction in the context of a broader metaphysical theory of property possession. According to that broader theory, for the cases that it is meant to cover,

if x is F, then x is F in virtue of the fact that x participates in the Form of F-ness.

So, for example, if knowledge is useful, then it is useful in virtue of the fact that it participates in the Form of Usefulness. Or, to use an example from *Sophist*, if Motion is at rest, then Motion is at rest in virtue of the fact that Motion participates in the Form of Rest (cf. *Soph.* 256b6-8).

There are three basic ingredients to this account: Forms, metaphysical explanation, and participation. With these three ingredients, Plato can do a great deal. In chapters 1 and 2, I argued that using these notions Plato can distinguish between the essential and non-essential features of a thing. In chapter 3, I argued that Plato also uses these three ingredients to resolve the three apparent inconsistencies in his position regarding the *great kinds* in *Sophist* 256-7. In neither context, does Plato need or posit a second relation, contrasted with participation, between an object and its features. In this regard, my reading departs from traditional interpretations of Plato's theory of property possession, according to which Plato posits *two* fundamentally different relations between an object and its properties. This, I argued in the final section of chapter 2, is an advantage of my account. If I am right, then, in this critical respect, Plato's one-relation theory of property possession differs from Aristotle's two-relation theory of property possession (see chapters 4 and 5). As a consequence, Plato in *Sophist* and *Statesman* and Aristotle in *Categories* approach the distinction between the essential and non-essential features of a thing in fundamentally different ways. In *Categories*, as I shall argue, Aristotle relies on two fundamentally different relations to

distinguish a thing's essential features from its accidental features (see chapter 4 below). In *Sophist* and *Statesman*, by contrast, Plato distinguishes the essential features of a thing from its non-essential features in terms of different metaphysical roles that these features play. Thus, my account challenges the familiar narrative about the origins of ancient Greek essentialism, according to which Plato operates with an intuitive grasp of the distinction but Aristotle is the first to seriously or systematically study it. It also challenges the standard view in recent, scholarly literature on Plato and on *Sophist* in particular, according to which Plato, like Aristotle, posits two fundamentally different relations between objects and features to account for the difference between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing.

There remain questions about Plato's three-ingredient account of property possession. In *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato does not give us definitions or accounts of metaphysical explanation, participation, or Form-hood.¹ He may well think that they are fundamental, in the sense that they cannot be defined or analyzed in more basic terms. Even if this is so, to properly understand and assess Plato's account of property possession, we need to know more about each of its three primitive ingredients. We need to know at least enough about these notions to be confident that Plato is not merely introducing unfamiliar, semi-technical vocabulary but that his terminology expresses coherent notions that are fit for the theoretical uses to which he puts them.

This concern is especially pressing regarding Form-hood and participation. While there remain controversies regarding metaphysical explanation in contemporary metaphysics, recent literature on the topic has gone a long way toward showing that the notion is fit for philosophical use. As this contemporary literature has shown, intuitive examples of metaphysical explanation abound, it

¹ In *Parmenides*, Plato discusses accounts of participation, but the discussion there raises problems for each and end aporetically without settling on a viable definition. Indeed, he probably does not define any of these three in any of his dialogues.

is deeply rooted in philosophical practice, and the notion can be regimented and studied in detail. Plato's other two notions have not received similar attention, nor is it clear that Plato ever provided even the beginnings of such a treatment of them.

Two sets of questions are especially pressing. First, there is a traditional problem about the 'extent' of the Forms. It is widely thought that Plato does not admit a Form for each meaningful predicate expression. If this is right, then we need to know where to draw the line and why: which predicate expressions correspond to Forms and what principled distinction explains why some predicate expressions get Forms and some do not? These questions are especially pressing in the context of Plato's theory of property possession. Plato's account only applies to facts of the form x is F , when there is a form of F -ness corresponding to predicate expressions for F . If, for example, there is no form of Ugliness, then the fact that my favorite holiday sweater is ugly cannot be grounded in the fact that it partakes in the form of Ugliness. To understand and assess Plato's theory of property possession, we need to know when it is supposed to apply and how to analyze cases in which it does not.

Just as important are questions about the logic and nature of participation. Aristotle charges that Plato never sufficiently explains his use of the language of 'participation'. Charitably, Aristotle's objection is not that Plato never defines participation. Plausibly, participation is meant to be a primitive—undefined—relation. It would be unreasonable to demand a definition of every Platonic concept. But it is reasonable to demand answers to some basic questions about participation. After all, to learn to competently use this concept we need to know, for example,

- (a) whether all Forms partake in themselves;
- (b) what the relationship is between direct and distributive participation (see chapter 2);
- (c) whether facts of the form x *partakes in* F -ness are fundamental and, generally, when

they can be metaphysically explained;

- (d) and whether Plato thinks of participation on the model of *being similar* to a Form, on the model of *approximating* a Form in some other way, or on some entirely different model.

Plato may have answers to some or all of these questions, but I will not pursue them here. Instead, I will simply note that questions like these apply to *any* ‘relational’ account of property possession—i.e. any account that analyzes facts of the form *x is F* by introducing a relation or a set of relations that hold between *x* and *F*. To properly understand the account in question, we need to know enough about the relation(s) to single them out from other relations and be sure that they are fit for the work assigned to them. What is more, we need to know *how general* the theory in question is meant to be. If it is not meant to apply to every fact of the form *x is F*, then we need to know when and why it applies.²

² The danger of Bradley-style regress arguments provides a strong, *prima facie* reason to restrict relational accounts in this way. David Armstrong (1978, Vol 1, 70-1) and Gilbert Ryle (1939, 137-8) argue that Plato’s account of property possession falls victim to just this sort of argument. Roughly, their argument relies on two principles:

(General Participation) for all *x* and all *F*, if *x is F*, then *x is F* in virtue of the fact that *x* participates in *F-ness*.

(Translation) if *x* participates in *F-ness*, then *x* is a participant in *F-ness*

General Participation simply states that Plato’s theory of property possession applies to all facts of the form *x is F*. Translation simply says that *participating in F-ness* entails *being a participant in F-ness*. If we grant these principles, then any fact of the form *x is F* will produce a regress. So, for example, suppose Naomi is wise then, By General Participation, it follows that Naomi is wise in virtue of the fact that Naomi participates in the Form of Wisdom. It follows that Naomi participates in the Form of Wisdom. From which, by Translation, it follows that Naomi is a participant in the Form of Wisdom. Here again, applying General Participation, it follows that Naomi is a participant in the Form of Wisdom in virtue of the fact that Naomi participates in the Form of being a participant in the Form of Wisdom. From which it follows that Naomi participates in the Form of being a participant in the Form of Wisdom, etc. To avoid this regress, Plato can simply claim that there is not Form corresponding to predicate expressions of the form ‘*is a participant in the Form of* ____’. The cost, however, is that he must restrict General Participation to cover only certain facts of the form ‘*x is F*’—since some predicate expressions do not correspond to Forms. Many commentators have taken this to be Plato’s view on independent textual grounds (see conclusion to chapter 3 above). But if this is Plato’s view, then he owes us a principled account of which predicate expressions correspond to Forms.

Part II

Essentialism in the *Categories*

Introduction

In Part II, I continue the inquiry into ancient Greek essentialism by turning to Aristotle's *Categories*. Part I centered on a reconstruction of Platonic essentialism in *Sophist* and *Statesman* that situated the distinction between the essential and non-essential features of a thing in Plato's broader theory of property possession. Part II turns to essentialism and property possession in Aristotle's *Categories*. Here too, I will offer a reconstruction of the distinction between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing and situate that distinction in the work's broader framework.

Aristotle's theory in *Categories*, as we will see, is quite different from that of *Sophist* and *Statesman*. This is no accident: Aristotle sharply criticizes Plato's account of property possession. As we have seen, according to the view in *Sophist* and *Statesman* objects possess their features in virtue of participating in Forms. On Plato's view, Naomi Osaka is wise in virtue of the fact that she participates in the Form of Wisdom; and Motion is the same in virtue of the fact that Motion partakes in Sameness. Aristotle rejects this account. He is famously critical of Platonic appeals to Forms, and he charges that Plato never sufficiently explicated his notion of participation. Nevertheless, in *Categories*, where Aristotle formulates his own account of property possession, he retains the structure of Plato's 'relational' theory. Aristotle follows Plato in thinking that objects have their features by standing in relations to those features. In place of Plato's single, participation

relation, however, Aristotle introduces two relations. In the terminology of *Categories*, a predicate can be *said-of* its subject or it can be *present-in* its subject.¹

The *Categories*' theory of property possession, then, is fundamentally different from the theory of *Sophist* and *Statesman*: the *Categories*' theory does without Forms and it replaces a single relation—namely, participation—with two relations. Still, the questions we raised about the account in *Sophist* and *Statesman* apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Aristotle's theory in *Categories*. First, how does Aristotle's theory account for the difference between essential features and non-essential features of a thing? Second, how are we to understand Aristotle's *said-of* and *present-in* relations? Much like Plato, Aristotle formulates his theory by using technical idioms for unfamiliar relations—namely, the *said-of* and *present-in* relations. This raises the question: does Aristotle say enough about these two relations to single them out and show that they are fit to do the theoretical work they are meant to perform in *Categories*? Third, is Aristotle's theory fully general? Does Aristotle mean to analyze *every predication*—every case in which an object has a feature—as an instance of one or other of his two relations?

In chapter 4, I address the first and second of these questions, focusing on the *said-of* relation. This is for two reasons. The first reason is that both Aristotle and scholarship on *Categories* say much less about *said-of* than about *present-in*. While *present-in* gets glossed or even defined at 1a24-5, *said-of* is never directly explained. Therefore, there is greater danger that Aristotle fails to sufficiently explicate *said-of* than that he fails to sufficiently explicate *present-in*. The second reason is that, as I will argue, the *said-of* relation links a subject to its defining, or essential, features. Thus, getting a grip on the *said-of* relation will put us in position to understand the distinction between essential and non-essential features in *Categories*.

¹ In this terminology, a predicate (κατηγορούμενον) is a predicable object and a subject (ὑποκείμενον) is an object to of which a predicate is predicated.

In chapter 5, I answer our third question. On the view I defend, not every (simple, affirmative) predication can be analyzed as an instance of *said-of* or *present-in*. In *Categories*, Aristotle relies extensively upon truths like *Socrates is an individual* and *human is a species*, but these truths cannot be analyzed by instances of *said-of* or *present-in*. Indeed, their predicate terms, “individual” and “species”, I argue, cannot introduce items in any of the ten categories. Accounting for these troublesome truths and puzzling terms is the task of chapter 5.

Chapter 4

The *Said-of* Relation¹

1. Introduction

Aristotle sharply criticizes Plato's account of property possession. For Plato, sensible objects possess their features because they participate in Forms. Aristotle charges, however, that Plato "introduced the name 'participation' (μέθεξις) ... but what participation in or imitation of the Forms could be they [viz. Plato and others] left an open question" (*Metaphysics* A.6, 987b10-14)²; that "to say that they are models (παραδείγματα) and that other things partake (μετέχειν) in them is to make empty speech (κενολογεῖν) and use poetic metaphors" (A.9 991a20-22)³; and that "participation (τὸ μετέχειν) ... is nothing (οὐθέν ἐστιν)" (A.9 992a28-29)⁴. According to Aristotle, Plato's account of property possession fails in part because Plato does not properly explain the relationship that he claims obtains between sensible objects and Forms.⁵ Merely introducing new technical vocabulary to talk about a relation does not suffice to single it out, much less to establish its existence.⁶

In the *Categories*, Aristotle offers an alternative account of property possession free of appeals to participation and free of Forms, but not free of new technical vocabulary.⁷ According to this

¹ Translations are my own, unless otherwise specified. I refer to passages in the *Categories* by chapter and Bekker number: e.g. 2.1a24-5.

² τὴν δὲ μέθεξιν τοῦνομα ... μετέβαλεν ... τὴν μέντοι γε μέθεξιν ἢ τὴν μίμησιν ἣτις ἂν εἴη τῶν εἰδῶν ἀφεῖσαν ἐν κοινῷ ζητεῖν. Translation adapted from Ross. Aristotle is comparing Plato's notion of participation with the notion of imitation that he attributes to Pythagoras, hence the plural, "they".

³ τὸ δὲ λέγειν παραδείγματα αὐτὰ εἶναι καὶ μετέχειν αὐτῶν τὰλλα κενολογεῖν ἐστὶ καὶ μεταφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικάς.

⁴ τὸ γὰρ μετέχειν, ὥσπερ καὶ πρότερον εἶπομεν, οὐθέν ἐστιν. See also *Metaphysics* M.1079b24-7 and H.1045b7-9. For discussion, see the papers in Steel and Crubelier (eds.) (2012) and especially Dorteia Frede (2012, 290).

⁵ Aristotle levels several other objections against Plato's theory, which I will not discuss here. For discussion see Frede (2012), Crubelier (2012), and Fine (1993, 66-159).

⁶ For a discussion of this charge and a defense of Plato, see Thomas (2014).

⁷ See, e.g., Owen (1965b, 136-9), Cohen and Matthews (1968, 632-3), Fine (1983, 241-3), Code (1986, esp. 411 and 416-423), Furth (1988, 9-11), Mann (2000, 23-4), Matthews (2009, 146-7), and Thomas (2014, 172-3).

account, predicates can be “*said of*” (λέγεται κατά + genitive) their subjects or they can be “*present in*” (ἔστιν ἐν + dative) their subjects.⁸ Aristotle leans quite heavily on this distinction: he relies on his two technical notions to articulate and defend the central theses of his Form-free ontology, including his distinction between substances and non-substances and his claim that primary substances are prior to all other beings. Given his criticism of Plato’s “empty” and metaphorical appeals to participation, we should expect Aristotle to offer substantive explanations of his own technical vocabulary. At very least, we should expect him to say enough to make clear *which* relations his technical vocabulary is meant to express.

There are grounds for cautious optimism. Aristotle rarely appeals to his *said-of* or *present-in* relations outside of the *Categories*, but within the *Categories* he has a fair amount to say about them.⁹ He introduces the *present-in* relation with an explanatory gloss that is often thought to be a definition of the relation, and, although he does not offer an explicit gloss of the *said-of* relation, he states several general principles that govern it.

Still, while it is clear that Aristotle takes himself to be talking about two importantly different relations, scholars have not been able to settle some basic questions about them. The debates concerning the *present-in* relation are well known and extensive.¹⁰ The *said-of* relation, however, has received comparatively little attention. This is not to say that commentators have said nothing about *said-of* or that they are in agreement about it. Since antiquity, it has been generally agreed that the *said-of* relation is an essential relation: in other words, A is *said-of* B just in case it is

⁸ Aristotle also uses the longer locutions, “λέγεται καθ’ ὑποκειμένου (+ genitive)” and “ἔστι ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ (+ dative)” to express the *said-of* relation. Note that, in *Categories*, “subject” (ὑποκείμενον) and “predicate” (κατηγορούμενον) typically do not refer to linguistic expressions, but to worldly entities.

⁹ See Owen (1965a, 97) and Crivelli (2017, n. 2 and n. 4).

¹⁰ See Ackrill (1963, 74-5), Owen (1965a, 98-105), Allen (1969), Duerlinger (1970, 183-189), Heinaman (1981, esp. 295-7 and 303-4), Hetherington (1984), Gill (1984, 10-14), Frede (1987a, 50-63), Devereux (1992, 114-126), Wedin (1993), Erginel (2004), and Corkum (2009, 5-15).

essential to B that B is A.¹¹ Recently, however, this consensus has been challenged by Paolo Crivelli (2017), who argues that the traditional essentialist interpretation is inconsistent with some of Aristotle's examples, and, therefore, that Aristotle does not intend *said-of* to be an essential relation. Even among those who agree that *said-of* is an essential relation, there are fundamental disagreements. According to the influential account proposed by Alan Code (1986), the *said-of* relation is metaphysically basic, in the sense it cannot be further defined or analyzed.¹² On his view, the more general notion of *predication* is defined, in part, in terms of the *said-of* relation. According to the similarly influential interpretation defended by Michael Frede (1987a), however, the opposite is true: the *said-of* relation is defined in terms of predication.¹³ On Frede's reading, the *said-of* relation is, so to speak, a species of predication. In light of these foundational disagreements about the nature of the *said-of* relation one might worry that Aristotle's own theory of property possession is subject to the very objection that he levels against Plato: if Aristotle's text cannot settle these basic questions about *said-of*, then he may not have adequately explained his own technical terminology.¹⁴

We are thus left with four questions about the *said-of* relation. (i) What is the *said-of* relation? In other words, when Aristotle says that A is "said of" B, in his technical sense, what relation is he claiming holds between A and B? (ii) Is the *said-of* relation an essential relation? That is, if A is *said-of* B is this, in some sense, an essential fact about either A or B? (iii) How does *said-of* relate to the more general notion of predication and which of these notions is more fundamental? (iv) Is the *said-of* relation itself basic or is it analyzable in more basic terms?

¹¹ For discussion of this consensus and its proponents, see Crivelli (2017, 540-1).

¹² Strictly, on Code's view they are each the converse of a primitive relation. For the same view, see Loux (1991, 18).

¹³ See also Gill (1984, 10) and Hetherington (1984, 218).

¹⁴ Crivelli (2017) concludes that there may not be any position regarding *said-of* that "can be coherently attributed to Aristotle" (pg. 531) and that Aristotle's remarks about the relation may be "simply inconsistent" (pg. 556).

I will answer these four questions by proposing an account of *said-of*, according to which

A is *said-of* B if and only if A is a formal part of B.¹⁵

This account tells us (i) *what the said-of relation is*. It is the relation of *being a formal part of*—that is, it is the relation of *being a part of x that determines what x is*. On this account, (ii) the *said-of* relation is, in a clear sense, an essential relation (contra Crivelli, 2017). A further consequence of this account is that (iii) the *said-of* relation is not defined in terms of predication (contra Frede, 1987a). I will argue that, on the contrary, predication is defined partly in terms of the *said-of* relation. Finally, this account is intended as a real definition of the *said-of* relation. Thus, (iv) the *said-of* relation *can be analyzed* in more basic terms (contra Code, 1986).

2. The Basics of *Said-of*

The technical idioms that Aristotle uses to express the *said-of* relation—e.g. “is said of ...” (λέγεται κατά ...) and “is said of ... as a subject” (καθ' ὑποκειμένου λέγεται ...) ¹⁶—are not helpful guides to understanding it.¹⁷ We cannot infer what the *said-of* relation is from the language that Aristotle uses for it: Aristotle’s examples indicate that not everything that people say of, e.g., Naomi Osaka is *said-of* Naomi Osaka, nor is everything that is said *truly* about Naomi Osaka *said-of* her.¹⁸ For this reason, I focus on the remarks that Aristotle makes *about* the *said-of* relation rather than offering a linguistic analysis of his technical idiom. These remarks set out general principles that govern the *said-of* relation’s logical behavior and its relationship to other important concepts. Identifying these principles will serve a double purpose. First, the principles will provide

¹⁵ For a similar account see Furth (1988, 23), who suggests but does not develop or defend this position in detail.

¹⁶ On the most likely grammatical construal of this second form of expression, what follows λέγεται in the genitive is in apposition to ὑποκειμένου. On this reading, the expression literally means “is said of a subject, namely ...”.

¹⁷ Pace Furth (1988, 23); cf. Crivelli (2017, 549 n.84). There is one notable similarity between “said of” in Aristotle’s technical sense and “said of” in the ordinary sense: in both cases, the what is expressed is a two-place relation.

¹⁸ For example, it is true to say of Naomi Osaka that she is a tennis player, but tennis player is not *said-of* her.

us with a basic understanding of *said-of* by giving us a sense of its metaphysical, semantic, and logical behavior. Second, they will provide us with *desiderata* for an account of the relation: an ideal account of the *said-of* relation will be able to explain, or at least entail, all of these principles.

2.1 The Principles

The first thing to know about the *said-of* relation is that it is not a linguistic or semantic relation, but rather one that obtains between worldly objects.¹⁹ In other words,

(Relata) if A is *said-of* B, then A and B are beings.²⁰

Aristotle introduces the relation with an example: human (ἄνθρωπος) is *said-of* the particular human (τοῦ τινὸς ἀνθρώπου) (1a21-2). Context makes clear that “human” and “the particular human” each refer to one of the beings (τῶν ὄντων) rather than a linguistic expression that stands for a being (cf. 1a20): “human” refers to the species, human, and “the particular human” refers to an individual human, like Socrates or Naomi Osaka. This first example might suggest that the *said-of* relation holds only between substances—i.e. entities in the category of substance. This is not so. Another of Aristotle’s initial examples is that knowledge (ἡ ἐπιστήμη) is *said-of* literacy (ἡ γραμματική) (2.1b1-3). Neither knowledge, which is a relative (see e.g. 7.6b3, 7.6b17, & 8.11a23-25), nor literacy, which is a quality (see 4.1b29 & 8.10a31), is a substance. Thus, while the relata of *said-of* need not be substances, they must be *beings*: Aristotle’s introductory examples of an instance of the *said-of* relation—and indeed the rest of the examples that he offers—take two worldly items as relata.²¹

¹⁹ Here, I follow the large majority of modern commentators. See, for example, Ackrill (1963, 75 and 82), Code (1985, 103-4; 1986, 422-3), Frede (1987a, 53), Furth (1988, 11-12), Loux (1991, 18), Mann (2000, 23-4 and n. 35), Perin (2007, 125 & n.2), Kohl (2008, n. 4), and Crivelli (217, 533).

²⁰ Trivially, linguistic expressions are also beings. **Relata** should be understood as saying that *said-of* is a binary relation both arguments of which range over the beings rather than the expressions.

²¹ See also 2a19-21 and 3a22-8, which imply Relata.

The next thing to know about the *said-of* relation is that, although *said-of* is not a linguistic or semantic relation, it is closely connected to linguistic phenomena. In particular, the *said-of* relation is truth entailing. In other words,

(Truth Entailment) if A is *said-of* B, then there is a true sentence of the form $\ulcorner \beta \text{ is } \alpha \urcorner$ (where β and α are names for B and A respectively).²²

For example, the species, human, is *said-of* individual humans, like Naomi Osaka; so, according to Truth Entailment, there is a true sentence of the form “Naomi Osaka is human.” Not every example works in English: the genus, animal, is *said-of* the species, human, and of the individual humans, like Naomi, but English does not allow

(E1*) #”human is animal”,

or

(E2*) #“Naomi is animal”.

Ancient Greek, which does not have an indefinite article, has no problem with these examples: it is perfectly acceptable to say

(G2) “ἄνθρωπος ἐστὶν ζῷον” (see 3.1b15),

and

(G1) “Ναόμι ἐστὶν ζῷον”.

To express the same propositions in English we need to add an indefinite article or an indefinite noun phrase to the predicate term:

(E1) “human is *a kind of* animal”

and

²² Here too, I follow the scholarly consensus. See, e.g., Frede (1987a, 53), Code (1986, 103-4; and 1985, 422-3), Furth (1988, 9-12), Mann (2000, 22-3 and 51-2), and Perin (2007, 128). The principle is a corollary of Aristotle’s claim, at 2a19-21 (cf. 3a22-8), that if A is *said-of* B, then the name of A is (truly) predicated of B. This passage also shows that when A is *said-of* B, $\ulcorner \beta \text{ is } \alpha \urcorner$ is a *predicative* sentence.

(E2) “Naomi is *an* animal.”

The *said-of* relation, then, is truth entailing in a straightforward way for sentences in Aristotle’s Greek, but the relationship between the *said-of* relation and sentences of other languages may be somewhat more complex.

Taken together, **Truth Entailment** and **Relata** entail that there is a correlation between the truth of certain sentences about A and B and the *said-of* relation obtaining between the entities, A and B. Aristotle’s view is likely stronger. For Aristotle, underlying relations between objects explain the truth of sentences (*Cat.* 5.4b8-10 and *Cat.* 12.14b14-23). Given this fact, it is tempting to think that the *said-of* relation is not only **Truth Entailing** but also **Truth Explaining**:

(**Truth Explaining**) If A is *said-of* B, then “ β is α ” is true *in virtue of the fact that* A is *said-of* B (where β is a name for B and α is a name for A).

Since Aristotle’s text suggests but does not require this principle, I will not include it among our list of principles to be explained by an account of *said-of*. Still, it is worth noting that the account I will present in section 3 will have the resources to explain it.

So far, we have seen that the *said-of* relation is a “worldly” rather than linguistic or semantic relation and that it is correlated to the truth of certain sentences. The next thing to know about the *said-of* relation is that its *relata* are not on a par:

(**Underlier**) if A is *said-of* B, then B underlies (ὑπόκειται) A.

For Aristotle, the relevant concept of underlying is expressed with the infinitival and finite forms of ὑποκεῖσθαι followed by a dative. Underlying is closely connected to substance-hood: Aristotle twice appeals to the idea that substances are the items that underly everything else. For example, Aristotle writes,

[T1] ... the primary substances because (διὰ) they underlie all the others (τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι)—i.e. (καὶ)²³ all the others are predicated of them or are in them—because of this (διὰ τοῦτο) they are called substances most of all (μάλιστα οὐσίαι λέγονται). (Cat. 5.2b15-17)

ἔτι αἱ πρῶται οὐσίαι διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄλλα κατὰ τούτων κατηγορεῖσθαι ἢ ἐν ταύταις εἶναι διὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα οὐσίαι λέγονται.

These lines refer back to a claim defended just a few lines above—namely that “all the other things are either said of primary substances as subjects or are in them as subjects” (2a34-5, cf. 2b3-5 and 2b6). The idea in T1 is that primary substances underlie everything else insofar as everything else is *said-of* primary substances or is *present-in* them.²⁴ It is because of this that primary substances are “substances most of all.”

The argument of T1 is best understood as relying, in part, on **Underlier**. To see why T1 supports **Underlier**, however, requires some unpacking. After all, T1 does not use the expression, “is *said-of*” (λέγεται κατὰ). Instead, Aristotle says that all the others are *present-in* primary substances or are “*predicated of them*” (κατὰ τούτων κατηγορεῖσθαι). This discrepancy should not worry us.²⁵ I follow the majority of scholars in the view that, at least in certain passages—including at 2a37, which is in the immediate context of T1—Aristotle uses “predication” language where he has in mind the *said-of* relation in particular.²⁶ Taking T1 in this way has two major advantages.

²³ I read the “καὶ” in 2b16 as epexegetic. One motivation for this reading is that at 2b37-3a4 Aristotle offers the claim that all non-substances are *predicated of* secondary substances as a *justification* for the claim that secondary substances *underlie* all the non-substances. It follows that *underlying* other things and being the subject of predication for other things are not independent criteria.

²⁴ See Ackrill (1963, 84) and Perin (2007, 134 n.22); cf. Frede (1987a, 59).

²⁵ One reason not to worry is that the *said-of* relation is predication entailing (see note 22): if x is *said-of* y then x is predicated of y. Thus, however we read “predicated of” in T1, the passage entails **Underlier**.

²⁶ Compare Cat. 3.1b10-15 (on which, see Mann, 2000, 52 n. 41) and 5.2a37. See also Perin (2007, n.2 and n.22) and Crivelli (2017, 533-5), who argues that wherever Aristotle contrasts *present-in* and “*predicated of*” the latter expression refers to the *said-of* relation. I do not mean to commit myself to this stronger view: it is possible that

First, if we understand “predicated of” in T1 as a reference to the *said-of* relation, then Aristotle’s assumption in T1 that all other things “are predicated of ... or are in” primary substances is supported by the argument a few lines above for the claim that everything else is *present-in* or *said-of* primary substances (2a34-5). Second, where Aristotle uses “is predicated of” to express a worldly *predicated-of* relation that is distinct from *said-of*, the relation in question covers instances of both the *said-of* relation and the *present-in* relation.²⁷ Thus, it hardly makes sense to contrast being *present-in* primary substances and being *predicated-of* primary substances. Much more likely, Aristotle has in mind the genuine contrast between *present-in* and *said-of*. Therefore, there is good reason to read T1 as claiming that primary substances underly all other things insofar as the other things are *said-of* them or are *present-in* them.

If this is the right reading of T1, then Aristotle is reasoning as follows:

- (i) everything else is *said-of* or *present-in* the primary substances (2b16-17; cf. 2a34-5 & 2b3-5, 6-7);

therefore,

- (ii) the primary substances underly everything else (2b15-16);

therefore,

- (iii) the primary substances are called substances most of all (2b17).

On the reading that I propose, Aristotle’s inference from (i) to (ii) is licensed by the principle that

(L1) if A is *said-of* or *present-in* B, then B underlies A;

and, therefore, Aristotle accepts that

(Underlier) if A is *said-of* B, then B underlies A.

“predicated of” never expresses *said-of* but that where Aristotle uses “predicated of” to talk about *said-of* he is relying on contextual constraints.

²⁷ For uses of “predicated of” (κατηγορεῖται) and related expressions that cover instances of the *present-in* relation, see 5.2a27-32, 2b31, 3a3-6, and 3a15-17.

Of course, there are other claims besides L1 that might license the inference between (i) and (ii): Aristotle might also be relying on the narrower claim that

(L2) if B is a *substance* and A is *said-of* or *present-in* B, then B underlies A,

or on the even more narrow claim that

(L3) if B is a *primary substance* and A is *said-of* or *present-in* B, then B underlies A.

Neither of these entail **Underlier**, but either of them would license the inference from (i) to (ii); so, to make the case that the argument of T1 commits Aristotle to **Underlier**, we need some reason to think that Aristotle is relying on L1 rather than L2 or L3.

One such reason is provided by a parallel passage later in *Cat.* 5, in which Aristotle refers back to the argument of T1 in order to support his claim that, besides primary substances, only the species and genera of primary substances are “rightly called substances” (2b36-7 cf. 2b29-30). Here is his second argument for this claim

[T2] Again, the primary substances because they underly all the others are called substances in the governing sense; but as the primary substances stand in relation to all the others, so the species and the genera of primary substances stand to all those remaining; for all those remaining are predicated of them. (2b37-3a6)

The species and genera of primary substances count as substances because they underly all non-substances. And these species and genera *underly* all non-substances, since all non-substances are “predicated of them”. Given that this argument builds upon the argument of T1 and the claim that everything else is *said-of* or is *present-in* primary substance, Aristotle’s assertion that everything is “predicated of” species and genera of primary substances is probably the claim that

(i*) everything else is *said-of* or *present-in* the species and genera of primary substances.²⁸

If this is right, then from (i*), Aristotle infers that

(ii*) the species and genera of primary substances underly everything else;

and, therefore, that

(iii*) the species and genera of primary substances are rightly called substances (2b36-7, cf. 2b29-30).

In this case, Aristotle's inference from (i*) to (ii*) cannot be licensed by the principle that

(L2) if B is a substance and A is *said-of* or *present-in* B, then B underlies A,

or on the principle that

(L3) if B is a *primary substance* and A is *said-of* or *present-in* B, then B underlies A.

L3 is too narrow: the species and genera of primary substances are not themselves primary substances. L2 also does not work. Aristotle is giving an argument *for the conclusion* that (iii*) species and genera of primary substances are substances. On pain of circularity, he cannot rely on the assumption that the items in question are substances to support this conclusion. Instead, the argument of T2—and, therefore, given the parallels between the passages, the argument of T1—appears to rely on the assumption that

(L1) if A is *said-of* or *present-in* B, then B underlies A.

Since this entails that

(**Underlier**) if A is *said-of* B, then B underlies A,

there is strong positive evidence in favor of the **Underlier** principle.

²⁸ This reading is further supported by the fact that some non-substances—like the color white—are *present-in* species and genera of primary substances (5.2a30-31-34, 2b1-5, 3a4-6) and other non-substances—namely, differentiae of substances—are *said-of* them (see 5.3a21-28).

Before we accept **Underlier**, however, we should consider a complication that arises from it. I noted above that Aristotle thinks that some non-substances are *said-of* other non-substances—for example, knowledge is *said-of* literacy. Thus, a consequence of the **Underlier** principle is that literacy *underlies* knowledge. This on its own is not a problem. After all, in the same passage, Aristotle tells us that literacy is a subject (ὑποκείμενον) for knowledge (1a29-1b3). Moreover, the idea that more specific kinds—no matter what category they belong to—underly and are more fundamental than the more general kinds to which they belong is perfectly consistent with both the letter and the spirit of the framework of the *Categories*. The problem, however, is that the arguments in T1 and T2—and in particular the inference from (ii) to (iii) and from (ii*) to (iii*)—appear to rely on the idea that if A underlies B, then A is a substance. But this idea, together with **Underlier**, entails that literacy is a substance, which is certainly not Aristotle’s view.

We can, however, make perfectly good sense of T1 and T2 without attributing to Aristotle the idea that if A underlies B, then A is a substance. Plausibly, Aristotle is operating with a conception of substance-hood according to which the substances are the entities that underly *all other entities*. Thus, to show that the class he calls “primary substances” in fact deserve to be called “substances”, he argues in T1 that this class of items underlies *everything else*.²⁹ In T2, Aristotle turns to the species and genera of primary substances and makes his case for the claim they are also “rightly called substances” (εἰκότως ... οὐσίαι λέγονται) (2b36-7). His argument turns on the thought that the species and genera of primary substances underly *everything else* besides primary substances. Therefore, the entire class consisting in the primary substances together with their species and genera deserve to be called “substances”: that class of items underlies everything else. On this

²⁹ The idea is that to be a substance is to be a member of a class upon which the rest of reality depends (and no part of which depends, in the relevant way, on the rest of reality), where “class” is understood in a restrictive way to exclude heterogeneous groupings that do not, to use a Platonic metaphor, “carve nature at its joints”.

reading of T1 and T2, the fact that A underlies B is not sufficient for A to count as a substance. Rather, A must be part of a class that jointly underlies *everything else*. Thus, we can accept **Underlier** without problem: while literacy underlies knowledge, it is not part of a class that underlies *everything else*. The upshot is that T1 and T2 together provide strong evidence in favor of attributing to Aristotle the claim that

(**Underlier**) if A is *said-of* B, then B underlies A.

Granting that Aristotle accepts **Underlier**, what does the principle tell us about the *said-of* relation? The first thing to note is that I do not mean to claim that the relevant concept of underlying is in play every time that Aristotle uses a form of ὑποκεῖσθαι. In particular, the frequent uses of the participle, ὑποκειμένον, may express a weaker notion. There are, however, three claims in the *Categories*—two of which we have already seen—that we can be sure use the relevant concept of underlying. In each, Aristotle uses the infinitival or finite forms of ὑποκεῖσθαι; and, in each, he relies on the notion of underlying to argue that some type of item is a substance or is more a substance than some other.

[1] Primary substances are substances most of all (μάλιστα οὐσίαι) and substances in the governing sense (κυριώτατα οὐσίαι) **because they underly** everything else (διὰ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ὑποκεῖσθαι) (5.2b15-17 [=T1], 2b37-3a1).

[2] Of secondary substance, species are “more substance” (μᾶλλον οὐσία) than the genera under which they fall **because species underly** (ὑπόκειται) their genera (5.2b17-22).

[3] The species and genera of primary substances are substances **because they underly** (ὑπόκειται) all the non-substance items (5.3a1-3 [=T2]).

Aristotle’s argument for [2] indicates that *underlies* is asymmetric: each species in the category of substance “underlies its genus, for the genera are predicated of the species but the species do not

reciprocate with respect to the genera” (5.2b19-21). The species, human, for example, underlies the genus, animal, because (i) animal is predicated of human and (ii) human is not predicated of animal. The presupposition of the argument is that underlying—in the relevant sense—requires *asymmetrical* predication: x underlies y *only if* x is a subject of predication for y and y is not a subject of predication for x.

The connection between underlying and substance-hood evidenced by [1], [2], and [3] suggests that underlying—and, therefore, the *said-of* relation—tracks relative fundamentality: if x underlies y, then x is more fundamental than y. To illustrate, primary substances, like Naomi, are the fundamental entities in the ontology of the *Categories* because they underlie everything else. A similar argument shows that species in the category of substance are more fundamental than their genera and that secondary substances are more fundamental than non-substances. Underlying is the basis for the elevated metaphysical status of primary substances relative to everything else, species in the category of substance relative to their genera, and substances relative to non-substances. Aristotle’s view is that, in some sense, the former group is more substance and more fundamental than the latter. Given **Underlier**, it follows that the *said-of* relation also tracks with relative fundamentality: if A is *said-of* B, then B is more fundamental than A.

We have so far discussed one semantic principle—**Truth Entailment**—and two metaphysical principles—**Relata** and **Underlier**—governing the *said-of* relation. I now turn to the relation’s logical profile, using **Underlier** as a guide.

Intuitively, underlying is a transitive, asymmetric, and irreflexive relation: nothing can underly itself; two things cannot underly each other; and if one thing underlies a second, and the second underlies a third, then the first item underlies the third. These intuitions are supported by two points we have already discussed as well as the text of *Categories*. First, underlying is asymmetric (see

2b17-22).³⁰ Second, as claims [1]-[3] indicate, underlying tracks with relative fundamentality—i.e. if *x underlies y*, then *x* is more fundamental than *y*. But nothing is more fundamental than itself (irreflexivity); no two things can both be more fundamental than each other (asymmetry); and if *A* is more fundamental than *B* and *B* is more fundamental than *C*, then *A* is more fundamental than *C* (transitivity).³¹ Given the **Underlier Principle**, it follows that the *said-of* relation is also asymmetric and irreflexive. That is,

(Asymmetry) if *A* is *said-of* *B*, then *B* is not *said-of* *A*.

(Irreflexivity) *A* is not *said-of* *A*.

There is also evidence for these two principles that does not rely on **Underlier**. **Irreflexivity** and **Asymmetry** harmonize with Aristotle's text: all of his examples of *said-of* are unambiguously non-reflexive and non-symmetric.

While the transitivity of *underlying* does not entail the transitivity of *said-of*, there is good textual basis for thinking that that

(Transitivity) if *A* is *said-of* *B*, and *B* is *said-of* *C*, then *A* is *said-of* *C*.

There is wide scholarly agreement that Aristotle asserts the transitivity of the *said-of* relation when he writes that

[T3] whenever one thing is predicated of another as of a subject, those things *said-of* the predicate also will all be *said-of* the subject (*Cat.* 3.1b10-12; cf. 5.3b4-5).³²

³⁰ Note that, in general, if a binary relation is asymmetric, then it is irreflexive as well.

³¹ Also, if *A* is more fundamental than *B* and *B* is more fundamental than *C*, then *A* is more fundamental than *C* (transitivity). However, the argument for the transitivity of *said-of* does not rely on this point.

³² See Ackrill (1963, 76), Patzig (1973, 65), Dancy (1975, 351), Rohr (1978, 380-1 & 384-5), Loux (1991, 24), Mann (2000, 52-3 & n. 41), and Crivelli (2017, 540). For doubts about transitivity, see Ferejohn (1981, 287).

On this reading, when Aristotle uses “is predicated of” in T3, he has in mind the *said-of* relation. A defense of this reading of T3 would require further argument, but, since it is widely accepted by commentators on the *Categories*, I will not go into more detail here.

So far, we have seen that the *said-of* relation is governed by a semantic and two metaphysical principles—**Truth Entailment**, **Relata**, and **Underlier**—as well as three logical principles—it is asymmetric, irreflexive and transitive. Given this logical profile, the *said-of* relation, can be thought of as corresponding to a partial order of entities such that if A is *said-of* B, then A is “later” in the order than B.³³ The resulting order is “partial” in the sense that there are some pairs of entities such that neither is “later” than the other in the order. For example, Naomi is not *said-of* Socrates and Socrates is not *said-of* Naomi.

Given this ordering of entities, it is natural to wonder whether there are any entities that are at the “beginning” of the order—i.e. whether there are any entities that are not *said-of* anything else. Aristotle thinks that there are such entities, and he calls them “individuals”. He writes, “things that are individual and one in number (τὰ ἄτομα καὶ ἓν ἀριθμῷ) are, without exception, not said of any subject (κατ' οὐδενὸς ὑποκειμένου λέγεται)” (1b6-9; Ackrill translation, slightly emended). In other words:

(Individuals) If A is an individual, then A is not *said-of* anything. (1b6-9)

But not all entities are individuals: some entities, which I will call “universals”³⁴, are *said-of* others (2.1a20-21, 2.1a29-1b3).

(Universals) If A is *said-of* something, then A is a universal.

³³ A binary relation that is asymmetric, irreflexive and transitive—like the *said-of* relation—is called a “strict partial order.”

³⁴ Aristotle does not use the term “universal” in the *Categories*, but it is common among commentators to use the term in this way. On this usage, non-substance individuals are not universals because they are not *said-of* anything even if, as some think, they can be *present-in* more than one subject (see 2.1b6-9).

Aristotle also thinks that each universal is *said-of* at least one individual (2a38-b1).³⁵ In other words:

(Some Individual) if A is *said-of* something, then A is *said-of* some individual.

The *said-of* relation does not only relate individuals to universals: Aristotle also thinks that genera are *said-of* the species that fall under them (3a9-11) and that (ii) differentiae are *said-of* the species that fall under them (3a21-5).³⁶ Thus,

(Genus and Species) if A is a genus and B is its species, then A is *said-of* B.

(Differentia) if A is a differentia and B is a species that falls under A, then A is *said-of* B.

One might use these facts about the *said-of* relation to study the relations between individuals, species, genera and differentia in more detail. For present purposes, however, what matters is that they are non-obvious theses about the *said-of* relation endorsed by Aristotle in the *Categories*, and, therefore, they are explananda for an account of the *said-of* relation.

Let's turn to one final principle governing the *said-of* relation. In *Categories* 5, Aristotle writes that "it is clear from what has been said that of the things said of a subject, necessarily the name and the definition are predicated of the subject" (2a19-21). Put another way, Aristotle says that

(Name and Definition) if A is *said-of* B, then the name of A is predicated of B and the definition of A is predicated of B.

I will pass over the question of what Aristotle has in mind when he says that this principle follows from "what has been said" (ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων). For present purposes, what matters is that we get a grip on what this principle means.

³⁵ This principle is required for the validity of Aristotle's argument that all other things are *said-of* or *present-in* primary substances (see 2a34-b5).

³⁶ Aristotle is explicit about these claims for substances and their differentiae, but he is less explicit about non-substances. The limited evidence suggests that these principles applies to non-substances as well: for example, knowledge is a genus and literacy is one of its species (8.11a24-8) and knowledge is *said-of* literacy (2.1b1-3).

(i) *The name* (τοῦνομα) of a thing, for Aristotle, is not just any word that can be used to talk about it or can be truly applied to it. For example, the abstract noun, “wisdom” is the name for the condition we attribute to Socrates when we say, “Socrates is wise”, and “health” is the name of the property we attribute to him when we say, “Socrates is healthy.” The predicate adjectives “wise” and “healthy” are words we use to talk about wisdom and health, but they are not names for those properties.³⁷

(ii) The definition (λόγος) of *x* is a noun-phrase that specifies with maximal perspicuity *what x is*, i.e. the being or essence of *x*. I will have more to say about essences below, but, for now, consider some examples: “rational animal” is the definition of human and “knowledge of words” defines literacy. Definitions are composed from the genus-terms (e.g. “animal”, “knowledge”) and differentia-terms (e.g. “rational”, “of words”).

(iii) Typically, the relation of *being predicated of* takes two worldly items as its relata. That is, health—rather than “health” or “healthy”—is predicated of Socrates. For instance, if “Achilles is sobbing” is true, then sobbing is predicated of Achilles. Aristotle’s discussion of the **Name and Definition Principle**, however, is the main exception to the rule that predication is a relation between worldly items. Here, Aristotle is not talking about “ontological predication”; he is using a notion of predication that relates linguistic expressions, which we can call “linguistic predication”.

With these clarifications in mind, let’s return to the Name and Definition principle. The first half of this principle says that when *A is said-of B*, the name for *A* is predicated of *B*. For instance, knowledge is *said-of* geometry, so “geometry is (a kind of) knowledge” is true; and since rodent is *said-of* mouse, “mouse is (a kind of) rodent” is true. The second half of the principle says that

³⁷ See *Cat.* 8 10a29-34.

when A is *said-of* B then the definition of A is predicated of B. For example, human is *said-of* Socrates and “Socrates is (a) rational animal” is true.³⁸

3. What is the *said-of* relation?

We now know a fair amount about the *said-of* relation. Concerning its metaphysics, we know that

1. the relata of *said-of* are worldly objects,
2. if A is *said-of* B, then B underlies A,
3. individuals are not *said-of* anything,

and

4. the species, genera, and differentiae under which x falls are *said-of* x.

³⁸ As an anonymous referee has pointed out, differentiae appear to pose a challenge to this interpretation. Given what I have said about names like “health” and “literacy”, we might expect the names of differentiae to be abstract nouns, like “footed-ness” (ποδότης). But these abstract nouns are generally not predicated of the species defined by the differentia: “human is (a kind of) footed-ness (ποδότης)” is false. To resolve this problem, it will be helpful to compare the case of differentiae to the case of the quality, white (λευκόν), which Aristotle discusses in the context of the **Name and Definition Principle** at 5.2a29-34. In the case of white (λευκόν), the same linguistic form—namely, “λευκόν”—functions as both a name for the quality and as an adjective used to predicate the quality. Compare: eggshell white is (a kind of) white (λευκόν) and my shoes are white (λευκόν). Crucially, 5.2a29-34 indicates that one predicates the quality’s name, even when one uses λευκόν as an adjective—for example, when one says, “body is white” (σῶμα ἐστὶν λευκόν) (cf. 2a32). Something similar appears to be the case for differentiae: Aristotle’s practice in *Categories* and *Topics* indicates that the canonical linguistic form for the name of a differentia, D, is the same as the linguistic form for the predicate term (usually an adjective) correlated to D. For example, Aristotle uses forms like (τὸ) πεζόν (footed), (τὸ) περιττόν (odd), and (τὸ) ψυχῆς (of soul; 153b9) as names for his differentiae; for these and other examples, see *Cat.* 1b18-20, 3a21-28, 14b37-15a3, *Top.* 107b23-6, 122b12-19, 123a11-14, 128a20-9, 133a2-5, 143a36-b2, 144b12-30, 145a14-18, 153a36-b1, 153b6-10. Thus, the canonical linguistic expressions Aristotle uses as names for differentiae can, like λευκόν, also function as adjectives. By analogy with λευκόν, then, the sentence “Ναόμι ἐστὶν πεζόν” (“Naomi is footed”) (cf. *Cat.* 5.3a28) counts as predicating the name of the differentia, footed (πεζόν), of Naomi. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable for Aristotle to think that the names of differentiae are (linguistically) predicated of the objects that they help define. The same point can help to explain why the *definitions* of differentiae are (linguistically) predicated of objects that fall under a differentia. On the plausible assumptions that (i) the definitions of differentiae, like everything else, take genus + differentia form and (ii) the genus of a differentia is always another differentia, it is reasonable to think that the *definition* of a differentia, like its name, will also be able to function as both a noun-phrase and an adjectival phrase. So, for example, δίπουν (biped) will be defined by some expression like “πεζόν δύο πόδας ἔχον” (terrestrial with two feet) (cf. *Metaphysics* Z.12 1038a21-23). If this is right, then it is plausible that the definition of every definable differentia will also be predicated of the individuals and species that fall under the differentia.

Concerning its semantics, we know that

5. *said-of* is truth entailing

and

6. if *x* is *said-of* *y* then the name of *x* and the definition of *x* are predicated of *y*.

We also know the basics of its logical behavior—namely, we know that

7. *said-of* is irreflexive, asymmetric and transitive.

It is now time to return to the four questions with which we began. What is the *said-of* relation? Is it an essential relation? How is it related to predication? Can it be analyzed in more basic terms? This section answers the first question. I first (in §3.1) propose an account of the *said-of* that explains all of our data and then (in §3.2) provide corroborating evidence for my proposal by arguing that there is strong textual basis for its key notion—namely, formal parthood—in the *Categories*.

3.1 An Account of *said-of*

I propose that

(Definition) *x* is *said-of* *y* just in case *x* is a formal part of *y*.

At the heart of this proposal is the notion of formal parthood. The formal parts of a thing are the (proper) parts of it that define it, i.e. determine *what it is*.³⁹ The notion of formal parthood has strong Aristotelian credentials: a version of it appears in the catalogue of uses of “part” in *Metaphysics* Δ.25, where Aristotle writes, “in another sense, the things that are in the definition that reveals each thing (τὰ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ δηλοῦντι ἕκαστον) are called parts of a whole. For this

³⁹ Furth (1988, 23) suggests “defines” as a gloss of *said-of*, suggesting that the idiom λέγεται κατὰ “could connote” to a Greek reader “defining, marking-out-the-nature-of”. Furth goes on to suggest an account along the lines of my **Official Proposal**, but he does not defend or develop it in detail.

reason, a genus is called part of its species—though in a different way the species is part of the genus” (1023b23-5).⁴⁰ Aristotle’s applications of this notion in developing his own philosophical positions clarify that the “definition that reveals a thing” is a *real definition*—i.e. an account that signifies the definiendum’s essence.⁴¹

We can learn more about the concept of formal parthood from the way that Aristotle puts it to work in his discussion of “substance” in *Metaphysics* Δ.8 (1017b17-21). Here, Aristotle introduces the notion with a different formulation:

[T4] Again, [we call “substances”] those things that are parts (μέρια) belonging in (ἐνυπάρχοντά ἐν) things of this sort (τοῖς τοιούτοις), which both define them (ὀρίζοντά) and signify a this and with whose destruction the whole is destroyed, as for instance, as some assert, body [is destroyed] with plane and plane [is destroyed] with line; number generally seems to some people to be of this sort, for [they think that] if it is eliminated there would be nothing, and it defines (ὀρίζειν) everything. (Kirwan translation, emended)

ἔτι ὅσα μέρια ἐνυπάρχοντά ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ὀρίζοντά τε καὶ τόδε τι σημαίνοντα, ὧν ἀναιρουμένων ἀναιρεῖται τὸ ὅλον, οἷον ἐπιπέδου σῶμα, ὥς φασί τινες, καὶ ἐπίπεδον γραμμῆς· καὶ ὅλως ὁ ἀριθμὸς δοκεῖ εἶναι τισι τοιοῦτος (ἀναιρουμένου τε γὰρ οὐδὲν εἶναι, καὶ ὀρίζειν πάντα)·

T4 will provide helpful information about Aristotle’s concept of formal parthood; but, in order to extract that information, we need to clarify two points. First, as the context makes clear, “things

⁴⁰ Μέρος λέγεται ... ἔτι τὰ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ δηλοῦντι ἕκαστον, καὶ ταῦτα μέρια τοῦ ὅλου· διὸ τὸ γένος τοῦ εἶδους καὶ μέρος λέγεται, ἄλλως δὲ τὸ εἶδος τοῦ γένους μέρος.

⁴¹ See, for instance, *Metaphysics* Z.10, 1034b32-1035a4: “In a way the matter is part of a thing, but in a way it is not—rather those things out of which the definition of the form is composed are the parts of the thing” (ἔστι μὲν ὥς καὶ ἡ ὕλη μέρος τινὸς λέγεται, ἔστι δ' ὡς οὐ, ἀλλ' ἐξ ὧν ὁ τοῦ εἶδους λόγος.).

of this sort” (τοῖς τοιούτοις) refers to particular material objects, like the simple bodies (τά ἀπλᾶ σώματα) and composite living things (τὰ ἐκ τούτων συνεστῶτα ζῷα), which are subjects of predication but are not predicated of anything.⁴² Thus, the objects whose parts Aristotle is discussing in T4 include the paradigmatic examples of primary substances in *Categories*: particular, composite living things, like Naomi Osaka and Felix the Sheepdog.

Second, a case needs to be made for understanding μόρια ὀρίζοντά in T4 to mean defining parts rather than *bounding* or *delimiting* parts. In other words, we need to make the case that T4 is about formal parts rather than physical boundaries. After all, Aristotle’s first two examples—plane as a part of body, line as a part of plane—might suggest that he is thinking about the physical parts of spatially extended objects that bound those objects and distinguish them from other objects. There are, however, strong reasons not to read T4 in this way. The first reason is that the use of generalizing singular nouns in Aristotle’s first two examples—“body (σῶμα) is destroyed with plane (ἐπιπέδου) ... and plane (ἐπίπεδον) is destroyed with line (γραμμῆς)” — suggest that he is referring to the universals, body, plane, and line. But universals, like plane and line, are not physical parts nor are they boundaries of particular extended objects. A second reason to reject the boundary reading is that, on Aristotle’s view, boundaries are not *parts* of the objects they delimit.⁴³ So, for example, the three lines bounding a particular triangle are not parts of that triangle and the surface enclosing a bronze cube is not a part of that cube. Thus, if we take the uses of ὀρίζειν in T4 to mean “bound” or “delimit”, then, on Aristotle’s own view, there is no object that satisfies

⁴² τοῖς τοιούτοις refers back to τοῖς τοιούτοις in b15, which in turn refers back to the objects called “substances” in the first way—including “simple bodies” (τά ἀπλᾶ σώματα) and “the living things composed out of bodies” (τὰ ἐκ τούτων συνεστῶτα ζῷα). These items are called “substances” because they are not predicated of a subject but others are predicated of them (b13-14).

⁴³ See Alexander (*In Met.* 373.29-31), Menn (2001, 99-100), and Pfeiffer (2018, 89-121 and 133-146). Wholes are composed out of their parts (*Metaphysics* Δ.25 1023b11-16, 19-20) but, for example, lines are not composed out of points, including their limit points (see, e.g., *Physics* VI.1 231a24-6, IV.10 218a6-8). Generally, higher-dimensional objects are not composed from lower-dimensional objects, including their boundaries (see, e.g., GC I.2 316b14-16, 28-9 and *Physics* VI.1 231a24-6).

the description he gives: no *parts* of extended objects bound them. However, if we take ὀρίζειν to mean “define”, then Aristotle’s description and his examples work perfectly well. Aristotle acknowledges and even entertains accounts of body and surface according to which body is defined by reference to the universal, surface, and surface in terms of the universal, line.⁴⁴ Finally, this reading neatly explains Aristotle’s *third* example—namely, that, as some people think, number is a part that “defines (ὀρίζειν) everything”. He elsewhere criticizes a group of theorists for just this view: these thinkers, he maintains, wrongly think that everything is *defined* in terms of number.⁴⁵

If this reading of the passage is correct, then T4 provides three important pieces of information about formal parthood. First, T4 shows that objects can have formal parts even if they do not, strictly speaking, have real definitions. Recall that T4 is about the formal parts of concrete particular objects, including particular living things, like Naomi Osaka or Felix the Sheepdog. Strictly speaking, these objects do not have definitions.⁴⁶ However, as T4 indicates, they do have formal parts. This is very important: it means that the formulation that Aristotle uses in Δ.25—i.e. “the things that are in the definition that reveals each thing”—is slightly too narrow to cover every case of formal parthood. For objects that do not have a definition, formal parts are, trivially, not mentioned in their definitions. For this reason, I use language from T4—rather than from Δ.25—to characterize formal parthood: the formal parts of *x* are the parts of *x* that “define” *x*, in the sense that they determine *what x is*.

Second, formal parts are not linguistic expressions that appear in a real definition but worldly entities. For Aristotle, definitions are linguistic expressions.⁴⁷ But, clearly, the “defining parts” in

⁴⁴ See *Physics* III.5 204b4-6 and *Topics* VI.4 141b3-8. This may not be Aristotle’s considered view: see *Physics* III.5 204b20 and *Metaphysics* Δ.13 1020a11-14; cf. Euclid, *Elements* I. Def. 2 & 5, XI Def. 1.

⁴⁵ See *Metaphysics* Z.11 1036b12-13, A.5 985b23-31, and M.4 1078b21-3.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., *Metaphysics* Z.10 1035b34-1036a1, Z.11 1036b28-9, Z.15 1039b27-9, and 1040a5-7; cf. *Topics* I.8 103b7-10, which requires that a definiens and definiendum counterpredicate, from which it follows that, since primary substances are not predicated of anything, they do not have definitions.

⁴⁷ *De Int.* 5.17a9-12 & *Top.* I.5 101b38-102a5

T4—which are called “substances” and without which the particular composite objects of which they are parts cannot exist—are not linguistic expressions, but worldly parts that determine what their wholes are. This is also consistent with the passage from Δ.25 quoted above: when Aristotle claims that a genus is “in the definition” of its species, he means that the genus is mentioned in the definition—i.e. the genus corresponds to a term in the real definition of the species. So for example, the definition of the species, human, is composed out of a genus-term (“animal”) and a differentia-term (“rational”), but it is *the entities corresponding to* these terms—the genus, animal, and the differentia, rational—that are formal parts of the human species.⁴⁸

Third, Aristotle has *proper parts* in mind. In other words, nothing is a formal part of itself. In Δ.8, formal parts are “in” (ἐν) their wholes and, in Δ.25, formal parts are “in” (ἐν) the definitions of their wholes. Intuitively, nothing can be “in” itself, so nothing can be a formal part of itself. And indeed, Aristotle’s considered view is that nothing is “in” itself in the relevant senses of “in”. In *Physics* IV.3, Aristotle distinguishes eight senses of being “in” something—including, crucially, a sense in which a part is “in” a whole (210a15-16) and a sense in which the parts of a species that are in its definition are “in” the species (a18-20)—and he considers at length whether anything can be “in” itself (210a25-b22).⁴⁹ His conclusion is that, in all eight senses, nothing can be in itself (210b8-10, b21-2). Since formal parts are “in” their wholes in two of the senses covered by Aristotle’s argument, his discussion entails that nothing is a formal part of itself. The same conclusion is also supported by the idea that real definitions cannot be circular—i.e. that nothing can be mentioned in its own real definition—and, generally, that nothing can “define” (ὀρίζειν)

⁴⁸ See also *Metaphysics* Z.10 1034b20-22.

⁴⁹ He qualifies his position to allow for x to be “in” itself derivatively and “in respect of its parts” (κατὰ τὰ μέρη) when one part of x is “in” another part of x (210a26-34; see Morison 2002, 89-91). In the primary way, however, which is the way relevant in our passages, nothing can be “in” itself.

itself. Since, as we have seen in T4, formal parts define the wholes to which they belong, this also supports the claim that nothing is a formal part of itself.

With this understanding of the “formal parts” of a thing as the worldly, proper parts that determine *what it is*, let’s return to the *said-of* relation. My official proposal is that *said-of* is defined in terms of *formal parthood*.

(Definition) *x* is *said-of* *y* just in case *x* is a formal part of *y*.

Our first order of business is to show that this account can explain the principles governing the *said-of* relation. **Definition** offers a clear explanation for the fact that the relata of the *said-of* relation are worldly items: if *x* is a formal part of *y*, then *x* and *y* are worldly items. The relation of *being a formal part* is a metaphysical—rather than a semantic or linguistic—relation. Therefore, **Definition** explains **Relata**.

Definition also explains why genera and differentiae are *said-of* the species that fall under them. As we saw above, the worldly correlates to the parts of the definition of *x*—i.e. the parts of the essence of *x*—are parts of *x* which determine *what x is*. In other words, they are formal parts of *x*. Definitions are composed from two parts: a genus term and a differentia term.⁵⁰ Therefore, in general, if *S* is a species that falls under the genus, *G*, then there is a definition of *S* that has an expression for *G* as a part. It follows that *G* is a part of the essence of *S* and, thus, that *G* is a formal part of *S*. This harmonizes with Aristotle’s claim that “a genus is part of its species” (Δ.25, 1023b23-5). A similar argument applies to differentiae: if *S* falls under differentia, *D*, then there is a definition of *S* in which *D* is mentioned. In general, then, differentiae are formal parts of the species that fall under them. This also has explicit textual basis: Aristotle writes, “other things [are ‘out of’ (ἐκ) something] as the species (εἶδος) is out of (ἐκ) a part: for example, human is out of

⁵⁰ See *Topics* A.9, 103b12-16, VI.4 141b25-6, and VI.6 143b19-20.

biped (δίποδος)” (Δ.241023a35-6). Since, biped is a differentia of human, Aristotle’s example indicates that differentiae are parts—and in particular they are *formal parts*—of the species they define.

It takes a bit more work to show that **Definition** explains why species are *said-of* the individuals that fall under them, but this work will further elucidate the concept of formal parthood. The challenge here derives from the difficulty of pinning down Aristotle’s understanding of the essences of primary substances, like Naomi. To identify Naomi’s formal parts—those parts of her that determine what she is—we need to know what Naomi’s essence is. In particular, we would need to know whether primary substance have unique essences or share their essences with the other members of their species. Definitively settling the extensive interpretive debates surrounding these issues is beyond the scope of this chapter. There is, however, a viable way forward: **Definition** is consistent with the two main camps concerning Aristotle’s view on the essences of particular substances. Whichever of these camps one favors, one can plausibly maintain that the species, human, is a formal part of Naomi Osaka.

Consider Naomi. On one view, Naomi has an *individual* essence (or “individual form”), in the sense that her essence is unique: she, Socrates, and each other human have numerically distinct essences.⁵¹ On this view, the species, *human*, which is shared by all humans is a *proper* part of the essence of Naomi: being human is a part of but not all of the essence of Naomi. There is more to her essence than being human, which is a feature she shares with all other humans. In other words, on this view, there is room to say that the species, human, is a proper part of Naomi’s essence. Thus, the species, human, the genus, animal, and the differentia, rational, are all on a par, in that they are all proper parts of Naomi’s essence. Since, in general, the (proper) parts of the essence of

⁵¹ For one version of this view, see Cooper, (1988, 33-38) for another version, see Frede (1987a, 65-71; 1987b, 77-81) and Frede & Pazig (1988 vol. I, 48-57).

x are defining (proper) parts of x, it follows from this view that the species, human, along with the genus, animal, and the differentia, rational are all *formal* parts of Naomi. Therefore, according to **Definition**, they are all *said-of* Naomi. Thus, on the view that Naomi has an individual essence, **Definition** neatly explains why human is *said-of* Naomi.

According to the second major interpretation of Aristotle's view on the essences of particular substances, all humans share a common essence.⁵² This view is also consistent with **Definition**. Naomi is composed from a material part—her matter—and a formal part—her essence, which she shares with all other humans. Since the essence she shares with all other humans is part of her but not identical to her, it is a proper part of her.⁵³ Indeed, it is a proper part that *determines what Naomi is*. Her essence, then, is a formal part of Naomi. Thus, even if the species, human, is *the whole of Naomi's essence*, it is still a formal part of Naomi. Therefore, **Definition** can explain why human is *said-of* Naomi on either of the two main interpretations of Aristotle's view concerning Naomi's essence.

This point illustrates an important fact about the concept of formal parthood: we need to distinguish the closely related concepts of *a formal part of* and *a part of the essence of*. On the understanding of species that Aristotle appears to operate with in *Categories* and *Topics*, the species, human, is identical to rational animal—i.e. the essence of human. On this view, *rational animal* is not a formal part of human: it defines human but it is not a *proper part* of the species. Thus, the proper parts of the species, human, that determine what it is are all *parts of its essence*. These are, the genus, human, the differentia, rational, and their formal parts. But there is an important difference between particular composite objects, like Naomi, and universals, like human: Naomi is not identical to her essence. Thus, Naomi's essence is a formal part of her: it is

⁵² For defenses of this view, see, e.g., Gelber (2010), Loux, (1991, 187-196 and 197-235), and Code (1986, 433-439).

⁵³ For discussion, see Koslicki (2006) and Rotkale (2018).

proper part of her that determines *what she is*. In short, the formal parts of objects that are identical to their essences, like the species, human, are the *parts* of their essences, but the formal parts of objects that are *composed out of* their essences, like Naomi, include both their entire essences *and* the parts of their essences.

With this understanding of formal parthood, let's turn to the logical profile of *said-of*. **Definition** explains why the *said-of* relation is irreflexive, asymmetric, and transitive. Given that (i) nothing is a proper part of itself and that (ii) no two objects can be proper parts of each other, it follows from **Definition** that nothing can be *said-of* itself and no two things can be *said-of* each other. Thus, *said-of* is irreflexive and asymmetric. Next, transitivity. It is standardly assumed that *proper parthood* is transitive: if *x* is a proper part of *y* and *y* is a proper part of *z*, then *x* is a proper part of *z*. Therefore, to show that **Definition** has the consequence that *said-of* is transitive we just need to show that *defining* is also transitive. This is quite plausible. Aristotle thinks that definitions can be chained: if square is defined by the expression “equilateral rectangle” and rectangle is defined by “right-angled quadrilateral”, then “equilateral right-angled quadrilateral” is a good definition of square. And if definitions can be chained in this way, then it stands to reason that the related concept of *defining* is transitive: if *A defines B* and *B defines C*, *A defines C*. Thus, the present proposal explains why *said-of* is transitive, irreflexive, and asymmetric.

With a bit of work, it is clear that **Definition** can account for the Truth Entailment principle. Recall that **Truth Entailment** says that

(Truth Entailment) if *A is said-of B*, then there is a true sentence of the form “ β is α ”

(where β and α are names for *B* and *A* respectively)

This principle is plausible for an object's species, genera, and differentiae. For example, Naomi is human, she is (an) animal, and she is rational. The challenge is that there appear to be objects

mentioned in definitions for which **Truth Entailment** fails. Consider literacy, defined as knowledge of words. In this case, *knowledge* is the genus and *of words* is the differentia. But the term “words” is part of the definition of this branch of knowledge, so—since the parts of a definition correspond to formal parts—it should follow from **Definition** that words, the genus of linguistic expressions, is *said-of* literacy. By **Truth Entailment**, it would follow that “literacy is words” is true. But clearly it is not. The solution is that not everything that is mentioned in a definition is a formal part of the item defined. In particular, a definition is composed of *only* two parts: the genus term and the differentia term.⁵⁴ The parts of a definition that correspond to formal parts, then, are just the genus term and differentia term. In the case of literacy, the kind *words* corresponds to neither: the genus is *knowledge* and the differentia is *of words*. Truth Entailment is plausible when it comes to species, genera and differentiae: it is true that literacy is *of words*. It is, then, reasonable to think that in *Categories* every definition is composed from genus and differentia, and, therefore, that every formal part is a species, a genus or a differentia. If we grant this plausible claim, then, as I’ve argued, the Truth-Entailment Principle follows from my proposal.

The **Name and Definition Principle** also follows from my proposal, given some plausible assumptions about predication. I will not give a fully regimented argument here, but the basic idea can be illustrated by example. Suppose that (i) Socrates is a human, (ii) animal is the genus of human, and (iii) rational is the differentia of human. It follows that human is *said-of* Socrates and animal is *said-of* human. So, by transitivity, animal is *said-of* Socrates. The same holds regarding rational. So, by **Truth Entailment**, “Socrates is rational” and “Socrates is animal” are true. If we concatenate “rational” and “animal” we get the complex expression “rational animal” in which the

⁵⁴ See *Topics* A.9, 103b12-16, VI.4 141b25-6, and VI.6 143b19-20.

word for the differentia functions as an adjective. The sentence involving this concatenated expression, “Socrates is (a) rational animal”, is also true. But this complex expression is just the definition of human. So, it turns out, the definition of human is predicated of Socrates. The crucial assumptions here are that (i) definitions are concatenations of a genus-term and one or more differentia-term and that (ii) if two predicates are truly predicated of the same subject, then any meaningful complex expression formed by concatenating words for these two predicates is also truly predicated of that subject.⁵⁵

Finally, formal parthood helps explain the significance of the individual/universal distinction and, on plausible assumptions, the **Underlier** principle. Certain items *have* formal parts but are not formal parts of anything else. These primary bearers of formal parts are individuals—i.e. the items that are not *said-of* anything. Their formal parts are universals—i.e. the items that *are said-of* something. If Aristotle accepts the plausible further claim that formal parts exist *by being formal parts*—i.e. that entities like rational and human exist in virtue of the fact that they are defining parts of some further object—then **Official Proposal** also explains why he thinks that individual substances (as a class) are more fundamental than secondary substances: each secondary substance exists in virtue of the fact that it is a formal part of some set of individual substances. Thus, the existence of individual substances as a class *explains* the existence of secondary substances. This point generalizes. Suppose A is a formal part of B, C and D. It follows that A exists *in virtue of the fact that* it is a formal part of B, C and D. Thus, there is a clear sense in which the existence of each of B, C and D (partly) explain the existence of A. It makes sense, then, to think of B, C, and D as “underlying” A. If so, then my proposal explains the **Underlier** principle and, indeed, all of the principles governing the *said-of* relation.

⁵⁵ The second assumption probably needs to be restricted somewhat, so that we avoid trying to predicate “big white” of a big, white dog.

3.2 Categories 1a24-5

So far, I have proposed an account of the *said-of* relation in terms of *formal parthood* and shown that this account explains the principles governing the *said-of* relation. Still, the account would be substantially stronger if I could make the case that Aristotle employs the notion of formal parthood somewhere in the *Categories*. In this section, I argue that Aristotle does and that he does just where my account of *said-of* would have us expect—in chapter 2 where he introduces the *said-of* and *present-in* relations.

In the course of his chapter 2 division of beings (1a20-1b6), Aristotle offers the following explanatory aside:

By “in a subject” I mean what belongs in⁵⁶ something (ἐν τινι ὑπάρχον) not as a part (μὴ ὡς μέρος) and cannot exist without something in which it is.⁵⁷ (*Cat.* 2.1a24-5)

– ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ δὲ λέγω ὃ ἐν τινι μὴ ὡς μέρος ὑπάρχον ἀδύνατον χωρὶς εἶναι τοῦ ἐν ᾧ ἐστίν

Commentators disagree about whether this remark is meant to be a definition or merely a gloss of the *present-in* relation.⁵⁸ It is generally agreed, however, that Aristotle means to give at least the following sufficient condition:

⁵⁶ I construe the phrase “ἐν τινι μὴ ὡς μέρος ὑπάρχον” as a single participial expression, in which “ὑπάρχον” takes “ἐν τινι” as its complement. This construal of “ὑπάρχον” is confirmed by the parallel passage at 5.3a32 (cp. “τὰ ὡς μέρη ὑπάρχοντα ἐν τινι”). Aristotle uses ὑπάρχειν ἐν + dative several times in the *Categories*; see, e.g., 2a14-5, 2a15-16, 3a32, 6b15, and 12a30. These uses make clear that ὑπάρχειν ἐν does not mean “is *present-in*” (see 2a14-5 for one clear example); therefore, we should not take “belongs in something” (ὑπάρχον ἐν τινι) in 1a24-5 to mean “is *present-in* something.” This mitigates somewhat the concern that Aristotle’s definition or gloss is circular [see, Frede (1987a, 62) and Erginel (2003, 194 and n.7); cf. Ackrill (1963, 74)]: at least the first use of “ἐν”—although perhaps not the second—does not stand for the *present-in* relation.

⁵⁷ I mean to leave open the question of whether “τινι” and “τοῦ” share a referent. This issue is a point of major controversy: see, e.g., Frede (1987a, 61) and Corkum (2009, 8-9).

⁵⁸ For the view that this sentence offers a definition of *present-in*, see Ackrill (1963, 74-5) and R. E. Allen (1973, 364). Frede (1987a, 59) takes this sentence to give a definition of the one-place predicate *is present-in some subject*; cf. Matthews (2009, 151-2). For the view that the sentence gives a helpful gloss rather than a definition, see Erginel (2003, 192-4).

if (i) *x* belongs in *y*⁵⁹, (ii) *x* is not a part of *y*, and (iii) *x* cannot exist without *y*, then *x* is *present-in y*.⁶⁰

For our purposes, what is most important is condition (ii): *x* is not a part of *y*. What notion of parthood does Aristotle have in mind here? To answer this question, we need to determine the role that condition (ii) plays—that is, we need to know what types of cases it is meant to rule out. There are three types of cases that Aristotle might be targeting. Consider Naomi’s heart. Naomi’s heart “belongs in” Naomi and, on Aristotle’s view, it cannot exist without her.⁶¹ But physical parts of primary substances, like Naomi’s heart, are themselves substances (7.8a15-21) and substances are not *present-in* anything (5.3a7-8). So, plausibly, Aristotle intends condition (ii) to exclude Naomi’s heart and other physical parts of primary substances from being *present-in* their wholes.

Physical parts are not the only kind of case for which Aristotle needs condition (ii). Consider Naomi herself. At the start of *Categories* 5, Aristotle writes that particular humans, like Naomi, “belong in” (ὑπάρχει ἐν + dat.) the species, human (5.2a16-17). So, Naomi satisfies condition (i) with respect to the species, human. What is more, Naomi cannot exist without the species, human; so, she satisfies condition (iii) as well. Since primary substances, like Naomi, are not *present-in* anything (5.2a11-14, 5.3a7-9), Aristotle needs to rule out this case. Plausibly, he accomplishes this with condition (ii): there is a sense of “part” according to which a universal, like human, is a whole whose *parts* are the items of which it is predicated (see Δ.26 1023b26-32). Let’s call a “part” in

⁵⁹ “Belongs in” does not mean “is present-in”; see n. 46.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Ackrill (1963, 74-5), Owen (1965) and discussion in Corkum (2008, esp. 1-15). Frede (1987a, 58-63) holds that this *is* a sufficient condition for being *present-in y*, but that this is not what Aristotle is asserting in our passage. The one exception is Erginel (2003, 192-4), who takes the sentence to give a necessary but not sufficient condition. This reading is hard to square with the text: Aristotle does not say, “I call in a subject *only* what is ...”; rather he says, “I call in a subject *what* is ...”. Surely, then, he means to assert at least a sufficient condition.

⁶¹ Compare the use of ἐνυπάρχον in *Gen. An.* I.21 729b3. See DA. II.412b10-25 for view that parts of substances cannot exist without their wholes.

this sense an “extensional part.” Thus, Aristotle appears to need condition (ii) to rule out both physical parts and extensional parts.

Finally consider the differentia, rational. Differentiae “belong in” the species that they constitute⁶² and cannot exist without their species.⁶³ Therefore, the differentia, rational, satisfies conditions (i) and (iii) with respect to human, but Aristotle also claims that differentiae of substances, like rational, are not *present-in* anything (5.3a21-28). So, we need condition (ii) to rule out *formal parts*, like rational.

How, then, are we to understand condition (ii)? One option is that “not as a part” is ambiguous: the expression excludes several relevant sorts of “part” from being *present-in* their wholes. On this reading, one could gloss condition (ii) as saying that x must not be a part of y *in any (relevant) sense* of “part.” This approach has its drawbacks: Aristotle’s own view is that accounts are vitiated if they include homonymous uses of terms (cf. *Top.* VI.1 139b12-15 & VI.2 139b19-23). By his own lights, then, 1a24-5 does not do a good job of defining or explicating the *present-in* relation. Indeed, if the best available definition or gloss of *present-in* employs “part” ambiguously, then this is a reason to doubt whether there is any unified notion of *present-in*.⁶⁴

Alternatively, there might be an implicit restriction on the kinds of cases under consideration in 1a24-5. The entities Aristotle is considering in chapter 2 are subjects and predicates: they are not themselves truths but they combine to form truths (2.1a16-19, 4.1b25-6, 4.2a4-10, 10.13b9-11). The idea appears to be that *present-in* and *said-of* correspond to two different ways in which

⁶² See *Physics* IV.3 210a18-20 and *APo.* I.4 73b16-18.

⁶³ See Frede (1987a, 61). For each species, the “constituting” differentia that is part of its definition is *said-of* that species and only that species (as well as the items that fall under the species) (3.16-24 and 5.3b1-9; cf. *Cat.* 5.3a21-28 and *Topics* VI.6.). Differentiae are not *present-in* anything (5.3a7-28). Aristotle thinks that an item that is *said-of* or *present-in* something cannot exist without any subjects (see 5.2b3-6). So, if the species, human, fails to exist, then the differentia, rational, has no subjects—i.e. it is not *said-of* or *present-in* anything—and cannot exist. Cf. *Top.* V. 133a18-23.

⁶⁴ Corkum (2008, 13) endorses a version of this reading of 1a24-5 on which “part” refers to both formal parts and physical parts.

subjects and predicates can combine to form truths.⁶⁵ Perhaps, then, in addition to conditions (i), (ii) and (iii) Aristotle is assuming that (iv) “y is x” is true. This is plausible. As we noted above, the *said-of* relation and the *present-in* relation are *truth entailing*. It is reasonable, then, to think that Aristotle is assuming in 1a24-5 that if x is *present-in* y then “y is x” expresses a true “combination”—i.e. a true predicative sentence.⁶⁶ If this is right, then there is an implicit restriction on the cases that Aristotle is considering in 1a24-5. He is only considering cases in which “y is x” is a true predicative sentence. Thus, we have a second solution to our puzzle: the sentences “Naomi is her hand” and “human is Naomi” are both false, but “human is rational” is true. In general, “y is x” will be false where x is a physical part of y and where x is an extensional part of y, but it will be true where x is a formal part of y. Therefore, Aristotle only needs condition (ii) to exclude *formal parts*.⁶⁷

If we read Aristotle’s reference to parts as a reference to formal parts in particular, then the passage as a whole works quite well. On this reading, the contrast that Aristotle draws in 1a24-5 is between a sense of “in” that expresses the *present-in* relation and a sense of “in” that applies to formal parts. Given my proposal about the nature of *said-of*, this means that Aristotle is disambiguating two truth-entailing senses of “in,” one of which expresses the *said-of* relation and the other of which expresses the *present-in* relation. Put another way, in 1a24-5 Aristotle is explicating the contrast that forms the centerpiece of this chapter and much of the rest of the *Categories*: the contrast between *said-of* and *present-in*. But even if we prefer to read 1a24-5 as involving an ambiguous use of “part”, Aristotle has in mind formal parts among other things. He

⁶⁵ Perhaps more precisely, terms for these entities are not truths but they can combine to form truths.

⁶⁶ More precisely, he thinks that if x is *present-in* y then for appropriate terms t_x and t_y standing for x and y, respectively, “ t_y is t_x ” is a true predicative sentence. Note that in many cases t_x will be an adjective rather than a noun.

⁶⁷ Frede (1987a, 61-2) defends this conclusion by referring to 5.3a29-32. He argues that the context of this passage indicates that in it “parts of substances” are formal parts. While I think his reading of that passage is the most likely one, I do not think it is required by the text.

does mean to convey that formal parts of *x* are not *present-in* *x*, even if this is not all that he means to convey. Thus, in the passage that introduces the *said-of* and *present-in* relations, Aristotle points out that the formal parts of a subject are not *present-in* that subject. That is, we find a reference to formal parts just where, on my view, we should expect to find one.

4. The Three Remaining Questions

We started with four questions: (i) what is the *said-of* relation? (ii) Is it an essential relation? (iii) how is it related to predication? (iv) Is it primitive or analyzable? So far, I've proposed an answer to the first question: *x* is *said-of* *y* just in case *x* is a formal part of *y*. This account, I argued, does a good job of explaining all of the principles governing *said-of*. In this section, I flesh out my account by considering our three remaining questions. My answer to each puts my account of *said-of* at odds with an existing interpretation of the *said-of* relation: contra Crivelli, I think that *said-of* is an essential relation; contra Frede, I argue that *said-of* is not defined in terms of predication; and, contra Code, I argue that *said-of* can be defined in more basic terms. In defending my answers to each of these three questions, then, I will also be arguing that my account of *said-of* does a better job of explaining Aristotle's text than one of its competitors.

4.1 Crivelli and Essentialism

The account I have proposed gives us an answer to our second question. According to my proposal, *said-of* is an essential relation: if *A* is *said-of* *B*, then it is essential to *B* that *B* is *A*. In this respect, my position is in line with that of the majority of commentators.⁶⁸ This essentialist consensus is, in large part, motivated by Aristotle's examples. Essentialists reason that it cannot

⁶⁸ I do not mean to commit myself to the view that *said-of* relation just is essential predication. Plausibly, *said-of* is a more demanding concept than essential predication as Aristotle thinks of it elsewhere.

be a coincidence that, in all of Aristotle's examples, what is *said-of* the subject is *essential* to the subject and what is *present-in* a subject is *not essential* to the subject. Recently, however, this majority position has been challenged by Paolo Crivelli (2017), who argues that essentialist accounts of the *said-of* relation, like the one I proposed, cannot accommodate all of Aristotle's examples. In what follows, I defend essentialism about *said-of* against Crivelli's objection.

On Crivelli's reading, "the universal bad is SAID OF some man, but it is not predicated essentially of him (because it is possible for that man to become good from bad). Again, the universal to-be-blind is SAID OF some man, but it is not predicated essentially of him" (2017, 540-1). Crivelli's argument rests on his reading of two passages in *Categories* 10—11b38-12a17 (T5) and 12a39-b1 (T6)—which he argues show that the universal, bad, and the universal, to-be-blind, are *said-of* individual humans.

Let's start with *Cat.* 10.11b38-12a17, in which Aristotle contrasts pairs of contraries "without an intermediate" and pairs of contraries "with an intermediate". Crivelli's interpretation of this passage turns on the claim that the contrast between "coming to be in" (γίγνεσθαι ἐν) and "being predicated of" (κατηγορεῖται + gen.) corresponds to the *present-in/said-of* distinction. Here is Aristotle's text with the crucial expressions in bold:

[T5] Whichever contraries are of such a sort that it is necessary that one [or other] of them belongs (ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῶν θάτερον ὑπάρχειν) to the things **in which they** [viz. the pair of contraries] **naturally come to be** (ἐν οἷς πέφυκε γίγνεσθαι) or **of which they are predicated** (ἣ ὧν κατηγορεῖται)—of these [pairs of contraries] there is no intermediate. ... For example, sickness and health naturally **come to be in** living body⁶⁹ ... And both odd and even **are predicated of** number ...

⁶⁹ Literally, "come to be in body of living thing."

But those [pairs of contraries] such that it is not necessary that one or other of them belong [viz. to each subject in their domain]—of those there is some intermediate. For example, black and white naturally **come to be in** body ... And both bad and good (φαῦλον δὲ καὶ σπουδαῖον) **are predicated of** people and of many other things ...

If Crivelli (2017, 535-7) is right that “comes to be in” expresses the *present-in* relation and “is predicated of” expresses *said-of*, then it turns out that good and bad are *said-of* individual humans. This would be a problem for essentialists about *said-of* because humans are not essentially good or bad.

However, Crivelli’s reading of the contrast between “comes to be in” and “is predicated of” is not obvious. Plausibly, T5 relies on the contrast between (a) predicates that come to belong to each of their subjects *through some process* and (b) predicates that do not always, or by nature, come to belong to each of their subjects through a process. Aristotle’s first three examples clearly work with this reading. Living bodies come to be healthy or fall ill through a process, and bodies generally come to be white or black through a process, but there is no process through which numbers become even or odd. To talk about the range of possible subjects for predicates like health, illness, black and white, Aristotle uses expressions like “those things in which they naturally come to be”, which emphasize that the predicates in questions come to belong to their subjects through some process. To talk about the range of subjects for predicates like odd and even, however, Aristotle has to use more generic expressions like “those thing of which they are predicated”, which do not imply any process of coming to be. The final example also works with this reading: the domain of subjects that good and bad (φαῦλον καὶ σπουδαῖον) “are predicated of” is “a human and many other things” (κατ’ ἀνθρώπου καὶ κατ’ ἄλλων πολλῶν). Humans undergo changes through which they come to be good or bad (5.4a30-34), but not *everything* that is good

or bad comes to be good or bad through some process. Take actions: if an act of friendship is good, it does not become good through a process—it just is good.⁷⁰ To talk about the range of subjects for good and bad, Aristotle needs to use his more neutral expression, “things of which they are predicated”. If this is right, then T5 does not support Crivelli’s objection to essentialists about *said-of*. T5 does not show that the universal, good, and the universal, bad, are *said-of* individual humans.

Let’s now turn to Crivelli’s second passage:

[T6] Again, if blindness were the same as being blind, they would both be predicated of the same thing, but the human is called blind, and the human is in no way called blindness.
(12a39-b1)

Crivelli’s reading of this passage (537-8) turns on two key contentions: that Aristotle is not talking about the expressions, “blindness” and “blind”, but entities, blindness and the universal, to-be-blind; and that “predicated of” expresses the *said-of* relation. Essentialists might challenge either of these contentions. Here, I focus on the first.

Crivelli (537-8) gives three reasons to think that T6 is about entities rather than expressions: (1) the *Categories* is primarily concerned with entities rather than expressions; (2) since it is obvious that “blindness” and “is blind” are distinct expressions, T6 cannot be giving an argument for this claim; and (3) T6 gives an example of the general rule that *being deprived* is different from the associated privation, but this general rule is about entities rather than expressions. Let’s work through them in turn.

(1) While Crivelli is certainly right that *Categories* is primarily about entities, Aristotle does talk about expressions in the *Categories*.⁷¹ The lines that follow T6 (12b5-16), provide a

⁷⁰ Aristotle makes a similar point when he says that individual substances can have contrary predicates (at different times) but that “the same action, one in number, will not be bad and good (φάλη καὶ σπουδαία)” (5.4a15-16).

⁷¹ See, e.g., 1.1a1-15, 2.1a16-19, 5.2a19-34, 5.4a21-4b13, and 8.10a27-10b11.

clear example: in those lines Aristotle argues that linguistic expressions can be opposed to each other in the same way that worldly items are opposed.

(2) Crivelli is certainly right that it is obvious that “is blind” and “blindness” are different expressions. It is not so obvious, however, that they have different meanings or extensions. Plausibly, in T6, Aristotle is drawing attention to the non-obvious fact that the true sentence, “Oedipus is blind,” does not count as a case of predicating the expression “blindness” of Oedipus even though it expresses a predication in which blindness is predicated of Oedipus.

(3) Crivelli makes a strong case that Aristotle means to argue that *being deprived of a state* is distinct from the associated privation (12a35). But it is perfectly reasonable to think that some of the evidence for this conclusion concerns the difference between the expressions we use to talk about being deprived of a state and the expressions we use for the privation itself: if he can show that “is blind” and “blindness” mean different things, then he has gone a long way toward showing that *being deprived of a state* and the *privation itself* are distinct.

Finally, there is positive evidence for the linguistic reading of T6. Following T6, Aristotle argues that, although they are distinct, *being deprived* is opposed to *possessing a state* in the same way that privation is opposed to possession (12b1-5). He then follows this with a lengthy remark (12b5-15) illustrating that linguistic expressions can be opposed to each other in the same way that the underlying worldly items are opposed. Given that this remark is about a different type of opposition—i.e. contradiction—it *only* makes sense in context if it is supporting or explaining the earlier claim that “as blindness is opposed to sight, so being blind is opposed to having sight”

(12b3-5). Thus, the lengthy remark at 12b5-15 is only relevant to its context if “being blind” and “having sight” are meant to refer to expressions. Plausibly, then, T6 is also about expressions.

The upshot is that all of Aristotle’s examples of *said-of* support essentialism about the relation. This does not, however, settle all of our questions about *said-of*: essentialists disagree among themselves about how *said-of* is related to predication and whether *said-of* can be defined in more basic terms. I now turn to these questions.

4.2 Frede and Predication

Clearly, *said-of* is closely connected to predication. It is, after all, predication entailing. But, why is it predication entailing? How exactly is the *said-of* relation related to predication? The two most natural explanations for the close connection between *said-of* and predication are

- (1) (***said-of* explains predication**) if A is *said-of* B, then A is predicated of B in virtue of the fact that A is *said-of* B

and

- (2) (**predication explains *said-of***) if A is *said-of* B, then A is *said-of* B (partly) in virtue of the fact that A is *predicated of* B.⁷²

Both of these positions have their defenders in the literature on *said-of*.⁷³ I favor the former.

⁷² In principle, it is possible that neither *said-of* nor predication explains the other. This position is consistent with my definition of *said-of*, but I do not know of any defenders of this view in the literature and I do not see any reason to think it is true. For these reasons, I will not consider this possibility in what follows.

⁷³ Code (1985, 103; 1986, 414 and n. 9) popularized (1). Frede (1987a, 53) is a prominent proponent of (2); cf. M. L. Gill (1984, 10 & n.4).

To see the advantages of (1), let's first consider an influential version of (2) defended by Michael Frede.⁷⁴ Frede proposes the following as a “definition” of *said-of*: “y is said of x as its subject if, and only if,

- (i) y is truly predicated of x; and
- (ii) the name of y occurs as a predicate-noun in the sentence in which y is predicated of x; and
- (iii) if, in that sentence, the definition of y can be substituted for the name *salva veritate*” (Frede, 1987, 53).⁷⁵

If Frede is correct, then the *said-of* relation is a type or species of predication. It follows from his view that if y is *said-of* x, then this is (in part) in virtue of the fact that y is predicated of x.⁷⁶

Frede's account faces a dilemma. Either predication in the *Categories* has the same logical profile as predication in *Topics* and *Analytics* and the Fredean account of *said-of* violates, at least, the principles of **Irreflexivity** and **Individuals**; or *Categories* predication and *Topics* predication are very different and Aristotle never explains or directly discusses the notion of predication that is at the core of his theory in *Categories*.

Let's flesh out the first horn of the dilemma by considering some of what Aristotle says about predication in a passage in *Topics* IV.1, which commentators have identified as a companion to Aristotle's discussion of the **Name and Definition Principle** in *Categories* 5.⁷⁷ Aristotle has just told us that “the definition of partaking is admitting (ἐπιδέχασθαι) the definition of that which is

⁷⁴ A version of this account is endorsed as a definition of *said-of* in antiquity by Porphyry (80.17-30) and Simplicius (*in Cat.* 51.30-52.5). In modern scholarship, it has been endorsed as a definition by Gill (1984, 10) and Hetherington (1984, 218) and as a true characterization of *said-of* by Code (1985, 429-30) and Mann (2000, 53-4).

⁷⁵ Note that, as stated, this account makes the *said-of* relation depend on contingent linguistic facts—e.g. the existence of a name for y. See note 83 below.

⁷⁶ This account builds on Aristotle's remark a 5.2a19-21, “it is clear from what has been said that it is necessary that the name and the definition of things said of a subject are predicated of the subject.” It is natural, however, to interpret this remark as giving a consequence that follows from the proper grasp of the *said-of* relation rather than a definition.

⁷⁷ See Crivelli (2017, 549) and Morrison (1993, 171); cf. Code (1985, 429-30).

partaken (τὸν τοῦ μετεχομένου λόγον)” (121a11-12). In other words, x “partakes in” y just in case x admits the definition of y. Since genera do not partake in their species (12-14), one can prove that A is not the genus of B by showing that A partakes in B. Here is Aristotle’s example:

[T7] For example, if one were to assign something as a genus of being (τοῦ ὄντος) or of one (τοῦ ἐνός), for then it would follow that the genus partakes in the species. For being and one are predicated of (κατηγορεῖται κατά) all of the beings (πάντων τῶν ὄντων); therefore, their definition is also [predicated of all the beings]. (121a16-19)

Neither *being* nor *one* can have a genus because, if either did, then that genus would partake in its species, since *being* and *one* are predicated of all beings and their definitions are predicated of all beings. As is clear in a closely related passage, *being* and *one* are themselves included in “all beings”: Aristotle infers that *being* is predicated of *one* from the claim that being is predicated of “everything” (VI.6 127a26-31).⁷⁸ Therefore, *being* and *one* (and their definitions) are predicated of each other and of themselves. If this is right, then it follows from T7 together with Frede’s account of *said-of* that *being* and *one* are *said-of* themselves and they are *said-of* each other. But, as we saw above, the *said-of* relation is irreflexive and asymmetric.

More generally, T7 shows that there is nothing in the *Topics*’s concept of predication that requires predication to be irreflexive or asymmetric (or even anti-symmetric). What is more, there are other passages that suggest that predication is *reflexive*. Malink (2013, esp. 139-141 and 144) persuasively argues that in *Topics*⁷⁹ and *Analytics*⁸⁰ predication is reflexive—i.e. that everything

⁷⁸ Being and one also share an extension, so it follows that each is predicated of itself.

⁷⁹ See *Topics* I.9 103b36 and V.5 135a9-12. On the former passage, see Alexander in *Top.* 67.5-11; on the latter, see Malink (2013, 139-40) and Barnes (1971, 151).

⁸⁰ More precisely, Malink (2013, esp. 63-72) argues that universal affirmative predication—or Ax-predication—is reflexive. This form of predication is relevant for our purposes because it is the form of *Analytics* predication that most closely tracks the *said-of* relation of *Categories*. For independent arguments that (essential) predication is reflexive, see Kung (1981, 232) and Code (1985, esp. 414, 417, and 419-20), who cites *Metaph.* Δ.18 1022a25-7.

is predicated of itself.⁸¹ But if everything is predicated of itself, then for every entity that has a name, the entity's name is predicated of it.⁸² Likewise, for everything with a definition, the definition of that thing is predicated of it. Thus, on the assumption that predication in the *Categories* operates like predication in *Topics* or *Analytics*, Frede's account has the consequence that the *said-of* relation is *reflexive* rather than irreflexive. It follows that, on Frede's account, individuals are *said-of* themselves, which is inconsistent with Aristotle's claim that individuals are not *said-of* anything (1a23-9, 1b3-6, 1b6-9, 2a11-14, 3a7-9, and 3a37).⁸³

To avoid these objections, a Fredean might fall back on our dilemma's second horn and maintain that predication in the *Categories*—and in Frede's account—is quite different from predication in *Topics* or *Analytics*. While in *Topics* everything is predicated of itself and at least some things are predicated of each other, our Fredean might maintain that in *Categories* nothing is predicated of itself and no two things are predicated of each other. The problem is that, on this view, the *Categories*'s ontology and theory of property possession rely on an unexplained notion of predication. In other words, on this reading of *Categories*, Aristotle relies on non-trivial claims about the *said-of* relation to defend his central claims and he defines the *said-of* relation in terms of predication, but he never bothers to explain what predication is or say anything about it directly. It is true that Aristotle says a fair amount about something that he calls “predication” in *Topics* and

⁸¹ As Malink puts it, “everything is predicated essentially of itself”, from which it follows that everything is predicated of itself. This should be understood as a claim about entities, not terms: it does not follow that that for every term, *t*, there is a true predicative sentence of form “*t* is *t*”.

⁸² See Malink (2013, 141) for a similar point about “nouns” in contrast to “paronymous terms” like the adjective, “greedy”.

⁸³ A Fredean should not argue that, since primary substances do not have definition, it follows trivially that they are not *said-of* themselves. This simply highlights the fact that Frede's account has the consequence that whether *x* is *said-of* *y* depends on contingent linguistic facts. Frede's account is only tenable if we revise it to remove the objectionable appeals to language as follows: *x* is *said-of* *y* iff *x* is predicated of *y* and the essence of *x* is predicated of *y* (where the essence of *x* is *what x is*—i.e. the ontological correlate of a definition of *x*, if *x* has a definition). Since, *ex hypothesi*, everything is predicted of itself and everything's essence is predicated of it, it follows from this revised Fredean account that *said-of* is reflexive.

Analytics, but, *ex hypothesi*, the relation he is talking about there is not the predication of *Categories*. This leaves Aristotle open to a version of his own critique of Plato's appeals to participation: Aristotle founds a theory of property possession and ontology on a relation that he introduces with technical jargon but leaves unexplained and relatively unexamined.

If we reject Frede's account, then we need to say how *said-of* is related to predication. I suggest that we adopt a suggestion of Code's (1985; 1986) that the *said-of* relation (and the *present-in* relation) are more fundamental than predication. In particular, I suggest we attribute to Aristotle the view that

- (1) (***said-of* explains predication**) if A is *said-of* B, then A is predicated of B in virtue of the fact that A is *said-of* B.

If this is right, then, in the *Categories*, Aristotle is presenting a partial theory of predication by studying two more basic relations—*said-of* and *present-in*—that ground or metaphysically explain predications. Since predications are explained in terms of *said-of* and *present-in* rather than the reverse and since Aristotle studies these two relations in some detail, he is not subject to the complaint that his theory relies on unexplained, empty, or metaphorical technical language.

4.3 Code and Fundamentality

We have said what *said-of* is, that it is an essential relation, and how it is related to predication. One question remains: is the *said-of* relation primitive or can it be defined in more basic terms? The account that I offered—that x is *said-of* y just in case x is a formal part of y—is intended as a real definition of *said-of*. If this is right, then *said-of* can be defined in more basic terms.

This puts my account at odds with the interpretation defended by Alan Code (1985 & 1986). According to Code (1985, 103; 1986, 413 and 419), the *said-of* relation (and the *present-in* relation) are “primitive” and “basic” and the logical principles that govern them are “fundamental

truths.”⁸⁴ I take this to mean that instances of the *said-of* relation—facts of the form *A is said-of B*—are fundamental truths that cannot be further explained, and, furthermore, that the *said-of* relation itself cannot be defined in more basic terms. Let’s call this view “Primitivism.” Code shows that even if *said-of* and *present-in* are primitive they need not be mysterious or obscure. One can still successfully explain them by offering a “semi-formal” theory comprised of principles and theorems about the two relations (1986, 414-6).

Let’s first consider the semi-formal theory that Code offers—which I will call “Codean Primitivism”—and then assess the prospects for Primitivism more generally. According to Codean Primitivism, there are four “Formal Principles” at the core of Aristotle’s theory of predication. In the terminology we have been using here, they are as follows:

FP1 *A is said-of A*

FP2 If *A is said-of B* and *B is said-of C*, then *A is said-of C*

FP3 If *A is said-of B*, then *A is not present-in B*

FP4 *A is present-in B* iff *A is said-of something that is present-in B*.⁸⁵

FP1 and FP4 are in tension with Aristotle’s claim that individuals are not *said-of* anything (1a23-9, 1b3-6, 1b6-9, 2a11-14, 3a7-9, 3a37). Since individuals are not *said-of* anything, they are not *said-of* themselves, but FP1 says that everything is *said-of* itself.⁸⁶ Similarly, FP4 entails that everything that is *present-in* a subject is *said-of* something, but Aristotle claims that non-substance

⁸⁴ See also Loux (1991, 18). Strictly, Code thinks that the *converse* of *said-of* and the *converse* of *present-in* are the primitive “Is” and “Has” relations.

⁸⁵ Code takes “Is” and “Has”, which he says are the converses of *said-of* and *present-in*, to be primitive and gives his theory in terms of them. For present purposes, the difference is immaterial.

⁸⁶ As Code puts it, that each thing is *said-of* itself is “is a fundamental truth ... Everything Is essentially itself, and nothing accidentally Has itself” (Code, 1986, 419). Note also that Mann (2000; 77, 82, and 190-1) seems to embrace the reflexivity of *said-of*.

individuals—like “a particular literacy” and “a particular white”—are *present-in* a subject but are not *said-of* any subject (1a23-29; see also 1b6-9).⁸⁷

This point of divergence between Code’s theory and that of the *Categories* has significant implications. For example, Code offers the following definitions of numerical identity (D4) and individuality (D5):

D4 $A = B$ iff (A is *said-of* B and B is *said-of* A)

D5 A is individual (ἄτομον) iff (necessarily) for all B it is the case that (if A is *said-of* B, then B is *said-of* A).

Given that, in the *Categories*, individuals (τὰ ἅτομα) are *said-of* no subject (οὐδενὸς ὑποκειμένου λέγεται) (1b6-9) and, therefore, are not *said-of* themselves, Aristotle cannot accept D4 and D5 as definitions of identity and individuality in the *Categories*. In sum, the differences between Code’s principles and the theory of the *Categories* are deep and widespread.⁸⁸

These considerations tell against Codean Primitivism, but they are consistent with Primitivism more generally. A Primitivist might argue that the principles discussed in §2 above constitute Aristotle’s description of a primitive relation, for which he uses the technical idiom, “*is said of*” (λέγεται κατά) and which he believes cannot be defined. On my account, however, *said-of* is not primitive: it is defined in terms of the more basic concept of *formal parthood* and this definition explains the principles—logical, semantic and metaphysical—that govern the *said-of* relation.

How can we decide between these two options? One approach is to consider the *said-of* relation in the larger context of Aristotle’s essentialism. Aristotle has several essentialist idioms. One set of these idioms—like *the what it is* (τὸ τί ἐστὶ) and *the what it is to be* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι)—are used

⁸⁷ Moreover, as I argued above, *said-of* is asymmetric, which inconsistent with Code’s account.

⁸⁸ Code (1986, n. 11) is aware that in *Categories* “a primary substance is not predicable of a subject and consequently is not ‘said of itself’” and that this is inconsistent with FP1. However, he maintains that this is a “minor departure from the *Cat.*” In my view, the departure is significant.

to talk about the nature or essence of *x*, understood as an entity that defines *x* and makes *x* what it is. Another set of these idioms—e.g. being *said-of* (λέγεται κατά), belonging in itself (ὕπαρχει καθ' αὐτό), being predicated in the what it is (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστι κατηγορεῖται)—express a relationship, or rather several closely related relationships, between an item and some feature that it *has essentially*. The two essentialist concepts—*being essentially F* and *the essence of x*—are closely related, but they are distinct: the genus, animal, is one of the essential features of Socrates—Socrates *is essentially* an animal—but this feature is not the essence of Socrates, rather animal is *part* of the essence of Socrates.

There are three ways that these two Aristotelian concepts might be related to each other. First, *being essentially F* might be analyzed, or metaphysically explained, in terms of *the essence of x*. I will call this the “Essence First” approach to essentialism. Second, *the essence of x* might be analyzed in terms of *being essentially F*. Call this the “Essential Features First” approach. Third, it might be the case that neither concept is more fundamental than the other: neither is analyzed or metaphysically explained in terms of the other. Call this the “Parity” approach.

Primitivism about the *said-of* relation—according to which, *said-of* is a basic, unanalyzable relation—rules out the Essence First approach. If *said-of* is unanalyzable, then it cannot be analyzed in terms of *essence*. In certain texts, however, Aristotle appears to take the Essence First approach. In *Metaphysics* Δ.18, for example, Aristotle tells us that “in itself” (τὸ καθ' αὐτό) is said in several ways,

for in one way [each thing] is *per se* (καθ' αὐτό) its essence (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι ἐκάστω), for example Callias is *per se* Callias⁸⁹ and the essence of Callias. And in another way, each

⁸⁹ Reading Καλλίας καθ' αὐτὸν Καλλίας with Jaeger, Ross, Kirwan (1971), and Code (1985 n. 11).

thing that belongs in (ὕπάρχει ἐν) the what it is (τῷ τί ἐστίν); for example, Callias is *per se* (καθ' αὐτόν) an animal. (1022a25-8)

Aristotle uses similar language in *Posterior Analytics* I.4: “in itself (καθ' αὐτά) are whatever belongs in the what it is (ὕπάρχει ἐν τῷ τί ἐστίν)” (73a35-6).⁹⁰ In both cases, Aristotle appeals to an idiom for *the essence of x* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι ἐκάστω, τῷ τί ἐστίν) to introduce the notion of an essential feature or something that belongs “in itself” (καθ' αὐτό) to a subject. The same holds in *Topics*. There, Aristotle relies on the concept of an essence (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) to distinguish four types of predicates—definitions, propria, genera, and accidents—and, thus, four ways in which a predicate may be predicated of a subject (101b17-25, 103b7-12). Indeed, his definitions of definition (101b37-8), proprium (102a18-19) and genus (102a31) all make use of the concepts of signifying an essence (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) or being in an essence (τῷ τί ἐστι).

At least sometimes, then, Aristotle introduces the concept of *being essentially F* by relying upon the notion of *the essence of x*. This is defeasible evidence in favor of the Essence First approach: it suggests that, in the order of things, *the essence of* is a more basic concept than *said-of* or *being essentially F* and that the latter are analyzed or defined in terms of the former. To definitively settle the matter, further inquiry is required. Still, these passages indicate that we should take seriously the possibility that Aristotle takes the Essence First approach and thinks that, as I have argued, the *said-of* relation is not primitive but analyzed in terms of more basic essentialist concepts.

⁹⁰ See also *APo.* 73a37-b1.

Chapter 5

Higher-order Predication in *Categories*

1. Introduction

According to Aristotle in the *Categories*, not all truths are on a metaphysical par.

(A) Socrates is a human

and

(B) Socrates is wise

are equally true, but fundamentally different. A is essential: it is part of the very nature of Socrates that Socrates is human. B is accidental: Socrates is wise, but wisdom is no part of the essence of Socrates.¹ What is more, in A, the predicate term², “human”, corresponds to a substance—namely, the species, human. Whereas, in B, the predicate-term, “wise”, introduces an accident—namely, the quality, wisdom. These two distinctions—between essential and accidental predication and between substances and accidents—are cornerstones of Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian metaphysics, and they are among Aristotle’s most influential and enduring contributions to the history of philosophy.

¹ I will use “essential” and “accidental” as rough stand-ins for, respectively, Aristotle’s technical “said of” relation (typically expressed by the verbal expression λέγεται κατά + genitive or similar) and his “present in” relation (typically expressed by ἐστὶ ἐν + dative or similar). Where it is important to talk about these relations or their instances, I will use “*said-of*” and “*present-in*”. The majority of modern commentators identify *said-of* predication with essential predication and *present-in* predication with accidental predication. See, e.g., Owen (1965a, 136-8), Code (1985, 101), Code (1986a, 417), Frede (1987a, 73), Loux (1991, 21), Mann (2000, 23), and Perin (2007, 127-8). This position was also common in antiquity. See Ammonius (*in Cat.* 31.6-12); Philoponus (*in Cat.* 38.38-9); Simplicius, apparently quoting Porphyry, (*in Cat.* 48.25-31); and Anonymous, (*in Cat.* 7.20-1). For a dissenting position and further discussion see Crivelli (2017). Officially, I do not mean to take a stand on whether the distinction between essential and accidental predication should be identified the *said-of* and *present-in* relations of the *Categories*.

² I follow the convention in *Categories* scholarship of using “predicate” for predicable entities rather than for grammatical or linguistic predicates. To talk about grammatical or linguistic predicates I use “predicate term”. I use “subject” for worldly bearers of predicates and “subject term” for the linguistic or grammatical subject of a sentence.

Despite their august place in the history of philosophy, it is not clear how exactly Aristotle means to draw the substance-accident and essential-accidental distinctions. For example, it is not clear how Aristotle classes truths such as:

(C) Socrates is an individual (ἄτομον),

(D) human is a species (εἶδος),

and

(E) wisdom is an accident (συμβεβηκός).

How do claims like these about the metaphysical status of their subjects fit into Aristotle's two distinctions? Are they essential like A or accidental like B? Do the predicate terms used to express them—"individual" (ἄτομον; ἐν ἀριθμῷ), "species" (εἶδος), "accident" (συμβεβηκός)—introduce substances or accidents?³

I will argue that terms like "individual" and "species" and truths like C, D, and E present a serious dilemma internal to the framework of the *Categories*. The doctrine of the *Categories* itself appears to commit Aristotle to the claim that terms like "species" and "individual" do not correspond to entities (ὄντα).⁴ In other words,

(1) individuality, species-hood, and the like do not exist.

³ The use of εἶδος in the technical Aristotelian sense of "species" is quite common in *Categories*; see, e.g., 3.1b17 and 5.2a14-19. Aristotle uses τὸ ἄτομον and τὸ ἐν ἀριθμῷ—literally, "indivisible" and "one in number"—for individuals, which he characterizes or defines as items (in any category) that are not *said-of* anything (see *Cat.* 2.1b6-9, 5.3b12, 5.3a35-3b2, 3b7, 4a10-21, and 4b17; although cf. τὰ καθ' ἑκάστα at 5.2b3). Note that the individuals in the non-substance categories are predicated of substances (see 2.1b6-9) and, therefore, that the *Categories* concept of individuals is related to but distinct from the notion of individuals (τὰ καθ' ἑκάστα) that Aristotle analyzes in *De Int.* 7.17a38-b1; for discussion, see Crivelli (2015b). It is also distinct from the epistemic concept of the primitive (ἄτομα) terms or propositions of the *Analytics*. Finally, Aristotle does not use his usual expression for accident—τὸ συμβεβηκός—in *Categories*, but it is widely thought that he has in mind some version of this concept, especially in *Categories* 2; on this, see Frede (1987b, 49-63). For this reason, in what follows "species" and "individual" understood in the technical sense outlined above will be my leading examples.

⁴ I follow several commentators—including Judson (2019, esp. 43-7), Crivelli (2017) and Barnes (1995, 69-72 & 77-8)—in using "being", "entity", and "item" interchangeably for Aristotle's substantive use of the participle ὄν, meaning "existing thing". I follow the same commentators in using "exists" for the associated complete use of ἐστί. According to this convention, "entity" just means "thing that is" or "existing thing."

These terms do not apply to substances in the right way: “individual” does not apply to secondary substances and “species” does not apply to any primary substance. Thus, *individuality*, *species-hood* and the like appear to have no place in the ontology of Aristotle’s ten-fold categorial scheme. But this position looks to be inconsistent with another doctrine of the *Categories*: given Aristotle’s use of terms like “individual” and “species” and given his realist theory of truth, it appears that Aristotle is committed to the existence of *individuality*, *species-hood* and the like.⁵ That is, it seems that he must accept that

(2) individuality, species-hood, and the like exist.

There is much more to be said about each horn of this dilemma, and our first task will be to explicate and motivate each of its horns.

Before doing so, however, it is important to emphasize that Aristotle owes us answers. Claims like C, D and E are ubiquitous in the *Categories* and indispensable to its arguments.⁶ Indeed, Aristotle relies heavily on the truth of such claims in setting out the basic principles of his system and even in the course of articulating and applying his essential-accidental and substance-accident distinctions.⁷ What is more, Aristotle seems to be aware of and responsive to the complications that arise from the use of terms like “species” and “individual.” For example, in *Topics* VI.6 144a32-b3, he argues that genera, like animal, cannot be predicated of their differentiae, like biped, because otherwise, since “every animal is a species or an individual,” it would follow that

⁵ For our purposes, the crucial fact about Aristotle’s theory of truth is that for a certain subset of true sentences, predicate terms must correspond to entities. See §3.3 below.

⁶ In §2, I will argue that there are several terms that Aristotle uses in the *Categories* besides “individual” and “species” that are problematic for the same reasons. Aristotle relies on claims involving these problematic terms in all three segments of the *Categories*: in the *antepredicamenta* (chapters 1-4), the *praedicamenta* (5-9), and the *postpredicamenta* (10-15). See 2.1b6-9, 3.1b16-24, 5.2a14-19, 5.2b2-3, 2a34-2b6, 5.2b7-14, 5.2b15-28, 5.2b29-3a6, 5.3a21-28, 5.3a33-3b9, 5.3b10-23, 5.3b24-32, 5.4a10-21, 6.5b11-6a18, 7.6b15-19, 7.8a13-28, 8.10b12-25, 8.11a20-36, 9.11b1-4, 10.11b17-19, 10.11b38-12a25, 10.12b26-13a31, 11.13b36-14a25, 13.14b33-15a12, and 14.15b1-16.

⁷ For example, Aristotle’s discussion of substance in *Cat.* 5 is largely centered on the distinction between individual, or “primary”, substances, on the one hand, and the species, genera and differentiae of primary substances, on the other hand. See, e.g., *Cat.* 5. 2a11-19, 2b7-28, 2b36-3a6, 3a7-28, 3a33-b9, and 3b10-23.

“each of the differentiae will be a species or an individual.” But, of course, the differentia, biped, is neither a species nor an individual. For these reasons, neglecting to formulate an account of terms like “species” and “individual” and claims like C, D and E, would constitute a serious oversight on Aristotle’s part. Considerations of interpretive charity, therefore, lead us to expect that Aristotle has *some* story to tell about his problematic claims. Indeed, Ancient commentators on the *Categories* appear to be sensitive to these issues: they work hard to assimilate the problematic terms and claims into the system of the *Categories*.⁸ Modern commentators on the *Categories*, however, have not given sustained attention to the status claims like C, D, and E or terms like “species” and “individual.”⁹

This chapter takes up the ancient project of reconstructing Aristotle’s position on the status of claims like C, D, and E and on terms like “species” and “individual” in *Categories*. I will start (in §2 and §3) by carefully motivating and explicating each horn of the dilemma presented by these problematic terms. I will then argue (in §4) that Aristotle does not neglect terms like “species” and “individual.” Aristotle, in the *Categories*, has an account for terms of this sort that resolves the dilemma: individuality, species-hood, and the like do exist, but they are not members of any of the ten category. This account has two important consequences. First, the ontology of the *Categories* includes entities beyond the categories. Second, truths involving these entities are neither essential nor accidental: Aristotle accepts and employs a third type of predication.

⁸ For example, Porphyry gives voice to the consensus among ancient commentators when he writes that “to say that human” is a species “indicates an accident of it, rather than its essence” (*in Cat.* 81, 16-20; Strange’s translation.). See also Ammonius, *in Cat.* 30.25-31.12; Simplicius *in Cat.* 52.9-18; Dexippus 26.12-27.2; Olympiodorus 50.15-21; and Boethius *in Cat.* 176C-D. Porphyry struggles, however, in his attempt to say something more precise about the status of *species-hood*, which, on his view, is “not an accident in the strict sense, but something like a differentia of it [viz. human]” that differentiates human from Socrates (*ibid.*; cf. Porphyry, *in Cat.* 82.5-37 and Boethius, *in Cat.* 176 C-D). Porphyry does not mean that “species” refers to a differentia in the strict sense, as differentiae are essentially predicated of the items that fall under them (see Porphyry *in Cat.* 82. 19-22).

⁹ See the representatively brief remarks in Ackrill (1963, 82) and Frede (1987b, 33).

2. The Case for Anti-Realism

Why think that Aristotle is an anti-realist about terms like “species” and “individual”?¹⁰ To answer this question, we need to make the case for attributing to Aristotle the view that

(1) individuality, species-hood, and the like do not exist.

Here is a brief sketch of the case for anti-realism: terms like “species” (εἶδος) and “individual” (ἄτομον) are not related in the right way to substances. Aristotle holds that all non-substances are predicated of at least one primary substance (**Fact One**) and at least one secondary substance (**Fact Two**). But “species” is not predicated of any primary substance and “individual” is not predicated of any secondary substance. Thus, Aristotle cannot be a realist about terms like “species” and “individual”: he cannot accept that terms like “species” and “individual” correspond to entities like species-hood and individuality because, on his view, species-hood, individuality and the like cannot exist.

With that sketch in mind, let’s turn to the details. According to Aristotle in the *Categories*, there are ten classes or “categories” of beings. One of these is the class of substances (οὐσίαι), which includes individuals—particular objects like you and Naomi Osaka and Felix the Sheepdog—as well as their species and genera—generic objects like the kind, human, and the kind, animal. Aristotle calls the individuals in the category of substance “primary substances” (πρῶται οὐσίαι); the generic substances he calls “secondary substances” (δεύτεραι οὐσίαι). Besides the substances there are nine categories of accidents—the qualities, quantities, relatives, locations, times, and so on.¹¹ The substances and the accidents are not on a par metaphysically:

¹⁰ In the sense I intend, a realist about term *t* thinks that *t* corresponds to an entity—i.e. something that exists—and an anti-realist about *t* thinks that *t* does not correspond to an entity.

¹¹ In each of these nine accidental categories, there are both generic items and individual items. The nature of individual accidents has received a great deal of scholarly attention, but it should not detain us here. For discussion see, for example, Frede (1987a); Owen (1965b); Erginel (2004); and Corkum (2009).

according to Aristotle, substances are ontologically prior to everything else. What is more, the substances themselves are not on a par: primary substances are ontologically prior to everything else, including secondary substances.

Consider first Aristotle's argument for the ontological primacy of primary substances: this argument relies on the claim that everything else is *said-of* or *present-in* primary substances. Indeed, he makes this claim twice in the course of his argument:

[T1] All the others (τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντα) are either said-of primary substances as a subject or are present-in them as a subject. ... For all the others are either said-of them as a subject or are present-in them as a subject. (*Cat.* 5.2b6-8)

More formally: for all x such that x is not a primary substance there is some y , such that y is a primary substance and x is *said-of* y or x is *present-in* y . Since Aristotle's technical *said-of* and *present-in* relations are predication entailing—that is, if x is *said-of* y then x is *predicated of* y and if x is *present-in* y then x is *predicated of* y ¹²—it follows from T1 that everything that is not itself a primary substance is predicated of at least one primary substance.¹³ Call this “**Fact One**.”

Fact One entails that species-hood does not exist. *Species-hood* is not a primary substance¹⁴; so, **Fact One** requires that if species-hood exists, then it must be predicated of some primary substance. But none of the individual (or “primary”) substances are species—species in the category of substance are *secondary* substances and not primary substances. Therefore, species-hood does not exist. In other words, **Fact One** says that everything that exists is either a primary substance, an essential feature of some primary substance or an accidental feature of some primary

¹² As I noted above, these relations are typically understood as essential predication and accidental predication (see n. 1 above). Even the minority of scholars who deny this, would accept that they are *predication entailing* as I do in Chapter 4; cf. Crivell (2017).

¹³ Compare *Cat.* 5.2b15-22. More formally: for all x such that x is not a primary substance there is some y , such that y is a primary substance and x is predicated of y .

¹⁴ Primary substances are not predicated of anything at all (1b11-13, 2b17-21 and 3a36-7), but were it to exist, species-hood would be predicated of human, knowledge, and the other species.

substance, but species-hood is not a primary substance itself nor is it an essential or accidental feature of any primary substance.¹⁵ Therefore, species-hood cannot exist at all: it is not an entity.

What about “individuality”? Primary substances are not species, but they are individuals, so positing the existence of *individuality* does not run afoul of **Fact One**. It does, however, run afoul of what I will call “**Fact Two**”. Aristotle argues for the ontological primacy of secondary substance over the accidents as follows:

[T2] And as the primary substances relate to all the others (τὰ ἄλλα πάντα), so do the species and genera of the primary substance relate to all the rest (τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα). For all the rest (πάντα τὰ λοιπὰ) are predicated of them. (*Cat.* 5.3a1-6)

Here Aristotle says that the other items, by which he must mean all non-substance entities, stand to secondary substances (i.e. the species and genera of the category of substances) as all things stand to primary substances: every non-substance is predicated of some secondary substance. Let’s call the fact that all non-substances are predicated of at least one secondary substance “**Fact Two**.”

Fact Two entails that individuality does not exist. Since individuality is not a substance,¹⁶ it follows from **Fact Two** that if individuality exists, then it must be predicated of some secondary substance. But no secondary substance is an individual—the secondary substances are the species and genera in the category of substance (*Cat.* 2a14-19, 3b13-18)—so, individuality is not predicated of any secondary substance. Therefore, by **Fact Two**, individuality does not exist at all.

The problem facing the realist is that were “species” and “individual” to introduce entities, then they would introduce entities that are not related in the right way to substances. For convenience, let’s say that

¹⁵ For x to be predicated of y, x must be a feature of y’s in some sense.

¹⁶ There are several reasons that *individuality* cannot be a substance. Here is one: no substance is predicated of an accident (suggested by *Cat.* 5.2b15-22, 5.2b37-3a6 and 5.3a7-15 and required by 5.3a33-3b9), but individuality is predicated of accidents (*Cat.* 2.1b5-9).

x is “independent” when (i) x is not a primary substance and x is not predicated of any primary substance or (ii) x is not a substance and x is not predicated of any secondary substance.

The problem for realism about terms like “species” and “individual” is that **Fact One** and **Fact Two** entail that

(1*) there are no independent entities,

but realism about these terms requires that “species” and “individual” introduce independent entities.

A realist might attempt to resolve this problem by arguing that terms like “species” and “individual” are homonymous. A full account of Aristotelian homonymy is beyond the scope of this chapter, but as Aristotle’s introduction of the notion of homonymy in *Cat.* 1.1a1-6 suggests and scholars widely agree, if a single expression, t, corresponds to one predicate when it applies (truly) to x and another predicate when it applies (truly) to y, then x and y are homonyms. For convenience, in such a case we can say that t is “homonymous” and that it applies “homonymously” to x and y.¹⁷ Let’s suppose that “species” is homonymous. In particular, let’s suppose that “species” corresponds to one predicate when it applies to substances—call this *substantial species-hood*—and it corresponds to a different predicate—*qualitative species-hood*—when it applies to qualities, etc.¹⁸ If this is right, then the realist can grant that there is no such thing as *species-hood* as such but still maintain that “species” always corresponds to some entity or other: sometimes it corresponds to substantial species-hood and sometimes to qualitative

¹⁷ For convenience, I talk of a *term* being “homonymous” or applying “homonymously.” This is a simplification: in 1a1-6 passage, homonyms are objects rather than terms. Nothing in what follows hangs on this simplification. Much has been written on Aristotle’s notion of homonymy. See, e.g., Ackrill (1963, 71); Barnes (1971); Barnes (1995, 72-4); Irwin (1981); Shields (1998, 11-14); and Ward (2007, 12-18).

¹⁸ This is just for concreteness. It does not matter what homonymy-based account we give.

species-hood, etc. On this view, substantial species-hood, qualitative species-hood etc., all exist. Thus, the realist can point out that in order to motivate anti-realism about “species” it is not enough to show that *species-hood* does not exist. The anti-realist must also argue that substantial species-hood, qualitative species-hood, etc. do not exist.

However, this does not resolve the problem of independence sketched above: if they exist, then *substantial species-hood* and *qualitative species-hood* are independent for the very same reasons that *species-hood* is independent if it exists. Substantial species-hood and qualitative species-hood, if they exist, are not primary substances and they are not predicated of any primary substances.¹⁹ What is more, a similar sort of argument shows that a homonymy-based account of individuality does not resolve the problem of independence for individuality. Homonymy, then, cannot save the realist.

With this understanding of the problem in hand, we can identify several terms besides “species” and “individual” that are problematic for the same reasons and that Aristotle relies on in the *Categories*. “Genus” (γένος) and “differentia” (διαφορά) are two clear examples: Aristotle uses these expressions as predicate terms throughout the *Categories*, but genus-hood and the feature of being a differentia are not predicated of primary substances. “Contrary” (ἐναντίον) and “contrariety” (ἐναντιότης) are similarly problematic: according to Aristotle, none of the substances are contraries (*Cat.* 5.3b24-27), but he regularly talks about contrariety and contraries. Aristotle does not use the terms “universal” (τὸ καθόλου) or “accident” (τὸ συμβεβηκός) in the *Categories*, but it is often thought that he has the concepts of universal and accident in mind and that they guide

¹⁹ They cannot be primary substances because primary substances are not predicated of anything at all, but *ex hypothesi* qualitative species-hood and substantial species-hood are each predicated of certain species. The arguments given above also show that neither substantial species-hood nor qualitative substance-hood is predicated of Naomi Osaka or any other primary species.

his thinking, especially in *Categories* 2.²⁰ However, since no primary substance is a universal and no substance at all is an accident, it would appear that the concepts *universal* and *accident* face our problem of independence. Finally, the crucial terms “primary substance” and “secondary substance” are themselves problematic: no secondary substance is a primary substance and no primary substance is a secondary substance. So, if there is a feature of *being a primary substance*, then it is independent; and if there is a feature of *being a secondary substance*, then it is independent.

3. The Case for Realism

So far, we have seen that Aristotle appears to be committed to the claim that

(1*) there are no independent entities,

and, therefore, also to the claim that

(1) individuality, species-hood, and the like do not exist.

But maybe this is not so bad. Why think that Aristotle is a realist about individuality, species-hood and the like?

Let's turn to the second horn of our dilemma and make the case for the claim that

(2) individuality, species-hood, and the like exist,

and, therefore, also that

(2*) there are independent entities.

²⁰ See Ackrill (1963, 74), Loux (1991, 19-20), Furth (1988, 12-3), Perin (2007, 125-7), Corkum (2008, 65-6), and Corkum (2009, 1). See Frede (1987b, 49-63) for a very helpful discussion.

3.1 Preliminary Evidence from outside the *Categories*

To warm up to 2 and 2*, let's start outside of the *Categories*, where there is good reason to think that Aristotle accepts the existence of entities like species-hood and individuality. In *Metaphysics* Γ.2, for example, Aristotle argues that metaphysics, the science of being, studies the *per se* properties (καθ' αὐτὰ πάθη) of unity and being (Γ.2. 1004b4-8), and that the scientific study of these properties involves knowledge of their essences (τὸ τί ἐστὶ) (Γ.2. 1003b33-36). Aristotle's primary examples include the different (τό ἕτερον/ἐτερότης) and contrariety (ἐναντιότης) and he claims that “priority, posteriority, genus, species, whole and part, and others like these” are also properties studied by the science of being because they are among the “things that belong” (τῶν ὑπαρχόντων) to being qua being (Γ.2.1005a13-18).²¹ As we have seen, several of these properties—including genus-hood, species-hood, and contrariety—are independent. According to Γ.2, however, genus-hood, species-hood, contrariety and “others like these” (i) have essences, (ii) are *per se* properties, and (iii) are studied by a science. I will not defend this point in detail in this chapter, but it is at least highly plausible that, according to Aristotle,

if x has an essence, then x is a being,

if x is a *per se* property (καθ' αὐτό πάθος), then x is a being, and

if x is a property studied by a science, then x is a being.

If this is right, then, in *Metaphysics* Γ, Aristotle is committed to claim 2, and, by implication, claim 2*. In the rest of this section, I make the case that this is also Aristotle's view in *Categories*.

²¹ I follow Alan Code here, who writes that Aristotle includes “unity, sameness, otherness, contrariety, and the like” among the “per se characteristics of being,” (1987, 130) and later adds that Aristotle explicitly counts the terms “‘one,’ ‘many,’ ‘same,’ ‘other,’ ‘similar,’ ‘dissimilar,’ ‘equal,’ ‘unequal,’ ‘different’ and ‘contrary’” as well as “‘complete,’ ‘prior,’ ‘posterior,’ ‘genus,’ ‘εἶδος,’ ‘whole’ and ‘part’” as “‘items belonging per se to being” (1987, 133).

3.2 Preliminary Evidence from within the *Categories*

One indication from within the *Categories* that Aristotle is a realist about terms like “species” and “individual” comes from the philosophical use to which Aristotle puts these terms. Consider, for example, just two passages in which Aristotle uses “species” and “genus”:

[T3] The species in which the things primarily called substances belong—these and the genera of these species—are called “secondary substances”. For instance, the particular human belongs in the species, human, and animal is the genus of this species. (*Cat.* 5.2a16-19)

In T3, Aristotle uses “species” and “genus” to introduce the concept of secondary substance: the secondary substances are the species and genera to which the primary substances belong. He goes on to give two arguments for the principle that each species in the category of substance is “more a substance” than the genus to which it belongs. Here is his second argument:

[T4] Again, the primary substances because (διὰ) they underlie all the others and all the others are predicated of them or are present-in them—because of this (διὰ τοῦτο) they are called substances most of all. And as the primary substances relate to the others, also the species relates to the genus. For the species underlies the genus. For the genera are predicated of the species, but the species do not reciprocate with respect to the genera. And, therefore, because of these things (ἐκ τούτων) the species is more substance than the genus. (*Cat.* 5.2b15-21)

It is difficult to say precisely what Aristotle has in mind when he uses the phrase “more a substance” (μᾶλλον οὐσία). For present purposes, however, it will suffice to get a rough sense of

the argument in order to see what role the concepts of *species* and *genus* play in it.²³ At the core of the argument are two claims.

- (a) Primary substances are most of all substances because they underlie all other things, in the sense that all other things are predicated of them.
- (b) Each species underlies its genus, in the relevant sense, but the genus does not underlie the species.

From these two claims it follows that each species in the category of substance stands to its genus as primary substance stands to everything else. By analogy to the case of primary substances—which are “most of all” (μάλιστα) substances because they underlie everything else—each species in the category of substance is “more a substance” than its genus because it underlies its genus.

T3 and T4 make clear that Aristotle is prepared to rely on the terms “species” and “genus” in introducing the core concepts—e.g. secondary substance—and stating the central principles of his theory. Indeed, these concepts also play an important role in his argumentation: he relies on the truth of general metaphysical principles about species and genera—e.g. if S is a species and G is its genus, then S underlies G—in making arguments for central results of his theory—e.g. each species is “more substance” than its genera.

Clearly, then, Aristotle thinks that his classification of certain universals as, e.g., “species” tracks a substantive and informative similarity between those universals: they are all alike in a metaphysically important way. It is plausible, then, that he thinks that these universals *share a feature*—namely, species-hood. What is more, the argument in T4 appears to *explain* why species in the category of substance are “more substance” than their genera. Primary substances are “most of all substances” *because* (διὰ) they underlie everything else. By showing that species underlie

²³ For a more detailed analysis of this passage and its context, see Kohl (2008; 159-161).

their genera, it appears that Aristotle is *explaining* why species in the category of substance are “more substance” than their genera.²⁴ But Aristotle, at least in some places, thinks that *explanatory* terms must correspond to genuine entities.²⁵ Thus, if in T4 Aristotle thinks that the fact that human is a species and animal is its genus explains the fact that human is more substance than animal, then this is further reason to endorse realism about “species” and “genus”.²⁶ Aristotle’s use of these terms makes it hard to resist the thought that, according to Aristotle, these terms get at metaphysically important underlying features. The species all share the feature of being a species, or *species-hood*; the genera share the feature of being a genus, or *genus-hood*.

3.3 Argument from the Theory of Truth

While the passages cited above and others like them provide strong evidence for thinking that Aristotle is committed to accepting the existence of species-hood, individuality and the like, the most powerful argument for this view comes from Aristotle’s theory of truth, which he invokes twice in the *Categories*. In sketch, the argument runs as follows: Aristotle appears to hold that

(**Truth**) a simple, affirmative, predicative sentence is true just in case the entity revealed by the subject term and the entity revealed by the predicate term combine.²⁷

This principle entails that for every true simple, affirmative, predicative sentence, there is an entity corresponding to the predicate-term.²⁸

²⁴ For an explanatory reading of this and related passages, see Kohl, (2008; 161).

²⁵ See *Posterior Analytics* (*APo* I.11 77a5-9).

²⁶ One might resist this line of thinking by arguing that in the *Categories* Aristotle is not presenting a theory, arguing for conclusions, or trying to give explanations but rather is merely presenting guidelines for dialectic. For a forceful defense of this reading of the *Categories* in general, see Menn (1995). I will return to this below.

²⁷ Note that I will have nothing to say about the truth conditions for denials, or negative predicative sentences, which are not relevant to our argument and present special complications. See Carson, (2000), Wedin (1978), and Mignucci (2007).

²⁸ Not every sentence of the form “S is P” is a simple, affirmative, predicative sentence. For example, “we are running” is not a simple sentence in the intended sense: it has a complex subject term. Thus, these sentences can be true even if neither “we” does not refer to a single entity (see Crivelli, 2004 155-8).

Aristotle also accepts the truth of the following simple, affirmative, predicative sentences:

- (i) “human is a species”
- (ii) “animal is a genus”
- (iii) “Socrates is an individual” and
- (iv) “ignorance is a contrary.”

Therefore, he must accept that “species”, “genus”, “individual” and “contrary” each correspond to beings. It follows that species-hood, genus-hood, individuality, and contrariety exist. The same sort of argument applies to other problematic terms like “accident”, “universal” and “secondary substance”; so, accident-hood, universality, and the feature of being a secondary substance exist as well. Spelling out this argument and defending its premises is the focus of the remainder of this section.

3.3.1 True Applications of Independent Terms

The first point I want to make in favor of the argument sketched above is that Aristotle accepts the (literal) truth of simple, affirmative, predicative claims involving our problematic terms. There are examples throughout the text of the *Categories* but consider just two. In T4, we saw Aristotle argue that species are more substance than their genera. He illustrates this thought by pointing out that human is a species and that animal is a genus (5.2b10-12). Clearly, then, Aristotle accepts the truth of the sentences “animal is a genus”, “human is a species” and “a species underlies its genus”. In *Cat. 2* Aristotle justifies the claim that there can be individuals that are *present-in* a subject by asserting that “the particular literacy is among the items present in a subject” (*Cat. 2.1b6-9*). This argument is nonsense if one does not take Aristotle to accept the truth of “the particular literacy is an individual”.

Note that Aristotle is committed to the literal truth of these sentences even if, as some have argued, the *Categories* is a preparatory work aimed at presenting principles relevant to the practice of dialectic rather than a work of metaphysics proper.²⁹ On this interpretation, *Categories* is not meant to present explanations or even arguments. But even if this is right, it is no reason to think that Aristotle is not fully committed to the literal truth of the claims that he makes in the *Categories*. He does not hedge or preface his remarks with some indication that he does not mean his claims literally or assert them earnestly. On the contrary, if the *Categories* is meant to be a preparatory guidebook for the practice of dialectic, then it ought to be accurate and the claims in it true. While Aristotle may not be presenting a fully worked out theory in the *Categories*, he is making claims that he takes to be true, including those that involve our problematic terms.

3.3.2 The Truth Principle

Let's turn the Truth Principle. What reasons do we have for attributing to Aristotle a theory according to which a simple, affirmative, predicative sentence is true *only if* its predicate term corresponds to an being?³⁰

There is strong evidence from the text of the *Categories* itself that Aristotle thinks that linguistic truths are explained by underlying, worldly matters of fact. This fact alone does not directly support attributing the Truth Principle to Aristotle, but it will help to set the stage. Consider *Categories* 12.14b15-22:

²⁹ See Menn (1995) and Burnyeat (2001, ch. 5, esp. 106-8).

³⁰ Aristotle is often thought to adopt a correspondence theory of truth. For a helpful discussion see Crivelli (2004, 129-138, and especially 130-1 n. 9). My target here is not whether Aristotle's theory counts as a correspondence theory in any technical sense but rather whether he thinks that *predicate terms* in simple, true, predicative sentences correspond to entities.

[T5] For the existence of a human reciprocates according to the implication of being with respect to the truth about this sentence. For if a human exists, then the truth of the sentence by which we say that a human exists is true, and indeed it reciprocates—for if the sentences by which we say that a human exists is true, then a human exists. But the true sentence is in no way the explanation of the existence of the object (τὸ πρᾶγμα), but the object appears somehow to be the explanation of the sentence being true. For because of the being of the object (τὸ πρᾶγμα) the sentence is either said to be true or to be false.

Aristotle thinks that “a human exists” is true *because* a human exists. More generally, in this passage he accepts that the truth (or falsity) of sentences of the form ‘ x exists’ are grounded in the fact that x exists (or does not). If this is right, then subject terms in true, simple, affirmative *existential sentences* must correspond to entities.³¹

What about predicative sentences? Aristotle also indicates that *predicative sentences*—sentences of the form ‘ x is F ’—are true (or false) because they correspond (or fail to correspond) to an underlying reality. In the final section of *Cat.* 5, Aristotle argues that sentences and beliefs admit the contrary properties, truth and falsity, in the sense that sentences and beliefs can be true at one time and false at another. He illustrates this point by noting that both the sentence and the belief that someone is sitting will be true when the person in question is sitting and false after they stand up (5.4a21-28). Still, Aristotle argues, it is significant that the changes do not really occur to the sentences or beliefs themselves but to the underlying object they describe:

[T6] The sentence and the belief themselves remain entirely the same and change in no way, but because the thing changes (πράγματος κινουμένου) the opposite comes to be concerning them [viz. the sentence and belief come to be true or false]. For the sentence

³¹ It is widely agreed that this is part of what Aristotle means to imply in *Cat.* 10 13a37-b35.

that someone is sitting remains the same, but it is at one time true and at another time false because the thing is changed (πράγματος κινηθέντος); and, likewise, also in the case of belief. ... It is because the thing is or is not (τῷ τὸ πρᾶγμα εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι)—because of this the sentence is said to be true or false, not because the sentence itself is capable of receiving contraries [viz. truth and falsity]. (*Cat.* 5 4a34-4b2, b8-13)

As in T5, Aristotle asserts that sentences (and beliefs) are true in virtue of the existence of some underlying reality. In this context, however, his claim is not restricted to sentences about existence: in T6 he primarily has in mind sentences like “Socrates is sitting”. So, he means to claim that at least certain sentences—including those of the form “ x is F ”—are true because of the condition of the object (πρᾶγμα) that they describe. If this is right, then it follows that the subject term in true simple, affirmative, *predicative* sentences must correspond to some real object (πρᾶγμα).

Admittedly, in the sentences that concern us here, the problematic terms, like “species” and “individual”, feature in predicate position; and Aristotle does not, in the *Categories*, explicitly make the analogous claim about *predicate terms*. Still, it seems clear that, in the *Categories*, Aristotle has in mind a theory of truth according to which sentences are true in virtue of the underlying reality, and, moreover, that the realities underlying true predicative sentences are “combinations” of worldly items—subjects and predicates (see *Cat.* 2.1a16-19, 4.2a4-10, and 10.13b10-15). Indeed, it is widely thought that a central goal of the *Categories* is to offer an account, or the outlines of an account, of the relationships between worldly things that underwrite and explain the truth of certain simple applications of predicate-terms to subjects.³² The standard and most natural way to elaborate this thought is to require that the *predicate terms* as well as the subject terms of true, simple, affirmative, predicative sentences refer to entities. Moreover, as I

³² See, e.g., Code (1986a, 422-3, n. 20 and n. 21), Frede (1987c, 53), Furth (1988, 9-27), Ferejohn (1981), Mann (2000, 23-4 & 51-2), and Carson (2000, 344).

will argue presently, where Aristotle *does* present his theory of truth in more detail, it takes this very form: both subject terms and predicate terms of the sentences in question must correspond to entities. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that in the *Categories*, where Aristotle draws on but does not fully explain his theory of truth, he thinks that *predicate terms* in true, simple, affirmative, predicative sentences must correspond to entities.³³

Let's look briefly at *Metaphysics* Θ.10, where Aristotle presents the longest account of truth and falsity in his corpus. The chapter begins as follows:

[T7] Since being and not being are spoken of in one way according to schemes of the categories; in another way according to their potentiality or actuality or the opposites [viz. of potentiality and actuality]; and in another way by being true or false in the most authoritative way³⁴ (τὸ δὲ κυριώτατα ὄν ἀληθὲς ἢ ψεῦδος). And this [viz. truth and falsity] exists in virtue of³⁵ combination or separation (τῷ συγκεῖσθαι ἢ διηρηθῆναι) concerning the worldly items (ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων); it follows that one is correct [viz. thinks truly] who thinks what is separated to be separated and the combined thing to be combined, while one errs who thinks the opposite of how the worldly items fare.³⁶ (1051a34-b5)

It is the third way of *being*—i.e. being true or false—that interests Aristotle in this chapter. Just as we saw in *Categories* 5 and 12, Aristotle thinks that truth and falsity obtain in virtue of an underlying reality. Here, Aristotle adds that, in particular, thoughts (and sentences) are true or false

³³ For a powerful and extensive defense of the view that Aristotle holds a correspondence theory of this kind see Crivelli (2004, especially 129-138 and 152-163); for this reading of *Categories* in particular, see, e.g., Carson (2000, 344); and for independent evidence that, according to Aristotle, *predicate terms* of the relevant sentences refer, see Corkum (2015, 794-797).

³⁴ I am following the second suggestion regarding how to construe this phrase in Ross (1924, 275) and Crivelli (2004, 234-7). As Ross notes, Aristotle presumably has in mind a contrast between the “most controlling” (κυριώτατα) way of being true and false and the way in which simples are true or false, which he discusses later in the chapter starting at 1051b17.

³⁵ Reading “τῷ” with Ross and Jaeger. See Crivelli (2004, 238) for discussion and an alternative reading.

³⁶ I translate Jaeger's OCT text.

in virtue of *combinations* or *separations* of worldly entities.³⁷ One thinks truly when one believes things to be combined (or separated), which are indeed combined (or separated). What does this mean? Aristotle's example a few lines down illustrates the point: "if you are pale, this is not because we think truly that you are pale; but we are correct when we say this because you are pale" (1051b6-9). The illustration suggests that the combination is, in this case, between you and pallor and that you combine with pallor just in case you are pale. When we believe you and pallor to combine—i.e. we believe that you are pale—then we are correct just in case you and pallor do indeed combine. On this reading, it is worldly items which combine (or separate) and thereby underwrite the truth or falsity of corresponding thoughts and statements.

If this reading is correct, then Aristotle is saying that,

the thought that *A is B* is true iff *A* combines with *B*, (where combination is a worldly relation between entities).

Aristotle does not say much about worldly combination, and, in particular, he does not tell us whether the relata of worldly combination must exist. But it is quite hard to see how objects (*πράγματα*) could combine without existing. So, it is fair to assume that according to the theory put forward in $\Theta.10$ (for simple affirmative thoughts and statements of the form *A is B*), if the thought that *A is B* is true, then *A* and *B* exist.

In the *Categories*, then, Aristotle draws on but does not fully spell out his theory of truth; and where he does present this theory, it entails that

³⁷ Here I am following what Crivelli (2004, 52) has called "the standard interpretation" of this passage, which is defended by Ross (1924, 275) and Burnyeat et al. (1984, 154-6) among others. Crivelli himself defends an alternative reading (2004, 51-53; 2015, 196-200), but as he points out (2004, 53), his alternative reading also entails that the main claim of the standard reading. Thus, on all accounts, the theory of truth in $\Theta.10$ requires an (existing) object corresponding to both the predicate-term and the subject-term of simple, affirmative, predicative sentences.

(**Truth**) a simple, affirmative, predicative sentence is true just in case the being revealed by the subject term and the being revealed by the predicate term combine.

While it is possible that Aristotle, at the time of writing the *Categories*, would not have accepted all the details of the theory of truth developed in other texts, it is fair to expect that he would have accepted the basics of that theory, including **Truth**. Therefore, there is good reason to attribute to Aristotle in the *Categories* the thesis that if a simple, predicative affirmative sentence, “A is B”, are true, then the item corresponding to B exists.³⁸ Since Aristotle accepts that “Socrates is an individual” is true, his theory of truth commits him to accepting the existence of *individuality*. The same applies to *species-hood*, *genus-hood*, *universality*, *contrariety* and the other problematic entities we have been considering.

4. Resolution

So far, we have seen reasons for attributing to Aristotle claim that

(1*) there are no independent entities,

and, therefore, by implication, that

(1) individuality, species-hood, and the like do not exist.

We have also seen evidence for attributing to Aristotle the claim that

(2) individuality, species-hood, and the like exist,

and, therefore, by implication, that

(2*) there are independent entities.

³⁸ Crivelli’s influential discussion of Aristotle’s theory of truth includes additional evidence for this claim; see, e.g., Crivelli (2002 and 2004, 152-8).

4.1 Extra-Categorical Beings

I propose a realist resolution to the dilemma, according to which Aristotle's rejection of independent entities (1*) is restricted to entities *within the categories*. Individuality, species-hood, and the like exist and are independent—therefore, 2 and 2* are true and 1 is false—but they are *outside of the categories*, so they do not violate Aristotle's rejection of independent entities.

This solution relies on three claims. (I) The items we have been discussing, such as species-hood and individuality, consist in or are defined in terms of predication. (II) The categories only include items that can combine to form predications but neither consist in nor are defined in terms of predication. (III) Aristotle's rejection of independent entities applies only to items *within* the categories. Together these claims entail that the items we have been discussing are non-problematically extra-categorical: they are not meant to be members of any of the categories. I will start with (III), before turning to (II), and then to (I).

What basis is there for restricting 2*—the rejection of independent entities—to items within the categories? Recall that the rejection of *independent* entities derives from the following two passages:

[T1] All the others (τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντα) are either said-of primary substances as a subject or are present-in them as a subject. ... For all the other are either said-of them as a subject or are present-in them as a subject. (*Cat.* 5.2b6-8)

[T2] And as the primary substance relate to all the others (τὰ ἄλλα πάντα), so do the species and genera of the primary substance relate to all the rest (τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα). For all the rest are predicated of them. (*Cat.* 5.3a1-6)

Above, we took T1 to express the claim that everything that is not a primary substance is *said-of* a primary substance or is *present-in* a primary substance. On this reading, the “all” (πάντα) in the

phrase “all the others” (τὰ δ' ἄλλα πάντα) ranges over all entities whatsoever. But this is not obvious. Aristotle does not specify the range of quantification for his claim and the context suggests another option. Given that Aristotle has just presented his tenfold scheme of categories (4.1b25-10) and means, in T1, to distinguish the primary substances from the other members of the categories, it is natural to read “all the others” to mean “all the other items in the categories.” If this is right, then T1 expresses the claim that each entity *in the categories* that is not a primary substance is predicated of some primary substance.

The same point can be made concerning T2 and its use of “all the others” (τὰ ἄλλα πάντα): it is entirely consistent with the text and makes good sense in the context to take “all the others” to range over items in the categories. What is more, Aristotle’s phrase “τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα” means quite literally “the things remaining” and it strongly suggests that he has some particular list or class in mind from which he has excluded the substances. The salient class is the class containing the members of the ten categories. On this reading, T2 asserts that each entity *that is in a category* and is not a substance is predicated of some secondary substance. If this is so, then there is no rule against independent entities as such, and we should reject

(2*) there are no independent beings.

Instead, we should attribute to Aristotle the weaker claim that there are no independent beings *within* the categories. In what follows, I argue that species-hood, individuality and the like do not fall under the scope of this principle: they are not members of any category, they are *extra-categorical* beings.

To make this proposal somewhat more concrete, consider the introduction of the official list of ten categories in *Cat.* 4:

[T8] Each of the things said on the basis of no combination (τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων) signifies either substance or quantity, or quality, or relative, or location, or time, or being in a position, or having, or doing, or being affected. (*Cat.* 4.1b25-7)

Τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων ἕκαστον ἤτοι οὐσίαν σημαίνει ἢ ποσὸν ἢ ποιὸν ἢ πρὸς τι ἢ ποῦ ἢ ποτὲ ἢ κεῖσθαι ἢ ἔχειν ἢ ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν.

There is controversy concerning whether the description “things said on the basis of no combination” (τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων) is meant to refer to a class of simple linguistic expressions or to a class of simple objects.³⁹ While the heart of the reading I will propose is consistent with either of these interpretations, for concreteness it will help to work on the assumption that “the things said on the basis of no combination” (τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων) are worldly objects, like Socrates, rather than expressions like “Socrates.”⁴⁰ While this is my preferred interpretation of the passage, I cannot defend it in detail here and, as I noted, the heart of what I will say is consistent with the alternative reading in any case. On all views, it is clear is that for the purposes of specifying the items classified by his categories Aristotle would count predications—as well as instances of the special predication relations *said-of* and *present-in*—as items that *are* “said on the basis of combination” (κατὰ συμπλοκὴν λεγόμενα). Thus, he excludes predications—like, Naomi is wise—and the sentences used to express predications—like

³⁹ See Crivelli (2002, 238-9 and n. 10), who takes our expression to pick out linguistic expressions that refer or “signify” worldly objects; for the view that “things said on the basis of no combination” are not expressions but worldly objects, see Patzig (1973, 72-3). I will remain neutral on this question. Both parties to this debate and the majority of contemporary commentators agree with Ackrill (1963, 78) that “the items in the categories are not expressions but ‘things’.”

⁴⁰ In a parallel passage, 13b7-12, Aristotle indicates that “the double and the half” (τὸ διπλάσιον καὶ τὸ ἡμισυ) as well as “sight and blindness” (ἡ ὄψις καὶ ἡ τυφλότης)—by which he appears to mean the worldly features, double, half, sight and blindness rather than expression for these features—are among “the things said on the basis of no combination” (τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων). Crivelli has objected that only linguistic expressions “signify” (σημαίνει). However, in *Categories* Aristotle is perfectly happy to say that primary substance (3b12), secondary substances (3b13-21), and accidents (5b26-8 & 10a16-18) “signify”, as he appears to do in a parallel passage in *Metaphysics* Δ.7 (1017a22-27).

“Naomi is wise”—from the categories. It is easy to see why this should be the case: such complexes are not members of any category but consist in and are defined in terms of combinations of items in the categories or terms for items in the categories.⁴¹ For example, the predication, Naomi is wise, just is the worldly combination of the substance, Naomi, with the quality, wisdom. Likewise, the sentence, “Naomi runs”, just is the linguistic combination of the name “Naomi” with the verb “runs”.⁴²

Clearly, predications—combinations of items in the categories—are things that are said on the basis of combination (κατὰ συμπλοκὴν λεγόμενα) and, therefore, are not in any of the categories. But this fact leaves open the possibility that there are further items that Aristotle would exclude from the categories because they are said on the basis of combination. Linguistically, there is no reason to assume that only predications—or, on the alternative reading, the linguistic expressions for—them should be counted as things “said on the basis of combination” and, therefore, excluded from the categories. One can reasonably translate the adverb “κατὰ” in Aristotle’s crucial phrase, “of things said on the basis of no combination” (τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων), with “on the basis of”—as I have done—or with “according to” or even “with.”⁴³ On any of these construals, there would plausibly be items excluded from the categories that are not themselves predications. For example, *the feature of being predicated of Socrates* is plausibly “said with combination” because it mentions combination; it is plausibly “said according to combination” because it tracks instances of combination; and it is plausibly said “on the basis of combination”

⁴¹ See *Cat.* 4. 2a4-7 for the thought that the members of the categories and the terms for them are, respectively, *constituents* of predications and sentences expressing predication and not themselves predications or sentences. Cf. *Cat.* 2.1a16-19.

⁴² See *Cat.* 2.1a16-19. Cf. *De Int.* 1.16a9-16.

⁴³ “With” is not a standard translation of “κατὰ” + accusative, but in this context there is a special case to be made for it: in *Cat.* 2.1a16-19 Aristotle contrasts being “κατὰ combination” and “without (ἄνευ) combination”.

because it applies in virtue of some combination. But the feature of being said-of Socrates is not itself a predication (nor is it a sentence expressing predication).

There is also positive linguistic evidence in favor of this reading. The negation in Aristotle's key phrase, "of things said on the basis of no combination" (τῶν κατὰ μηδεμίαν συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων), can be construed in two ways. It can be understood to take scope over the entire adverbial phrase, "on the basis of combination" (κατὰ συμπλοκὴν), or it can take scope only over the noun, "combination" (συμπλοκὴν). On the first construal, the phrase simply means "things said not on the basis of combination"; on the second, the phrase most likely means "things said on the basis of no form of combination." The negation in the sentence is a negative adjective, "μηδεμίαν", which attaches to the noun "combination" (συμπλοκὴν). This makes the wide-scope reading less natural: the simplest and most direct way to say "things said not on the basis of combination" would be to use the negative particle, μή, in front of the adverbial phrase—i.e. to write, "τῶν μὴ κατὰ συμπλοκὴν λεγομένων". Indeed, while the wide-scope reading is linguistically possible—in highly stylized Greek prose, negative adjectives, like "μηδεμίαν", are often used in this way—it is not likely. The prose of the *Categories* is compressed and direct; it is very rarely, if ever, stylized or elegant. Therefore, we should construe the negation in Aristotle's phrase to take narrow scope over only the noun, "combination." The effect of this narrow scope negation is, most likely, to emphasize that the items in the categories are not said on the basis of *any form or sort of combination*.⁴⁴ By contrast, the items excluded from the categories are said on the basis of *some form or other* of combination. If this is right, then it suggests that there are several sorts of items that are excluded from the categories. Although these linguistic points are consistent with the possibility that Aristotle excludes only predications (and sentences) from the categories, the

⁴⁴ Cf. *Soph. Elench.* 9. 170a39.

language of the passage does not require or even suggest this. Indeed, as I've argued, the language of T8 suggests the opposite.

There is also philosophical pressure to accept that several kinds of items are excluded from the categories because they “are said on the basis of combination” (λέγεται κατὰ συμπλοκὴν). Ackrill is responding to this pressure when he argues that Aristotle

ought not to intend only indicative sentences (or only sentences) to count as expressions involving combination. For in Chapter 4 he says that every expression without combination signifies an item in some one category; this implies that an expression like 'white man' which introduces two terms from two categories is an expression involving combination (Ackrill, 1963, 73).

Akrill's challenge is that if we take “things said on the basis of combination” to refer only to predication or sentences, then we will be forced to conclude that all non-sentential expressions introduce items in the categories. But, according to Ackrill, “pale human” and “sitting Socrates” do not refer to items in any of the categories. Ackrill's point is strengthened by the fact that Aristotle does sometimes recognize composite entities or “accidental unities” like *sitting Socrates* and *musical Coriscus* (*Physics* I.6, 190a19-21; *Metaphysics* Δ.6. 1015b17).⁴⁵ The cases we have been discussing—like, individuality and species-hood—are even more pressing than that of sitting Socrates. If we can find a place for sitting Socrates in the ontology of the *Categories*, then we can harmonize the *Categories* with that of other Aristotelian works. But we must find a place for individuality and species-hood in the ontology of the *Categories* in order to make sense of the *Categories* itself. These examples, therefore, provide strong philosophical pressure for construing

⁴⁵ See discussion in Matthews (1982 and 1992); SM Cohen (2008 and 2013).

the crucial phrase, “things said on the basis of combination”, broadly in such a way as to include them.

One natural way to construe “things said on the basis of combination” is to take it to cover items that consist in or are defined in terms of combination or predication. As we saw above, the sentence “Naomi runs” just is the linguistic combination of the name, “Naomi”, and the verb “runs”; and the fact that Naomi is human, just is a predication of the subject, Naomi, with the predicate, human. Plausibly, our troublesome items are also *on the basis of* predication or the technical predication relations, *said-of* and *present-in* in the sense that they consist in predications or instances of *said-of* and *present-in*. Suppose that individuality is defined as *the feature of being said-of no subject*. If this is right, then there is a clear sense in which individuality is said “on the basis of combination”: it is on the basis of combination because its definition involves combination. If anything is an individual, then this fact obtains on the basis of an instance of combination.

Crucially, this is not the case for items in the *Categories*: there is good reason to think that these items are not defined in terms of combination. Aristotle does not give explicit definitions of any items in his categories in the *Categories*; but it is generally agreed that his definitions would look roughly like this:

- (a) human just is rational animal.
- (b) literacy just is knowledge of letters.
- (c) pure white just is maximally luminous white.

Aristotle likely thinks that for each definable item in the *Categories* there is a definition of genus + differentia form of the sort expressed by examples a, b, and c. In cases like these, the *definiens*

of these items do not involve predication, *said-of* or *present-in*.⁴⁶ Since “rational animal” does not involve predication or one of the more specific predication ties—namely, *said-of* and *present-in*—then the definition of human does not involve predication in the intended sense. If this is right, then categorial items, like, human, are not defined in terms of predication. Thus, they are not said on the basis of combination in the sense of being defined in terms of or consisting in combinations.

But what about items like *the belief that Naomi is wise* or the *belief that human is said-of Socrates*? Plausibly, beliefs (ὀπολήψεις) are items in the categories.⁴⁷ But these beliefs presumably *do* have definitions involving predication. Even so, there is a clear sense in which these beliefs and other items like them do not *consist* in predications or patterns of predications: they are mental states *about* predications rather than predications or patterns of predications themselves. Contrast individuality: if individuality is the feature of not being *said-of* anything, then individuality consists in a certain predication pattern. The crux seems to derive from the function of the “about” or “that” used to introduce the content of the beliefs in question. Consider: beliefs *about* Socrates do not consist in Socrates or facts about Socrates, even if they mention Socrates in their definitions. To deal with this sort of case, we can distinguish between items that are defined “directly” in terms of x and those that are defined “indirectly” in terms of x. Let’s say that something is defined “directly” in terms of x just in case its *definiens* includes an expression referring to x that appears outside of the scope of any modifier like “about” or “that.” Saying exactly which uses of which modifiers introduce indirect contexts in a definition is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it should be clear that only items that are defined *directly* in terms of

⁴⁶ Definitions like that of human, “human *is* rational animal”, express predications but do involve predication in the intended sense. What matters for our purpose is whether the *definiens* mentions predication.

⁴⁷ Knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is in the categories (see, e.g., 2.1b1, 8.6b2-6, 8.6b15-17) and belief (ὀπολήψεις) is the genus of knowledge (see *DA* 247b24-6, *EN* 1140b31-2, and Moss and Schwab, 2019, esp. 14-15). It stands to reason that belief is a member of some category and that belief-types, like *the belief that Naomi is wise*, are as well.

predication(s) consist in predications or patterns of predications in the intended sense. What matters, then is that, plausibly, none of the items in the categories are defined *directly* in terms of predication, so none of the items in the categories consist in predications or patterns of predications in the relevant way.⁴⁸

I will take it for granted that categorial items—entities in the categories like human, Socrates, color, and literacy—are not (directly) defined in terms of predication. But there remains a crucial question. Should we accept that the troublesome items that we have been discussing, like *individuality*, are defined (directly) in terms of predication or some kind of predication? I think that the answer is yes. To warm you up to this thought, consider the following first-pass accounts:

(i) to be an individual is to be not *said-of* anything.

(ii) to be a universal is to be *said-of* something.

(iii) To be a species is to be a universal that some other universal is *said-of*.⁴⁹

To define genus and differentia, let's use the shorthand “is S-coextensive with x” to stand for “is *said-of* all and only the individuals that x is *said-of*.”

⁴⁸ More formally, we can say that an item x is **predication defined** iff there is a (real) definition of x that contains a term referring to predication, the *said-of* relation, or the *present-in* relation. Let's also say that x is **directly predication defined** iff there is a real definition of x that contains a term referring to predication, the *said-of* relation, or the *present-in* relation outside of the scope of every modifier relevantly like “about.” My contention is that there may be items in the categories that are **predication defined** but there are no items in the categories that are **directly predication defined**. We might want to capture cases in which an item is not itself **directly predication defined** but is **directly defined** in terms of some item(s) which are themselves **directly predication defined** or which are themselves defined in terms of some item(s) which are **directly predication defined**, and so on. Thus, let's stipulate recursively that x **directly involves predication** iff x is directly predication defined or x is **directly defined** in terms of some item, y, and y **directly involves predication**. The notion that I am interested in is that of **directly involving predication**. My proposal, then, is that our troublesome bunch of items all **directly involve predication** and that the members of the categories do not **directly involve predication**. For convenience, however, in what follows I will speak simply in terms of “being defined in terms of predication.”

⁴⁹ Aristotle sometimes also uses a relational notions—*species of*, *genus of*, and *differentia of*—and these relational notions can also be defined in terms of *said-of*, but the details need not detain us here.

(iv) to be a genus is to be a universal that is *said-of* several species and not S-coextensive with any of them.⁵⁰

(v) to be a differentia is to be a universal that is *said-of* a species with which it is S-coextensive.

(vi) to be a primary substance is to be neither *said-of* nor *present-in* any subject.

(vii) to be a substance is to be a subject of *present-in* predication.

(viii) to be a secondary substance is to be a substance that is *said-of* something.

(ix) to be an accident is to be *present-in* something.

Some of these definitions may require some refining and nuancing, but they are intuitive and explanatory characterizations of the entities in question (under Aristotle's conception of them). At very least, they make clear roughly how one might give definitions for these nine troublesome entities in terms of predication or the predication relations, *said-of* and *present-in*. If it is true that all of the troublesome items we have been discussing and none of the items in the *Categories* are defined in terms of predication, then these items turn out not to be an entirely heterogeneous bunch: there is something significant and philosophically illuminating that they share. My proposal is that the feature of being defined in terms of predication or predication ties explains why Aristotle does not include these items in any category.

In the remainder of this section, I flesh out and further motivating my suggestion that items like individuality are (directly) defined in terms of predication. Admittedly, Aristotle does not give definitions of all of these troublesome items, but, for the ones he does carefully characterize or define, his definition or characterization mentions predication, *said-of* or *present-in*. Consider Aristotle's brief discussion of individuality at the end of *Cat.* 2 at 1b6-9:

⁵⁰ This account works if every genus is *said-of* several species. It would need to be revised if there can be a genus with a single species.

[T9] And without exception ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\lambda\acute{\omega}\varsigma$), the things that are individuals and one in number are *said-of* no subject, but nothing prevents some from being *present-in* a subject—for literacy is among the things *present-in* a subject.

It is tempting to take this as a definition of individuality. On this view,

(i) to be an individual just is to be *said-of* no subject.

This conception of individuality strongly resembles that of *De Interpretatione* 7 17a38-b1, where Aristotle's defines individuals as those things that are not capable of being predicated of many things.⁵¹ Strictly speaking, however, T8 can be read as merely offering a characterization of the individuals—namely, that if something is an individual then it is *said-of* no subject. Frede (1987c, 54), for example, argues that T8 presents only part of Aristotle's account of individuality. On Frede's view,

(i*) x is an individual if and only if x is not *said-of* anything and there is some y such that y is *said-of* x.⁵²

Both of these interpretations have their advantages, but, for our purposes, they come to the same thing: individuality is defined in terms of the *said-of* relation, one of the forms of combination.

If either of these accounts of individuality is correct, then it suggests that Aristotle endorses a related account for the items that contrast with individuality—namely, universality, species-hood, genus-hood, and the feature of being a differentia. In particular, it suggests that

(ii) to be a universal is to be *said-of* something.

⁵¹ This is a paraphrase. Note that in *De Int.* 7 Aristotle appears to think of individuals as, roughly, items that cannot be predicated and universals as items that *can be* predicated. In *Categories*, however, Aristotle is working with a notion of individuality that allows (non-substance) individuals to be accidentally predicated, or *present-in* a subject. For discussion see Crivelli (2015b, especially 21-2).

⁵² Compare *APr.* 1.27 43a25-36.

On this view, the universal items—those contrasted with the individuals—are just the ones that are *said-of* some subject or other. This harmonizes with Aristotle’s remarks on universals in both *De Int.* 7 17a38-b1 and *APr.* 1.27 43a25-36, where the individuals are contrasted with the items that can be predicated or essentially predicated of other things.⁵³ Likewise, in the *Categories*, genera, species, and differentiae are *said-of* individuals. The species, human, is *said-of* the individual humans; the differentia, rational, is *said-of* the species, human, and also of the individual humans; and the genus, animal, is *said-of* the species, human, and the individual humans as well as the various other species of animal—e.g. aardvark—and individuals of those species—e.g. the individual aardvarks. Thus, the items contrasted with individuals—i.e. the universals—are each *said-of* something.

Indeed, if we accept this account of universality, then we can extend it to define species-hood, the feature of being a genus and the feature of being a differentia. According to Aristotle, species are *subkinds*: they are *said-of* individuals and there are other universals that are *said-of* them.⁵⁴ In particular, according to Aristotle, for each species there is a genus and a differentia, which together define that species, that are *said-of* that species.⁵⁵ Thus, Aristotle appears to accept that

(iii) to be a species is to be a universal that some other universal is *said-of*.

On his view, both genera and differentiae are *said-of* species. The difference, however, between genera and a differentiae is that each genus divides into—and is *said-of*—several proximate species that fall under it, while each differentia is associated with a unique proximate species.⁵⁶ As

⁵³ Aristotle defines universals in *De Int.* 7 17a38-b1 as “what is of such a nature as to be predicated of several things.” In the *Analytics* passage, Aristotle does not explicitly define universals, but he appears to think that the universals are those things that are (essentially) predicated of other things. See the helpful discussion in Crivelli (2015b).

⁵⁴ See *Cat.* 5.2b15-21.

⁵⁵ For the claim that differentiae and genera are *said-of* species see *Cat.* 3a37-3b2 together with 5.3a9-13, and 21-25. For the claim that species are defined by genera together with differentiae see, e.g., *Topics* I.8 103b14-16 and VI.6 143b19-20.

⁵⁶ See *Cat.* 3.1b16-24. This appears to be what Aristotle has in mind in *Topics* VI.6 144b12-20, although later in that chapter (144b20-30) he considers relaxing this restriction.

Aristotle puts it in *Topics* I.5, “a genus is predicated (κατηγορούμενον) in the what-it-is (ἐν τῷ τί ἐστὶ) of many things which are different in species (διαφερόντων τῷ εἶδει)” (102a31-2, Smith translation). In the terminology of the *Categories*, we might say that a genus is what is *said-of* several species but is not S-coextensive with any of them: the set of individuals that the genus is *said-of* is strictly larger than the set of individuals that each of its species is *said-of*. Thus, it is reasonable to attribute to Aristotle the view that

- (iv) to be a genus is to be a universal that is *said-of* several species and is not S-coextensive⁵⁷ with any of them.⁵⁸

A differentia, insofar as it *differentiates* a species from the other species of the same proximate genus, cannot be *said-of* any individuals that are not members of that species. So, each differentia is S-coextensive with some species. Even though Aristotle does not give an explicit definition of differentia in *Categories* or *Topics*, given what we have said, it is clear how to contrast differentiae with genera: a differentia is what is *said-of* some species and is S-coextensive with it.

- (v) To be a differentia is to be a universal that is *said-of* a species with which it is S-coextensive.

Granting that definitions of species-hood, genus-hood and the feature of being a differentia along these lines can be articulated in a satisfactory way, we have made significant progress towards supporting the claim that our troublesome bunch of entities are defined in terms of combination. Turning next to primary substance-hood, consider Aristotle’s opening remarks about substance in *Cat.* 5 at 2a11-13:

⁵⁷ Note that “S-coextensive” means coextensive with respect to the *said-of* relation.

⁵⁸ These definitions of species and genus have the welcome result that some, but not all, species are genera and some, but not all, genera are species. To wit: maximally general genera are not species and maximally specific species are not genera (cf. *Cat.* 5. 2b22-26).

[T10] What is called substance both in the most governing sense and primarily and most is what is neither *said-of* a subject nor is *present-in* a subject.

This at least looks like it is an informal definition of substance—or rather, what Aristotle later calls “primary substance” (3a8-9)—and it is sometimes read as such.⁵⁹ On this reading, Aristotle is asserting that

(vi) to be a primary substance is to be neither *said-of* nor *present-in* any subject.

The majority of commentators, however, argue that this is only part of Aristotle’s official account of primary substance, and that, according to Aristotle’s considered account,

(vi*) to be a primary substance is to be (a) neither *said-of* nor *present-in* any subject and also (b) a subject that other items are *said-of* or are *present-in*.⁶⁰

For our purposes, there is no need to decide between these definitions. On all accounts, *primary substance-hood* is defined in terms of predication. The same is true for *substance-hood*. We do not need to decide between the account of substance-hood given by Perin (2007, 133), who argues that

(vii) to be a substance is to be a subject that something is *present-in*,

and the one given by Kohl (2008, 164), who argues that

(vii*) to be a substance is to be a subject that something is *present-in* and that is not present-in anything.⁶¹

On either account, substance-hood is defined in terms of predication. If either of these accounts of substance-hood is correct, then it puts us in position to give an attractive account of secondary substance-hood:

⁵⁹ See Matthews (2009, 146).

⁶⁰ See Code, (1986, 431), Loux (1991, 23-4), Mann (2000, 24-5), Kohl (2008, 164-5), and Perin (2007, 134). Compare the account of substance in Frede (1987, 59). These accounts are often couched in terms of “subjecthood”, but it is clear that the relevant notion of being a subject is that of being a subject of *said-of* or *present-in* predication.

⁶¹ See Kohl (2008, n. 22). Compare Frede (1987, 59).

(viii) to be a secondary substance is to be a substance that is *said-of* something.

Moreover, it puts us in position to define accident-hood:

(ix) to be an accident is to be *present-in* some subject.

Thus, nine of the troublesome entities that we have discussed have attractive Aristotelian definitions in terms of combination and these definitions are grounded in the text and the conceptual resources of the *Categories*. If there are other entities that pose similar problems but that we have not discussed, we should be cautiously optimistic that they too can be defined in terms of combination.

4.2 Beyond Essential and Accidental Predication

I began this chapter by asking how Aristotle would analyze truths like

(C) Naomi is an individual,

(D) human is a species,

and

(E) wisdom is an accident.

So far, we have a partial answer: the predicate-terms in these sentences introduce *extra-categorical* entities, “higher-order” entities that are themselves defined in terms of predication. But what kind of predications correspond to sentences like C, D, and E? Is Naomi essentially an individual or accidentally an individual? In the language of the *Categories*, is individuality *said-of* Naomi or is it *present-in* Naomi? As I will show, C, D, and E do not correspond to *said-of* (essential) predications nor to *present-in* (accidental) predications. Rather, Aristotle accepts a third kind of predication, which I call “higher-order predication.”

Let's focus on (D) the claim that the kind, human, is a species. Would Aristotle class this as a *said-of* predication? No. Aristotle holds that the *said-of* relation is transitive.⁶² In other words,

if *x* is *said-of* *y* and *y* is *said-of* *z*, then *x* is *said-of* *z*.

But if *said-of* is transitive, then species-hood cannot be *said-of* human. Why not? Well, on Aristotle's view, the kind, human is *said-of* the individual humans, like Naomi Osaka and Socrates (see, e.g., *Cat.* 2. 1a21-2, 5. 2a21-2). So, if species-hood is *said-of* the kind, human; and the kind, human, is *said-of* Naomi Osaka; then, by transitivity, it follows that species-hood is *said-of* Naomi Osaka. But the *said-of* relation is predication entailing: if *x* is *said-of* *y*, then *y* is *x* (*Cat.* 5. 2a19-27). So, it would follow that Naomi Osaka is a species. But, of course, this is absurd. So, given Aristotle's views about the *said-of* relation, species-hood cannot be *said-of* human.

Can species-hood be *present-in* human? Also, no. Aristotle endorses what we can call the "Some Individual Principle" for the *present-in* relation:

if *x* is *present-in* the universal, *y*, then *x* is also *present-in* some individual member of *y*.

So, for example, if wisdom is *present-in* the kind, human, then there must be some individual human such that wisdom is *present-in* that human. Aristotle relies on this principle in defending what may be the most important thesis in the *Categories*—namely, the claim that primary substances are prior to everything else. Part of his argument goes as follows:

[T11] all the others are either *said-of* primary substances or are *present-in* them. This is clear from an examination of cases⁶³ ... color is *present-in* body, therefore it is also *present-in* a particular body; for if it were not *present-in* some one of the individuals, it would not

⁶² *Cat.* 3.1b10-12 and 5.3b4-5. Here, I follow the majority of commentators. See Ackrill (1963, 76), Patzig (1973, 65), Dancy (1975, 351), Rohr (1978, 380-1 & 384-5), Loux (1991, 24), Mann (2000, 52-3), and Crivelli (2017, 540). For doubts about transitivity, see Ferejohn (1981, 287).

⁶³ Literally, "from taking in hand specific cases" (ἐκ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα προχειριζομένων). Compare *Cat.* 8.10b19.

be *present-in* body generally (εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐν τινὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα, οὐδὲ ἐν σώματι ὅλως).
(2a34-2b2)

Clearly, Aristotle's discussion of the color-body example is meant to illustrate what he takes to be a general principle governing the *present-in* relation: if something is *present-in* some general kind, or universal, then it must also be *present-in* some individual of that kind. In other words, Aristotle endorses the Some Individual Principle. But, if this is right, then species-hood cannot be *present-in* the kind, human. Otherwise, by the Some Individual Principle, it would follow that species-hood is *present-in* some individual human. And if species-hood is *present-in* some individual human, then that individual human is a species.⁶⁴ But no individual is a species! Therefore, Aristotle cannot accept that species-hood is *present-in* the kind, human.

If this is right, then it follows that there must be some third form of predication. But what is this third form of predication? I propose that we think of this third form of predication as higher-order predication: higher-order predications are predications about the first order predication profile of their subject. Since a subject's metaphysical status in Aristotle's framework in the *Categories* tracks with its predication profile—i.e. the facts about whether the subject is *said-of* anything, whether it is *present-in* anything, whether anything is *present-in* it, etc.—higher order predications track their subject's place in Aristotle's framework, their metaphysical status. If this is right and Aristotle accepts higher-order predication as a third form of predication besides *said-of* and *present-in*, then he can account for *all* of the truths involving the problematic independent terms we have been investigating in a unified and elegant fashion: each of these claims, including C, D and E are higher-order predications—predications that obtain in virtue of an underlying pattern of *said-of* and *present-in* predications.

⁶⁴ Like the *said-of* relation, the *present-in* relation is predication entailing.

4.3 Final Remarks

According to the interpretation I have defended, the *Categories* offers an ontology and a theory of predication that is more generous than one might have suspected. I argued that the ontology of the *Categories* includes extra-categorial entities and that, besides the *said-of* and *present-in* relations, the theory of predication in the *Categories* recognizes a third form of predication—higher-order predication. If this interpretation is correct, it raises some questions. Why does the text of the *Categories* focus only on a special subset of the entities? What is Aristotle up to in distinguishing his ten categories if he thinks that there are entities that do not fit into any of them? Why does Aristotle discuss only two forms of predications, when he recognizes a third?

The *Categories* is engaged in identifying the metaphysical grounds for simple predicative truths—like *Socrates is wise* and *literacy is (a) knowledge*. This is not a new project. Plato also puts forward a theory according to which certain truths are more fundamental than others: certain truths obtain in virtue of others. According to the Platonic theory, the basic truths—those that explain all the others—all have three ingredients. All of the basic truths involve two Platonic Forms and the relationship of combination. Thus, all basic truths take the form:

F combines with G (where F and G are Forms).

Take, for example, the fact that the form of Motion combines with the form of Difference. According to Plato's theory, truths like this one metaphysically explain or ground more familiar truths, like *Motion is different* (see *Sophist* 255e3-256b4 and 256d11-e3). Thus, there is a clear sense in which the truth that the Form of Motion combines with the Form of Difference is more fundamental than the truth that motion is different.

The theory put forward in the *Categories*, deviates from this Platonic theory in two crucial respects. First, according to the *Categories*, *combination* comes in two kinds, and, thus, the basic truths come in two different forms:

A is said-of B, and

C is present-in D

All of the other truths obtain in virtue of the truths of these two basic forms.

Second, according to the *Categories*, the beings that combine with each other to form the basic facts are not Platonic Forms. Aristotle argues that all of the constituents of the basic facts—all items that combine via the *said-of* or *present-in* relations—are primary substances or are predicates of the primary substances. Some of these predicates form part of the very essence of a primary substance—for example, the kind, human, is part of the essence of Naomi Osaka. Some of them, however, are predicates that determine what a primary substance it is like, or how much there is of it, or in relation to what it is, or where it is, etc.

On this picture, the basic predications metaphysically explain further, non-basic, predications. For example, the fact that human is *said-of* Naomi grounds the fact that human is a universal. Naomi is an individual in virtue of the fact that Naomi is not *said-of* anything. If this is right, then the categories encompass only a subset of entities: they include only the primary substances and their predicates because only these items combine with each other to form the fundamental truths—the truths that explain all the others. Items defined in terms of predication, like species-hood, are not included in the categories because they are *higher-order entities*: they are predicated of their subjects in virtue of the first-order combinations of items in the categories—i.e. the *said-of* and *present-in* facts. This picture allows for a third form of predication distinct from *present-in* and *said-of* predication: Naomi is an individual even though individuality is neither *present-in* not

said-of Naomi. Plausibly, however, the *Categories* does not theorize these higher-order predications because it is focused on the two *basic* forms of predication. This picture also allows for the existence of items outside of the categories: species-hood, individuality, and the like are *real*, but they are not the focus of the *Categories* because the text is focused on giving a theory of items that are constituents of predications of the two basic forms.

The idea that the *Categories* is focused on a special subset of entities dates back to antiquity. Consider the opening lines of chapter 2, where Aristotle first takes up the themes of ontology and predication:

[T12] Of things said, some are said on the basis of combination and others without combination. Those said on the basis of combination are, for example, man runs, man wins; and those said without combination are, for example, man, ox, runs, wins. Of beings (Τῶν ὄντων), some are said of a subject but are present in no subject ... (1a16-1b4)

Modern commentators have often remarked on the apparently harsh transition here. How does the distinction between being said with combination and being said without combination presented in the chapter's opening lines bear on the classification of entities in the latter part of the chapter?⁶⁵ According to an ancient interpretive tradition there is nothing strange here at all: the distinction between what is said with combination and what said without combination provides a contextual constraint on the classification of entities.⁶⁶ According to Ammonius, Philoponus, and Simplicius, the classification does not concern *all beings* but only *beings said without combination*. If this

⁶⁵ See Mann (2000, 60) for a forceful statement of the problem.

⁶⁶ See Ammonius, in *Cat.* 24.13-20; Philoponus, in *Cat.* 27.27-33; and Simplicius, in *Cat.* 40.30-41-4. Note that these commentators approach the *Categories* with a distinctly Platonist or Neo-Platonist agenda. Nevertheless, they do not appeal to any Platonist or Neo-Platonist doctrines in offering their reading of the relationship between the first and second parts of T2. What is more, as I have argued, a version of their reading is attractive on purely textual and Aristotelian grounds.

ancient interpretation is correct, then the ontology and the theory of predication of the *Categories* treat only a special subset of entities, those said without combination.

Conclusion

1. Ground Covered

This dissertation has analyzed two ancient Greek conceptions of the distinction between a thing's essential features and its non-essential features by situating those conceptions in the broader theories of property possession to which they belong. Part I reconstructed Platonic essentialism in *Sophist* and *Statesman* and Part II reconstructed Aristotelian essentialism in *Categories*.

Together, Chapters 1 and 2 argued that, in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato has a determinate conception of this distinction, according to which

F is an essential feature of x iff (i) x participates in F-ness, (ii) the fact that x participates in F-ness is not metaphysically explained, and (iii) the fact that x participates in F-ness at least partly metaphysically explains at least one distinctness or combination fact about x.

An upshot of this account is that, in order to draw the distinction between the essential and non-essential features of a thing Plato does not need to posit a second relation, on a par with but distinct from participation. This is a distinctive feature of my account and it comes with a significant advantage: in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, there is no evidence that Plato posits a second relation of this sort. Chapter 3 added support and determinacy to this analysis by defending a reading of *Sophist* 256-7, in which Plato claims to resolve three apparent inconsistencies in his position regarding the combinations of the "greatest kinds". On this reading, Plato's strategy is to deploy his participation-based theory of property possession to offer metaphysical explanations of these three apparent inconsistencies. Once one sees their *explanantia*, it is clear that the *explananda* pose no threat. Here too, Plato needs and employs only the notion of metaphysical explanation along with a single relation, participation, to formulate his theory of property possession.

Part II turned to Aristotle's two-relation theory of property possession in *Categories*. Chapter 4 reconstructs Aristotle's distinction between a thing's essential and its non-essential features by giving an account of his *said-of* relation. This account answers four foundational questions about *said-of*. (i) What is it? (ii) Is it an essential relation? (iii) How is it related to predication? (iv) Can it be defined? Chapter 4 argues that

(Formal Part) A is *said-of* B just in case A is a formal part of B.

On this account, (ii) *said-of* is an essential relation: if A is *said-of* B, then A is an essential feature of B's. Thus, on this account of the *said-of* relation, all and only the defining features of a thing are *said-of* it. It also supports the view that (iii) *said-of* is not defined in terms of predication but (iv) it can be defined.

Chapter 5 further studied the contrast between *said-of* and *present-in* by drawing attention to a particularly troublesome set of claims the truth of which Aristotle relies upon throughout *Categories*. These are claims like "Socrates is an individual" and "human is a species" in which the predicate term—i.e. "individual" and "species"—stands for a metaphysical status that the subject is claimed to possess. These claims, I argued, cannot correspond to instances of the *said-of* relation or the *present-in* relation. Moreover, their predicate-terms must introduce entities—e.g. individuality and species-hood—but they cannot introduce entities in any of the categories. On the account I defended, the troublesome terms introduce "higher-order" entities outside of the categories and that the troublesome claims correspond to a distinct form of "higher-order" predication. I concluded by suggesting that *said-of* and *present-in* are the two fundamental relations between entities and their predicates—that is, all other predications, including "higher-order" predications, are grounded in the instances of the *said-of* and *present-in* relations.

2. Open Questions

There are several questions that deserve but have not received comprehensive treatment. A fully realized version of this study would discuss these issues in detail, but, for reasons of space and time, the actual version does not give them the comprehensive treatment they deserve. In order to indicate where a more fully realized version of this study might elaborate on the actual version, I note some of these unanswered questions.

- (i) In Part I, I offered some preliminary reasons for doubting that, as Frede and his allies have argued, the contrast between καθ' αὐτό and πρὸς ἄλλο introduced in *Sophist* 255c-d tracks with a difference between being F *by nature* and being F *by participation*. I did not, however, offer a positive account of the crucial passage, nor did I discuss every passage that Fredeans offer as evidence for their reading. Although I will not defend this hypothesis here, I suspect that the right way to understand the *kath' auto/pros allo* distinction in 255c12-d7 is as a version of the contrast Plato draws in *Charmides* 167b2-e8 and *Republic* 438a7-439b1 between relative and non-relative properties. The Fredean interpretation calls for a systematic assessment and critique, including a positive alternative reading of 255c12-d7 and related passages.
- (ii) A more complete version of this study would include a detailed analysis of Plato's various idioms for participation in *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Although, in Chapter 2, I argued for the distinction between direct and distributive participation, it would be extremely valuable to have a careful reconstruction of the logic and basic principles governing participation—in the sort of way I did for *said-of* in section 2 of chapter 4. This analysis could go a long way toward fleshing out the theory of property possession in *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

- (iii) The aim of the dissertation was to reconstruct the contrast between the essential features and the non-essential features of a thing. Both Plato and Aristotle draw also attention to what may be a different contrast: Plato contrasts *what something is* with *what it is like* and Aristotle contrasts *said-of* with *present-in*. First, it would be worth working out whether, for Plato, the features that make something *what it is like* are just its non-essential features or whether he has a positive conception of *what something is like*. Furthermore, if he has a positive conception, it would be good say what that conception is: are the features that determine *what something is like* just any features that it happens to have, all the features that are not essential to it, or some set of structurally important but non-essential features? Moreover, if the features that determine what *something is like* are not simply its non-essential features, then how does Plato understand the contrast between *what something is* and *what it is like*? Second, concerning Aristotle, it would be valuable to say more about the *present-in* relation. While Chapter 4 has some things to say about the *present-in* relation, a fully realized version of this work would include a comprehensive account of the relation on a par with its discussion of *said-of*. What is more, it would be valuable to trace the connection—or bring to light the differences—between Plato’s notion of *what something is like*, on the one hand, and Aristotle’s category of quality as well as his *present-in* relation.
- (iv) More should be said about related Platonic texts, including *Philebus*, *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*. While it is important to be careful not to import doctrines from these other contexts in reading *Sophist* and *Statesman*, a careful consideration of the relationship between our two dialogues and these others would make clear what is an important innovation in *Sophist* and *Statesman* and what is shared with other “late” dialogues.

- (v) Finally, an account given of the historical relationship between *Categories* and late Platonic dialogues, including *Sophist* and *Statesman*. It is sometimes suggested that the metaphysics of *Categories* overlaps in important respects with that of late Platonic works.¹ What is more, it is sometimes suggested that *Sophist* and *Statesman*—along with other “late” dialogues—represent a program of research that held sway in the Academy during Aristotle’s time there². Additionally, it is sometimes suggested that *Categories* is, in large part, a response to Platonic ideas that were current in the Academy during Aristotle’s time there.³ If this is true, then it would be quite significant for the present study. In particular, it might go a long way toward supporting the narrow focus on the texts discussed here and the historical—rather than simply philosophical—importance of a careful comparison between *Sophist* and *Statesman* and *Categories*. A fully realized version of this material would discuss this and related historical issues in detail.

This actual dissertation, then, has left this set of questions to be answered. I hope someday to return to them.

This dissertation also opens a second set of questions. Indeed, one of its goals has been to open some new questions and reopen some old ones. In particular, it has aimed to call into question familiar accounts of the relationship between Platonic and Aristotelian essentialism, Plato’s way of drawing the contrast between the essential and the non-essential features of a thing, and the theory of predication in *Categories*. It has also aimed to motivate less well studied questions about, for example, the relationship between meaning and metaphysical explanation in late Plato and terms like “individual” and “species” in *Categories*.

¹ See Frede (1987, 27-8 & 56-7).

² See Owen (1965, 126-9).

³ *ibid.* 133. Cf. Mann (2000, 188-204)

Appendix A: The Definitions

The definitions in *Sophist* and *Statesman* fall into two families. **Family A** includes the definition angling (Sα; 221b2-c3), the sixth definition of sophistry (Sσ6; *Soph.* 231b3-8) and the first definition of political expertise in the *Statesman* (Pπ1; 267a4-c3). **Family B** includes the first (Sσ1; 223b1-6), second (Sσ2; 224c9-d2), third and fourth (Sσ3/4; 224e1-4)¹, fifth (Sσ5; 226a1-4) and seventh (Sσ7; 268c8-d4) definitions of sophistry proposed in *Sophist*. In this appendix, I include the Greek for each definition without translation to facilitate comparisons.

Family A

Note the series of parallel independent clauses, the genitives expressions for *whole* and the repetition of names of kinds—first for a part and then for a whole contain a part.

The Definition of Angling (*Soph.* 221b2-c3)

Sα {ΞΕ.} ... συμπάσης γὰρ τέχνης τὸ μὲν ἡμῖς μέρος κτητικὸν ἦν, κτητικοῦ δὲ χειρωτικόν, χειρωτικοῦ δὲ θηρευτικόν, τοῦ δὲ θηρευτικοῦ ζωοθηρικόν, ζωοθηρικοῦ δὲ ἐνυγροθηρικόν, ἐνυγροθηρικοῦ δὲ τὸ κάτωθεν τμήμα ὅλον ἀλιευτικόν, ἀλιευτικῆς δὲ πληκτικόν, πληκτικῆς δὲ ἀγκιστρευτικόν· τούτου δὲ τὸ περὶ τὴν κάτωθεν ἄνω πληγὴν ἀνασπωμένην, ἀπ' αὐτῆς τῆς πράξεως ἀφομοιωθὲν τοῦνομα, ἢ νῦν ἀσπαλιευτικὴ ζητηθεῖσα ἐπὶ κλην γέγονεν.

¹ The third and fourth definitions are given by a single sentence with a disjunctive clause—"καπηλικὸν εἴτε αὐτοπωλικόν". They are counted separately in the summary at 231d-e.

The Sixth Definition of Sophistry (*Soph.* 231b3-8)

Sσ6 {ΞΕ.} Ἐστω δὴ διακριτικῆς τέχνης καθαρτική, καθαρτικῆς δὲ τὸ περὶ ψυχὴν μέρος ἀφωρίσθω, τούτου δὲ διδασκαλική, διδασκαλικῆς δὲ παιδευτική· τῆς δὲ παιδευτικῆς ὁ περὶ τὴν μάταιον δοξοσοφίαν γιγνόμενος ἔλεγχος ἐν τῷ νῦν λόγῳ παραφανέντι μηδὲν ἄλλ' ἡμῖν εἶναι λεγέσθω πλήν ἢ γένει γενναία σοφιστική.

The First Definition of Political Expertise (*Stm.* 267a8-b10)

Pπ1 {ΞΕ.} Τῆς γνωστικῆς τοίνυν ἐπιστήμης ἡμῖν ἦν κατ' ἀρχὰς μέρος ἐπιτακτικόν· τούτου δὲ ἀπεικασθὲν τὸ μόριον αὐτεπιτακτικὸν ἐρρήθη. ζωοτροφικὴ δὲ πάλιν αὐτεπιτακτικῆς οὐ τὸ σμικρότατον τῶν γενῶν ἀπεσχίζετο· καὶ ζωοτροφικῆς εἶδος ἀγελαιοτροφικόν, ἀγελαιοτροφικοῦ δ' αὖ πεζονομικόν· τοῦ δὲ πεζονομικοῦ μάλιστα ἀπετέμενετο τέχνη τῆς ἀκεράτου φύσεως θρεπτική. ταύτης δ' αὖ τὸ μέρος οὐκ ἔλαττον τριπλοῦν συμπλέκειν ἀναγκαῖον, ἂν εἰς ἓν τις αὐτὸ ὄνομα συναγαγεῖν βουληθῇ, γενέσεως ἀμείκτου νομευτικὴν ἐπιστήμην προσαγορεύων. τὸ δ' ἀπὸ τούτου τμήμα, ἐπὶ ποίμνῃ δίποδι μέρος ἀνθρωπονομικὸν ἔτι λειφθὲν μόνον, τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ἐστὶν ἤδη τὸ ζητηθέν, ἅμα βασιλικὸν ταῦτὸν κληθὲν καὶ πολιτικόν.

Family B:

Note the frequent use of hyperbaton and the use of genitive expressions to indicate a whole or a series of wholes to which a part belongs.

The First Definition of Sophistry (*Soph.* 223b1-7):

Sσ1: Κατὰ δὴ τὸν νῦν, ὃ Θεαίτητε, λόγον, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἡ τέχνης οἰκειωτικῆς, θηρευτικῆς, ζωοθηρίας, χειρσαίας, ἀνθρωποθηρίας, <πιθανοθηρίας>, ἰδιοθηρίας, νομιζματοπωλικῆς, δοξοπαιδευτικῆς, νέων πλουσίων καὶ ἐνδόξων γιγνομένη θήρα προσρητέον, ὡς ὁ νῦν λόγος ἡμῖν συμβαίνει, σοφιστική.²

The Second Definition of Sophistry (*Soph.* 224c9-d2):

Sσ2: {ΞΕ.} Οὐδὲν ἄλλο. ἴθι δὴ νῦν συναγάγωμεν αὐτὸ λέγοντες ὡς τὸ τῆς κτητικῆς, μεταβλητικῆς, ἀγοραστικῆς, ἐμπορικῆς, ψυχεμπορικῆς περὶ λόγους καὶ μαθήματα ἀρετῆς πωλητικὸν δεύτερον ἀνεφάνη σοφιστική.

The Third and Fourth Definitions of Sophistry (*Soph.* 224e1-4):

Sσ3/4 {ΞΕ.} Καὶ τὸ κτητικῆς ἄρα μεταβλητικόν, ἀγοραστικόν, καπηλικόν εἴτε αὐτοπωλικόν, ἀμφοτέρως, ὅτιπερ ἂν ἦ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μαθηματοπωλικὸν γένος, ἀεὶ σὺ προσερεῖς, ὡς φαίνει, σοφιστικόν.

The Fifth Definition of Sophistry (*Soph.* 226a1-4):

Sσ5 {ΞΕ.} Οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ τὸ χρηματιστικὸν γένος, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐριστικῆς ὃν τέχνης, τῆς ἀντιλογικῆς, τῆς ἀμφισβητητικῆς, τῆς μαχητικῆς, τῆς ἀγωνιστικῆς, τῆς κτητικῆς ἔστιν, ὡς ὁ λόγος αὖ μεμήνυκε νῦν, ὁ σοφιστής.³

² See notes on text on T9 in chapter 1.

³ Note that the definiendum is the bearer of an expertise—namely, “the sophist” only in Sσ5 and Sσ7. In every other definition, the definiendum is the expertise itself.

The Seventh Definition of Sophistry (*Soph.* 268c8-d4):

Sσ7 {ΞΕ.} Τὸ δὴ τῆς ἐναντιοποιολογικῆς εἰρωνικοῦ μέρους τῆς δοξαστικῆς μιμητικόν, τοῦ φανταστικοῦ γένους ἀπὸ τῆς εἰδωλοποιικῆς οὐ θεῖον ἀλλ' ἀνθρωπικὸν τῆς ποιήσεως ἀφωρισμένον ἐν λόγοις τὸ θαυματοποιικὸν μόριον, “ταύτης τῆς γενεᾶς τε καὶ αἵματος” ὃς ἂν φῇ τὸν ὄντως σοφιστὴν εἶναι, τἀληθέστατα, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐρεῖ.

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