

THE PHAEDO AND REPUBLIC V ON ESSENCES

TOWARDS the close of Book V of the *Republic* Plato tells us that the true philosopher has knowledge and that the objects of knowledge are the Forms.¹ By contrast, the 'lovers of sights and sounds', he tells us, have no more than belief, the objects of which are physical particulars.² He then goes on to present us with some very radical-sounding assertions about the nature of these physical particulars. They are bearers of opposite properties, he says, in so thorough-going a manner that we cannot say of them that they are nor that they are not: they lie somewhere between being and utter non-being.

This passage of the *Republic* (475–80) still awaits an agreed interpretation and I want to suggest as a reason for this that it is usually interpreted in isolation. I will argue that it becomes easier to understand when seen against the background of Plato's developing thought. To be more precise, it makes sense when taken as a rejection by Plato of one of his earlier beliefs: namely, a doctrine of essentialism³ to be found in the *Phaedo*.

The greater part of this paper then will be an attempt to show that *Republic* V is a rejection of the *Phaedo*'s doctrine of essences. Its concluding part will try to explain why that doctrine was rejected.

I

I have already argued in detail elsewhere⁴ that the *latter* part of the *Phaedo* (by which in this paper I will mean 95–107) contains a doctrine of essences, and I will limit myself here to recalling the points that are of most importance.

To begin with, Socrates' final argument for the immortality of the soul is to be understood as follows.⁵ Particulars of many different kinds—Simmias, Socrates, lumps of snow, bits of fire, numbers, fevers and souls—possess some of their properties accidentally and some of them essentially. For example, Simmias possesses the property of being small or being big accidentally. He does not have these properties by virtue of being Simmias, by virtue of what he *is*, but because smallness and bigness are properties which he merely happens 'to have'. By contrast, a lump of snow possesses the property of being cold as part of its essence, and a fever possesses the property

Numbers in parentheses following authors' names refer to the bibliography at the end of the article.

¹ It has been pointed out many times that the detailed discussion about knowledge and opinion in *Rep. V* is between Socrates and the lovers of sights and sounds, who do not believe in the Forms. Thus, from 476e7 onwards, it is said, the argument cannot assume the existence of the Forms. See: Murphy (30) 104–6; Cross & Woosley (15) 139; Gosling (19) esp. 122.

This is true, but it should not prevent us (*the readers*) from taking 475a–480a as a single discussion. *We* are to understand what is said about the objects of knowledge as being also said about the Forms; and what is said about the objects of opinion as being about physical particulars (but see following note).

² It has been argued by Gosling (18) that 'the many' characterised especially at 479 are not particulars at all, but *types*. For the opposite view see White (46) and (48). Confusion over the distinction between types and particular tokens has made some commentators very difficult to follow: e.g., Murphy (30) ch. 6; Cross & Woosley (15) 147 ff., esp. 159.

³ By 'essentialism' or 'the doctrine of essences' in this paper is meant the view that any given particular *x* has, *qua* particular, some property or properties *F*, such that *x* could not be, have been, or continue to be *x*, without having *F*, nor would it continue to be *x* if it acquired

Opposite-*F*. By '*qua* particular' is meant that *x* has *F* not under this or that description, but independently of all descriptions. See Kripke (27); Cresswell (11) 91–100; White (45) section I. See also section II of this paper.

⁴ See White (45) *passim*. There are many places where other commentators seem to hold that a doctrine of essences is to be found in the *Phaedo*, but they pay little attention to it. See, for example, Bluck (4) 118; Nehamas (32) 471–2, 489–90; Cresswell (10) 247. Turnbull (40) esp. 137, is well aware that Plato holds a view of 'natured individuals', but he treats this as a passing aberration.

⁵ The important feature of this account is that it is *consistently* in terms of particulars. Recently the orthodox view has been that the argument shifts away from particulars to Forms.

For this recent orthodoxy, see, for example, Vlastos (44) esp. 317; Burge (9) 11; O'Brien (33) 224. It has even been suggested at times that Plato takes the soul to be a Form (Hackforth (22) 156), or at any rate speaks as if it were a Form (Keyt (25) 169). See (*contra*) Schiller (37).

For views that are close, in one respect or other, to the one I take here, see Gallop (17) Version A, 203–5; Taylor (39) esp. 48; Cresswell (10) 246–7; Nehamas (32) 482–90.

The short summary that appears in the text here is the same as in White (49). There seemed no point in altering the wording.

of causing sickness in the same way. In turn, the soul—that which brings life to the body—possesses the property of being alive as part of its essence, and so long as it is in a body, that body is necessarily alive; just as, so long as a fever is in a body, that body is necessarily sick. Finally, given that the soul thus possesses life as part of its essence and cannot therefore lose it, when death comes there are but two possibilities: the soul either withdraws or perishes. But, concludes Socrates, what is immortal is surely indestructible. The soul, therefore, when death approaches, simply withdraws.

So much for the general drift of Socrates' argument. More important are some of the things said along the way.

(i) We are told that particulars should be contrasted both with the characteristics they possess and with the Forms. Reality for Plato at this stage of his thinking is made up of three irreducible sorts of items: particulars, properties and Forms.⁶

(ii) By contrast with Forms particulars are held to be bearers of opposite properties. Further, those properties which are present in this or that particular *together with their opposites* are taken to be no more than accidental. More needs to be said and will be said about this later.

(iii) The different particulars that play so important a part in Socrates' final argument are not 'bare particulars', not merely empty containers devoid in themselves of all intrinsic characteristics.⁷ On the contrary, they are essentially characterised and there is no suggestion in the dialogue of that more recent doctrine according to which particulars do not have essences *per se* or intrinsically, but only under this or that description. To take an example, we have no reason to believe that when Plato attributes immortality to the soul he has in mind *something or other* which under the description of 'soul' is immortal but which under different descriptions might bear quite other properties. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the attribution of oddness to three, coldness to snow and hotness to fire. In Plato's mind, as in Aristotle's, there is only one correct description of the world, and it is the function of language to provide us with that description. In his own words, 'language is an instrument for separating out reality, as the shuttle separates out the web' (*διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας, ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος Cratylus 388b-c*).

II

What I want now to argue is that almost immediately after the *Phaedo*—by what would seem to be more than a coincidence—while Plato keeps and develops his doctrine of Forms, he totally rejects the doctrine of essences. Aristotle by contrast will pursue the doctrine of essences while rejecting the theory of Forms.⁸

It is my view that the last few sections of Book V of the *Republic* (475 ff.) are much more nearly related to the latter part of the *Phaedo* than they are to the preceding parts of the *Republic* itself. In a way they follow straight on from *Phaedo* 95–107, not simply because they take up the same major metaphysical theme (so does the *Symposium*, which may well come between these other two dialogues), but because they take it up in the same close and analysing vein. Further, as I will argue later, they share a common 'technical' vocabulary and have the same interest in the relationship between Forms and opposite properties. Indeed, since it seems quite possible that the earlier parts of the *Republic* were written before the *Phaedo* anyway,⁹ *Republic V* may well be close

⁶ A number of commentators take a different view. Allen (1) 161–2, claims that particulars have no independent status; so does O'Brien (33) esp. 201–3. Neither of them however, I think, meet Turnbull's arguments (esp. 136–7).

Guthrie (21b) 353–5, argues against the distinct existence of Forms and forms-in-us.

For a recent defence of the view that there are immanent forms in the *Phaedo*, see Cresswell (12).

Probably the majority of scholars, however, hold that there are three sorts of items in the *Phaedo* account. See, for example, Turnbull (40) 131–5; Bluck (4) 17–18; Mills (28) 139; Ross (35) 30; Hackforth (22) 143–4, 154; Nehamas (32) 475, 483; Nehamas (31) 108–9. Brentlinger

(7) 126 ff., holds that there are Forms, forms-in-us, and particulars, but claims that the last are mere complexes of form-imitations (cf. Burge (9) 10). Against this last view, see White (45) section III, 4.

⁷ See White (45) section III, 5; Turnbull (40) 137. For the view that particulars in the *Phaedo* are 'bare particulars' (empty containers) see Hackforth (22) 154–5.

⁸ Professor M. J. Cresswell argues for this sort of view in an unpublished paper 'Plato's Essentialism', which he generously allowed me to read and make use of.

⁹ My own view still is that Book I at least belongs to a much earlier period. But this view is not currently popular. See Guthrie (21b) 437, for a brief summary of opinions and references.

to *Phaedo* 95–107 not only in theme and manner but also in time. These considerations might with some justification lead us to expect a close nexus between the two passages in the detail of their argument too.

I maintain that there is such a nexus. But before I go on to consider it I want to set out an analysis of what Plato says about the physical world in *Republic V*. It will be useful for the rest of the discussion.

Republic 479a5–d2

1. (a) Any one of the many beautiful things which are the delight of the lover of sights will also in some fashion ($\pi\omega\varsigma$), and of necessity, appear ugly; anything just will appear unjust; anything holy will appear unholy.
- (b) Any of the many things which are double appear half, just as much as they appear to be double.
- (c) Things we call 'big' will have no more claim to be called 'big' than to be called 'small'. And so also for 'heavy' and 'light'. Each thing will always partake of both.
2. From the above considerations, a number of conclusions may be drawn.
 - (a) Each particular thing is not what we say it is any more than its opposite (x is not more F than it is Opposite-F).¹⁰
 - (b) Things are 'ambiguous' ($\epsilon\pi\alpha\mu\phi\omicron\tau\epsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\iota$). It is not possible to have a stable conception of a thing:
 - α . as either being or not being.
 - β . as both being and not being.
 - γ . as neither being nor not being.
 - (c) Particulars then are best placed between being and non-being.

With this analysis before us we can now turn to seeing how what Plato says here is related to what he had said in the *Phaedo*.

I want to begin the discussion in a rather indirect manner, by asking how we, not Plato, might briefly express the doctrine of essentialism. We might suggest the following:

(S1) *Belonging to any given physical particular, x , there are some properties which cannot be succeeded by their opposites, on pain of x 's ceasing to exist.*¹¹

Second, if we were asked what would have to be asserted if we wished to deny this doctrine of essentialism, we would probably say that we would need to assert the following but no more than the following:

(S2) *Every (material) property of a given physical particular, x , is such that x could subsequently acquire the opposite of that property, and continue to be x .*

N.B. The scope of properties under discussion takes in only *material* properties. Anyone denying that x has essential material properties is quite at liberty to hold that x has at least one *formal* essential property: namely, the property of being able to acquire the opposite of any (material) property it possesses and still continue to be x . (By 'formal properties' I mean those which every particular possesses irrespective of the kind of particular it is.)

We can now turn to asking what assertions are contained in Plato's doctrine in *Republic V*.

Unfortunately there is no interpretation which everyone would accept. The text will allow of two main possibilities (S3 and S4 below) and two subsidiary possibilities (S5 and S6).

(S3) *Every (material) property of a given physical particular, x , is such that x can simultaneously possess the opposite of that property.*

This statement is a perfectly straightforward understanding of what Plato says, though one

¹⁰ The question of the *range* of properties and opposites is discussed fully in section V below.

¹¹ It might be objected that a more obvious way of characterising essentialism would be in the form of So: *particulars with essences are those which possess properties that they cannot lose without ceasing to be the par-*

particulars they are.

This is true. However, So immediately entails S1 on the additional assumption of the principle of non-contradiction, and the adoption of S1 as a basis for discussion will considerably simplify the train of my argument.

point about it should not go unnoticed. This is that it assumes (and the same will be true of S4, S5, S6) that what is being spoken of is the actual possession of opposite properties, not their merely apparent possession. It assumes that when Plato asserts that something, *x*, appears to be *F* and Opposite-*F*, he does not mean that *x* *only* appears to be so, nor that *x* is constituted by 'mere appearances'.

This assumption, in spite of some opinion to the contrary,¹² seems to be justified on the following grounds. The description of particulars as bearers of opposites is part of a discussion designed to take place with the 'lover of sights' (ἐκείνος ὁ φιλοθεάμων) who denies that there are Forms (cf. 478e7 ff.). But of course the argument with him concerning the status of physical things could not *begin* by saying: 'Physical particulars only appear to have this or that property, while really they have none at all, they are mere appearances.' The lover of sights would accept nothing of the sort—at any rate not to start with. (This is borne out incidentally by Glaucon's reply on his behalf at 479b8.) It may or may not be the case then that in the *Republic* Plato thought of the things of this world as mere appearances, as not more substantial than shadows or reflections in water, but I see no reason to believe that that is what Socrates was supposed to be putting forward as the sort of commonplace that even the lover of sights would assent to without demur.

(S4) *It is necessarily true that every (material) property of a given physical particular, x, is such that x simultaneously possesses the opposite of that property.*¹³

This way of understanding what Plato says differs from S3 in that it makes a particular's simultaneous possession of opposites not just possible but necessary.

There is no doubt that this is a legitimate interpretation and perhaps more plausible than some have occasionally judged.¹⁴ For the necessity that is referred to could be taken rather more liberally as applying not to the full conjunction of different sorts of cases but simply to their disjunction. It could be taken to mean that of necessity either a thing is beautiful to one person and ugly to another, *or* is beautiful in part but not as a whole, *or* is beautiful according to one set of criteria but not according to another. And so on.

It seems reasonable to suppose that as a matter of necessity any given physical particular will always in *one* of these cases at least turn out to be both beautiful and ugly.

On the other hand we do not *have* to accept such an interpretation. When Plato says that of 'necessity' (ἀνάγκη) what is beautiful will also appear ugly, and so on, he might with reason be taken simply to be pointing out that such is the nature of physical things that they can appear in this way—without wanting to assert that at each and every moment they in fact do so.

It could be added that since Plato not infrequently lacks rigour in the way he employs tenses, moods or adverbial phrases, we are not warranted in singling out one expression from many and then supposing that that one alone reveals his thoughts.

(S5) *Every (material) property of a physical particular, x, is such that x can simultaneously possess the opposite of that property and x can also successively possess the opposite of that property.*

(S6) *It is necessarily true that every (material) property of a given physical particular, x, is such that x simultaneously possesses the opposite of that property, and x successively possesses the opposite of that property.*¹⁵

S5 and S6 can be looked at together, because while like S3 and S4 they differ in modality, the only new thing they introduce is the notion of the *successive* possession of opposite properties.

¹² Kirwan (26) 118, seems to suggest that Plato *might* have thought that things appear to be beautiful and not beautiful—and no more than appear. Brentlinger (7) 127 ff., argues that, according to Plato, because things appear in different ways, this shows that they are simply 'appearances'. I believe this is quite false.

¹³ It is important not to confuse *de re* modality here with *de dicto*. S4 (and, *mutatis mutandis*, S6) is to be distinguished from:

(1) Every property of a given physical particular, *x*, is such that *x* necessarily possesses both that property

and its opposite.

(2) Every property of a given physical particular, *x*, is such that *x* necessarily possesses that property and *x* necessarily possesses the opposite of that property.

¹⁴ See Gosling (18) 178–19.

¹⁵ This formulation may seem odd: it may appear that if *x* is already simultaneously *F* and Opposite-*F*, then it makes no sense to say that it can successively be *F* and Opposite-*F*. For, one might argue, if Opposite-*F* is to succeed *F*, Opposite-*F* could not already have been present.

While the succession of opposites is not specifically mentioned by Plato, I think its inclusion is justified.¹⁶ For first, when we come to look for examples of what he has in mind when saying that anything beautiful will also appear ugly, one of the most obvious candidates that springs to mind is something which seems beautiful at one time but ugly at another. Secondly, in the parallel passage of the *Symposium* (211) a case of the successive possession of opposites is put side by side with cases of simultaneous possession, all of them conjointly characterising particulars with the purpose of distinguishing them from Forms. Finally, it becomes clear from the opening pages of Book VI of the *Republic* that the things Plato has been talking about in our passage are those which are caught up in change and are thus subject to generation and decay (485b).¹⁷

To conclude this section. S3, S4, S5 and S6 are all admissible interpretations of what Plato means to assert in *Republic V*. However, for reasons that I have given I prefer the last.

III

With the four possible ways of taking Plato's assertions before us, we can now turn to the further question of importance. What were Plato's intentions in making these assertions?

I want to confine myself to considering three possible answers to this question, the last of which I believe to be the correct one.

Answer 1. What Plato intended was certainly not just the rejection of essences. He had very much more in mind. He wanted to dismiss the physical not only as incoherent but even as contradictory.

This extreme answer has a *prima facie* case in its favour. For Plato does seem to be saying something very radical about the physical world. Indeed, it has been argued even recently that he means us to see it as utterly faceless, as devoid of all determinate properties whatever.¹⁸

I think however that there are compelling reasons against this extreme answer.

(i) Plato had already made it clear in *Republic IV* (436b8 ff.) that particulars are not contradictory items: they will not submit to doing or suffering opposite things in the same respect, in the same relation and at the same time.¹⁹

(ii) Physical particulars participate in the Forms. Surely then they *do* have determinate properties, thanks to the Forms.

(iii) The world of particulars, far from being given over to chaos, is said to be *like* the world of Forms; even as like as are dreams to our waking states (476c–d).

(iv) Opinion is contrasted with knowledge (477b ff.), not because its objects are contradictory or in some other sense incoherent but merely because they are not of the kind that make for infallibility. They themselves are the objects of perfectly sensible and true statements. Their point of contrast with the Forms lies simply in the fact that the truth of statements about them can never be more than contingent.²⁰

However, what I have in mind is simply this: x must here-and-now be F and Opposite-F in (at least) one way (e.g., beautiful in body, ugly in mind), and also F now, and Opposite-F later (e.g., beautiful physically now, ugly next year). See also nn. 17 and 24 below.

¹⁶ Owen (34) 108 (including n. 34), apparently thinks that compresence alone, and not succession, is at issue.

¹⁷ However, one needs to tread carefully here. 485b used to puzzle me: I wondered how Plato could think that he had been talking about *change* all the time when he seemed so obviously to have been talking about the *compresence* of opposite properties.

Part of the explanation is that the notions of change and the possession of opposites are closely tied in the Flux tradition. Change for Heraclitus is but one part of the identity of opposites, and in the *Theaetetus*, when Plato attempts (seriously or not) to explain how the wind is hot and cold at the same time, he turns to the doctrine of Flux to help him.

For Heraclitus, see Guthrie (21a) 439–54, and Crombie (14) 9. And, of course, see *Hipp. Major* 289a.

¹⁸ See Bolton (6) esp. 77–8.

¹⁹ However, *Rep.* 436b8 ff. is not as decisive as is sometimes believed. For if, to take an example, Simmias is bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, in Plato's estimation Simmias is still big and small. This is because he wants to analyse 'x is bigger than y' in terms of *participation*. But there is no Form of Bigger, still less of Bigger-than-y.

The whole of this area is controversial. See Kirwan (26) and White (47).

²⁰ Bolton (6) 77–80, argues that *Rep. V* asserts sensible objects to be totally indeterminate. To the objection that all that Plato says about them is that one cannot have knowledge of them (in the sense of *a priori* knowledge of necessary truth), Bolton replies that Plato must have meant far more than that: because *Rep.* 479 proves far more than it need on such a view. 'The contention that

Answer 2. In the final pages of *Republic V*, pages which are close to *Phaedo* 95–107 in time, style and content, Plato is indeed concerned to deny essentialism, but does so by asserting far more than he needs. To put the point with less elegance, Plato's method is a method of 'overstrike'.

The reason for referring to it in this way is that the strongest assertion, I suggested, that is needed for the denial of essentialism is S2: the claim that all the properties of a particular can be succeeded by the opposites of those properties. But each of the four exegeses of Plato's words that we looked at earlier (S3 to S6) asserts greatly more than this—by insisting on the *simultaneous* possession of opposite properties.

However, a distinction needs to be made. If we take Plato to have asserted either S3 or S5, we will see his overstrike as still fairly restrained. If we take him to have asserted S4 or S6—each of which insists on some sort of necessity rather than mere possibility—we will see his overstrike as approaching total: as coming close to affirming the sort of chaos contained in Answer 1.

This interpretation of what Plato was about has advantages. It rescues him from the accusation of having refused to make any sense of this world at all, and it manages to explain in what way the metaphysical doctrines of the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* are related.

But Answer 2 also has a weakness. For while it rescues Plato from one accusation, it leaves him open to another: the accusation of either quite extraordinary clumsiness in argument or downright carelessness.

Answer 3. In *Republic V* Plato rejects essentialism and he does so by asserting no more and no less than he thinks is required of him.

To show this answer to be the most plausible, there is one crucial point that needs to be established. It must be argued that in *Plato's mind* S2 is by no means enough to constitute a denial of essentialism; that a good deal more is needed.

IV

In the *Phaedo* at 102 ff. Socrates explains how it is that Simmias is at once both bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo. The argument merits close attention:

1. There are such things as Forms, and whatever participates in these Forms is named after them.

2. When you say that Simmias is bigger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo you mean that there is bigness and smallness in Simmias.

3. This is indeed what you ought to mean. For:

(i) The statement that Simmias overtops Socrates is not true as stated in those words.

(ii) Simmias does not overtop Socrates by virtue of his *being Simmias* (τῷ Σιμμίαν εἶναι).

(iii) Simmias overtops Socrates by virtue of the bigness which he happens to *have* (τῷ μεγέθει δ τυγχάνει ἔχων).

4. Similarly, Simmias does not overtop Socrates because Socrates is Socrates—nor is he overtopped by Phaedo because Phaedo is Phaedo.

5. Correctly then, Simmias is said to be both big and small because he submits his smallness to the bigness of the one to be overtopped, and his bigness to the other's smallness to overtop it.

From this argument it would seem clear that for Plato there is a close connection between the compresence of opposite properties in a particular (for example, bigness and smallness) and the accidental nature of those properties.²¹ Compresent opposite properties are those, he claims, which a particular happens to *have*; they do not constitute what the particular *is*, its *being*.

sensible objects no more are than are not *whatever* one may say they are, entails a much stronger conclusion than that there are no necessary truths knowable *a priori* about sensible objects.'

The following pages of my paper are, I believe, an adequate answer to Bolton's point, and since I can find no other reason for holding that Plato here is preaching extreme Flux, I have not treated Bolton's view as a separate possible 'answer'.

²¹ The fact that the ascription of opposite properties is not always attributable to their being accidental does not mean that Plato was in a *complete* muddle. For the ascription of opposite properties to physical particulars does seem due to the accidental nature of those properties. They are tied to the contingent existence, or contingent properties, of other physical particulars (or sometimes their own). But of course no one will suggest that Plato's view is adequate. It does not explain (to take an obvious

It is of importance to bring out *how* close Plato thinks this connection to be.

(a) Each implies the other. If a property is accidental, its opposite also can be present (or is present) in the same subject. This was the whole point of Plato's explanation of Simmias' bigness. But equally, if opposite properties are *both* present in a particular, then those properties must be accidental. For the only alternative would be that they are essential; and that clearly would run counter to Plato's explanation. There is in Plato's view a two-way relation of implication between compresence and accidentality.

(b) This two-way implication is not of course material nor is it merely conceptual. It is ontological. For Plato the connection is based on how things are. The thought behind his much compressed argument is surely this. If a particular actually *were* (in virtue of its being the particular it is) big and small, then it would present a logical embarrassment. For it would manifest a contradiction. But that is not how things are. It is not the case that particulars like Simmias *are* (in virtue of their being) big and small; they just happen to *have* bigness and smallness.²² Thus there is no contradiction, for since bigness is not small and smallness is not big there is nothing in the end that is F and Opposite-F;²³ there is only this or that particular which happens to *have* or possess them.

What follows now is fairly plain. In the latter part of the *Phaedo* Plato held that accidental properties are those which are able to be present in a particular together with their opposites; and conversely that compresent opposites are accidental. Let us now suppose that when Plato comes to write *Republic V* he has decided to reject the essentialism that he has recently espoused in the *Phaedo* and is consequently out to make clear that he thinks all properties of physical things are accidental. What is he to do?

Because of his belief in the equivalence of accidentality and compresence, his task is straightforward. He must press home the doctrine that all properties of particulars are or can be, or perhaps even must be, compresent with their opposites.²⁴ He must argue, for example, that whatever seems beautiful will seem ugly too, whatever we say is big will have as much right to be called small. And so for heavy and light. And so for everything. For 'each thing will always partake of both'.

And this is precisely what Plato did press home. This *was* his doctrine in *Republic V*.

V

In order to keep my account so far moderately unencumbered, I have left aside discussion concerning the *range* of properties that Plato had in mind when describing particulars as bearers of opposites. Commentators are not united on this issue. Some hold that Plato had *all* properties in mind, not only attributes and relational properties (big, bigger, just, juster) but substance properties too (man, cloak, finger). Others hold that Plato had a restricted range in view, a range which above all excluded substances.²⁵

case as one example) why green-all-over (an accidental property) cannot be compresent with red-all-over (another accidental property).

²² More stress should be placed on the fact that Simmias is said to *have* bigness and smallness (and not to *be* big and small) than on the fact that he is said to *happen* to have them. For the verb *τυγχάνω* by itself does not necessarily convey accidentality. (See, for example, *Phaedo* 72e, where *τυγχάνει οὐσα* does not mean 'happens to be'.)

²³ Of course, *grammatically* Simmias 'is bigger and is smaller', and so on. But such states of affairs turn out, on analysis, to be quite different. Simmias has bigness, which overtops Socrates' smallness, and so on. See Nehamas (32) 472-4.

²⁴ It should be now be clear that S₃, S₄, S₅ and S₆ all deny essentialism, by asserting the simultaneous compresence of (all) properties and their opposites in particulars. In doing this they assert *eo ipso* the accidentality of those

properties. It might be thought that this renders idle the addition of the *successive* possession of opposites in S₅ and S₆. However, in Plato's mind I think that such an addition would not have been idle. For there is no doubt that, like Heraclitus, he saw succession and simultaneous compresence as tightly linked. Perhaps—again like Heraclitus—he thought that for x which is F to become Opposite-F it must already in some sort *be* Opposite-F. If this is what he thought then clearly he would have seen a succession of opposites as an obvious manifestation of their (prior) compresence. See n. 17 above.

²⁵ The following are some of the commentators who hold that Plato does *not* wish to say that all properties are to be ascribed along with their opposites: Nehamas (32) 466-8; Nehamas (31) 108; Allen (2) 329; Owen (34) 108-9. Some of those holding the opposite view are: Gullely (20) 27-37; Kirwan (26) 118; Bolton (6) 79-80; Ross (35) 24; Brentlinger (7) 141-2.

My interpretation of *Republic V* may seem committed to the first view, since I have argued that for Plato the compresence of opposites was not only a sufficient but also a necessary condition of the accidentality of properties. Given this, if Plato had deliberately excluded one kind of property from the range of opposites he would *eodem ictu* have excluded it from the range of accidental properties. He would, that is, have continued to think of some properties as essential.

I do in fact, though only on balance, believe that Plato held what I will term 'the non-restrictive view'. That is, I believe he thought *all* properties to fall within the range of opposites, and I will spend most of the present section defending this view. However, one thing that I want to stress in advance is this: I do not think that the way I have interpreted *Republic V* commits me to such a belief. I will explain my reasons for saying so later.

Because the issue is a disputed one, it will be useful if first of all I set out what I think to be the principal arguments favouring the *restrictive* view (the one that I do *not* hold).

1 At *Republic* 523 ff., Plato contrasts properties like 'big' and 'small' with properties like 'finger' in the following way. The faculty of sight presents things to us confusedly as both big and small, thick and thin, and so on, and due to this confused presentation, questions are raised. What is 'the big'? What is 'the small'? For, in an effort to get things clear the intelligence is forced to treat big and small as distinct. In this manner the mind is led on to true reality. Indeed, it is in this way that our distinction arises between 'the intelligible' (τὸ νοητόν) and 'the visible' (τὸ ὄρατόν).

By contrast, in the case of a finger the mind of most men is not impelled to question the intelligence and to ask, What on earth is a finger? For the faculty of sight never signifies to it at the same time that the finger is the opposite of a finger. Thus the perception of a finger does not give rise to questioning and thought, and does not lead the mind to true being either. The whole passage implies that the Forms of Big and Small are needed as the referents of 'big' and 'small', while a Form of Finger is not so needed.

The core of the argument is as follows. The faculty of sight perceives a finger just as it is—as a finger. There is no call for puzzlement then concerning what 'finger' refers to; the answer is simple: 'finger' refers to this thing here (for example) at the end of my hand. By contrast, sight never perceives something big just as it is—as big. It always perceives things as *big-and-small*. But something which is big-and-small cannot be the referent of what the intelligence distinguishes severally as big and small. There must then exist non-visible referents in these cases.

Now surely, it might be urged, Plato's contrast here between substance properties and attributes is well-founded. For, what *could* induce us to say that this object before us is both a finger and the opposite of a finger?

2 (a) The *Phaedo* is the first dialogue in which Plato introduces the Forms as part of a well-articulated and worked-out theory. Yet the only Forms, apart from numbers, to be explicitly mentioned are those which correspond to attributes, and indeed more narrowly to those which have 'natural' opposites—such as good and bad, beautiful and ugly, big and small. No mention is made of substance properties.²⁶

It might be suggested against this that substance Forms are left unmentioned merely because Plato was not specifically interested in them at the time. But this is not a very persuasive suggestion since much of Plato's interest throughout the dialogue was in Forms as such and not in this or that special Form or kind of Form. Given this, it is hardly plausible to suppose that he would have left out so important a class as substances, even by oversight.

2 (b) Much as in the *Phaedo*, when in the *Republic* the Forms first make their appearance (475e–6a) they are explicitly related to attributes which have natural opposites: good and bad, just and unjust. In fact it is worth recalling rather more precisely just how they are introduced.

Socrates wanted to explain how the philosopher is to be distinguished from the lover of sights and sounds. He says that the former loves to behold truth or reality (τῆς ἀληθείας), and when Glaucon asks for more detail Socrates replies that it will be easy to explain because Glaucon is likely to accept the following:

²⁶ However, see Vlastos (44) 320 and comment by White (45) 135 n. 8, but also 146.

- (i) Since <the> beautiful is opposite to <the> ugly:
 - α. These are two.
 - β. Since they are two each severally is one.
- (ii) The same holds for the just and unjust, the good and bad, and all the Forms:
 - α. Each itself is one.
 - β. They appear as many due to their communion with actions, bodies and one another.

This compressed argument appears to be a summarised version of the one yet to be stated at *Republic* 523 ff. But even if its point is not entirely the same, still the *examples* given are examples of opposites and the *theory* itself (that which Glaucon is taken to be familiar with) is explicitly tied to the notion of opposites ('Ἐπειδή ἐστὶν ἐναντίον καλὸν αἰσχρῶ . . .).

2 (c) Not only where the theory of Forms is first introduced in the *Republic* but also throughout the middle books there is no mention of Forms of substances. But given that these middle books are almost exclusively about the Forms, this silence on substances would very much seem to indicate that Plato thought there were no such things.

To turn aside for a moment. The connection between the range of Forms and the range of opposite properties in *Republic* V is, I hope, clear. If we have independent reasons for believing that Plato did not think there were such things as Forms of substances, we have independent reasons at the same time for believing that in *Republic* V the range of opposites was meant to *exclude* substance properties. For, one point of introducing the pairs of opposites was to bring out by contrast the nature of the Forms: any Form, Φ , is F to the exclusion of Opposite-F, while any particular, x, is (the corresponding) F *not* to the exclusion of Opposite-F. But if there were such a thing as a Form of Finger, this contrast would no longer hold. Because, if x is a finger, in Plato's estimation it is so to the exclusion of being the opposite of a finger (compare *Euthyphro* 7a–8a).

2 (d) The first part of the *Parmenides* sketches out what we might call a history of the development of the theory of Forms. The young Socrates—and it is stressed that he is young at the time—asserts without hesitation that there are such Forms as Likeness, Justice, Beauty and Goodness, but is not sure about Man, Fire and Water, and totally rejects Hair, Mud and Dirt (130a–e). This may plausibly be taken to indicate that in its earlier days the theory of Forms did not embrace substances, and if this is the case we are provided with a satisfactory reason for the silence on substances from the *Phaedo* to *Republic* X.

To turn now to the other side, to the arguments favouring the *non-restrictive* view.

(1) There are three steps to this first argument:

(i) One of Plato's principal interests from the time of the early dialogues onwards was in Forms (εἶδος, ἰδέα, αὐτὸ τὸ <φ>, ταῦτόν, τὸ κοινόν) as *universals*, as providing an answer to the problem of the one-and-many (cf. e.g., *Laches* 191e–192b; *Hippias Major* 300a–b; *Euthyphro* 6d–e; *Meno* 72c).²⁷ But the one-and-many is as much a problem for properties like 'man', 'cloak' or 'finger' as it is for 'just', 'beautiful' or 'good'.

(ii) When in *Republic* X the Form of Bed is referred to it is not introduced in any sense as problematic, but rather as part of an already well-established and accepted doctrine; no detail of argument is thought necessary to support the claim of 'one name, one Form'.

(iii) When the theory of Forms was explained in the *Phaedo* it was presented *inter alia* as a theory of naming and predication. According to this theory words are <proper> *names* when applied to Forms and *eponyms* when applied to particulars (esp. 102a–c).

These three points taken together suggest (at the least) that there was a continuity in Plato's thought from the early dialogues onwards and beyond *Republic* X—a continuity in the belief that Forms are universals and the referents or *nominata* of words. But if there was such a continuity *and* substance Forms were taken for granted in *Republic* X, there is no reason to believe that they were not equally taken for granted earlier on.

It might be countered here that there is less continuity of theory than I have suggested, on the grounds that when in the earlier dialogues Plato speaks of Forms (εἶδος, αὐτὸ τὸ <φ>, and so on) he does not have in mind the sorts of items to be introduced later on in the middle dialogues.

The answer to this objection is that while there may well be discontinuity of doctrine

²⁷ For an excellent discussion of this see Allen (3) *passim*.

concerning such matters as the ontological status of the Forms, there is certainly not discontinuity on all fronts. For one thing, the same expressions are used throughout the relevant dialogues. For another, the same characteristics are often ascribed to the Forms both early and late—including the characteristics of being universals and *nominata*.

(2) It is a fundamental doctrine of the middle dialogues that while the things of the physical world are inferior to the Forms, they none the less resemble them and are in some sort even copies of them. In *Republic V* itself, for example, the things of this world are compared to the contents of dreams, so *like* the waking world (the Forms) that they are able to deceive all but the philosopher into thinking that they *are* the waking world (476c–d).

It is an equally fundamental doctrine of the middle dialogues that the *explanation* for this resemblance lies in the fact that physical things share or participate in the Forms. But given these two doctrines, it follows that *if* there were no such Forms as Man, Cloak or Finger, the things of this world in their most fundamentally characterising features would not resemble Forms at all.

Against this it might be argued that Plato thought of substances as mere bundles of attributes: thick, thin, hard, soft, short, long, and so on. However, while there is no evidence to support such a view, there is an argument against it: namely, that if such had been Plato's view he would have had no reason for introducing—as later he did introduce—the Forms of Bed, Table or Man.

(3) In whatever way we interpret the verb 'to be' (*εἶναι*) and its derivatives as they occur in *Republic V*, it is hard to avoid the feeling that Plato meant us to understand something fairly radical by his conclusion that particulars are best placed between being and non-being. There is no reason in fact to believe that in speaking of 'being' and 'non-being' he meant to exclude even the notion of existence. On the contrary, I should think—*pace* the current orthodoxies—that in Plato's mind the notion of existence and the notion of the possession of properties were closely tied, without of course being synonymous or so thoroughly fused that one could not be distinguished from the other. Plato simply held, I would suggest, that when existence is present properties are present too (and *vice versa*) and conversely that when no properties are present no existence is present either (and *vice versa*).

If this is a true appraisal of Plato's thought, then when he came to consider that particulars possess their properties and yet in a sense do not possess them (actions are just and yet not just, objects are big and not big), naturally he would have concluded that not only are particulars F and Opposite-F, but *pari passu* they exist and do not exist. They are best placed 'between being and non-being'—an expression which covers the two senses at once.

In short, Plato was not saying something as unadventurous as at times recent commentators would have us believe.²⁸ And the fact that what he intended appears to me quite radical leads me also to believe that he would not have wished to exclude substance properties from his range of opposites. For if, to take an example, a man is a man and not the opposite of a man (as the Good is good and not the opposite of good), there is no fair reason for confining him to an ontological limbo.

(4) For the following reasons the finger at *Republic* 523 does not present insurmountable difficulties.

(a) Plato says that 'the mind of most men' (*τῶν πολλῶν ἡ ψυχῆ*) is not impelled to question the intelligence (*τὴν νόησιν ἐπερέσθαι*) and to ask what on earth a finger is, because the faculty of sight never signifies to it (that is, never signifies *to the mind of most men*) at the same time that the finger is the opposite of a finger.

The simplest way of understanding 'most men' in this context is as at *Republic* 479d3, where it

²⁸ There has been much discussion about Plato's meaning when he argues that particulars are and are not, *are* between being and non-being. Some have claimed recently that Plato could not have meant that particulars do and do not *exist*, on the grounds that such a statement would be meaningless. See Vlastos (41) esp. 8–9; Vlastos (42) 8–12; Kirwan (26) 118; Crombie (13) 66. Allen (2) *passim*, and esp. 335, says that particulars are real and not real in the sense that they '*are* resemblances' and '*are* resemblances'. Others take Plato to be talking about existence. Cross & Woolzley (15) 145 ff.; Guthrie (21b) 493–8;

Brentlinger (7) 150. See also Runciman (36) 21–2, 66, and, for some interesting comments on the *Phaedo*, Gallop (17) 135, 145. For the view nearest my own see Bluck (5) 62–3. Guthrie (21b) 495–6, makes the useful point that it will hardly do to argue that Plato did not assert physical things to have less than full existence—on the grounds that such a claim is meaningless to the twentieth-century philosopher. Philosophers just do say paradoxical things. For the relation between *Rep. V* and Parmenides' teaching about the physical world, see Guthrie (21b) 493–8, and Seligman (38) 5–7.

referred to the majority of men as distinguished from philosophers.²⁹ And as a matter of fact it ought not to take the philosopher very long to realise that a finger *qua* finger is as much a bearer of opposites as *qua* thick or thin. For not only is this finger before me in point of temporal succession also not a finger, but here and now too it is, *as far as sight is concerned*, no more a finger than not a finger. For it may be seen just as much as three articulated pieces of flesh and bone.

This example of course is close to the case of 'one and countless in number' given in the same context, at *Republic* 524d7 ff.

(b) As I have already mentioned, *Republic* 521c–526b contains an argument to show that there are Forms: they are needed as referents in thought and in language. And as far as the purpose of the argument goes, there is no reason why it should not be taken to furnish referents for *all* concepts and predicates. However, the scope of the argument is somewhat curbed by the context in which it is embedded. Plato is concerned to point out what is the best method for drawing the would-be philosopher away from the world of becoming and towards the realm of true being. Because of this, it is reasonable to construe the exclusion of fingers and other such substances as a purely *methodological* exclusion. In other words it is reasonable to take Plato's point to be this: cases like hot and cold, big and small, are excellent starting points for the novice philosopher, because they are capable of provoking the minds of even the mass of men into asking initial questions of importance; cases of substance properties by contrast are useless for they do not have any such wide provocative powers at all.

(5) If in *Republic* V Plato held that substance properties are possessed by particulars without further ado, while other properties are possessed compresently with their opposites, he held a curious doctrine and one which conflicts with common sense if not with common logic. For in our normal ways of thinking it is not possible for something to be determinately a man, finger, or whatever, unless it possesses at least *some* attributes to the exclusion of their opposites.

The *general* conclusions that I want to draw from this discussion of the range of opposites in *Republic* V are the following.

(i) *On balance* I think that the range is inclusive of substance properties. At least Plato's intention was not to *exclude* them.

(ii) Side by side with the above conclusion, a stubborn fact has to be borne in mind: namely, neither in the *Phaedo* nor in the greater part of the *Republic* is any mention made of substance Forms.³⁰ Attributes alone appear to be at issue. Further, Plato is preoccupied almost exclusively with what I have called 'natural' opposites.

(iii) In the *Phaedo* and the middle books of the *Republic* Plato deliberately ties the theory of Forms to the notion of opposites: indirectly in the *Phaedo*,³¹ directly at *Republic* 475e–6a and again at 521c ff.

The question that I can now turn to is this. How does the extent of the range of opposites in *Republic* V affect my interpretation of what Plato was about there?

There are three possibilities to be considered. On the first, Plato meant all properties to be included within the range of opposites. This of course is the interpretation which I have favoured, and if it *is* what Plato intended, then his rejection of essences was at once simple yet total: all properties are possessed alongside their opposites, all therefore are accidental. There are no essences.

On the second possibility, Plato did not intend to include all properties within the range of opposites. But he did not wish to exclude any either. It was simply that he was preoccupied with attributes and relations in such a manner that the problem of substance properties did not enter his mind.

It might seem that on this possibility my interpretation of *Republic* V would collapse. But this is not so. For the following reason. If Plato gave no thought to substance properties in *Republic* V, there is no reason to suppose that he gave thought to them in the *Phaedo* either. But of course my interpretation of *Republic* V was that it constituted neither more nor less than a rejection of what

²⁹ See Gulley (20) 64, and Bolton (6) 79–80.

³⁰ I suppose things like squares, diagonals and so on (*Rep.* 510c–d) might be considered to lie in a sort of no man's land, between attributes and substances. But at least

they are not *obviously* substances.

³¹ I say this because the *almost* exclusive interest of the *Phaedo* lies with Forms of natural opposites.

was held in the *Phaedo*. All that was explicitly taught in the latter was that *attributes* like hot and cold were possessed by certain particulars (bits of fire and lumps of snow) to the exclusion of their opposites. This doctrine is rejected by *Republic V* on the second possibility as fully as on the first.

On the third possibility Plato intended to *exclude* substance properties from the range of opposites.

If this is what was in Plato's mind, it now turns out that he was rejecting the 'attribute essentialism' of the *Phaedo* while at the same time endorsing 'substance essentialism' (whether or not this was contained in the *Phaedo*).

As I pointed out before, this would be a very curious doctrine for Plato to have held, and I do not believe that this is what he had in mind. However, even if he had, my interpretation of *Republic V* is still not undermined. For it still remains true that in the *Phaedo* Plato held particulars to possess some of their attributes essentially. In the *Republic* he denied it.

In short then, while the first of the three possibilities seems to me to be the most plausible, the other two are not disastrous for my way of understanding *Republic V*.

VI

The last question to be faced is this. *Why* did Plato reject the essentialism of the *Phaedo*? The answer I think lies in the fact that essentialism renders redundant the principal rôles played by the Forms in the latter part of the *Phaedo* and in *Republic V*: namely, their rôles as causes, objects of knowledge and referents in thought and in language.

(1) In the *Phaedo* when the Forms are said to be 'causes' (99d ff.) we ought to be clear what they are said to be 'causes' of.

They are not meant to play a part in some sort of cosmological argument. That is, Plato was not concerned to argue from a premiss about the contingent existence of the things of this world to a conclusion that the Forms must sustain the latter in being. What he was concerned to argue can best be brought out in the following way.

As we saw earlier, the *Phaedo's* ontology comprises three distinct sorts of items: particulars, characteristics and Forms, and Plato's interest lies not with the particulars as such but with their *characteristics*. That is, he thinks that an explanation is called for concerning how *characteristics* come to be, are, or cease to be in particulars. In short, what he thinks is in need of explanation is not

(i) Why does x exist?

but

(ii) Why is x F?

For example, not, 'Why does this man exist at all?' but 'Why is this man good or just?' The Forms provide the required explanation: particulars come to possess the properties of beauty, justice, or whatever, because they come to *share* in the corresponding Forms.³²

A basic, if obvious, point about this explanation of why x is F is that an appeal is made to something *other than x itself*, and it is now worth asking the following general question. *When* is an answer to the question, 'Why is x F?' justified by an appeal to something other than x itself?

The answer to this general question surely is: when and only when x is *contingently* F, and with this answer before us we can now see why essentialism makes the causal rôle of the Forms redundant.

It is fairly obvious from *Republic V* that if someone had asked Plato, 'Why is the Form of Justice just?',³³ his answer would have been something like: 'Because it could not be otherwise;

³² Brentlinger (8) 68, makes the surprising claim that 'the relation between the basic entity F and the particulars on which it confers F-ness is that of imitation—that is, striving and failing to be like—rather than sharing'. I find it surprising, because, as Brentlinger then admits in a footnote, the language of imitation does not even occur in the *Phaedo*. There seems to me no doubt that in 95–107 the notion of sharing is the fundamental one. Ross (35) 24,

seems to say something like Brentlinger, but on closer inspection it is clear that he is talking about 74–5 only.

³³ There is no room here to debate the question of self-predication. I have argued elsewhere (White (49) section IV) that Plato not only accepted self-predication but *needed to*, in order to preserve a number of his central doctrines.

because that is its nature.' But on the assumption that particulars have essences a similar sort of thing would have to be said. For if this or that property, F, belongs essentially to x, it follows that x is necessarily F, cannot be other than F, and so on. It follows equally that the only answer to the question, 'Why is x F?' is: 'Because it could not be otherwise; because that is its nature.' In short, no explanation *other than x itself* is needed for the possession of F. And that means that a Form corresponding to F would be redundant.

It is worth adding that this argument about essences and redundant Forms was made by Aristotle, albeit in rather different terms,³⁴ and (as in other cases) it is not unreasonable to conjecture that Plato saw the difficulty first. If this was the case, the difference between the two philosophers lay in their solution to the problem: Plato dropped essences, Aristotle (transcendent) Forms.

(2) In *Republic V* one of the principal rôles of the Forms is that of objects of knowledge. But essentialism renders this rôle redundant too; in the following way.

Plato says that knowledge is infallible (*ἀναμάρτητος*). By this he does not mean (or mean solely) that the knower is in a certain psychological state. He means that the objects of knowledge themselves guarantee the truth of certain propositions about them. They do this because they possess their properties to the exclusion of the opposites of those properties. If a Form, Φ , is F, it is necessarily F in that it cannot be Opposite-F. Thus a man who is aware that Φ is F is aware of something that cannot ever be false. It is not easy to supply the exact detail of how Plato would have argued, but it does seem clear, and is fairly widely accepted, that in thinking of knowledge as infallible Plato was thinking of it as of necessary truths.³⁵

As soon as this is said, however, it becomes obvious that essentialism makes physical particulars perfectly adequate candidates for knowledge. For if a given Form, Φ , is necessarily F, so is a given particular, x, necessarily F (for essential values of F). Thus, if Plato had held on to essences he could not have claimed that Forms alone could constitute objects of knowledge.

It might be objected to this that in Plato's mind physical particulars could not become objects of knowledge because, unlike the Forms, they are not eternal. But to this it may be replied that while elsewhere Plato may have argued that eternal existence is required as a feature of the objects of knowledge, in *Republic V* he does not. The sole characteristic he picks out is the necessary exclusion of opposites. The essential feature of a Form, Φ , making it an object of knowledge, is *not* that it cannot cease to exist. It is that it cannot be both F and Opposite-F.³⁶

(3) As I argued earlier on, in both the *Phaedo* and *Republic V* Plato tied the theory of Forms to the notion of opposites. I suggested too that the detail of what Plato meant to argue in *Republic V*, at 475a–6a, can reasonably be supplied from what is later argued in *Republic VII*, at 521c–6b, and elsewhere.

Now when the substance of Plato's argument is set out, it becomes clear at once that the third principal rôle of the Forms, their rôle as *nominata*, would also be made redundant by essentialism. This argument goes as follows.³⁷

- (i) If words or thoughts³⁸ have meaning, they must name.
- (ii) Words or thoughts do have meaning.

³⁴ I owe this point to Turnbull (40) 141–2.

³⁵ See Vlastos (41) 11–13, 17; Vlastos (42) 12; Cresswell (11) 96–104; Cross & Woosley (15) 187–91; Gulley (20) 61–7. See also Nehamas (32) 471–4 on 'strong' and 'tenuous' copulae. For a wider view, see Gallop (16) 191.

Plato contrasts knowledge with opinion on the grounds that the latter is not infallible. But to say that it is not infallible is not to say that we can never have true opinions. Murphy (29) 76, is wrong in saying that Plato wants to prove that the objects of the *φιλοθεάμων* cannot be . . . the subjects of true propositions. Bolton (6) 79, would also make opinion (*δόξα*) quite incapable of ever being true. But if (as Bolton would have us believe Plato meant in *Rep. V*) this world has no determinate properties whatever, it would be a silly understatement to say merely that our judgements about it are not infallible.

³⁶ According to the way I have interpreted *Rep. V* this includes the *successive* possession of opposites. That is, one of the essential features of a Form, Φ , is that Φ cannot cease to be F and come to be Opposite-F. But this is not the same as saying that Φ cannot cease to exist *tout court*.

³⁷ Not everyone will accept my formulation of the argument, but I think that *in general* it agrees with what other have said about it. See, for example, Allen (2) 328–9; Mills (28) 145–7; Gallop (17) 123; Nehamas (32) 467–8; 480–1; Nehamas (31) 108–9; 116–17. For the *clear* passage in Plato, see *Rep.* 523–4. For some interesting comments on Plato's belief that there is a single meaning to 'beautiful' and so on, see Nehamas (32) 480.

³⁸ It has often been remarked, against those who, like Hare (23) esp. 23, make too much of Plato's analogies with sight, that Plato looked on thought as very much

- (iii) For every word or thought that has a clear meaning there must correspond a clear and unambiguous referent or nominatum.
- (iv) The nominata of words or thoughts cannot be sensible particulars. For if any given sensible particular, *x*, can be said to be *F*, it can also be said to be Opposite-*F* (whatever is said to be beautiful is also said to be ugly, and so on). In short, particulars are confused and ambiguous.
- (v) If the nominata of words are not sensible particulars they must be non-sensible entities. These latter are called 'Forms'.

Now this argument has many weaknesses. For example, it is hard to think why Plato did not consider characteristics as nominata. After all he pointed out in the *Phaedo* that they are not bearers of opposites any more than the Forms are. Bigness-in-us, for example, cannot be small [102d].

However, my concern is not with the argument's weaknesses but with its bearing on essentialism. And clearly it is at odds with the latter for the following reason. Essentialism denies its most important premiss: it denies that for all cases of *F*, if a particular, *x*, is said to be *F*, it is also properly said to be Opposite-*F*. It denies, for example, that if a lump of snow is said to be cold, it is also properly said to be hot, or if a fire is said to be hot, it is also properly said to be cold. There is no reason in other words why, if essentialism is true, lumps of snow and bits of fire should not be the respective nominata of 'cold' and 'hot'.³⁹

To conclude. We cannot be *certain* why Plato changed his mind about the doctrine of essences. But given that that doctrine renders redundant the very rôles of the Forms that interested him most at the time of his change of mind, we are surely entitled to speculate that that had something to do with it.⁴⁰

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tied to *language*—closely enough for him to have held it to be 'propositional'. (Cf. *Theaet.* 189e–190b; *Sophist* 263d–e.) For some useful comments on this, see Nehamas (32) 480; Hintikka (24) esp. 21–2. My formulation of the 'naming argument' is meant to take into account this important closeness between words and thoughts.

³⁹ This may seem odd. For why, it might be asked, should a lump of *snow* be thought of (even remotely) as a possible nominatum of 'cold'? It is odd, and I have already suggested that no doubt Plato ought to have thought of property-instances as nominata. However, he did not. On the contrary what he *did* argue was that particulars cannot be nominata, because they possess their properties ambiguously. His argument—to furnish an example—is that a man cannot be the nominatum of 'tall', *not* because 'man' does not mean 'tall', but because any given man is both

tall *and* short. From this we can reasonably infer that if a man *were* tall without being short he *could* act as nominatum for 'tall'.

⁴⁰ An anonymous (and very helpful) critic has pointed out to me that my interpretation has the air of considerable paradox. For, it takes Plato to have developed an argument 'whose implications render the Forms redundant in a passage where his overt purpose is to *apply* them'. My answer in general to this point is that while Plato does indeed start off with the intention of using the Forms to explain the immortality of the soul, he quite soon after shifts to talk of particulars and their essential properties. For the detail of my case I must refer the reader to my paper 'Particulars in *Phaedo* 95e–107a' in *Canadian J. Philos.*, Supp. vol. ii (1976). See also n. 5 above.

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