



Motivating Forms

Platonic Univocity

Something or Nothing?

- * ‘Tell us: does the person who knows know something or nothing?’
- * ‘He knows something.’
- * ‘Something that is, or something that is not?’
- * ‘Something that is. For how could something that is not be known?’
 - * *Rep.* 476e10; cf. *Rep.* 478b6-c1, *Symp.* 199d1-2, e6-7, *Prt.* 330c1, *Lys.* 218d7-8, *Euth.* 291d7-e1, *Chrm.* 161d1-4, *Prm.* 132b3-c7.
- * First contention: this is a perfectly salubrious question.
 - * Our choice is not between realism and nominalism (*vel sim*). . .
 - * . . . but rather between relationalism and nihilism.
 - * Our only question, then, is this: what is the character of the *relatum*?

One Innocent-Sounding Thought

- * They are *definitions* (ὁρισμοί; *Met.* 1078b31, 10863-4)
 - * What are those?
 - * Socrates, according to Aristotle, had been seeking the *universal* (τὸ καθόλου) where these are or supply definitions (ὁρισμοί). (*Met.* 987b2-4, 1078b18-19, 1086b3)
 - * ‘Socrates used to ask but not to reply; for he would concede that he did not know.’ (*Soph. El.* 183b7-8)
 - * Here is behaviour was, in Aristotle’s view, impeccable. (*Met.* 1078b30-31, 1086a33-b4)
 - * Plato, by contrast, went awry by making those definitions something beyond, or apart from (παρά) sense particulars, and, indeed, separate from them (χωριστά) (*Met.* 1078b16, 1086a25).
- * So far, then, Aristotle and Socrates agree: we should seek these definitions (ὁρισμοί).

The One Over Many

- * In a linguistic mode:
 - * We are in the habit of assuming one Form for each set of many things to which we give the same name (*Rep.* 596a).
- * In a mixed mode:
 - * ‘So, tell me this: is it your view that, as you say, there are certain Forms whose names these other things have through getting a share of them as, for instance, they came to be like by getting a share of Likeness, large by getting a share of Largeness, and just and beautiful by getting a share of Justice and Beauty?’
 - * ‘It certainly is,’ Socrates replied (*Parm.* 130e-131a).

Rudimentary Formulations

- * In a linguistic mode:
 - * Whenever we apply 'F' to x and y, then there is something, F-ness, which x and y share.
 - * Whenever we correctly apply 'F' to x and y univocally, then there is something, F-ness, which x and y share (and in virtue of which x and y are correctly characterised as F).
- * In a metaphysical mode:
 - * Whenever x and y are F, there is something, F-ness, which x and y share.

As Presented by Aristotle

* *Peri Ideôn* (80.8-81.22):

- (1) Each of the many Fs is F; each of the many Gs is G; and so on for each general term.
- (2) If (1), and if for each of the F things, it is not something predicated of itself, but rather there is something predicated of all of them which is not the same as any of them, then there is something (i) beside (*para*) the Fs, not identical with them, (ii) separated (*kechôrismenon*) from them, and (iii) sempiternal (*aidion*).
- (3) For each of the F things, it is not something predicated of itself, but rather there is something predicated of all of them which is not the same as any of them.
- (4) Hence, what is predicated of the Fs is something (i) beside (*para*) the Fs, and not identical with them, (ii) separate (*kechôrismenon*) from them, and (iii) sempiternal (*aidion*).

An Aristotelian Formulation

* A General Framework

- (1) For every univocal general term F, there is something predicated in common of all the Fs.
- (2) What is predicated in common cannot be identical with any particular F or any collection of particular Fs.
- (3) Hence, for every univocal general term F, there is something, F-ness, which is not identical with any particular F or any collection of particular Fs. (1) (2)
- (4) If F-ness is not identical with any particular or collection of particulars, those particulars are F in virtue of the one F-ness which is over them.
- (5) Hence, F things are F in virtue of the one F-ness which is over them. (3) (4)
- (6) Further, this F-ness is either universal or particular.
- (7) It is not particular. (2)
- (8) Hence, F-ness is something universal. (6) (7)

Aristotle's First Complaint

- * Further, it appears that none of the proofs which we [viz. Platonists] offer to show that there are Forms succeeds; for some of them are invalid, while some also yield Forms of things that we think have no Forms. For the Arguments from the Sciences yield Forms of all the things for which there are sciences; the One Over Many yields Forms even of negations; and the Argument from Thinking (about something that has perished) yields Forms of things that perish, since there is an appearance of these. Further, among the more accurate arguments, some produce Ideas of relatives, whereas we deny that these are among those things that exist in their own right; others introduce the Third Man (*Met.* 990b9-17)

Aristotle's Approval and Disapproval

- * Socrates was right to search for universal definitions, since without the universal, it is not possible to attain knowledge (*Met.* 1086b5-6).
- * 'Nevertheless, Socrates surely never separated them from particulars; and in not separating them, he thought rightly' (*Met.* 1086b3-5).
- * That he thought rightly, Aristotle insists, can be appreciated by observing how those who do separate universals from particulars, the Platonists, go awry (*Met.* 1086b5).

Some Questions

- * Does Plato conceive of Forms as universals? Particulars? Both? Neither?
- * Does (OM) generate unwanted Forms? (Cf. *Met.* 990b9-17)
- * What is the participation relation? Is it in fact a relation? What is exemplification? Is it a relation? If so, does Bradley's Regress result? If so, is it vicious?
- * Does (OM) singly or in conjunction with other demonstrably Platonic theses yield absurdities?
- * Is it open to Plato to restrict (OM) so as to stave off obvious and immediate objections to it in its most general formulation?

Aristotle's Plato's Motivation

* After the systems we have named came the philosophy of Plato, which in most respects followed these thinkers, but had peculiarities that distinguished it from the philosophy of the Italians. For, having in his youth first become familiar with Cratylus and with the Heraclitean doctrines (that all sensible things are ever in a state of flux and there is no knowledge about them), these views he held even in later years. Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole but seeking the universal in these ethical matters, and fixed thought for the first time on definitions; Plato accepted his teaching, but held that the problem applied not to any sensible thing but to entities of another kind—for this reason, that the common definition could not be a definition of any sensible thing, as they were always changing. Things of this other sort, then, he called Ideas, and sensible things, he said, were apart from these, and were all called after these; for the multitude of things which have the same name as the Form exist by participation in it. Only the name 'participation' was new. . . . But what the participation or the imitation of the Forms could be they left an open question (*Met.* 987a29-13).

Plato's Heracliteanism

* Aristotle's Analysis of Platonic Separation (*Met.* 987a32-b7; cf. 1078b12-17, 1086a32-b32)

1. Sensibles are in flux.

2. Whatever is in flux is unknowable.

3. Therefore, sensibles are unknowable.

4. There is some K.

5. Therefore, there are nonsensible objects of K, viz. Forms.

* What does (1) mean?

* succession of opposites: at t_1 x is F, but at t_2 x is not-F.

* radical

* mild

* 2. compresence of opposites: at t_1 x is both F and not-F.

An Argument from the *Phaedo*

* *Phaedo* 74a9-c5

"Then consider whether this is so. We say, don't we, that there is something equal—I don't mean a log to a log, or a stone to a stone, or anything else of that sort, but something else beyond all these, the equal itself: are we to say that there is something or nothing?"

"We most certainly are to say that there is," said Simmias, "most emphatically!"

"And do we know what it is?"

"Indeed."

"Where did we get our knowledge of it? Wasn't it from the things we were just mentioning: on seeing logs or stones or other equal things, wasn't it from these that we thought of that object, it being different from them? Or doesn't it seem different to you? Consider it this way: don't equal stones and logs, the very same ones, sometimes seem equal to one, but not to another?"

"Yes, indeed."

"But now, did the equals themselves ever seem to you unequal, or equality inequality?"

"Never yet, Socrates."

"Then those equals, and the equal itself, are not the same."

Some Formulations of Phaedo 74b-d

- * Evidently relies upon LL. But with reference to which feature?
- * Phenomenal Variation
- * Compresence of Opposites
- * Temporal Variation

Phenomenal Variation

1. Equal sticks and stones sometimes, staying the same, appear equal to one person and unequal to another.
2. The equals themselves have never appeared unequal to anyone.
3. Therefore, the equal itself and equal things are not the same.

Compresence of Opposites

1. Equal sticks and stones sometimes, staying the same, appear equal in one respect and unequal in another (viz. they suffer the compresence of opposites).
2. The equals themselves are never unequal (and so never suffer the compresence of opposites).
3. Therefore, the equal itself and equal things are not the same.

An Abstract Characterisation

- * Flux ushers in *context-sensitivity* and so some manner of semantic and/or metaphysical instability or indeterminacy.
 - * Because sensibles are always flowing or in flux (ἀπάντων τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀεὶ ῥεόντων; *Met.* 987a33-34, 1078b14-15), they are indefinable (*Met.* 987b6-7)
 - * N.b., here, the connection between *to define* (or to mark a boundary, ὁρίζειν) and *boundary* (ὄρος)
- * It seems, then, that ‘something or nothing’ is, in effect ‘something or nothing *determinate*’.
- * For all evaluative predicates, then, the demand to say or think something determinate, coupled with the irreducibility of the determinate ϕ to any manner of shifting ψ fails.
 - * The failure of reduction here, then, yields for each CS-predicate a permanent, perfectly determinate ϕ : these are Ideas (ιδέαι) or Forms (εἶδη).

Backing Away

- * Plato's something-or-nothing hinge forces a pair of choices rather than establishes an *ab initio* existence argument for Forms:
 - * first choice: nihilism or epistemic relationalism
 - * second choice: endless, infinite non-univocity or univocity.
 - * Plato's choice: 'Beauty itself, taken by itself, within itself, one in Form, and existing always' (τὸ καλὸν . . . αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοειδὲς αἰεὶ ὄν; *Symp.* 211a-b)
 - * Same again, then, for the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν)

A Gestalt Argument: the Univocity Thesis

1. For each CS-predicate ϕ , ϕ is either something or nothing.
2. ϕ is not nothing.
3. So, ϕ is something.
4. Given CO, ϕ can be identified with neither any individual CS- ϕ -thing nor any collection of CS- ϕ -things.
5. If (4), for each CS-predicate ϕ , there is some mind- and language-independent context-insensitive ϕ^* set over ($\epsilon\pi\acute{\iota}$) the ϕ -things, serving as the paradigm in virtue of which ϕ -things qualify as ϕ .
6. So, for each CS-predicate ϕ , there is some mind- and language-independent context-insensitive ϕ^* over ($\epsilon\pi\acute{\iota}$) the ϕ -things, serving as the paradigm in virtue of which ϕ -things qualify as ϕ .
7. If it admits of an account ($\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) at all (otherwise we will call ϕ^* *primitive*), ϕ^* itself is either univocal or meant in many ways.
8. If (6) ϕ^* is not meant in many ways.
9. So, for each CS-predicate, there is some ϕ^* which, unless primitive, is univocal.

The Univocity of Goodness

- * [The good is] that which every soul pursues and on account of which it does all things. Divining that the good is something, but being perplexed and incapable of grasping sufficiently what it is or of having the steadfast confidence one has concerning other things, one misses the benefit, if there was one, of those other things (*Rep.* vi, 505d11-506a2).
- * Ὁ δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἔνεκα πάντα πράττει, ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι, ἀποροῦσα δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσα λαβεῖν ἱκανῶς τί ποτ' ἐστὶν οὐδὲ πίσσει χρῆσασθαι μονίμῳ οἴῳ καὶ περὶ τᾶλλα, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ ἀποτυγχάνει καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἴ τι ὄφελος ἦν.

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The Power of the Good

- * These appearances appear in this way to me, the realm of what is known, the Form of the Good is last and is hardly seen; but once it has been seen, it is necessary to conclude that it is in every way the cause of all that is right and fine (*Republic* vii, 517b7-c1).
- * τὰ δ' οὖν ἐμοὶ φαινόμενα οὕτω φαίνεται, ἐν τῷ γνωστῷ τελευταία ἢ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα καὶ μόγισ ὀρᾶσθαι, ὀφθεῖσα δὲ συλλογιστέα εἶναι ὡς ἄρα πᾶσι πάντων αὕτη ὀρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν αἰτία

Analogical Reasoning

- * When asked to characterise the good, Socrates initially demurs, lest he be made to look ludicrous and make himself into a subject of ridicule (506b).
- * Still, he agrees to speak of 'an offspring of the Good' (507e3), which is 'most like it' (506e3-4).
- * This is the sun.
 - * Broadly: as the sun is in the visible realm, so the Form of the Good is in the intelligible realm.

An Astonishing Contention

- * In the case of things known, one is to say, then, that not only is their being known present to them because of the good, but that both their existence and their being is present to them because of that, though goodness is not being, but is still further beyond, surpassing being in dignity and power (*Rep.* vi, 509b6-10).
- * Καὶ τοῖς γινωσκομένοις τοίνυν μὴ μόνον τὸ γινώσκεισθαι φάναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ παρεῖναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἶναί τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπ' ἐκείνου αὐτοῖς προσεῖναι, οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ' ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος.

Astonishing, that is, to Glaucon

- * Καὶ ὁ Γλαῦκων μάλα γελοίως, Ἄπολλον, ἔφη, δαιμονίας ὑπερβολῆς. (*Rep.* vi, 509c1-2)
- * Grube/Reeve: 'By Apollo, what a daemonic superiority!'
- * Shorey: 'Heaven save us, hyperbole can no further go.'
- * Lee: 'It must be miraculously transcendent,' remarked Glaucon to the general amusement.
- * Waterfield: "It's way beyond human comprehension, all right," was Glaucon's quite amusing comment.'
- * Conford: 'Glaucon exclaimed with some amusement at my exalting Goodness in such extravagant terms.'

Pre-Sun Characterizations I

- * It is the greatest object to be learnt (the *megiston mathêma*; 504e4-5, 505a2).
- * It is by their drawing upon the Form of the Good that just and other virtuous things become useful and beneficial (*chrêsima kai ôphelima*; 505a4-5).
- * Without knowledge of the Form of the Good, even if we were to know things maximally, there would be no benefit for us—just as if we possess something without its good (505a6-b1).
- * Still, if the Guardian in charge of our constitution knows these things, then our constitution will be perfectly ordered (506a6-b2).

Pre-Sun Characterizations II

- * Those defining the Good as pleasure are shown to be mistaken by the bare fact of there being bad pleasures (505c6-9).
- * Those who define the Good as knowledge cannot specify what the knowledge in question is knowledge of; when pressed, they fall back into circularity by suggesting that it is knowledge of the Good (505b8-10).
- * Every soul pursues the Good and does all that it does for its sake (505d11-e1).

Analogical Characterizations I

- * In the realm of reason, the good stands to the objects of reason as the sun stands, in the visible realm, to the objects of sight (508b13-c2).
- * As the sun provides the light enabling objects of vision to be seen and the power to see to the faculty of vision, so the Form of the Good gives truth and intelligibility enabling the objects of reason to be known and to the faculty of reason the power to know (507d11-e3, 508b6-7, 508e1-3).
- * As the sun can be seen, so the Form of the Good is itself an object of knowledge (508e4).

Analogical Characterizations II

- * The Form of the Good is responsible (*aitia*) for knowledge and truth (508e3).
- * Still, knowledge and truth are not identical with the Form of the Good, it being still more beautiful than they are (508e2-3).
- * Still, the Good is not being (*ousia*), but surpasses it in dignity (*presbeia(i)*) and power (*dunamei*). (509b5-6).
- * As the sun provides not only the ability to be seen but also the generation, growth and nourishment to what is visible, so the Form of the Good provides not only being known to the objects of knowledge, but also their existence and being (*to einai te kai tên ousian*; 509b6-8).

Is the FOG a Form?

- * Krohn: 'The Form of the Good is *not* a Form' (1876, 146)
- * Joseph (1948, 23-24) The Form of the Good then is not one among the other forms, to which being belongs and which are the objects of knowledge. From one point of view, reality is exhausted in them. That which is good, and the goodness of it, are the same; for nothing of what is good fails to contribute to that goodness which consists in its being just all that it is. From another point of view, its goodness is something beyond everything contained in our description of what is good: for we describe it by running over its constituent parts, the Forms which are the various objects of our knowledge; and its goodness is none of these. This, which I think we can understand in principle, though we cannot verify it in a complete apprehension of the real and of its goodness, is what Plato means when he says that this goodness is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει [surpassing being in dignity and power].

Types of Attributes

- * Two Distinctions:
 - * Ideal *vs.* Proper Attributes of Forms
 - * Systemic *vs.* Dissective Attributes
- * The suggestion: the FOG is a systemic feature of all Forms taken together, but not a proper or ideal attribute of any individual Form.
- * The FOG is not one Form alongside other Forms, but the structure of all Forms taken together.

The Textual Data

- * The Form of the Good is responsible (*aitia*) for knowledge and truth (508e3).
- * As the sun provides not only the ability to be seen but also the generation, growth and nourishment to what is visible, so the Form of the Good provides not only being known to the objects of knowledge, but also their existence and being (*to einai te kai tèn ousian*; 509b6-8).
- * Still, the Good is not being (*ousia*), but surpasses it in dignity (*presbeia(i)*) and power (*dunamei*). (509b5-8).

Assessing this Data

- * Plato does *not* state or narrowly imply the No-Form Theory of the FOG
- * He does not say that the FOG *has* no being.
- * He does not—or does not obviously—say that FOG is not *a* being (*ousia*).
- * Rather, he contends that the FOG is not identical with Being (*ousia*)
- * Still, it remains obscure how the FOG is *beyond* Being (*ousia*) in dignity and power.

How is the FOG a cause (*aitia*)?

- * The FOG is necessarily an attribute of all Forms taken individually:
- * For each Form Φ , the Form is paradigmatically Φ .
- * For each Form Φ , the Form has a range of ideal attributes, the explanation of which makes appeal to the FOG.
- * So, the FOG is the cause (*aitia*) of the proper and ideal attributes of all Forms, taken individually.

Still, it is not Being

- * In the realm of Forms, Being (*ousia*) and Goodness are necessarily co-extensive.
- * Still, Goodness is not Being, but beyond Being in power and dignity.
- * That is to say, then, that though necessarily co-extensive, we would be wrong to suppose that the FOG could be identified with Being.
- * Rather, the FOG is a cause (*aitia*) in a way that Being is not.