

9 The Unfolding Account of Forms in the *Phaedo*

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Perhaps Plato's most famous idea is that things like justice, beauty, largeness, and smallness are in some fundamental way different from ordinary, perceptible things. While this idea is famous, it is difficult to find an account in the dialogues of why he thinks it, and how, exactly, these things – which he sometimes calls “forms” – are supposed to be different from the ordinary objects we touch and see. Intuitively, there is clearly a difference between largeness and a large thing, such as Mount Olympus, but why and how does Plato think these are different? We should not assume that he thinks of the differences the way that we do, especially since he seems to be the first Greek philosopher to provide a general account of things like largeness and beauty – which we might call “abstract entities.” As one might expect, he also seems to be the first to develop a contrasting category that corresponds, at least roughly, to what we might call an “ordinary physical object.” Plato's most extensive discussions of forms are in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. Since there are good reasons to think the *Phaedo* was written first, it seems like a promising place to look for his account of why they are fundamentally different from ordinary physical objects.¹

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates does not use the term “physical object” or other terms that we might use for such things, such as “body” or “material thing.”² The first time he contrasts such things with forms,

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he simply gives examples – a stick equal to another stick or a stone equal to another stone or “anything else of that sort” (74a10–11); the next time, he refers to them as “the many beautiful things, such as people or horses or cloaks or any other such thing, or equal things, or any other thing that shares a name with those things [the forms]” (78d10–e2, cf. 102b).³ While our notions of abstract object and physical object arise out of an intellectual tradition going back to Plato, he is in a radically different position from us, inheritors of millennia of reflections on these topics, along with a developed terminology. Understanding his reasons for thinking that forms are different from “ordinary objects,” as I will call them, helps clarify how he thinks about each category.

The most common interpretations are either (1) that in the *Phaedo* Socrates simply assumes the existence of so-called “Platonic forms” – that is, entities that have a number of features, including being in some strong sense distinct from ordinary objects – or (2) that the dialogue’s recollection argument contains one of Plato’s few arguments for them.⁴ In this chapter I present a new interpretation of why and how forms are different from ordinary objects, according to Socrates in the *Phaedo*. Rather than identify one particular passage as the key to understanding the *Phaedo*’s account, I argue that the explanation unfolds across the dialogue, so that Socrates’ claims near the end are needed to fully understand what he says near the beginning.⁵ According to this reading, Socrates asserts some claims early in the dialogue without providing the underlying explanation for them. This is part of why some interpreters claim that he is simply assuming the existence of Platonic forms. I argue instead that each time he returns to forms and ordinary objects he further explains the claims made the previous time he discussed them.

Socrates’ basic description of the forms is that they are what he is looking for when he asks his “what is it?” question. He mentions this the first three times he brings them up in the *Phaedo* (65d–e, 75c–d, and 78c–d). For example, in the recollection argument he says that he is talking about “everything to which we attach this label, ‘what it

is, 'both in the questions we ask and in the answers we give' (75d1–3). The fourth time he discusses them – his discussion of forms as causes – he says that what he is talking about “isn't anything new, but what I've never stopped talking about, on any other occasion or in the discussion thus far” (100b1–3). Socrates is making new claims about the same things he has always sought. Several of the dialogues typically called “Socratic” are devoted to answering such “what is it?” questions, but none of them contrasts forms with ordinary objects. There are several possible reasons for this difference between the *Phaedo* and the Socratic dialogues, each compatible with the account provided here.⁶ The important point for this chapter is that Plato does not portray Socrates as talking about some entities that he does not normally discuss, but rather as making new claims about the things he has always been interested in.⁷ In this chapter I use the term “form” simply as a name for this thing Socrates has always searched for – without building into this term any contrast with ordinary objects or the idea that the forms are somehow “transcendent.”

Aristotle lies in the background of any discussion of why and how Plato distinguishes forms from ordinary objects. Aristotle's discussions of Plato's forms can be useful for understanding Plato's dialogues. For example, I think Aristotle is right when he notes (*Met.* Alpha 6, Mu 4, 9) that Plato's commitment to ordinary objects being in flux is part of why he thinks that they are distinct from forms.⁸ But we can also be misled by Aristotle if we try to use him to understand Plato's dialogues.⁹ In particular, Aristotle frequently distinguishes his own view of forms from Plato's by saying that Plato “separates” forms from ordinary things, whereas Aristotle does not (*Met.* Alpha 6, 9; Mu 4–5, 9; and the *Peri Ideōn*). Plato does not describe forms as “separate” in the *Phaedo*.¹⁰ This idea plays no role, I shall argue, in the *Phaedo*'s reasons for viewing forms as fundamentally different from ordinary objects. The goal of this chapter is to understand the *Phaedo*'s reasons for this contrast on their own terms. Moreover, Aristotle focuses on what arguments there are for the existence of Platonic forms – that is, for the existence of forms that

are separate from ordinary objects (*Met.* Alpha 9, Mu 4, and the *Peri Ideōn*). In my view, the *Phaedo* has been misunderstood by seeking such arguments in it. Instead, it treats separately the questions (1) whether there are forms and (2) why and how they are different from ordinary objects. This chapter focuses on the latter question. As for the former: Socrates thinks that there are forms, in the first instance, because he thinks that there are things like justice, holiness, and largeness – the things he is searching for when he asks his “what is it?” questions. But the *Phaedo* does not ultimately rely on Socrates’ (and his interlocutors’) commitment to there being such things. In the fourth stage of his unfolding account of forms, he famously lays out a method of hypothesis, and adopts as separate hypotheses the existence of individual forms, each of which serves as a cause (100a–101e). How this works is its own story. My question here is, given that there are forms, what is the *Phaedo*’s account of why and how they differ from ordinary objects?

The primary contrast Socrates draws in the *Phaedo* is between a given form and ordinary objects with the corresponding feature – for example, between the form of beauty and ordinary beautiful things. Across the dialogues, a basic feature of forms is that the form of *f*-ness is that by which any *f*-thing is *f*. In the fourth stage of the *Phaedo*’s unfolding account, Socrates uses this basic feature of forms to identify the form of beauty as the cause of beautiful things being beautiful. I argue here that, at the end of the *Phaedo*’s unfolding account, we learn that the nature of any ordinary beautiful thing does not allow it to be such a cause. Thus, the *Phaedo* provides an account of causes and of the nature of ordinary objects that means that no ordinary object could be a cause, and hence none could be a form. Most of the key differences between forms and ordinary objects can be traced back to this basic difference. I argue for this interpretation by considering each section of the dialogue where Socrates discusses the forms and ordinary objects; however, my focus is on the later sections, since these, on my interpretation, provide the *Phaedo*’s ultimate account of why forms and ordinary

objects are fundamentally different. The end of the chapter considers Socrates' account of what I call "bringers" – things like fire, snow, and three, which bring some opposite with them. Considering them anticipates an objection to my interpretation as well as clarifying why and how ordinary objects differ from forms.

I FIRST STAGE: ARE FORMS PERCEPTIBLE?

Socrates first mentions forms in his defense speech (63b–69e), the part of the dialogue where he defends his shocking claim that the philosopher desires to be dead. In defending this, he describes both why the philosophers avoid pleasure and why they do not inquire using the senses. His initial discussion of forms arises after Socrates gives some preliminary considerations for not inquiring with the senses (65a–d). It begins as follows:

"Well now, what do we say about things like the following, Simmias? Do we say that there is such a thing as a just itself, or not?"

"Indeed we do!"

"Yes, and such a thing as a beautiful, and a good?"

"Of course."

"Now have you ever actually seen with your eyes any of the things of this kind?"

"Not at all," he said.

"Or have you grasped them with one of the other senses that are through the body? I'm talking about all of them, such as largeness, health, and strength and, to sum up, about the being of all the rest – what each one turns out to be. Are they viewed at their truest through the body, or . . . ?" (65d4–e2)

First, note that Socrates does not refer to these using the term "form." It is not until the fifth and final stage of the unfolding account that Socrates first uses the term "form" (*eidōs*, 102b1) as a name for the thing referred to by the correct answer to a "what is it?" question. Here in the first stage he refers to them first as "an *f* itself", then he uses abstract nouns – *f*-ness – then as the being (*ousia*) of all other such

things, and finally as “what it is.” These are all expressions used for justice, beauty, and holiness in the *Protagoras* (330c–e), *Euthyphro* (5c–6e, 11a–b), *Meno* (72b–e), and *Hippias Major* (286d–e, 289d); in the last three dialogues, Socrates refers to this as a “form” (*eidōs* or *idea*). In none of these dialogues are forms explicitly contrasted with ordinary objects, although in the *Hippias Major* some such contrast seems implicit. A form – both in these dialogues and in the *Phaedo* – is what we are looking for when we ask the “what is it?” question. It is the being of a thing. It can be referred to as “the large itself” or as “largeness.” What we find in the *Phaedo* – unlike the *Protagoras*, *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major* – is a sustained discussion of what one can say about forms in general, independently of what the correct answer to the “what is it?” question turns out to be.¹¹

Note that Socrates asks Simmias whether there are forms before asking whether they are perceived – treating the latter as a separate question. Socrates seems to be suggesting that it would be a sort of category mistake to think that one could use the senses to perceive a form, but we should be careful not to assume that he puts largeness into the same category that we might put it – perhaps, “abstract entity.” Moreover, Socrates does not explain here why forms are not the sort of thing to be perceived. If one merely wanted an argument that forms are different from ordinary objects, Socrates all but gives one here: Forms are not perceived through the body, ordinary objects are; hence, forms are not ordinary objects. This, I think, is the most intuitively gripping argument the dialogue has to offer: Justice simply is not the kind of thing that we see or touch. But there is no reason to think that being perceptible is the fundamental difference between forms and ordinary objects.

In general, one should ask what the goal of an argument is. Is it supposed to start from premises that seem obviously true? Or provide an underlying explanation for why the conclusion is the case? There is no reason to expect that an argument could do both. Here, in the first stage, Socrates provides premises that are easy to accept.¹² But do they identify the underlying explanation for why forms are not ordinary

things? Of course, not everything has an underlying explanation, so it is conceivable that forms could belong to a different category than ordinary objects without there being any explanation for why this is. But there would be something dissatisfying about this scenario and so good reason to be cautious before accepting it. One would be asked to accept the existence of the forms – a category we probably do not have clear intuitions about and at least many of whose members have never been discovered – and then accept as a brute fact that they cannot be ordinary objects. I will argue, instead, that by the end of the dialogue it turns out that the basic description of what one is searching for, when searching for a form, requires their nature to be fundamentally different than that of ordinary objects. This underlying explanation for their difference, as we shall see, does not have to do with whether or not they are perceptible.

Since Socrates does not, at this stage, explain why forms are distinct from ordinary objects, we can see why some interpreters think that he simply assumes the existence of Platonic forms from the beginning. Instead, I suggest that Socrates begins by getting Simmias to agree to an intuitively plausible claim about the forms, a claim not made in the Socratic dialogues: One cannot grasp them with bodily senses.¹³ But we need to read on to see why and how the nature of forms must differ from that of ordinary objects.

II SECOND STAGE: THE RECOLLECTION ARGUMENT

Socrates next refers to forms in the recollection argument (73b–77a), which argues that everyone had knowledge of the forms before birth. Perhaps no other argument in ancient philosophy has received as much attention over the last seventy years.¹⁴ In my view, this argument's key claims about forms are further explained by what comes later, and so my discussion of it here is very brief.

The most famous section of this complicated argument is the part where Socrates argues that equal stones and sticks are not the same as the equal itself (74b–c). Regardless of how this subargument is supposed to work, it clearly is supposed to argue *that* the form of

equality is distinct from ordinary equal things, such as equal sticks. Socrates later clarifies that his claims are meant to apply not only to the form of equality, but also to the rest of the forms (75c–d). Does this subargument also provide an underlying explanation for why forms are distinct from things like sticks and stones? According to some readings it does not.¹⁵ However, most think that it is supposed to illuminate an underlying difference between them. Soon after this subargument, Socrates says that the equal sticks are deficient and fall short of equality itself but want to be like it (74d–75b). This strongly suggests that there is supposed to be something about the nature of ordinary objects that makes them not simply different from, but in fact inferior to the forms. Nonetheless, it is obscure how to understand this inferiority. The route taken by many in the secondary literature is to understand ordinary objects' inferiority by going back to the two sentences where Socrates contrasts the equal sticks with equality itself (74b7–c2).¹⁶ Often, such interpretations also look to other dialogues (such as the *Hippias Major* and the *Republic*) to fill in Socrates' reasoning. Let me suggest that the two sentences contrasting equal sticks with the equal itself do not contain a fully satisfying account of the fundamental difference between them. But at the same time we do not need to go to other dialogues to fill in the reasoning. We simply need to wait for the next stages of the unfolding account.

III THIRD STAGE: THE AFFINITY ARGUMENT

The so-called “affinity argument” (78b–80b – which I think would be better named the “kinship argument”) comes directly after the recollection argument. Socrates argues here that the soul is more like and akin to “the unseen” – a category whose only identified members are the forms – than to “the visible,” and so there are good reasons to expect the soul to be indestructible, like the unseen. In arguing for this, he provides his most detailed account in the *Phaedo* both of forms and of ordinary objects. But, in stark contrast to the recollection argument, the affinity argument has received relatively little scholarly attention.¹⁷

Socrates' primary description of forms in the affinity argument is the following:

“Then let's turn,” he said, “to the same things as in the previous argument. Take the being itself which is the object of our account when in our questions and answers we give an account of what it is. Is each of them always in the same state and the same condition or in different states at different times? The equal itself, the beautiful itself, what each thing itself is, that which is – does that ever admit of change of any kind at all? Or is what each of them is, since it is uniform itself through itself (*auto kath hauto*), always in the same state and the same condition, and does it at no time, in no way, in no manner admit of any difference¹⁸?”

“It must be in the same state and the same condition, Socrates,” said Cebes. (78c10–d9)

This is a complicated description of the forms. I focus here only on those aspects that are directly relevant to my overall interpretation. Note first that Socrates says that he is talking about the same things as in the previous (recollection) argument, which again he describes as the object of their search when they ask, “what is it?” He says that these things, the forms, are in the same state and the same condition.¹⁹ Socrates' last sentence, I take it, explains why this is so: because each is uniform, itself through itself (*auto kath hauto*).²⁰

A careful account of the notoriously difficult expression “*auto kath hauto*” would require its own essay.²¹ Let me suggest an interpretation that could result from a number of different ways of understanding what this expression literally means. The suggestion is that Socrates is saying that each form has each of its features insofar as it is what it is. In other words, the nature of each form entirely determines how it is. By contrast, most of an ordinary thing's features – for example, whether it happens to be beautiful or ugly – are not determined by its nature. Thus, in the above passage, Socrates is saying

that since each form is uniform and its nature determines the way that it is, it is always in the same state and the same condition.

What does it mean to describe the forms as uniform (*monooides*)? Socrates later says that ordinary objects are, by contrast, multiform (*polueides*) (80b4). Our evidence suggests that Socrates is using “uniform” here to indicate that the forms are single, partless wholes, so that they have no (even non-spatial) parts with independent functions or roles. In saying that forms are “uniform,” Socrates is thus saying that anything attributable to a form is not attributed to some part of it (since it has no such parts), but to the entire form.²² One piece of evidence for this way of understanding “uniform” comes near the end of *Republic X*, where the question of whether or not the true nature of the soul has several parts is put in terms of whether the pure soul is “uniform” or “multiform” (611b–612a). Similarly, in the *Phaedrus* Socrates asks whether the soul is “simple” or “multiform,” where this is determined by whether or not it has different parts with different functions (270d–271a). In considering the possibility that the soul is uniform or simple in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, Socrates is not doubting that it has several things attributed to it, but saying that anything attributed to it would be attributed to the whole soul.

Drawing together the account so far: Socrates is saying that since each form is a simple whole and has all of its features insofar as it is what it is, it is always in the same state and the same condition. This is a much more determinate characterization of the forms than we had in the previous stages.

Before turning to the next stage, we should consider the contrasting description of ordinary objects:

What about the many beautiful things, such as people or horses or cloaks or any other things whatsoever that are of that sort? Or again, equal things, and so on for all the things that share the names of those things? Are they in the same condition, or, quite the opposite to those things, are they virtually never in any state

or in the same condition as themselves or as one another?
(78d10–e4)

Again, Socrates' claims are very difficult to decipher. He describes a group as "the many beautiful things, such as people, horses, cloaks," and so forth. These are the many ordinary objects that we call beautiful. These many beautiful things – and equal things, and so forth – are virtually (*hōs epos epein*) never in any state or the same condition; specifically, they are never in the same condition as themselves nor the same condition as one another.²³ By contrast, the forms are always in the same state and condition. Socrates cannot simply mean that the many beautiful things change over time, given that he says that they are virtually never – literally *at no time* (*oudepote*) – in any state or the same condition. Nor can he mean that there are simply some states that they are not in, since he says that they are virtually in no state. Why think that each beautiful person, horse, and so forth is virtually never in any state or same condition as itself? Earlier in the argument Socrates said that such things are composite (78c) and later he will say that they are multiform (80b). Let me suggest that beautiful things are each like a statue that is beautiful (as a whole) in virtue of its eyes – perhaps the eyes' color nicely complements that of the rest of the statue – but ugly (as a whole) in virtue of its arms – perhaps the arms are out of proportion with the rest of the statue. The statue is both beautiful and ugly (as a whole) at the same time, in virtue of its different parts, and so not in the same state as itself. As we will see, Socrates provides another way in which they are not in the same state as themselves in the fifth stage of his unfolding account.

Socrates draws this strong contrast between forms and ordinary objects in the affinity argument before saying anything about them being perceptible or imperceptible. It is only after this description of the "many beautiful things" that Socrates notes that they are perceptible and the forms are unseen (79a). While it is tempting to think that anything perceptible must have spatial extension and this is why perceptible objects are multiform, Socrates makes no such claim,

and it is not clear that Plato in the *Phaedo* is thinking in terms of a category like “spatial extension.” Nonetheless, it is now much clearer how the nature of forms differs from that of ordinary objects: (1) The form of *f*-ness, since it is uniform and itself through itself, is entirely unchanging and in the same state and the same condition. By contrast, (2) the many *f*-things are changing, multiform, and virtually at no time in the same state or condition as themselves or as one another. Yet again, we have a clear argument that forms are distinct from the ordinary objects: From (1) and (2), one can easily conclude that the form of *f*-ness is not any *f*-thing. This account, unlike that in the defense speech, provides an underlying explanation for why the forms have features that distinguish them from ordinary objects, but it does not rest on intuitively obvious claims. Instead, its claims are further clarified and explained in the following stages.

IV FOURTH STAGE: FORMS AS CAUSES

Near the end of the section known as Socrates’ autobiography (95e–102a), Socrates puts forward as a hypothesis the existence of the form of the beautiful, which he says causes each beautiful thing to be beautiful, and similarly hypothesizes the existence of the other forms (100a–102a).²⁴ He says that to know a cause would be to know, “because of what?” (*dia ti*, 96a) and he regularly treats causes as that *by which* (causal dative) things are as they are. Hence, the form of *f*-ness, as a cause of something’s being *f*, is that because of which and by which that thing is *f*. So, for example, it is because of the form of beauty that a sunset is beautiful. While Socrates may be applying the term “cause” to forms for the first time in the *Phaedo* (see also *H. Ma.* 296e–297d), there is nothing new in the idea that things are the way they are because of the forms. Neither the *Euthyphro* nor the *Meno* call forms “causes,” but they both describe the form of *f*-ness as that because of which and by which something is *f* (*Euphr.* 6d–e, *Meno* 72c–e; cf. *H. Ma.* 289b–d, 294a–e, and 296e–297d). As noted in the introduction, Socrates himself emphasizes when introducing his hypothesis that what he is talking about “isn’t anything new, but

what I've never stopped talking about, on any other occasion or in the discussion thus far" (100b1–3). What is new here is that Socrates discusses what must be true of forms, given that they are causes.

A topic of considerable debate since Vlastos' 1969 article – particularly in the 1970s and 1980s – was whether to translate "*hē aitia*" and "*to aition*" with the traditional translation, "the cause," or instead with something like "the reason" or "the explanation." I retain here the traditional translation, although it is important to recognize that Socrates is operating with a concept for which there is no perfect English translation. A Platonic cause need not be an event, it need not be temporally prior to what it causes, nor need it have several other features some contemporary philosophers require of causes – though contemporary philosophical views of causation are also fairly different than they were in the 1960s–80s, when Vlastos' position was developed and most thoroughly discussed.²⁵ A Platonic cause is something that answers, "because of what?" or, more colloquially, "why?" Anything that could be taken to answer this question is a candidate cause. Thus, if we ask, "why is that large?" we can answer, "because it meets the requirements for being large" – something like, "it exceeds in height." Forms are candidate causes precisely because an answer to a "what is it?" question can function as an answer to a "why?" question.²⁶ Michael Frede, David Sedley, and others have emphasized that in the original legal context, as well as ordinary Greek, one of the terms typically translated "the cause" (*to aition*) is the person or thing responsible for a crime.²⁷

With this background in place, let us consider one of Socrates' descriptions of the causal role of the form of the beautiful:

I keep the following at my side, in my straightforward, amateurish, and perhaps simple-minded way: nothing makes it [some beautiful thing] beautiful other than that beautiful's presence, or association, or whatever its mode and means of accruing may be. For I don't go so far as to insist on this, but only that it is by the beautiful that all beautiful things are beautiful. (100d3–8)

Although forms have been discussed several times earlier in the dialogue, the autobiography is the first place where Socrates mentions this basic feature of them: that it is because of the form of *f-ness* that *f*-things are *f*.²⁸ This focus on forms' causal role helps to clarify the idea in the recollection argument that forms are superior to ordinary objects. Part of the reason for this superiority is that the form is causally prior to ordinary objects: Equal things are equal because of the form, not the other way around.²⁹ Moreover, turning to the affinity argument, we now have a positive characterization of the forms, which clarifies what it means to describe each as itself through itself (*auto kath' hauto*) and uniform. They do not have different parts with different activities or functions; the only thing the form of beauty explains is why each beautiful thing is beautiful. This is the nature it does not depart from. There is no chance that the thing by which all beautiful things are beautiful will change its nature and start explaining instead why all large things are large. In sum, Socrates' characterization of the forms here helps us understand the claims made in the previous two stages. In doing so, it clarifies the characteristics that distinguish them from ordinary objects.

So far I have emphasized that in calling forms causes, Socrates is characterizing them in the same basic way that he does in the *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major*.³⁰ But the *Phaedo* further examines causes, which turns out to be crucial for understanding the underlying difference between forms and ordinary objects. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates seems committed in general to the requirement that *x* cannot be the cause of something if *x*'s opposite has an equal claim to causing this same thing. He defends this when he first rejects his initial candidate causes (97a–b). He argues that neither addition nor division can be the cause of two because each has an equal claim to causing two: Sometimes we say that something is two because of addition and other times because of division. The idea seems to be that a minimal requirement on a cause is that the opposite thing cannot do an equally good job of explaining the same effect. Of course, it may be that without addition there would not have been two in some particular case, but

that is compatible with addition being merely “that without which the cause could not be a cause” (99b3–4) – that is, a necessary requirement, but not the thing ultimately responsible. We must not have identified the thing genuinely responsible if the opposite thing could explain the same thing equally well. Socrates’ alternative is that twoness is the cause of things being two (101c). Twoness is responsible precisely for things being two. Twoness has no opposite, but even something like halfness (the opposite of double at *Rep.* 479b) has no claim on causing things to be two. While I can divide an apple and end up with two halves, the halfness does not cause these to be two; halfness is only responsible for each being a half. People sometimes find Plato’s focus on opposites archaic or simplistic. Instead, this argument at 97a–b makes clear that focusing on opposites brings out the most extreme cases, where it is especially clear that we must not have identified the thing responsible.

The important requirement for us will be an inverse requirement that Socrates also seems to accept: Nothing could be a cause if it makes an equal claim to causing one thing and its opposite. For example, a head cannot be the cause of a person’s being large since it could just as well be the cause of someone’s being small (101a; cf. 99a). I take this requirement to be justified by parallel reasoning: The fact that x is an equally good candidate to explain two opposite things indicates that it must not really be responsible for either of them. The head might be a necessary requirement for someone’s being large, but it is no more responsible for being large than being small. By contrast, the form of largeness only explains things being large, never small.

To sum up, in the fourth stage we gain a positive account of a form’s nature: Since it is what f -ness is, it causes all f things to be f . Moreover, this stage introduces important constraints on causation: The form of f -ness, as the cause of things being f , will never be responsible for something being $un-f$. There is no explicit contrast with ordinary objects in this stage; however, such a contrast is found in the fifth and final stage.

V FIFTH STAGE: CAUSATION AND COMPRESENCE
OF OPPOSITES

Immediately after Socrates' discussion of forms as causes, in the lead up to the final argument, he describes how an ordinary thing is both large and small at the same time (102b–103c). Socrates connects this phenomenon of being characterized by opposites – typically called “the compresence of opposites” – to not being a cause. I argue in this section and the next that the fundamental explanation for why forms are different from ordinary objects is that forms are causes whereas ordinary objects cannot be.

The passage comes after Socrates has presented his method of hypothesis and used it to hypothesize that forms exist. It begins with Phaedo, the narrator of the dialogue, speaking in his own voice:

When these points of his [Socrates] were accepted and it was agreed that each of the forms exists and that other things receive a share of and are named after the forms themselves, I think that he next asked: “So if that’s what you are saying, whenever you say that Simmias is larger than Socrates but smaller than Phaedo, aren’t you saying that at that time both of these, both largeness and smallness, are in Simmias?”

“Yes, I am.”

“However,” he said, “do you agree that ‘Simmias exceeds Socrates’ does not express in words as it in fact truly is? For presumably it isn’t in Simmias’ nature to exceed by this, by being Simmias, but rather by the largeness that he happens to have. And do you agree that, again, he does not exceed Socrates because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness relative to his largeness?”

“True.”

“Right, and again that he is not exceeded by Phaedo because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has largeness relative to Simmias’ smallness.”

“That’s so.”

“In that case, this is how Simmias is named both small and large, by being in between the pair of them, offering his smallness to Phaedo’s largeness to be exceeded, but providing to Socrates his largeness, which exceeds Socrates’ smallness.” (102a11–d2)

Socrates provides here a concrete example of how an ordinary thing can be rightly called both large and small at the same time. This example does not have to do with change over time (e.g., *Cratylus* 439d–440d)³¹ or being *kata* (perhaps “through” or “according to”) different things in the same object (*Republic* 436d–e). Instead, this case of the compresence of opposites arises because of how ordinary objects are in relation to (*pros*) one another (*H. Ma.* 289b–d, *Tht.* 154c).³²

In order to think through this example, we should consider Socrates’ introduction here of “the largeness in Simmias,” which he later discusses alongside “largeness itself” (102d6). This is a particularly fraught topic, since Aristotle criticizes Plato for thinking that there is a type of largeness that does not exist “in” anything. Again, it is important to approach the *Phaedo*’s account on its own terms, not through Aristotle’s lens. At this stage in the dialogue, Simmias and Cebes have agreed to the existence of forms many times, and Socrates has defended this claim with his method of hypothesis in the autobiographical section. Phaedo begins the above quotation by saying (in the outer frame of the dialogue) that Socrates and the others agreed that there are forms themselves and that other things receive a share of them. Socrates then says that “if you say these things” (102b3–4), then when you say that Simmias is larger than Socrates, you are saying that there is a largeness in Simmias. Thus, Socrates thinks that if you are committed to (a) there being the form of largeness and (b) something having a share of this form, then you are committed to (c) there being largeness in this thing. Nonetheless, he treats largeness itself as distinct from largeness in something.³³ Socrates is emphatic in the affinity argument that the forms themselves are completely unchanging and indestructible (e.g.,

78d, 80b). By contrast, the forms in things – which I will call “immanent forms” – either retreat or perish when their opposite approaches (102d–e). The heat in me perishes when I become cold; by contrast, heat itself will never perish or change in any way. Hence, heat itself must be distinct from immanent heat.³⁴

I suggest that we understand this as follows. Largeness itself is what Socrates is looking for when he asks, “what is largeness?” It does not change over time, nor is it destructible, since there is always something that it is to be large and this stays the same. In addition, when something has a share of largeness, there is something about it – something “in it” – that makes it appropriate to call it “large” in certain situations. It is tricky to identify what this largeness is that is in Simmias. Suppose that Simmias is six feet tall and Socrates five feet tall. We do not want to say that the largeness in Simmias is his being six feet tall, because six feet tall can also be small, whereas Socrates says that the largeness in Simmias is never willing to be small (102d–e). We might then be tempted to identify the largeness in Simmias as his having a greater height than Socrates. But it is strange to think of this relation to Socrates as “in Simmias,” and Simmias would then need a different largeness in him for each person and thing that he is larger than. However, Socrates only speaks of Simmias having a single smallness in him and a single largeness in him (102c–d). There is thus much to be said for Sedley’s suggestion that we draw on the discussion of largeness in the *Parmenides* (150c–e) (cf. *Hippias Major* 294a8–b4, *Laches* 192a–b).³⁵ The proposal is that the largeness in Simmias is his power to exceed. Simmias exercises this power only when he exceeds someone, never when he is exceeded. Being six feet tall gives Simmias’ power its specific character, explaining why it is exercised at some times but not at others.

Simmias only has a share of largeness when his immanent largeness is appropriately related to someone (or something) else’s immanent smallness. Whereas a thing is only large in relation to something else, Socrates treats heat and cold, odd and even, and living and dead as non-relational features. These non-relational features are

simpler: If something has heat in it, it will have a share of the form of heat. Hence, we can think of immanent heat as the manifestation of having a share of the form of heat. I say this to offer a way to think of immanent forms. But for purposes of this chapter, the crucial point is that Socrates thinks that a commitment to the forms themselves and to things that have a share in these forms brings with it a commitment to immanent forms.

Now that we are clearer about the immanent forms, let us return to the above passage. Socrates emphasizes that it is not in the nature of something like Simmias or Phaedo to be that *by which* things are large or small. Neither Simmias nor Phaedo is the cause of their being large or small. Rather, it is by the largeness Simmias happens to have that he exceeds. Why is it not in Simmias' nature to exceed? Socrates says that instead Simmias just "happens" to be large. He could have been smaller. If someone put Simmias himself forward as a cause of his being large, one could object that he could have been a cause of being small, and so, by the same reasoning about opposites that Socrates used earlier, he should not be identified as the cause of either being large or small. If one wants what is really responsible for Simmias' being large, it is his largeness. This is responsible only for his being large, with no claim on making anything small.

After Socrates provides his account of how Simmias is both large and small, he further clarifies the difference between Simmias, on the one hand, and the largeness in him and largeness itself, on the other (102d–103a). This is the last place in the dialogue where Socrates contrasts a form with an ordinary thing. He says that he is able to admit both opposites, largeness or smallness, whereas the largeness and smallness in him and largeness and smallness themselves are not able to admit (*dechetai*) such opposites (102e–103a). Whether Socrates is large or small in relation to something is determined by which form he happens to have admitted. Socrates already said in the affinity argument that the forms do not admit (*endechetai*) of any difference (78d). This is one of the fundamental features of ordinary objects that distinguishes them from forms: Ordinary objects

admit opposites, whereas forms do not. Even if some ordinary object managed not to be characterized by some opposite – even if it were somehow entirely smooth, in no ways rough – its nature would admit of both. It would not be responsible for its being smooth; it would just happen to be that way. But forms, as causes, are precisely what are responsible for things being the way they are, and so cannot be receptive of opposites.³⁶ Reflecting on ordinary objects' receptivity to opposites helps clarify why forms must not have such receptivity, but rather always are the same way by virtue of their own nature.

VI BRINGERS

After discussing how Simmias is both large and small, in preparation for the final argument, Socrates describes a group of things that include fire, snow, three, and soul (103c–105e). He does not give a name to these, but I call them “bringers,” since one of their key characteristics is that they always bring a member of a pair of opposites to whatever they occupy. (I will henceforth refer to a member of a pair of opposites simply as “an opposite.”) Some bringers are ordinary, perceptible objects, such as fire and snow, and some not, such as three and soul. Each is unable to admit some specific opposite: cold, heat, even, or death. While bringers that are ordinary objects admit many opposites – large and small, beautiful and ugly, etc. – each does not admit some specific opposite, and so they do not face the same obstacle that other ordinary objects face to being a cause. In fact, bringers are generally taken to be causes – called “sophisticated causes” by Vlastos.³⁷ If that were correct, then the account of this chapter could not be correct: Socrates' ultimate explanation for forms not being ordinary objects could not be that forms are causes and ordinary objects cannot be. If fire were a sophisticated cause, then at least some ordinary things would be causes. As the last step in my argument, I will argue that the bringers are not causes for Socrates and he has good reasons to not make them causes. This will further clarify Socrates' account of why forms are not ordinary objects.

Socrates gives a complicated description of the bringers; it is important to consider carefully the different claims he makes about them. After distinguishing fire from the hot and snow from the cold, he notes that fire does not admit cold, nor snow hot; if hot approaches snow, snow flees or is destroyed, just like the cold in us (103c–d). Next, he says that bringers always are characterized by one member of a pair of opposites and they do not admit the other member of the pair: fire is always hot, and does not admit the cold, and snow always cold, and does not admit the hot (103e–104b). Then, Socrates notes that the bringers have in them the opposite that always characterizes them (104b–c). He refers to this opposite several times as a form;³⁸ the bringers have in them the immanent forms that Socrates introduced immediately before introducing the bringers. Fire has the form of heat in it and snow the form of cold in it. Next, Socrates says that they bring this opposite that is in them to whatever they occupy: Whatever fire occupies will be hot, and whatever three occupies will be odd (104d). Sometimes, Socrates is reported as saying that fire is “essentially hot” or the soul “essentially alive.”³⁹ But he never uses such language and instead emphasizes that fire always has the form of heat in it and brings this to whatever it occupies.

In Socrates’ account of forms as causes, he repeatedly indicates that anything caused by a form is not caused by anything else; for example, he says that “what is smaller is smaller because of nothing other than smallness” (101a4–5). When making these claims, he emphasizes that doing so means not identifying other things as causes (100c–d, 100e–101a, 101c).⁴⁰ He never takes back these claims and he refers back to his hypotheses of forms after his discussion of bringers (107b). We might have expected that any ordinary object that moves, alters, or changes another thing must be a cause. But since Socrates says that nothing other than the form is a cause, these ordinary objects that change another thing must not be causes. If only forms are causes, then bringers are not causes. This explains why he never describes bringers as causes, nor does he use causal language to describe what they do. He never says that they “make” (*poiein*) things

some way, nor says that things are some way “because of” them, or “by” them. Instead, he says that the bringers bring with them the form of an opposite, which is in them: Fire has heat in it; snow has cold in it; and they bring heat and cold to other things. There is a very tricky grammatical construction at the end of Socrates’ discussion of bringers, which is often translated as if it were a causal dative. However, no commentator has defended reading it as a causal dative, and Denyer and Bailey have both argued that it is not one.⁴¹ I agree with them, although for my purposes it is only necessary that it need not be a causal dative and that the broader context suggests that it is not one. On my reading of the tricky construction, Socrates says that both “fire” and “heat” could be used to answer the question, “What is such that, anything in which it arises, in the body, will be hot?” (105b8–9).⁴² He is not saying that it is *because* of fire that this thing is hot. He is saying that fire is a sufficient condition for something to be hot. Bringers bring an opposite with them, but they are not the cause of things having this opposite.

Given that Socrates never says that bringers do this causal work and given that he never takes back his claim that anything explained by a form is not explained by anything else, we should conclude that he does not think of bringers as causes. But why not? According to his method of hypothesis, he should put forward whatever theory seems strongest and count as true about cause and everything else that seems to harmonize with that theory (100a). He thinks that it harmonizes with his theory that things are beautiful because of *nothing other than* beauty. Identifying bringers as causes would be a different theory from the one he has adopted and defended.

We can see why this theory appeals to Socrates, both intuitively and theoretically. Intuitively, bringers are not what is truly responsible. Those are the forms – either the forms in us, or the forms themselves. Instead of themselves being responsible, bringers bring what’s responsible: the forms that are in them. A bringer is like the accomplice who brought the killer to the scene, rather than the murderer himself – the one genuinely responsible. If one wants what

is “proximate” to the effect, that is the heat that is in the bringer. If one wants the cause described in full generality, that is the form of heat itself. Neither is the bringer.

Furthermore, ordinary objects are characterized by countless features that are entirely irrelevant to anything they might putatively cause. Fire is large and small, beautiful and ugly, loud and quiet, and so on. The relevant feature that fire possesses, heat, is what is responsible for something’s being hot, rather than fire as such. The form of heat, being uniform, is exactly what is responsible for a thing’s being hot, whereas any ordinary object (whether a bringer or not), being multiform, will have many parts that are in no way responsible for being *f*. This, then, clarifies why Socrates thinks that the forms are uniform. If the forms had a part that were irrelevant to their being the cause of *f*, the relevant part of the form would have a better claim on being the cause. Since what it is to be a form is to be a cause, they have no such irrelevant parts.

VII CONCLUSION

Plato’s historical context is very different from our own. He seems to have been the first philosopher to discuss, in general, how to think of things like “largeness” and “justice,” as well as how to think about a contrasting class of ordinary objects. So we should not be surprised if his way of distinguishing these groups from each other is very different from our own. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates does not stop at the idea that forms simply do not seem like the kind of thing that we can perceive, nor is he driven by puzzles about how an unlimited number of large things could have a share of the same thing, largeness. Those sorts of puzzles are very important to Aristotle, and Plato discusses them briefly in the *Euthydemus* (300e–301a) and at more length in the *Parmenides* (130e–134e).⁴³ But he does not present them as reasons for thinking that the forms are distinct from ordinary objects; instead, they are puzzles once one views them as distinct. Socrates also does not distinguish forms from ordinary objects by some process of abstracting one feature common to

many ordinary objects, nor does he say that forms are not bodies or not material. Instead, Plato's approach in the *Phaedo* is for Socrates to argue that, independently of what the correct answer is to any "what is *f*-ness?" question, we know the sort of causal work the form of *f*-ness must do. It must be because of it that all *f*-things are *f*. A minimal requirement on causing something to be *f* is not making as good a claim on causing the opposite, *un-f*. But ordinary objects are receptive to opposites, and so make equally good claims on causing *f* and *un-f*. Hence, ordinary objects are not the sort of things that could be causes, and so not the sort that could be forms. The form of *f*-ness must not be receptive of opposites and must not have parts, but rather be simple, so that it as a whole – rather than some part of it – explains why *f*-things are *f*. It must do so for all time and so be eternal. In sum, in order to meet the basic requirements for being a form, it must be uniform and eternally have all of its characteristics through its own nature. This makes forms fundamentally different from ordinary objects.

NOTES

- 1 See Brandwood (this volume, ch. 3) for reasons to think the *Republic* was in a second chronological group, after the *Phaedo* and before the late dialogues.
- 2 The word "body" is generally used to refer to living or once-living bodies in the *Phaedo* (except once, at 86a) – just as it is in all texts before Plato. By the *Sophist*, a late dialogue, "body" can refer to anything tangible (246a–b). I have learned much about Plato's development of the notion of body from Betegh (unpublished).
- 3 Translations from Sedley and Long 2010, occasionally modified. Text is Duke et al. 1995. Ordinary objects "share a name" with the forms because in Greek one can refer to either beauty or an individual beautiful thing as "*to kalon*" ("the beautiful").
- 4 Examples of the first group include Burnet 1911, Gallop 1975, Scott 1995, Sedley 2007c. Examples of the second group include White 1992, Irwin 1999, Kelsey 2000, Dimas 2003, and Tuozzo 2018.

- 5 Irwin (1999) takes the approach closest to mine, though our accounts differ in a number of significant ways. I argue in Ebrey (2023) that this unfolding structure also applies to the *Phaedo*'s ethics and account of the soul. In this book, I also consider each of these discussions of forms in more detail, situating each within its broader context in the dialogue.
- 6 Three possibilities, compatible with one another, are: (1) that the Socratic dialogues were written before the *Phaedo* and other so-called "middle period" dialogues, and reflect an earlier stage in Plato's thinking; (2) that Plato intended the Socratic dialogues to be read before the Platonic dialogues, and hence the differences reflect a pedagogical structure; and (3) that Plato has Socrates express different views in different dialogues because Socrates is speaking to different interlocutors on different topics, leading him to approach issues in different ways. Regarding (3), note that the *Phaedo* is a conversation between Socrates and his closest companions on the last day of his life, so he may be making "new" claims about the forms not only because they are relevant for his arguments (which they are not in many other dialogues), but also because he thinks his close companions will be able to understand these claims, whereas other interlocutors might not. For a further discussion of these broad interpretive possibilities, see the introduction to this volume.
- 7 One could accept most of what I say in this chapter and think that Socrates begins by assuming the existence of Platonic forms, but that over the course of the dialogue he explains this assumption by explaining why and how forms are distinct from ordinary objects.
- 8 This is a common view. See, e.g., Irwin 1999, Kelsey 2000, Dancy 2004. Aristotle refers to what I am calling "ordinary things" as "perceptible things," which Socrates does not in the *Phaedo*. As I discuss below, in the affinity argument Socrates identifies a group as "the visible," but only does so after contrasting members of this group with the forms in ways that have nothing to do with visibility.
- 9 In most of the relevant passages, Aristotle attributes views to Plato without explicitly referring to any of Plato's dialogues. Perhaps Aristotle is correctly reporting views that Plato presented in his Academy. I am simply claiming that his claims can be misleading when used to interpret the dialogues, in particular the *Phaedo*.

- 10 He uses the term “separation” in the *Parmenides* (first at 129d), though it is unclear whether he means by it what Aristotle means. See, e.g., Fine 1984, Meinwald 2016: 301–6.
- 11 Socrates asks Simmias in the above passage whether he agrees that there are such things as a just itself and a beautiful itself and so on. In the so-called “Socratic” and “transitional” dialogues, Socrates similarly asks his interlocutors to agree that there are forms. For example, he asks whether Euthyphro thinks that there is such a thing as the form of unholiness (*Euphr.* 5c–d) and whether Protagoras agrees that there is such a thing as justice and holiness (*Prt.* 330c–d; cf., *Meno* 72a–73c, *H. Ma.* 287c–d). In the same way, Socrates repeatedly asks his interlocutors in the *Phaedo* whether they agree that there are forms (65d, 74a–b, 100b–c) or notes that his arguments rely on their earlier acceptance (76d–e, 78c–d, 107b; cf. 92d–e). While it is natural to assume that there are the things that we are searching for when we ask a “what is it?” question, Socrates does not think it is an innocuous assumption. For one way that the assumption could be denied, see *Meno* 71d–73a.
- 12 By contrast, Dancy (2004: 250) suggests that Socrates is implicitly making an explanatory argument here.
- 13 For a similar idea, see Irwin 1999: 144. For a broad defense of the idea that Socrates in the *Phaedo* is starting with intuitive claims, see Dimas 2003, esp. 179–81.
- 14 See Tuozzo 2018 for a recent extensive bibliography. Further secondary literature on the recollection argument and other parts of the *Phaedo* are in Ebrey 2017a, an annotated bibliography on the dialogue.
- 15 This is true of most of the so-called “epistemological readings,” such as Sedley 2007c. For a list of such readings, see Tuozzo 2018: 5 n. 13.
- 16 This is the view of a diverse group of interpreters, which includes, for example, Nehamas 1975a and Kelsey 2000. For a partial (but lengthy) list, see Tuozzo 2018: 5 n. 13.
- 17 Apolloni 1996 is a rare article devoted to it. Mann (2000) and Ademollo (2018) have significant discussions of it.
- 18 Cf. *Rep.* 454c9 for “ἀλλοίωσις” meaning difference, not alteration. Even at a given time the forms do not admit difference in way or manner.
- 19 It is a difficult question what it means for the forms “to be in the same condition” (*echein kata tauta*). I argue in Ebrey (forthcoming) that this

- standard translation does not capture its meaning, but there is not space to address this here.
- 20 For the translation of this participial phrase as explanatory, see Mann 2000: 107–8 n. 50.
 - 21 The phrase “*auto kath hauto*” is first applied to the forms at 66a. For a discussion of its role in the ethics of the *Phaedo*, see Ebrey 2017b. For a discussion of “*kath auto*” in the *Sophist*, see Frede’s contribution to this volume (ch. 14). My translation “itself through itself” is meant to capture two ideas. First, *auto kath hauto* is frequently connected to purity: there is nothing else through(out) it; it is simply itself through(out) itself. Second, if something is *auto kath hauto*, it is the way that it is on the basis of its own nature, and so is itself through (i.e., on the basis of) itself.
 - 22 Mann (2000) says it is “natural” (81) to suppose the form of *x* is uniform just in case the form of *x* is *only x*, having no other features. But Socrates includes “uniform” in a list of several other features that all the forms have: unseen, immortal, indestructible, always in the same state, etc. (80b). My account allows the forms to have several features, so long as these features apply to it as a whole, not some part of it.
 - 23 Ademollo (2018: 38–40) argues persuasively that not being in the same state is what “virtually” is meant to soften.
 - 24 In Ebrey (forthcoming), I argue that Socrates in the *Phaedo* distinguishes between two expressions translated “the cause” here: *hē aitia* and *to aition*. Strictly speaking, the form is *to aition* and *hē aitia* is: having a share of the form. For simplicity, I ignore this distinction here.
 - 25 Vlastos 1969 – picked up, for example, by Gallop 1975, Frede 1980, and Bostock 1986. Deep disagreements in the contemporary debate about causation are made clear in Schaffer 2016.
 - 26 One reason not to call these “reasons” is that this often suggests something psychological, but Platonic causes are not, in general, psychological. Similarly, “explanation” suggests a linguistic utterance of some sort, whereas candidate causes for Plato are often things or processes picked out with nouns, such as “a head” or “division” or “the large itself” or “intelligence.” Nonetheless, we do sometimes say in English, for example, that the air in the radiator explains the loud noise you are hearing – and in this sense a cause explains something.
 - 27 Frede (1980) thinks we should not call them “causes” in Plato, whereas Sedley (1998) thinks we should.

- 28 One important difference between (i) the *Phaedo* and (ii) the *Euthyphro* and *Meno* is that in the latter dialogues Socrates says that, for example, the holy things have (*echein*) the form of holiness in them (*Euphr.* 5d and *Meno* 72c–73a). He also never suggests that they might be at the same time unholy. In the *Phaedo* Socrates does not commit himself to what the relation is between forms and ordinary objects, but he says that they have a share of (*met-echein*) the forms. This change in terminology may, at least in part, be because he maintains in the *Phaedo* that ordinary *f* things are both *f* and *un-f*.
- 29 Another part of their superiority is likely related to the so-called “compresence” of opposites that the ordinary objects have. The form of *f*-ness is entirely what it is and in no way its opposite, unlike ordinary objects.
- 30 Note that in later dialogues, such as the *Philebus* (26e–27b) and *Timaeus* (28a–29a), Socrates does not identify forms as causes; he simply identifies there the maker or craftsman as the cause. This chapter only aims to explain Socrates’ account in the *Phaedo*.
- 31 Depending on which manuscript reading one takes of the key sentence about equal sticks in the recollection argument, it may have to do with change over time. See Verdenius 1958, Dixsaut 1991, Ebert 2004, and Sedley 2007c.
- 32 These correspond to the three different ways in which something can undergo opposites, according to the principle of non-opposition in the *Republic*: “the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites through (*kata*) the same thing, at least in relation to (*pros*) the same thing and at the same time” (436b8–9). In Ebrey (forthcoming), I argue that in the recollection argument Socrates says that ordinary objects, unlike forms, undergo opposites at different times, and that in the affinity argument he says that ordinary objects, unlike forms, undergo opposites through (*kata*) different things. Here he says that they undergo opposites in relation to (*pros*) different things. And so, over the course of the dialogue, he attributes all three types of compresence of opposites to ordinary objects and denies that each type applies to the forms.
- 33 Fine (1986) argues that in the *Phaedo* largeness itself could be the same as the largeness in *Simmius*. If so, this could simplify my interpretation; however, in my view, Devereux (1994) provides decisive arguments against Fine, which I briefly summarize here.

- 34 At 106b–c Socrates explicitly says that odd perishes when the even comes into three. Moreover, 106a very strongly suggests that the hot and the cold in things are perishable.
- 35 Sedley 2018: 211.
- 36 It might seem possible that forms could admit some opposites, if these are irrelevant to what they cause. I explain why Socrates does not allow this at the end of the next section. On a separate note, Aristotle says in *Categories* 5 that it is most characteristic of substance/being (*ousia*) that it is receptive of opposites (4a10–4b19), using the same term for receptive (*dechetai*) used in the *Phaedo*. As we saw, the beings (*ousiai*) for Plato are the forms. Hence, precisely the feature of ordinary objects that disqualifies them as forms, and hence beings, for Plato is the feature that Aristotle says is most characteristic of beings.
- 37 Vlastos 1969.
- 38 Using the term “*idea*” (rather than “*eidos*”), which seems to be his term in the *Phaedo* for the immanent forms (so Devereux 1994: 71 n. 16). See for example 104b9, 104d2, 104d9.
- 39 E.g., O’Brien 1967 and 1968, Frede 1978, Sedley 1998.
- 40 For a further discussion of Socrates’ commitment to there being just one cause, see Ebrey 2014a.
- 41 So Denyer 2007: 91–3, and Bailey 2014: 24–6. See next note.
- 42 The Greekless reader will probably want to skip this note. Here are the first two occurrences of the construction, with a slightly more literal translation:

εἰ γὰρ ἔροίό με ᾧ ἂν τί ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐγγένηται θερμὸν ἔσται, οὐ τὴν ἀσφαλῆ σοι ἐρῶ ἀπόκρισιν ἐκείνην τὴν ἀμαθῆ, ὅτι ᾧ ἂν θερμότης, ἀλλὰ κομψοτέραν ἐκ τῶν νῦν, ὅτι ᾧ ἂν πῦρ· οὐδὲ ἂν ἔρη ᾧ ἂν σώματι τί ἐγγένηται νοσήσει, οὐκ ἐρῶ ὅτι ᾧ ἂν νόσος, ἀλλ’ ᾧ ἂν πυρετός· (105b8–c4)

For if you should ask me, what is such that, whatever it arises in, in the body, this thing will be hot, I will not give you that safe, ignorant answer, that it is heat, but rather a more ingenious one, based on what we now said, that it is fire. And if asked what is such that, whatever body it arises in, this body will be ill, I will not say that it is illness, but fever.

The interrogative (τί) is embedded within the relative cause (ᾧ . . . ἐγγένηται). This construction cannot be translated directly into English,

hence the “what is such that” at the beginning of the translation of each question. My translation takes the dative relative $\tilde{\phi}$ to be governed by $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\tau\alpha\iota$; its antecedent is the omitted subject of $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$. The $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\tilde{\phi}$ in Socrates’ initial question makes for a somewhat strange question and so Stephanus omits it, but there is no need to do so: Socrates is asking about something (fire) that arises in something else (e.g., the blood, or the brain), which in turn is in the body (so Burnet 1911 and Rowe 1993).

O’Brien (1967) translates it similarly and offers a reasonable explanation for what it means (223–4); and Gallop (1975: 237) in a note (n. 75) also gives a similar “literal translation” (cf. also 204) as does Rowe (1993). But most translations (including Gallop’s) read as if Socrates is saying that fire is that *by which* something is hot (for a list of such translations, see Denyer 2007: 93–4 n. 6). However, the Greek cannot literally mean this (so also Denyer 2007 and Bailey 2014). To think through how such a reading would need to work, note that there would be an omitted $\tau\acute{\omicron}\tilde{\tau}\tilde{\omega}$ in the clause $\theta\epsilon\rho\mu\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$, which refers back to the relative $\tilde{\phi}$. Such readings could take the $\tilde{\phi}$ to be attracted to the dative, but need not. Next, note that “fire” is the answer to the question “what?” ($\tau\acute{\iota}$). Since the interrogative pronoun ($\tau\acute{\iota}$) is in the same clause as the relative $\tilde{\phi}$, they must refer to different things. Hence, even if this sentence somehow were mentioning something “by which the body will be hot” ($\tau\acute{\omicron}\tilde{\tau}\tilde{\omega}\ \theta\epsilon\rho\mu\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$), whatever this is would not be fire, since fire is the referent of $\tau\acute{\iota}$ and this other thing would be the referent of $\tilde{\phi}$. For example, if we take $\tau\acute{\iota}$ as the subject of the $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\tau\alpha\iota$ and $\tilde{\phi}$ as its object, $\tilde{\phi}$ would be whatever fire arises in. But that does not identify fire as that by which something is hot, but rather whatever fire arises in would be that by which something is hot. If we took the $\tilde{\phi}$ to be a causal dative within the relative clause, then whatever causes fire to arise in the body, by this same thing the body would be hot. Again, this does not identify fire as that by which the body is hot.

- 43 For a discussion of one of these puzzles, see Meinwald’s contribution to this volume (ch. 13).