The Nature and Purpose of Relative Terms in Plato

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Dissertation Summary

Relative terms are those such as ‘larger’, ‘smaller’, ‘parent’ and ‘offspring’. Questions concerning the nature of this type of term in Plato fall under three themes. First, logic: what is the syntax and semantics of relative terms? Second, metaphysics: what structures in the world constitute relative properties? Third, taxonomy: do relative terms form a distinguishable class? Questions concerning purpose ask what role these terms have in the wider economy of Plato’s thought. Only one existing approach addresses all of these themes and questions: it was put forward by G.E.L. Owen in 1957, although it was subsequently developed by others. The Owenian view holds that relatives are syntactically or semantically incomplete, that they are identical to metaphysically dyadic relations and that they do form a taxonomic class. According to Owen, Plato introduces relative terms to bolster a certain argument for the separation of forms and participants. Therefore, they have an ontological purpose. This thesis aims to offer a plausible, non–anachronistic alternative to the Owenian view. To give such an account I have to argue for a radically different logic, metaphysics and purpose for relatives in Plato. I call the view that I defend ‘conjunctivism’.

I begin by characterising the logic of conjunctivism. Plato holds that relative terms have formal objects. These are exceptionlessly correct objects of the relative in question. A parent is always and only parent of offspring, so ‘offspring’ is the formal object of ‘parent’. I then demonstrate that the metaphysical problems for relatives which are not dyadic relations are avoided by Plato’s version of conjunctivism. Looking at *Sophist* 255c–d and *Parmenides* 133c–134e, I discuss the taxonomy of relative terms. I show that, under the conjunctive reading, they form a distinguishable class and, in contrast to Owenian relatives, each reciprocates with its correlative. So, just as a parent is relative to offspring, so offspring are relative to a parent. With the nature of relative terms established, I proceed to refute Owen’s account of their purpose, and give my own explanation. By looking at passages from the *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*, I argue that Plato introduced relative terms to articulate why some arguments are fallacies and others not. That is, relative terms have a dialectical purpose.

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Declaration and Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. It falls within the Faculty of Classics word limit of 80,000 words, including footnotes and appendices, but excluding the bibliography.

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Introduction

Russell was famously pessimistic about Plato on relatives: 'Plato is perpetually getting into trouble through not understanding relative terms. He thinks that if A is greater than B and less than C, that A is at once great and small, which seems to him a contradiction. Such troubles are among the infantile diseases of philosophy'.[1] The view that Plato suffers from a logical colic was widespread. The ailment in question is the failure to grasp relative terms correctly, and those who diagnose it include, alongside Russell, some of the most serious scholars of Plato.[2] The diagnosis deserves scrutiny; Russell implies not that Plato has a poor understanding of relative terms, but rather that he has no understanding of them at all. I aim to show that this claim is false: Plato does have an understanding of relative terms and it is quite developed. As it turns out, understanding Plato's attitude towards relative terms is important for understanding his reasons for introducing the Forms, his attitude towards relativism and his relationship to the category ontologies that proliferated in the Academy after his lifetime.

The quotation from Russell already suggests two areas for investigation. The first is the nature of relative terms in Plato. Russell implies that Plato does not have any clear understanding of them, since he gets into trouble through his failure to understand them. So does Plato even have a conception of relative terms? If so, how does he think of them? Indeed, what is supposed to be the relative term in Russell's example: the individual, A, or the relation, being greater than? Could it be the property, being large? Or does Plato characterise relatives in a way that differs from all of these options? The second theme suggested by Russell's quotation is the purpose of using relative terms: are they introduced simply to articulate a contradiction, as Russell seems to imply, or could they be used to avoid such contradictions? Maybe they have very little to do with contradiction and the idea that they have is an anachronistic retrojection of a conception of relations as dyadic properties. What other purposes could there be for Plato to introduce the concept of relative terms? This thesis takes up the two themes of the nature and purpose of relative terms in Plato. First, I will begin to map the intellectual territory concerning the nature of relatives, before going on to discuss how we might approach questions regarding their purpose.

As we saw, modern commentators often hold that Plato does not have a clear understanding of relative terms; ancient commentators and doxographers believed the reverse.

[1] Russell, 1946: 143. See also, Russell, 1946: 164.
[2] For example, Hackforth, 1955:155; Cornford, 1939:78; Moravcsik, 1962:54n1; Cross and Woozley, 1966: 156-7.

That Plato carved out a class of relative terms, and understood their nature, was a view widely held in antiquity.[3] The clearest, although not the most reliable, attribution is at iii 80–109 of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives*. The passage records the so–called *Divisions of Aristotle*, which purports to be Aristotle's account of a series of distinctions made by Plato (iii.80 cf. iii.109.8). The last of these divides beings into 'absolute' and 'relative' and gives some examples and characterisations of each:

> Amongst beings (τῶν ὅ ντων), some are absolute (καθ' ἐ αυτά), others are said in relation to something (πρός τι). Those said absolutely are all those which need (προσδεῖ ται) nothing to be added in expressing them (ἑ ν τῇ ἐ ρμηνείᾳ). Examples of these would be man, horse and the other animals… Those said in relation to something (πρός τι) are all those the expression of which needs something, for example, greater than something, quicker than something, more beautiful, and other such things. For the greater is greater than something and the quicker is quicker than something (DL iii 108–9).[4]

If this is correct and Plato did, either in writing or otherwise, have a clear account of 'relative' terms, Diogenes' text raises three kinds of questions about their nature.[5] The first we could call 'logical'. Logical questions, in this context, concern the syntax and semantics of relative terms: what are the conditions of their meaningful use? Diogenes says that relative terms are those that need something more for their expression. On the level of language they are, in some sense, incomplete. That incompleteness may be either syntactic or semantic. Syntactically, a meaningful term must make a contribution to a syntactically complete unit, such as a phrase, clause or sentence. It seems that some of the relative terms that Diogenes mentions require a complement before they can feature in a sentence. 'Achilles is faster than…' is not syntactically

[3] Boethus of Sidon, a 1st century BC Peripatetic, attributed the concept to Plato (Simp. *In Cat.* 159.9–22). Simplicius agrees. Diogenes is thought to rely on Middle Platonist sources for this attribution, and the Middle Platonist commentator on the *Theaetetus* suggests that Socrates' objection at *Theaetetus* 146d6–e11 relies on the idea of relative terms (*In Plat. Tht.* 20.24–37). However, most of the ancient sources are little more than suggestive: they attribute to Plato an understanding of relative terms, and perhaps suggest some Platonic passages where it is close to the surface, but give few details on what the doctrine might have been. Diogenes is the exception.

[4] Translations from Greek are my own, unless otherwise noted. For Plato, I have consulted the translations in Cooper, 1997. For Greek texts, I have used the latest OCT editions.

[5] I use the expressions 'relative terms' and 'relatives' here and in the following chapters as neutral between items in language and items in the world. Where possible, I distinguish between items in the world and items in language using the usual use/mention apparatus, but since Plato and other early thinkers are not conscientious in this regard there are some discussions where a neutral expression is required. As is standard, I use 'relation' to refer both to the linguistic–level dyadic predicate and to the world–level dyadic property.

complete, and so the sentence (or the relative term) must be completed with the name of another individual or class of individuals, such as 'Hector' or 'the Achaeans'.

Similarly, we can see that there are some terms which may not be syntactically incomplete, but which have a semantics that suggests there is another item in play. 'Beautiful' would be an example. When we apply the term 'beautiful' to some individual, we imply that there are some other items in comparison with which the individual is being judged to be beautiful. This is evidenced by the fact that such assertions can change their truth–value, depending on the context in which they are asserted: Helen may be beautiful compared with other women, but not beautiful compared with goddesses.[6] This point is further discussed in Chapter 1, §1.2.

The next questions raised by the Diogenes passage about relatives are what we could call 'metaphysical' questions. These are not about the linguistic–level features of relative terms and the statements that contain them, but rather about the structures in the world that make such statements true or not. For example, are relative terms dyadic? 'Dyadic' means that relative terms are a single item in the world with two 'gaps', one for an individual such as Achilles and the other for a second individual, such as Hector. In this case, the truth–maker for a statement featuring the relative expression '…is faster than…' will have three components: the two individuals and the single relation being faster than. Another, anti–realist, possibility is to think that the truth–maker for a relative statement does not include a dyadic relation, but two one–place properties, each belonging to one of the subjects. In our example, Achilles could have the property of being able to run at 10kph, while Hector could have the property of being able to run at 8kph. The concatenation of these two individual–and–monadic–property units accounts for the truth of 'Achilles is faster than Hector', but there is no place in the world for the dyadic relation of being faster than. These two options, respectively dyadic and monadic accounts of relatives, may not be exhaustive. Chapter 1, §§1.2 and 1.3 follow up the issue.

A final set of questions is raised by the first sentence of the Diogenes passage: 'Amongst beings (τῶν ὅ ντων), some are absolute (καθ' ἐ αυτά), others are said in relation to something (πρός τι)'. This suggests a set of taxonomic questions, concerning not the structures in the world that make statements true, but the items that are the fundamental constituents of the world.

[6] Note that syntactically incomplete expression and semantically incomplete expressions have different logical behaviours. Syntactically incomplete expressions can generally be completed only once: 'Achilles is larger than Hector, than Priam' is not a well–formed sentence. Semantically incomplete expressions may be completable more than once: 'Hector is a son' could become 'Hector is a son of Priam' and then be qualified a second time to 'Hector is a son of Priam, son of Laomedon'. This process of completions can be iterated for semantically incomplete terms, but not syntactically incomplete ones.

Diogenes' use of 'amongst beings' and the division of those beings into two apparently exclusive and exhaustive classes, those which are relative and those which are absolute, suggests that what we are given here is a taxonomic framework into which all terms are supposed to fit: terms are either of the 'man, horse, animal' kind or of the 'greater, quicker, more beautiful' kind (more broadly, this latter kind will include examples such as 'slave', 'neighbour', 'left' and 'right'). The basic taxonomic question concerning Plato's thought is whether relative terms form part of a two–category ontology of absolute and relative terms, and precisely how to characterise those categories. I tackle this question in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, §5.4.

These three kinds of question are not independent of each other. Distinguishing a class of relative terms that are incomplete semantically may make us think that this semantic incompleteness is to be accounted for at the level of metaphysics: 'Helen is beautiful' is semantically incomplete just because the truth–maker may vary to involve women or goddesses. And any commitment to a structural isomorphism between linguistic–level statements and the world–level facts to which they correspond will make answers to the logical and metaphysical questions about relatives interdependent. Moreover, it would be problematic to assert, on a taxonomic level, that one of the basic genera is the 'relatives', without a metaphysics that distinguishes between relative and non–relative terms. There may also be an interdependence of the taxonomic and the logical questions, depending on the extent to which our linguistic categories mirror taxonomic ones. There may even be a collapse between the two sets of questions if we suggest that categories divide only linguistic items.

The logical, metaphysical and taxonomic questions raised by Diogenes are questions about the nature of relative terms for Plato. The purpose of relative terms for Plato is a further theme addressed in this thesis. If, as I argue, Plato introduced a class of relative terms and gives them a specific characterisation, there must have been some reason for him to do so. The literature on this question presents one main answer: Plato introduced relative terms for ontological reasons. Either, relative terms are needed for an argument to separate the Forms from the sensible world, or they are one of the basic ontological classes that constitute the world.[7] According to either option, ontological considerations explain why Plato reflects on relative terms. I will argue for a different purpose for the introduction of relative terms: they are to construct and deconstruct arguments in dialectic.

[7] For these views, see Owen, 1957; Owen, 1968; Fine, 1993; Baltzly, 1997. This theme is discussed in Chapter 4.

I would now like briefly to look at some of the existing approaches to relative terms in Plato, which I do not treat in detail in the thesis. They are excluded from lengthier treatment because they are no more than selective. Selective approaches address only one or two of the important questions: maybe they make claims about the logic or metaphysics of relative terms for Plato, or just about their purpose. In contrast, global approaches address all of the themes I have identified: they work out a logic, metaphysics and taxonomy of the nature of relative terms, and offer some reflections on their purpose in Plato's philosophy more generally. Chapter 1 articulates two global approaches. The first, offered by G.E.L. Owen provides the foil for the view I defend in this thesis, which I style 'conjunctivism'. Chapters 1–3 argue for the conjunctive interpretation and against the Owenian one. But before moving on to discuss those, let me briefly acknowledge and discuss some existing, selective, approaches that are not the focus of the thesis. In each case, I will use the discussion to further frame the issues I will treat later.

Mignucci

Mario Mignucci proposes a partial account of relative terms in Plato, addressed to their logic.[8] Mignucci bases his reading on a sentence at *Symposium* 199d1, which I will discuss in more detail below (Chapter 1, §1.2). Mignucci explains the sentence as follows. In his refutation of Agathon, Socrates makes the point that 'the father is father of someone'. Plato suggests that being a father amounts to bearing the 'being a father of' relation to someone. In other words, being a father just is to be a father of someone.[9] This is Plato's conception of the logic of relative terms throughout his writing, not just in the *Symposium*. Mignucci generalises and formalises the point in this way:

(M) $\forall xFx \equiv \exists yRFxy \wedge x \neq y$[10]

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[8] Mignucci, 1988: 280–286. cf. Mignucci, 1986: 101–5. In the former paper, Mignucci also offers a metaphysics of relatives in Plato based on the work of Castañeda (see below, p. 9).

[9] This may suggest to Mignucci that what Plato gives here is an instance of the first Aristotelian formula for a relative: 'Relative terms are those that are such as to be just what they are of something' (*Cat*. 6a36).

[10] Mignucci actually writes '$Fx \equiv \exists yRFxy$', but this is not a well–formed formula of predicate calculus, since the 'x' is not a bound variable. He also gives an alternative formulation of this using the class–forming λ–operator. There is no significant difference between the two formulations, if we assume that the extension of a predicate is a class. Mignucci writes: 'è facile accorgersi che le due formule sono logicamente equivalenti' (Mignucci, 1988:282).

Where *F* is a relative term, and *RF* is the relation constitutive of it, and *x* and *y* are variables, this formula says 'Something is relative if and only if that thing bears its constitutive relation to something else.' For example, a term like 'son' is relative because *x* is a son if, and only if, *x* is a son of some *y*. Thus, 'son' fulfils the requirements of being a relative term, on Mignucci's view. Mignucci's thought is that, for Plato, a relative term is monadic. A proposition featuring a monadic relative term turns out to be equivalent to one that features a two–place relation. Mignucci calls this two–place relation the 'constitutive' relation of the relative.[11] He thus tries to avoid the challenge of saying whether relative terms are complete or incomplete. It turns out that any apparently incomplete relative term, such as 'being larger than' is just a term with a bound variable: 'being larger than' just means 'being larger than something'.

What does a constitutive relation amount to, for Mignucci? His formulation says that the extension of a relative term is co–extensive with the domain of the constitutive relation. But this causes a problem, because the terms 'man' and 'is a son of' both equally satisfy Mignucci's definition of a relative and constitutive relation: *x* is a man iff *x* is the son of some *y*, because all and only men are sons of someone. This cannot be right: 'man' is an exemplary non–relative term. So the relationship between a relative term and its constitutive relation must be stronger than mere co–extensiveness. If it is not stronger, then we will find that any term co–extensive with a relative term will be relative. Mignucci realises this,[12] and asserts that the link must be explained by the meaning of the terms involved: 'son' just means 'is a son of someone'; 'large' just means 'is larger than something'. The connection between the relative term and the constitutive relation is an intensional link.

Mignucci's story about the logic of relative terms in Plato is a good place to start, since it allows us to see how problematic it is to claim that one–place relative terms either are equivalent to or even mean the same as two–place relations. Take even a very simple case of a statement involving a relative term, such as (1) 'Ajax is large'. For Mignucci's Plato, that must mean the same as (2) 'Ajax is larger than someone'. One problem with this is that these two statements have different truth–conditions. (2) could be satisfied by Ajax being larger than, say, the world's smallest person, but clearly (1) could not be satisfied in the same way. But if the two statements have different truth conditions, in what sense do they have the same meaning? Mignucci might respond that (1) 'Ajax is large' does not mean that Ajax is larger than any given person, but rather than some given, if abstract, person, e.g. an average man. (3) 'Ajax is larger than the

[11] Mignucci, 1986: 105.
[12] Mignucci, 1986:105.

average man' seems a reasonable paraphrase for (1) 'Ajax is large'. Maybe Mignucci's account can be saved in this way.

Unfortunately, there are also serious difficulties with such an approach. One is that it makes the truth–conditions of (3) opaque: why are only men relevant to determining whether Ajax is large? Why not people in general? Why not other classes of animal? Taking this approach raises more questions than it answers. A second difficulty is that, even if we are specific and say that (1) 'Ajax is large' means (4) 'Ajax is larger than the average man in height', there will be situations where (1) and (4) have different truth conditions, where, for example, there are ten men, seven of whom are 1.5m tall, Ajax, who is 1.65m tall and two who are 2m tall. The mean average man here is 1.62m, the mode is 1.5m and the median is 1.5m. Ajax is larger than the mean, mode and median average man in height, but, with two men who are significantly larger than Ajax, it does not seem right to say that (1) 'Ajax is large' is true.[13] The concepts of mean, mode and median average are anachronistic, but my aim here is to show how problematic it would be to attribute to Plato the notion that 'large' means 'larger than average'. Even if we ignore the anachronism, 'large' does not mean 'larger than average'. This highlights an important contribution that my account of the logic of relative terms in Plato can make. We should not attempt to reduce relative terms to relations, however tempting that may seem.

Mignucci is concerned to save Plato from a certain logical mistake, namely confusing positive adjectives being used as predicates with comparative adjectives.[14] In some cases that Mignucci cites, such as *Republic* 438c1–2, Plato seems to lump together positive adjectives, like 'large' and 'double', and, we could add, nouns like 'father' from the *Symposium*, with comparative adjectives, such as 'larger', 'faster' and so on. Mignucci thinks that if Plato's account takes the positive and the comparative adjectives to be intensionally equivalent, his transgression of the grammatical categories is less serious.[15] Mignucci does put his finger on an interesting issue here, one about which both the Owenian and conjunctive readings of Plato will have something to say (See Chapter 1, §1.2). But Mignucci's cure is worse than the disease: the transgression of the grammatical categories is explained in a way that makes Plato's account of the logic of relatives implausible, as we have just seen. One contribution that my account will make to understanding the logic of relative terms in Plato will be to explain why he transgresses these grammatical categories.

[13] For more on this issue, see: Wallace, 1972; Wheeler, 1972; Kitcher, 1978 and Kennedy, 2007.
[14] Mignucci is not the first to worry about this issue: see Gallop, 1976:162 and Brentlinger, 1972: 71.
[15] Mignucci, 1988: 283–5.

Castañeda

An important fragment of an interpretation of relatives in Plato deals with their metaphysics. The fragment has its origins in the work of Hector–Neri Castañeda and was extended by Mark McPherran.[16] Castañeda deserves credit for his recognition that Plato has some views on the nature of relatives. I will give a brief account of Castañeda's view and some of the lessons we can learn from its flaws. Castañeda bases his discussion on *Phaedo* 102c–d, and styles this 'Plato's *Phaedo* theory of relations'. It aims to tell us the structure of the fact which makes 'Simmias is taller than Socrates' true.

Castañeda's theory asserts that there are three sorts of entities presented in the *Phaedo*: Forms, ordinary particulars and forms in ordinary particulars.[17] The theory then makes four claims about metaphysics: (1) Ordinary particulars have the properties they have by participation in Forms. (2) All Forms are monadic, which is to say that each Form is instantiated by exactly one particular in each fact it is involved in. (3) There are two sorts of facts: single–pronged facts and multiple–pronged facts. Single–pronged facts are each constituted by exactly one Form and exactly one participant. Multiple–pronged facts are each constituted by two or more Forms, each instantiated by exactly one participant, but such that each Form–participant pair is not alone a fact. (4) Forms that enter into multiple–pronged facts cannot ever enter into single–pronged facts: they can only make Form–chains. For example, the statement suggested in the *Phaedo*, 'Simmias is taller than Socrates' is made true by the compound fact that Simmias participates in Tallness and Socrates participates in Shortness. By (4) the Forms Tallness and Shortness make a chain Tallness–Shortness. There is then a derivative connection between Simmias and Socrates: Simmias participates in a Form that is enchained to a Form in which Socrates participates. Castañeda suggests that we represent this state of affairs as Tallness (Simmias)– Shortness (Socrates).

[16] I have based my discussion on Castañeda, 1972. He repeats his views in Castañeda, 1978 and Castañeda, 1982. McPherran's own independent contribution to the discussion comes in McPherran, 1983*a* and continues in McPherran, 1986. There was a certain amount of back and forth on this issue between Matthen, criticising Castañeda, and McPherran, defending him (Matthen, 1982; McPherran, 1983*b*; Matthen, 1984). As will become clear, I think that the basic assumptions, shared by both sides, are false, and so will spare the reader a detailed reconstruction of a wrong–headed, long–winded, long–dead debate.

[17] I retain an initial capital letter for transcendent Forms.

Castañeda's reading, in contrast to those of many of his contemporaries, tries to show that Plato has an awareness of relational facts and has some resources for dealing with them. Castañeda's reading also respects the monadic nature of Plato's metaphysics. Castañeda puts the point by saying that while Plato attempts to reduce relations to monadic Forms, he does not reduce relational facts to non–relational facts. I think that this is one of the points that is correct about Castañeda's approach: he tries to explain the metaphysics of relatives in Plato without attributing to Plato an understanding of dyadic relations, as to do so would be anachronistic. This is something that the account of relatives in Plato that I defend takes up (Chapter 1, §§1.2 and 1.3). However, although I agree with the core idea of Castañeda's approach, there are serious problems with the way he executes it.[18]

First, it is highly questionable whether Plato conceives of the Forms as doing the work in truth–makers that Castañeda needs them to. Point (1) of his theory is that ordinary particulars have the properties they have by participation in Forms. Without this assumption, there is no basis for the further claims Castañeda makes about the truth–makers for statements involving relations.[19] But it is very dubious whether Plato in the middle–period or at any time, held such a view. For (1) to be true, there would have to be one Form for each like–named plurality, so that the truth–maker for any statement, relational or not, would involve a Form and a particular. Thus, a non–relational statement, such as 'Simmias is a man' would have as its truth–maker Simmias participating in the Form Man. But the evidence that Plato held the view that there is one Form for each like–named plurality is very thin, and there is some evidence that he found the idea problematic (*Parmenides*, 130b–d).[20] The lesson, I think, is that, whatever Plato's metaphysics of relative terms, it would be prudent not to depend on any particular account of the Forms. My conjunctive account of the metaphysics is novel in that it is independent of any given account of the Forms.

Second, even if we grant Castañeda his assumptions about Plato's metaphysics of truth–makers, there is a question about the basic bearers of relativity for Plato. Are they individuals, such as Simmias and Socrates? Or are they general items, such as Tallness and Shortness? For Castañeda it seems that the basic bearer of relativity is the individual, Simmias or Socrates. This

[18] Further criticisms can be found in the secondary literature (Matthen, 1982: 92–94). I do not rely on Matthen's objections here, because I wish to highlight the original contribution my reading of relatives will make.
[19] It is clear that Plato thinks the forms have something to do with the successful use of language, (*Sophist*, 259e and *Parmenides*, 135b–c), but the relationship is not the one Castañeda suggests.
[20] The only passage where Plato seems to say such a thing is *Rep.* 596a. But I doubt that the correct reading of those lines is as asserting that there is one Form for each like–named plurality. See Harte, 2008. Sedley also challenged the received reading in a paper given in Cambridge in July 2011.

is because they each participate in a Form, and those Forms must be enchained into the 'Form–chain' Tallness–Shortness. The relationship between Simmias and Socrates is derivative from the Tallness–Shortness chain, but the individuals are what ground the relationship. But this seems odd when we consider Plato's discussions of relatives which we find outside the *Phaedo*. Plato's typical language for discussing relatives uses a generalising definite article: 'the father is father of someone' (*Symposium* 199d7) and 'the larger is larger than the smaller' (*Republic* 438b4) are more typically Platonic locutions (see Chapter 1, §1.2). This makes it sound as though individuals are not being considered as the relative terms, but rather groups or types: I shall attempt to respect this language with my account of relatives in this thesis.

The third problem is that there are no rules, on Castañeda's account, governing which Forms can be enchained with which. Point (4) of his theory says that there are some Forms, such as Tallness and Shortness, and, presumably, Fatherhood and Sonhood that must be enchained to another Form. But it does not specify which Form each must be enchained to. Castañeda may intend that Tallness only forms a chain with Shortness, and Fatherhood with Sonhood, but his theory does not rule out deviant chains, such as the enchainment of Tallness and Sonhood. So there could be a truth–maker of this sort: Tallness (Simmias)– Sonhood (Socrates), using Castañeda's notation. This multiple–pronged fact seems perfectly serviceable as a truth–maker for 'Simmias is taller than Socrates'. The multiple–pronged fact Tallness (Simmias)– Shortness (Socrates) can serve as a truth–maker for that statement, even though the statement does not explicitly mention Shortness. So, presumably, the multiple–pronged fact Tallness (Simmias)–Sonhood (Socrates) can do so too, even though the statement does not explicitly mention Sonhood. This is a possible truth–maker for the statement 'Simmias is taller than Socrates', under Castañeda's account, but it is hard to see what relevance Socrates' being a son has to Simmias' being taller than him.

We will see that the conjunctive account has a valuable contribution to make in this area as well. Clearly, the conjunctive account will not carry on the discussion in terms of Form chains, but nevertheless, it does allow us to formulate some rules governing which items are relative and correlative pairs. Being a son and being taller are not a relative and correlative pair, while, just as clearly, being taller and being shorter are. Castañeda's account gives us no way of distinguishing between genuine relative–correlative pairs and deviant ones. One of the principal aims of the conjunctive account is to articulate Plato's way of eliminating such deviant relative–correlative relationships, in a way that respects the texts where Plato is dealing with these questions. I will briefly foreshadow the two key ideas I attribute to Plato on this issue. First is that relatives have

an intentional orientation, each towards its proper correlative: the taller is orientated towards the shorter. So there could be a rule which blocks deviant relative–correlative pairs. Second, there will be recognition of the reciprocity of a relative and a correlative. Taller is relative to shorter, certainly, but the reverse also obtains; the shorter is relative to the taller. Castañeda's account fails to recognise these two important features of relatives for Plato.

We have seen the programmatic framework for the remainder of this thesis. Russell and others prompt us to question whether Plato has an understanding of the nature of relative terms. Questions about the nature of relative terms turned out to divide into three themes: logic, metaphysics and taxonomy. A full account of Plato's view on relative terms ought to discuss each of these themes. Examining two fragments of a full account, each of which only deals with one aspect of the nature of relatives for Plato, allowed me to further frame and highlight the issues involved in this thesis. My discussion of Mignucci's account of the logic of relative terms in Plato showed us that there will not be a story of straightforward equivalence between a relative term and a relation; such an account was found to face serious difficulties, to which there is no easy solution. But it did allow us to bring to the foreground the question of the relationship between relative terms and relations and whether Plato's apparent lack of concern over sliding between positive and comparative forms of adjectives has any philosophical basis. Castañeda gave the second fragment of an account. He addressed the metaphysical questions and allowed us to see that we have to deal with the following: what the basic bearers of relativity are, for Plato; how to specify the relationship of relatives to their correlatives; and, what the scope of any given metaphysical analysis of relatives should be.

It remains to mention the areas I will not be discussing in detail in this thesis. We will see in Chapter 1 which passages I consider most important for my discussion of relative terms in Plato, but *Phaedo* 102b–d is not amongst them. The main reason for this is that Owen, whose view of relative terms is the primary foil for my own views, does not consider it an important passage. His account has the advantage of being global, and so giving a position on each of the themes discussed above. In his discussion, he does not cite *Phaedo* 102b–d as a source for Plato's views on relative terms. Owen is wise not to do so: 102b–c seems, at first sight, to be contrasting natural, some might say essential, and non–natural properties of an individual, not relative and non–relative properties. Socrates' objection to the form of words 'Simmias overtops Socrates' is not that it mentions a dyadic relation, as Castañeda would have it, but rather that 'it isn't by nature that Simmias overtops him, by virtue, that is, of being Simmias, but by virtue of the largeness he happens to have' (102c1–3). The evidence that the analysis of relatives is in Plato's

mind here is thin, so I will bracket it off from further discussion and concentrate on more clear–cut passages.[21] Moreover, as we have just seen, *Phaedo* 102b–d has received a good deal of attention as a source for Plato's view on relatives, without bearing fruit.

Another issue I will not discuss in this thesis is relativ*ism*. There is obviously an important link between relations and the Protagorean doctrine, or series of doctrines, expounded in the *Theaetetus*. Moreover, the first use of the expression πρός τι in a philosophical context occurs at *Theaetetus* 160b9. This will later become Aristotle's technical term for 'relatives' (*Cat*. 6a36). But there is sufficient scope for a thesis on relative terms in Plato that does not discuss the link between relatives and relativism. The relativist position is usually taken to be given at 152a, where Socrates characterises the theory by saying that 'as each thing appears to me, so it is for me, and each thing, as it appears to you, so it is to you' (152a8–9). Based on this passage, commentators often gloss the logical form of propositions, according to the relativist, as '*x* is *F* for *a* and *x* is un–*F* for *b*', at least for values of *F* such that *F* represents a perceptible property.[22] This seems to suggest that, under relativism, at least some monadic properties, such as being *F*, turn out to be dyadic relations, such as being *F* for someone. If this is correct, relativism in the *Theaetetus* relies on taking apparently monadic properties to be dyadic ones. As will become clear in Chapter 1, I hold that Plato's analysis of relative terms is not that they are simply dyadic relations. The story about the relation between Plato's relatives and the way he characterises relativism cannot, therefore, be straightforward. One avenue for further research would be to apply the results of my investigations into the nature of relative terms in Plato to his account of relativism, but such a project goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

The following is a brief overview of the thesis. I treat here the nature and purpose of relative terms in Plato. Discussions of the nature of relative terms break down into discussions of their logic, metaphysics and taxonomy. Global readings of relative terms in Plato ought to have something to say to each theme and also to the purpose served by appeals to relative terms in Plato. I take it that Plato does not develop a notion of relative terms simply for its own sake. This means that the development of the notion must serve a purpose for Plato: it must address some problem, support a theory or explain a certain phenomenon. Chapters 1–3 of the thesis contrast two approaches to these themes: the Owenian and the conjunctive. I show in Chapter 1 how each

[21] One might think that all and only non–relative properties are essential properties, because all and only relative properties are non–intrinsic, and all and only essential properties are intrinsic. But in fact, none of these equivalences obtains. There are some relational, intrinsic properties: having longer legs than arms is an intrinsic property of me, but it is clearly relational. There are some non–intrinsic, essential properties, such as being the sum of two prime numbers, which is a property that all numbers have essentially (if they have it), but which is in no case extrinsic.
[22] e.g. Burnyeat, 1991: 13.

approach addresses the three themes concerning the nature of relatives in Plato. Focusing on *Republic* IV, Chapter 2 begins to compare the Owenian and conjunctive approaches, to see which gives the more plausible reading of key passages in Plato. Chapter 3 continues this investigation, examining the *Sophist* 255c and *Parmenides* 133c–134a discussions of relatives. These passages confirm that a key part of the conjunctive reading, reciprocity, is at the forefront of Plato's account of relative terms. Chapter 4 addresses the role that relatives might play in Plato's ontology: Owen thinks that they have an important place in Plato's argument for the forms, but I reject this view. Finally, Chapter 5 presents my own account of the origin and purpose of relative terms for Plato: relatives help Plato with the dialectical defence and construction of arguments.

Chapter 1

This chapter outlines the two comprehensive accounts of relative terms. The rest of the thesis concerns itself with a comparison between these two. The first view was worked out by G.E.L Owen and developed by those who follow him.[23] This traditional way of understanding the nature of relative terms is articulated in §1.1 of this chapter. Along the lines suggested in the introduction, I will divide the discussion of the nature of relatives in Plato into three main questions: what is the logic of relatives, what is their metaphysics, and in what taxonomy do they sit? We will see how Owen answers each question. §§1.2 and 1.3 of the chapter will begin to develop an alternative way of answering those three questions, based upon a particularly clear example of Plato's use of relative terms. §1.4 will begin to define the grounds on which to compare the two readings. Chapters 2 and 3 will go onto complete the comparison of the Owenian and conjunctive natures of relatives, and chapters 4 and 5 will examine why Plato introduced them.

1.1 The Owenian Reading

To articulate the nature of relative terms, according to Owen, I begin with a metaphysical question: under the Owenian reading, what are the elements in a relational fact? A relational situation consists of two individuals and a relation between them (Owen, 1957: 108) to give a complete relational situation, represented by the statement, 'Achilles is faster than Hector'. There are two individuals, Achilles and Hector, and they are related by the being–faster–than relation. That relation falls between the two individuals.[24] However, in many of the interesting cases, there will only be one individual, the subject of the term, and an *incomplete* term (Owen, 1957: 108; Owen, 1968:108, 113). Depending on how the term is completed, it will become true or false of

[23] The attitude that Plato had a dyadic conception of relatives can be found in many discussions. To cite just a few: Strang and Rees (1963:161), Schiebe (1967:30), Cavarnos (1975: 17), Nehamas (1975:107), Jordan (1983:27–35) and Mignucci (1988: 259). McCabe (1994:31–52) and Dancy (1999) hold that Plato has a dyadic conception of relatives, but their view differs from Owen in other important ways. The most recent expression of Owenianism is Silverman (2008).

[24] In principle, those individuals might be imaginary or one individual at different times: 'Achilles is faster than he used to be' or 'Achilles is faster than you can imagine' seem to relate Achilles to himself at a different time, or to an Achilles that you are imagining. Owen does not consider this kind of case.

its various subjects. Thus, 'Achilles is faster than…' is true when completed with 'Hector', but false when completed with 'Apollo'.[25]

Thus the key metaphysical claim of the Owenian reading is the *dyadic* nature of the relative terms. They are two–place relations. Owen tries to distance himself from attributing a dyadic understanding of relative terms to Plato, perhaps knowing that it runs the risk of anachronism (Owen, 1957, 108n34).[26] But his persistent use of the metaphor of 'incomplete' terms (e.g. Owen, 1968:108, 113) must, I think, commit him to the view that they are dyadic: the metaphor makes little sense without the idea of a term with two places.[27] And other Owenians, such as Strang and Rees (1963:161), Schiebe (1967:30), Cavarnos (1975: 17) and Mignucci (1988: 259) have accepted the consequence that Plato believed in dyadic predicates, and even used it to defend Plato in the face of Russell's criticism. Thus I hold that we can characterise the Owenian reading as attributing a dyadic understanding of relative terms to Plato.

Logical questions concern the syntax and semantics of relative terms. Here, the Owenian view is generous with respect to the descriptions that can be characterised as relative. Owen notes this feature in his 1957: 108. There are syntactically incomplete comparatives, such as 'taller than' ('Achilles is taller than' alone is not a grammatical sentence), but these often have positive adjectives that conceal that comparative, such as 'large' ('Achilles is large' is grammatically unobjectionable). Indeed, in Greek the comparative can be used to 'soften' an expression. For example, τὸ μεῖζον can be used to mean 'the comparatively large thing' as well as 'the larger'. In general, this use is rendered as 'rather *F*' or 'somewhat *F*' (Smyth, §1083d); this use will not be 'incomplete', but will 'conceal' the comparative, just like the case of 'large' in English, even though, unlike the English 'large', a comparative form is present in the surface grammar. Some relatives will be none of the above: the examples below of 'Eros' and 'brother' neither are, nor

[25] This logical fact, that the same description may vary as to whether it is true of some subject is, for Owen and others, key to Plato's reasons for positing the forms: all and only 'relatives', understood this way, will generate forms (Owen, 1957:108).

[26] It is difficult to know when exactly the notion of a 'dyadic' relation was born. Plotinus (*Enn*. vi. 1. 6. 29–36) has a secure enough grasp on the notion to be sceptical about it. The Stoic relative genus is not clearly dyadic in character, but rather seems to include monadic dispositions which have as a necessary condition of application some other item (Simp. *In Cat*. 166, 15–29). Sextus records an argument of Carneades (*Adv. Math*. 7.166–75) which relies upon there being two monadic qualitative descriptions. But two monadic terms do not make one dyadic term. Some barred using the singular 'a relative' preferring to discuss 'relatives' (e.g. followers of the Peripatetics Achaicus and Sotion cited in Simp. *In Cat.* 159, 28–160.2). But this alone does not show they had a dyadic conception of relative terms, only that they thought two items are necessary for a relative description; an idea which goes back to Plato.

[27] There is not a vast literature on relatives in Plato, but the view of relatives as incomplete predicates appears to originate in the 20th century in Owen, 1957:108–9. Owen also repeats this view later in his 1968:113–4. Strang and Rees, 1963: 158–62 take up the idea. Nehamas (1975:107) also relies upon this 'incomplete' reading of relatives. The previously dominant reading finds its last expression in Cornford, 1935: 283, who denies that Plato, Aristotle and medieval and modern Aristotelians thought of relatives as dyadic terms. This latter view is shared by Russell, 1900: 13, 208 and 1945:128–9. I will discuss below a possible third way using Denyer, 1991: 140.

conceal, comparatives, but seem to be or conceal relations. However, Owenians think of all of these as having the same 'general logical character' (Owen, 1968: 113). Why do Owenians permit themselves such a broad range of relative descriptions, a range that goes far beyond dyadic relational descriptions?

The reason is the 'variable –adicity' of relative terms. The '–adicity' of a term refers to how many 'gaps' it has: monadic descriptions have one subject, polyadic descriptions have more than one. Dyadic descriptions have exactly two. Some descriptions are *variably* –adic, that is to say, they may be added to in order to make a complete sentence, but they need not be, and they still make a complete sentence.[28] Many relative terms exhibit variable –adicity: the example in the *Symposium*, 'brother', seems to be of this type. The sentence 'Paris is a brother' is complete but it can be added to, giving 'Paris is a brother of Hector'.[29]

To account for the phenomenon of 'variable –adicity', Owen understands 'incomplete predicates' to include *both* syntactically incomplete descriptions, which must be completed to make a grammatical sentence, *and* descriptions which are grammatically complete but whose truth–conditions suggest another item or class. We might call these semantically incomplete. The description 'brother', in 'Hector is a brother' does not need a complement to form a complete sentence. But to evaluate the truth of that statement one must make reference to some other items, in this case his siblings.[30] This relationship could then be cashed out as a dyadic relation between Hector and one of his siblings. Owenians can, therefore, permit themselves a wide range of relative descriptions, without compromising their basic model of relativity in Plato, by including both the grammatically and semantically incomplete descriptions. In order to count 'tall' and 'father' amongst relative terms, i.e. to say that they are in some sense incomplete, Owenians must appeal to the semantics of the terms 'tall' and 'father'. They do not recognise variable –adicity as an unanalysable grammatical fact about relative terms: they analyse it into terms involving either the grammar of relative terms, or their semantics.

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[28] I am concerned here with terms that vary between being monadic and dyadic, although variation between being dyadic and being triadic is common. For example, a term like 'are comrades' can be dyadic, or triadic, or *n*–adic: 'Achilles and Agamemnom are comrades' can vary to 'Achilles and Agamemnon and Patroclus are comrades'.

[29] Cf. Brown, 1986: 53–5. Brown's examples focus on the variable –adicity of verbs: 'Jane is teaching' and 'Jane is teaching French'. I suggest that relative terms are analogous to the verbs Brown identifies. This is not an innovation: it is well known that certain non–verb terms are variably –adic such as 'work well together': this term can have two or more subjects, but it still makes sense even if it has only two.

[30] What about 'Hector is an only child'? Owen could argue that this is semantically incomplete, in the same sense as 'Hector is a brother': 'Hector is an only child' is equivalent to 'For any human, that person is not a sibling of Hector'. To evaluate the truth of 'Hector is an only child', we may need to make reference to the class of every other human.

Finally, the taxonomic question: Owenians usually follow certain ancient sources, especially Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, iii 108–9, but also Hermodorus (cited in Simp. *Phys*. ix 247. 30–248.5) and possibly Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 10.263), which, Owen claims, attribute to Plato and the early Academy a two–category ontological taxonomy of 'absolute' and 'relative' terms (Owen, 1957, 109; 1960: 171). These are sometimes known as the Old Academic categories. Owen suggests that Plato and the Old Academics introduced this taxonomy to explain the apparently differing behaviour of the two classes of terms: absolute ones such as 'finger' (*Republic* 523c4ff), and 'man' (*Parmenides* 130c–d) as opposed to relative ones such as 'beautiful' (*Hippias Major* 288b–9c) and 'equal' (*Phaedo* 74c). The second class seems to permit the co–application of the term and its opposite: Helen is beautiful and ugly, depending upon whom she is compared to (mortals or gods). The first class does not allow such fun: Helen cannot be described as both a woman and a man at the same time and in the same respect, regardless of the comparison class. This, according to the Owenians, is because 'man' and 'woman' are absolute terms, while 'beautiful' is a relative term. The use of relatives to avoid contradictions is essential to their use as a category of terms.[31]

The way Owen answers the taxonomic question is not independent of the way he responds to the metaphysical and logical questions. To divide the taxonomically absolute from the taxonomically relative terms, Owen relies on the logical 'incompleteness' of certain terms in language: these turn out to be the taxonomically relative terms. The complete/incomplete contrast, in turn, relies upon a metaphysics for these terms that includes dyadic relations. Thus, according to Owen and his followers, the metaphysically monadic, the logically complete and the taxonomically absolute terms, such as 'man', fall together on one side of the divide, while the metaphysically dyadic, logically incomplete and taxonomically relative terms, such as 'large', fall on the other.

1.2 The Conjunctive Reading

[31] It is potentially embarrassing for Owen, and others who think that Plato introduced forms for all ambiguous ethical and logical–mathematical terms of measurement *because* they cause disputes, that at *Euthyphro* 7b–d Socrates contrasts the measurement terms 'greater/ lesser, more/fewer, heavier/lighter' with ethical terms, on the very grounds that disputes over measurement terms can be resolved by appeal to the arts of measurement, while the ethical disputes cannot. These issues are taken up again in Chapter 4, where I argue that it is the context–sensitivity, not the relativity, of these terms that is important to Plato.

This section develops the conjunctive way of understanding relatives in contrast to the Owenian view of Platonic relatives. Throughout this thesis, we will see that the conjunctive understanding gives the best reading of individual passages. In that spirit, let me pick a clearly relevant and interesting passage, *Symposium* 199c3–201c12, and show how my alternative to the Owenian understanding of relatives emerges from a close reading of it. The use of relative terms is widespread in Plato, and they feature in some important arguments, as we shall see in the following chapters. However, I focus on this passage because, as I will argue, relatives are consciously delineated as such and some of their characteristics as relatives are described and relied upon in the argument. It therefore provides a good basis for thinking about Plato's conception of relatives.

After Agathon has given his 'amazing' speech in praise of Eros (199b4), but before giving his own monologue, Socrates undertakes to examine Agathon using the method of question and answer. This section of the dialogue, the 'elenchus of Agathon' (199c3–201c12), uses arguments based on the logic of the terms ἔ ρως (love), καλόν (beautiful) and ἐ πιθυμία (desire), to force Agathon to admit that ἔ ρως is not καλόν. Socrates begins his examination by praising the approach Agathon recommended at the start of his speech (197e7), that is, to lay out 'what sort of thing Eros is' (ὸ ποῖ ός τίς ἐ στιν ὸ ῎Ερως 199c5) before discussing 'his works' (τὰ ἔ ργα αύ τοῦ).[32] Taking this approach, Socrates launches into the question: 'is Eros the sort of thing to be Eros of something or of nothing?' (199d1–2).[33] Agathon answers that Eros is always Eros of something. Socrates recalls and endorses Agathon's claim at 197b5 that Eros is Eros of beauty and never ugliness at 200a1–2. Finally, Socrates moves to show that Eros cannot possess that which it is Eros of: it cannot be beautiful. He attempts this proof by saying that Eros desires whatever it is Eros of, and that whatever one desires one does not possess (200a7–b2). Since Eros is Eros of beauty, it must desire beauty. Since it desires beauty it must lack beauty, therefore Eros is not beautiful.

It is important for an account of relatives to show that Plato conceives of relative terms as a distinct class and to have some criteria to re–identify that class.[34] At 199c4–5 Socrates says that we should first show what sort of thing Eros is, before showing his works (πρῶτον μὲ ν δέοι αύ τὸ ν ἐ πιδεῖ ξαι ὸ ποῖ ός τίς ἐ στιν ὸ ῎Ερως, ὕ στερον δὲ τὰ ἔ ργα αύ τοῦ).[35] This advises

[32] Cf. 201e1 which adds 'what Eros is' to the question of 'what sort Eros is' and contrasts both with what Eros does.
[33] πότερόν ἐ στι τοιοῦ τος οἷ ος εἶ ναί τινος ὸ ῎Ερως ἔ ρως, ἢ ού δενός;
[34] This does not alone imply that Plato thinks of them as a class significant in an ontological taxonomy.
[35] This line is often interpreted as if it were an expression of the 'Socratic' procedure, found in, for example, the *Meno* at 71a1–b8 (cf. *Meno* 87b3, *Georgias* 462c10–d2 and *Republic* 354c1–3), which emphasises the priority of

us to find the *sort* that Eros belongs to, before looking for the things Eros does, his 'characteristic activity'. The reasons for this reading are clear: first, ὁ ποῖ ός, as a relative pronoun, is used to indicate 'of what sort or quality' something is.

Moreover, at 195a1–3 Agathon makes the point that one must commence an encomium by saying what sort of thing the subject is and then the sort of thing that he or she is responsible for. As Sedley notes, Agathon does not follow the canonical dialectical procedure of starting with the 'What is it?' question, and Socrates at 199c5 is self–consciously following Agathon's deviation (Sedley, 2006: 52). Socrates has put Eros in a class of terms all of which have some characteristic in common. At this stage, we do not have enough information to say whether Socrates has identified a quality Eros happens to have, or whether Eros is being placed in a kind comprised of terms that have some defining characteristic in common.

The next exchange tells us that they have a defining characteristic. Socrates puts a formula for whether something is a relative as a question: 'is Eros of such a kind as to be of something or of nothing?' (199d1–2).[36] He continues with an analogical case: 'is the father father of something or not?' (199d5).[37] Socrates supplies the answer that the father is father of a son or daughter.[38] Socrates has put the term 'father' into the same class as the term 'Eros'. Dover says that these terms, Eros and father, are of 'such a kind as to stand in an "of" relationship' (Dover, 1980: 133). This is what marks out the class which Socrates has been alluding to: they are terms which are such as to be 'of something'. To put the formula schematically, we could say that the *f* is *F* of *y*, where 'the *f*' is a place–holder for the bearer of a relative description, '*F*' is the relative description, and '*y*' is replaced with the formal object of the relative (see below in this section for an account of a 'formal object').

Socrates' characterization of relative terms allows us to begin to specify the conjunctive account of relatives. The Owenian and conjunctive readings differ with respect to their interpretation of the 'ἐ στι' in statements such as ὁ πατήρ ἐ στι πατήρ τινος, which have the form 'the *f* is *F* of *y*'.[39] Owenians will take the ἐ στι to indicate identity. The property (a) being a father, just is the property (b) being a father of someone. (b) is the dyadic relation which Owen

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determining what *X* is before one can know what is true of *X*. See Lamb, 1925: 167; Rowe, 1998:71; Nehamas and Woodruff, 1989: 40; Allen, 1991: 42 and Sheffield, 2008:33. Sedley, 2006:52 is an exception to this consensus.

[36] ἐ στι τοιοῦ τος οἷ ος εἶ ναί τινος ὁ Ἔρως ἔ ρως, ἢ οὐ δενός;

[37] ἆ ρα ὁ πατήρ ἐ στι πατήρ τινος ἢ οὔ ;

[38] ὁ πατήρ, the Greek formula with a definite article, is a way of speaking generally about fathers. I have retained the definite article in English for the sake of literalism, even though using a formula with a definite article to generalise over fathers, or anything else, sounds archaic.

[39] Mignucci, 1988: 281 draws attention to the different possible reading of 'is' here, but does not make any use of the distinction.

commits himself to, on a metaphysical level. But because (a) is identical to (b), we can see that 'is a father' means the same as 'is a father of someone'. Therefore, we can also characterise 'is a father' as incomplete: we cannot make a sentence whose truth–conditions are clear simply by predicating 'is a father', the linguistic counterpart of (a), of a subject. We ought to predicate 'is a father of someone' of the subject and we ought to specify who this 'someone' is in order to assess the truth of the statement. The Owenian view of Platonic relatives is to understand both 'is a father' and 'is a father of someone' to mean the same, i.e. being a father of someone. The one–place predicate and the two–place predicate are equivalent.

An alternative way of reading the ἐ στι in the 'the *f* is *F* of *y*' formulation is as predicative, which is to say that being father of someone is a property which applies to the father. On this interpretation, 'the father' must be being used to pick out fathers both collectively and individually, and to predicate 'is a father of someone' of each of them. Thus, under the predicative interpretation, the point is that each father has the property being father of someone.[40] The important thing to see is that the relationship between the monadic property being a father and the dyadic property being a father of *y* is not identity, contrary to the Owenian way of understanding relatives here, but rather a relationship of co–instantiation: each of the individuals in the class of fathers can have 'is a father' predicated of it because it bears a pertinent relation to some other individual. So under the predication reading, in the relational situation there are two distinguishable elements: the monadic property being a father and the being a father of someone property, an apparently dyadic relation, both applied to an individual father.

Another way to see this point is to employ some technicalities about relations, as understood in modern logic.[41] We draw a distinction between the domain of a relation, and its extension. The domain of a relation is the set of those individuals that bear that relation to something or other. The extension of a relation is a set of ordered pairs of items, such that the first bears that relation to the second. An ordered pair is simply a pair of items where the order matters to the identity of the ordered pair: the ordered pair <*x*, *y*> is not identical to the ordered pair <*y*, *x*>, except in the special case where *x*=*y*. For example, the domain of the relation 'is a student of' will include all the individuals who have ever studied with someone. The extension, meanwhile, will include the ordered pairs <Plato, Socrates> and <Aristotle, Plato> amongst many others.

[40] See Allen, 1991: 45
[41] This discussion is based on Denyer, 1991: 139. See also Carnap, 1958:117–9

We could say that the line dividing the Owenian and conjunctive readings is that the Owenian reading understands the relative expression 'father' to have for its extension the pairs which constitute the extension of the 'is a father of' relation. The conjunctive reading takes it that the term 'father' encompasses the domain of the relation in question. If we follow Allen's suggestion (Allen, 1991: 45) and understand 'the father' distributively, we will surely say that we are concerned with the *domain*. For one thing, the domain of the 'is a father of' relation is simply all those individuals to which the predicate 'is a father' applies. Second, since we are taking 'the father' distributively, there are no pairs of items in question, only individuals. On the other hand, the Owenian reading seems to understand what belongs to the relative 'father' to be the extension of the 'is a father of' term: the extension of the 'is a father of' relation is the set of ordered pairs $<x, y>$, where $<x, y>$ is such that x is father of y. Since the terms 'is a father' and 'is a father of' mean the same under the Owenian reading, the domain of the relation is just all those things to which the 'is a father' predicate applies.[42]

These two possible readings of the copula in the formulation of relatives in the *Symposium* bring into focus one important difference between two possible readings of relatives in Plato. On the one hand, for Owen, it seems to be the case that Priam is a father of Hector because of one single factor: the two–place relation of being a father of falls between Priam and Hector. There is nothing more to being a father than being a father of someone: the two terms 'father' and 'father of someone' mean the same. On the other hand, if the copula is read as indicating a predication, there is more going on in the truth–maker. There will be two factors that together constitute the truth of 'Priam is father of Hector'. The first is that Priam falls into the domain of 'father' and hence is a father. The second is that he is 'of Hector', which is to say that Hector is an object towards which Priam is orientated in a paternal way.

This second account of relations in Plato has been called his conjunctive theory of relations.[43] As Denyer says, the core point of relatives is that something cannot be relative all by itself. On the conjunctive theory of Platonic relatives, Plato does justice to this feature of relatives through their 'towardsness', the idea that, as well as being a father, Priam is 'of' or 'towards'

[42] The conjunctive reading of these terms as distributive here would confirm Denyer, 1991: 140. Denyer suspects that Plato thinks of relational terms as having a domain, rather than an extension.

[43] Denyer, 1991: 142. This kind of theory should not be confused with a Leibnizian theory of relations that could also be called 'conjunctive'. On the Leibnizian view, a 'relation' conjoins 'Priam is a father' and 'Hector is a son' (Fx & Gy), and the 'towardsness' is a mental projection. The 'conjunctive' theory that I suggest Plato develops conjoins 'Priam is a father' with 'Priam is of Hector'. Thus, on Plato's theory, there is a real 'towardsness' in a relational situation, which is missing from Leibnizian conjunctivism. Leibnitz here follows medieval nominalists such as Peter Abelard.

Hector.[44] On the Owenian reading, the relatedness of relatives is elegantly captured by the dyadic nature of the relational term. Since a relative term corresponds to a relation it is clear that no item can be relative just by itself: if there is only one individual bearing a relative term, the corresponding statement is incomplete. To reiterate the essential point once more: on the conjunctive reading, there are two conditions that must be satisfied for 'Priam is a father of Hector' to be true. Priam must be a father, and Priam must be 'of' Hector. On the Owenian reading, there is only one condition: Priam must be a father of Hector.

This idea that the second conjunct is a colourless 'of…' has its basis in the text of the *Symposium*. After all, the formulation 'the father is father of someone' includes the genitive for the object of the relative. Allen (1991: 42–43) claims that the genitive here is a genitive of *relation*. Allen may mean 'relation' in the narrow sense of 'member of one's family' or the broader sense in which we have been using 'relation' to mean some connection between two items. If the former, Allen is correct: there is a genitive that is used to denote a member of the family (Smyth §1301). There is also the standard Greek patronymic formulation which uses the genitive case to denote the father of the person named. In fact, a family (γένος) relation is arguably the basic meaning of the genitive case (γενικὴ πτῶσις) in Greek.

But if Allen means 'relation' in a broad sense, we must be careful that genitives do not give a spurious unity to the class of relative terms. Aristotle, at *Cat*. 6a35, seems to hold that needing to be combined with a genitive is necessary and sufficient for being a relative. I suggest that the *Symposium* passage does not support such a strong claim. The term ἔρως (love) will need to be completed with an objective genitive but this is supposed to fit into a class of relatives with πατήρ (father). A father is of a son or daughter, but in the latter case, it is the genitive of possession (Smyth §1301). This sense of possession is even stronger in the case of master and slave, another Platonic example of a relative (*Parmenides* 133b–e). Moreover partitive genitives and genitives of comparison may represent relatives. Finally, some relatives can be expressed in the dative case.[45]

There is arguably a connection between (a) the *towardsness* that the conjunctive reading postulates, and (b) the fact that, although relative terms are usually construed with a genitive, and especially so in the *Symposium* passage we are discussing, their formal connection with their

[44] I borrow this use of 'towardsness' from Cornford, 1935: 283. In Cornford 'towardsness' alludes to the expression πρός τι, used as Aristotle's standard technical term for relatives (*Cat.* 6a35). Fiona Leigh used the same expression in this context in a paper given in Cambridge, September 2010. Immediately below, I say a little more about the linguistic use and cash value of this 'towardsness'.

[45] e.g. *Cat*. 6b28–35 mentions 'knowable' as a relative known *by* knowledge and 'perceptible' as a relative perceived *by* perception.

object comes (certainly in Aristotle at *Cat*. 6a36, but, I will argue, in Plato too) to be expressed with πρός + accusative. Typical uses of πρός with the accusative in authors of the 4th century BC were not semantically neutral. πρός + accusative may have a sense of directionality. One of the most common uses, given by Smyth (§1695.3), is as indicating the direction of something.[46] It certainly helps my case that many uses of πρός in authors comparable to Plato indicate direction towards.

Moreover, if this 'towardsness' does form part of the basic sense of the preposition with the accusative, it would help to explain why it seems plausible to Plato that all relatives are aliorelatives.[47] Something that is aliorelative cannot bear that relation towards itself. If 'towards' were a natural way to express a relation, then it would seem plausible to a philosophical audience that all relatives are aliorelatives. This is because '*x* moves towards *y*' is what we would now call an irreflexive relation: if *x* moves towards *y*, then *x* is not identical to *y*. Nothing can move towards itself. So if this literal, spatial use of πρός + accusative is what the metaphorical, conceptual use we find in Plato is based on, then we might understand why aliorelativity seems to Plato to characterise all relatives.

We have seen that the literal meaning of πρός + accusative is spatial, indicating direction. So it is possible that the bias in favour of 'directionality' in the semantics of πρός + accusative makes plausible to Plato some of his characteristic thoughts about relative terms. But is Plato the first to use πρός + accusative more colourlessly to mean 'in relation to'? Plato is certainly not the only one to use it in this way.[48] But he does use the πρός + accusative expression to cover a wide variety of ways of expressing relativity in Greek. *Republic*, 372d2 uses it with a verb of seeing to indicate the direction of looking. *Phaedo* 111b6 uses the expression to specify the respect in which those who dwell around the sea of air surpass us. *Protagoras* 327d1 uses the construction to express proportion and *Phaedo* 102c8 it to express a comparison. Because Plato uses the πρός + accusative construction as a substitute for a variety of ways of expressing relativity in Greek, it seems that he is using it as a convenient way to talk about relations in general, that is, to mean 'in relation to'.

This use of πρός + accusative to mean 'in relation to' may already have been a philosophical one. Zeno of Elea is recorded by Simplicius as saying 'for no such part of it will be

[46] For example, in Xenophon, *Anabasis* vii. 6. 6; Thucydides, iii. 6. 1. 4. See πρός, *LSJ* C.I.
[47] See, e.g., *Charmides*, 167c4-169c2 and *Sophist* 255c14, discussed in Chapter 3, §§3.1-3.2, both of which use πρός + accusative to express relativity.
[48] For example, Demosthenes uses it to mean any relation at all: 'he has nothing to do with the city (πρὸ ς τὴ ν πόλιν)' (*In Midiam* 44.7-8). Many more cases can be found in πρός, *LSJ* C.III.4.

last, nor will there not be one part related to another (οὔ τε ἕ τερον πρὸ ς ἕ τερον οὐ κ ἔ σται)'.[49] Of course, it is possible that Simplicius, writing many centuries later, anachronistically inserted the expression πρὸ ς ἕ τερον. But Kirk, Raven and Schofield (KRS), like all editors of the Presocratics, give this as a direct quotation, and the only reason to doubt them is that πρὸ ς ἕ τερον is not found elsewhere in philosophy before Plato.[50] Given that it is hard to say with certainty that Zeno used the expression, I think it safest to conclude that even if Zeno introduced this use of πρός + accusative to indicate 'in relation to', it was certainly Plato who made it a staple of the philosophical vocabulary.

Plato does not only use πρός + accusative to mean 'in relation to', but he also uses it to express the correlative to a relative term. In passages where relative terms are at stake such as *Charmides* 168d1, πρός + accusative seems to stand in for the objective genitive or genitive of comparison, and indicate what something relates to. *Republic* IV, 438b11–c4, also displays the same tendency, where Plato switches, without missing a beat, from the objective genitive, to the πρός + accusative construction, and back again, when specify the object of relative terms.[51]

Plato uses the πρός + accusative construction in philosophy to express relativity in general, to specify the object of a relative term and the distinctive 'towardsness' that characterises his view of relativity is bound up with the basic meaning of the construction. A common form of the πρός + accusative construction is one where the accusative is a pronoun. The most famous example would be to use τι as that pronoun, giving an expression meaning 'in relation to something'. Plato uses a number of pronouns in various places, but he is the first to use the expression πρός τι in a philosophical context, and this – thanks in part to Aristotle's *Categories* (1a25 and 6a36) – became the standard philosophical argot to refer to relative terms. Aristotle uses τὰ πρός τι as a referring expression, like a name, to pick out the class of relative terms. So

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[49] Simp. *In Phys.* 140, 34. This is Zeno B 1 DK. Translation taken from Kirk, Raven and Schofield, 1983: 267.

[50] If one were inclined to challenge the KRS construal, one might read the fragment in this way: (i) προδείξας γὰ ρ ὅ τι εἰ μὴ ἕ χοι μέγεθος τὸ ὃ ν οὐ δ' ἂ ν εἴ η, ἐ πάγει εἰ δὲ ἔ στιν, ἀ νάγκη ἕ καστον μέγεθός τι ἕ χειν καὶ πάχος καὶ ἀ πέχειν αὐ τοῦ τὸ ἕ τερον ἀ πὸ τοῦ ἐ τέρου. (ii) καὶ περὶ τοῦ προύχοντος ὁ αὐ τὸ ς λόγος. (iii) καὶ γὰ ρ ἐ κεῖ νο ἕ ξει μέγεθος καὶ προέξει αὐ τοῦ τι. ὅ μοιον δὴ τοῦ το ἅ παξ τε εἰ πεῖ ν καὶ ἀ εὶ λέγειν· (iv) οὐ δὲ ν γὰ ρ αὐ τοῦ τοιοῦ τον ἕ σχατον ἕ σται οὔ τε ἕ τερον πρὸ ς ἕ τερον οὐ κ ἔ σται. You might think the verbatim quotation is just (i). (ii) would then be Simplicius saying that Zeno marshalled the same argument for τοῦ προύχοντος. (iv) would be Simplicius' paraphrase with πρὸ ς ἕ τερον being the reversal of τὸ ἕ τερον ἀ πὸ τοῦ ἐ τέρου above in (i). I thank Ben Harriman for this suggestion.

[51] Ἆ ρ' οὖ ν καὶ τὸ ποτὲ μεῖ ζον ποτὲ ἐ λάττονος, καὶ τὸ ἐ σόμενον μεῖ ζον ἐ σομένου ἐ λάττονος;
Ἀ λλὰ τί μήν; ἦ δ' ὅ ς.
Καὶ τὰ πλείω δὴ πρὸ ς τὰ ἐ λάττω καὶ τὰ διπλάσια πρὸ ς τὰ ἡ μίσεα καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦ τα, καὶ αὖ βαρύτερα πρὸ ς κουφότερα καὶ θάττω πρὸ ς τὰ βραδύτερα, καὶ ἔ τι γε τὰ θερμὰ πρὸ ς τὰ ψυχρὰ καὶ πάντα τὰ τούτοις ὅ μοια ἆ ρ' οὐ χ οὕ τως ἕ χει;
Πάνυ μὲ ν οὖ ν.
Τί δὲ τὰ περὶ τὰ ς ἐ πιστήμας; οὐ χ ὁ αὐ τὸ ς τρόπος; ἐ πιστήμη μὲ ν αὐ τὴ μαθήματος αὐ τοῦ ἐ πιστήμη ἐ στὶ ν…

(a) does Plato anticipate Aristotle's referential use of the term τὰ πρός τι, and (b) does Plato use πρός τι as a term of art to express relativity? I suggest a negative answer to the first question and an affirmative to the second. Plato does not seem to use τὰ πρός τι as a referring expression to pick out the class of relative terms, but he does sometimes use πρός τι as a term of art to express relativity.[52]

Plato uses πρός τι six times. Four of these, *Sophist* 257e3, *Parmenides* 154e1, *Gorgias* 503e1 and *Meno* 89d1, do not use the term to express the idea of relativity as such: they each use it to specify a relationship between one item and some–or–other second item. However, there are two uses where the expression does seem to indicate relativity as such. The first, at *Theaetetus* 160b9–10, is in the context of a reiteration of the Protagorean position that properties only inhere in items in a relative sense: 'So if someone says that something is or is becoming, one ought to say "for someone" (τινί) or "of something" (τινός) or "in relation to something" (πρός τι)'. In this clause, the term seems to be a generalising one: the run of τινί, τινός, and πρός τι ascends from mentioning a specific relation, to an observer, to a more general relation to something, to relation in general, this last using the πρός + accusative construction. This use would be perfectly natural given Plato's tendency to use that construction to cover a variety of relational expressions in Greek. The expression πρός τι would simply cover any relation, to anything whatsoever. Which makes sense in the context, where what is being ruled out is talk that does not mention at least some relation to something or other. The ascending tricolon given at *Theaetetus* 160b9–10 is simply a microcosm of Plato's language for expressing relativity. However, note that here πρός τι does not refer to 'relative terms', but rather means something more like 'relativity'. So it does not do the duty it acquires in Aristotle, of naming a specific class of terms, and without the definite article, introduced by Aristotle, there is no reason to think that it could be a referring expression.

The other passage where πρός τι seems to express relativity as such is *Philebus* 51c–d.[53] There Socrates contrasts plane figures and solids, which are naturally beautiful by themselves (καλὰ καθ' αὐ τά) with what is beautiful relatively (πρός τι καλά) (51c6–7). A few lines below, Socrates clarifies what he means with the example of sounds. Some of these 'are not beautiful in relation to something else, but in themselves' (51d7–8).[54] It is clear that the sounds are beautiful only relatively, but it is not clear what sense of relativity is at stake here. Are they beautiful relatively because they are beautiful comparatively, like the girl of *Hippias Major* 289a–b, who is

[52] Plato does seem to use an expression to pick out relative terms on one occasion: ὅ σα γ' έ στὶ τοιαῦ τα οἷ α εἶ ναί του (*Republic*, 438a7). So Plato does have a referring expression, but it differs from Aristotle's.
[53] See Leigh, 2012: 13.
[54] οὐ πρὸ ς ἕ τερον καλὰ ς ά λλ' αὐ τὰ ς καθ' αὐ τὰ ς εἶ ναι,

beautiful compared to mortals, but not compared to gods? Or are they beautiful relatively because their beauty consists in the relations they bear to other sounds, so that the sounds are beautiful because they are in harmony with others? This ambivalence supports my suggestion that πρός τι in Plato designates relativity in general. If, in the *Philebus* context, it means some relativity or other, the fact that the text does not determine what sort of relativity is at stake is perfectly explicable.

So Plato does not anticipate Aristotle's use of τὰ πρός τι as a referring expression picking out relative terms, but rather he uses πρός τι to describe relativity in a very general way. I argued that *Theaetetus* 160b9–10 and *Philebus* 51c6–7 use πρός τι to express relativity in the most general sense: in Protagoras' view, everything is somehow relative. But this general sense of relativity, captured by πρός τι in Plato, is very different from the thought that some terms are relative terms. Terms like 'parent', 'master' and 'larger' have a set of logical, metaphysical and taxonomic characteristics, or so I argue, that are lacking from other terms, even if those other terms are 'relative' because the objects which have them stand in some relations. Aristotle uses τὰ πρός τι as a referring expression to pick out this class of relative terms, but Plato uses πρός τι to mention a much more loose sort of relativity. Plato does have an expression for picking out relative terms, as I mentioned above, but more often he just expects us to grasp that he is discussing relative terms.[55]

In summary, this linguistic detour has given us reason to think that the towardsness that I argue forms an important part of Plato's conception of relatives is natural, given the existing linguistic use of πρός + accusative. We also saw that Plato is the first to popularise the use of the πρός + accusative expression in a philosophical context, and that when he does use it, it means that the item picked out by the subject is 'in relation to' the object.[56] So when we see this expression in Plato, we are expecting relativity to be at stake, but not some particular relation. Finally, we saw that Plato does not anticipate Aristotle's use of τὰ πρός τι to pick out relative terms, but rather uses πρός τι to express relativity more broadly.

Returning to the comparison of the Owenian and conjunctive views, we should note that the modern notion of a relation is an extensional one. That is to say, a 'relation', as it is understood in modern logic, is defined simply as a set of ordered pairs. That set is such that the first item in the pair bears the relation in question to the second. The domain is the set of all items that bear the relation to something and the co–domain is the set of all items that have the relation

[55] Reasons for this are explained in Chapter 5, §§5.3-5.4.
[56] Although cf. 436b10.

borne to them. This has the following consequence: in modern logic we could not distinguish between two relations with the same extensions, at least, we could not without invoking the meaning of these expressions. We could not, for example, distinguish between the relations 'is a master of' and 'is a square circle or is a master of', because these relations will be co-extensive, given that there are no square circles. Or, to take a less fanciful example, we could not distinguish between 'is a son of' and 'is a man or is a son of', since all and only men are sons.

However, we will see at several crucial points below that Plato seems to conceive of relative terms as *intentional*.[57] In some sense, relatives are *about* things, for Plato. One way to see this is that a relative term does distinguish between co–extensive correlatives, such as being a man and being a son of someone. The relative term 'father', for example, is relative to 'son' and not to 'man', even though 'son' and 'man' are co–extensive. This is because 'is a father' has an orientation towards 'son' and not 'man'; being a father is about the son. To put the point another way, Plato's notion of relative terms distinguishes between our world, where every son is a man and every man is a son, and a counterfactual situation where, for example, the first man was generated *ex nihilo*, and so not every man is a son. We will also see that Plato's notion of relative terms apparently distinguishes not only between co–extensive sets of correlatives, but between different descriptions of the same item when assigning the appropriate correlative: whether, for example, the proper correlative of 'love' is 'the beloved' or 'the beautiful'. This is another sign that relatives, for Plato, involve intentionality. We will see more of this idea in the discussion of formal objects for relatives.

This feature, the essential intentionality of relative terms for Plato, may also serve to explain their apparent monadicity. Rather than having to appeal to something dyadic to enforce a link between a father and a son, the former conceived in modern logic as a member of the domain of 'is a father of', the latter as a member of the co–domain, Plato assumes a (reciprocal) link that is grounded in the intentionality of the terms 'father' and 'son'. We will see in due course that all relative and correlative pairs of terms reciprocate for Plato (see below and Chapter 3, §§3.4-3.5). So this intentional link between a relative and correlative could be grounded in the reciprocity of the terms. For example, larger is larger than the smaller will always be true because being larger is the reciprocal correlative of being smaller. So the intentional orientation of being larger

[57] I use this term advisedly: in usual philosophical usage, 'intentionality' refers to a property of mental states, namely the property of being 'about' things (Jacob, 2010). What I wish to indicate is the aboutness or directness items in the world. 'Intention' is sometimes used in this sense in the philosophy of biology (Fodor and Piatelli–Palmarini, 2011) and reflects the medieval philosophical use of the Latin 'intentio'. I also happen to think that relative expressions should not be viewed extensionally in Plato and, in that sense, relatives are intensional as well as intentional.

towards being smaller is explained because being larger reciprocates with being smaller. Further detail on this issue is given in Chapter 3, §3.5.

Now we have two issues in play concerning the *Symposium*: the taxonomic question, whether relatives for Plato fall into a distinguishable class, and the metaphysical question, whether the formulation 'the *f* is *F* of *y*' is to be understood as identifying '*F* of *y*' with 'the *f*' or predicating '*F* of *y*' of it, and the associated question whether we take an Owenian or conjunctive reading. I would like to add a third, which falls broadly under the heading of logical issues. At 199d5–7, just after Socrates has asked whether 'the father' is of something or not, he says: 'you would presumably tell me, if you wanted to answer correctly, that the father is father of a son or daughter' (199d5–7).[58] Socrates here places a condition on what can replace the '*y*' in the schema above, when the *f* and *F* are replaced with 'the father' and 'is a father': '*y*' must be replaced with 'son or daughter'. We might use the term 'offspring' here as a convenient way to pick out the disjunction of 'son' and 'daughter'. Given that 'the father' is being used here to pick out fathers quite generally, the disjunction would be needed: 'fathers are fathers of sons' is not true; neither is 'fathers are fathers of daughters'.[59] Clearly, Socrates is right to say that anything of which we truly predicate 'is a father' is the father of an offspring, but how are we to explain the correctness of this claim, and how does Plato?

Both the Owenian and conjunctive readings used a contemporary understanding of relations to explicate Plato's view, and that analytical tool can help us again. The domain of a relation, *R*, is the set of all of the items that bear *R* to something. We can say that the co–domain of *R* is the set of all items which have *R* borne to them. These two notions allow us to do various things, including defining the basic kinds of relation (reflexive, symmetric, and transitive). These notions also allow us to define the converse of a relation, *R*. The converse of *R* is R^{-1}, defined as the relation which which has $\langle x,y \rangle$ in its extension iff $\langle y,x \rangle$ is in the extension of the original relation. But we can also describe in more detailed language what Socrates is saying here: the co–domain of the 'is a father' relation consists exclusively of sons and daughters.

We can now say something about the formal object of a relation. The formal object of the being–a–father–of relation is 'offspring'. To put the point intuitively, we can say that the formal object of a relation is an exceptionlessly correct, if uninformative, object for the relation. 'Offspring' will always be able to replace the 'something' in 'is a father of something'. It is

[58] εἶ πες ἂ ν δήπου μοι, εἰ έ βούλου καλῶς ά ποκρίνασθαι, ὅ τι ἔ στιν ὑ έος γε ἢ θυγατρὸ ς ὸ πατὴ ρ πατήρ

[59] Of course, strictly speaking, the subject 'father' should be the disjunction of 'father' and 'mother', i.e. 'parent'. We would then have the properly formulated relative 'parents are parents of offspring'. I discuss this point in more detail below and explain why Plato seems blind to it.

trivially true that a father is father of offspring, but it does not tell us very much. Socrates' example of *son or daughter* is aptly a disjunction: if Socrates had mentioned only one of the disjuncts, we would not have had a formal object, as the statement could have been false: it is not trivially true that a father is father of a daughter. The fact that he specifies son or daughter seems to be no accident, and suggests to me that it is the formal, that is to say, trivial, object of the relation which Socrates intends us to grasp.[60]

To put the point more precisely using the technicalities introduced above, we can say that the formal object of a relation is a property that all objects in the co–domain of a relation have. All objects in the co–domain have this property because having this property is a necessary condition of having some instance of the relation borne to it. In quasi–formal notation, where *x* and *y* are individuals, *R* is a relation and *F* is a formal object, we can say that for all *x*, there exists a *y* such that, if *Rxy* then *Fy*. But, given that we suggested above that the subject has an intentional orientation towards the formal object, a formal object is not just any property that satisfies that schema: it is the property which satisfies this schema and which the subject is intentionally orientated towards. Take the example of father and offspring borrowed from the *Symposium*: for any individual, if that individual is a father of something, that thing has the property of being an offspring. But that individual will also have all sorts of other properties, such as being human, being younger than their father, being a human younger than their father and so on. How do we determine that it is being an offspring that is the formal object? It is because of the intentional orientation of father to offspring: all fathers are exceptionlessly of offspring. We will see below how this notion of an 'intentional orientation' relates to reciprocity.

So does Socrates think of the formal object as an exceptionlessly correct object for the relative? There are two reasons to think so. First, he gives us the disjunction of 'son' and 'daughter' as the only items which could replace the 'something' in the formulation 'the father is father of something'. It is no mere accident that Socrates employs that exhaustive disjunction there: Socrates reiterates his point at 199e2–6 using the example of 'brother' (ἀδελφός) as a relative; the object he specifies is being a brother or sister (ἀδελφοῦ ἢ ἀδελφῆς), again an exhaustive pair which we could paraphrase as 'sibling'. The formal object of 'brother' is specified as the exceptionlessly correct object of the 'is a brother of' relation.

[60] Cf. *Rep*. 437e6–7 and Reeve, 1988: 120. I make extensive use of the notion of a formal object in my characterisation of the Partition argument in *Republic* IV (Chapter 2). The fact that it is so useful there is further evidence that Plato thinks relatives have formal objects.

The second reason to think that Socrates is relying on the object being exceptionlessly correct is the logic of the argument. Socrates will use these moves concerning formal objects to argue that Eros is not beautiful, in the argument from 200a2 to 201b9. That argument is as follows:

1. Eros is desire for its object (200a2–3)
2. Whatever someone desires, they do not possess (200a5–b1. cf. 186b5–7)
3. The object of Eros is beauty (201a4–5)
4. So, Eros does not possess beauty (201b4)
5. Therefore, Eros is not beautiful (201b9–c7)

For the argument to work at all, Socrates needs an object that Eros is of without exception. If there could be exceptions to the proposed object of Eros, the argument would be vulnerable to the following counterexample. Imagine that we attempted to show that Eros was not *feminine* (an object which Eros is sometimes of and sometimes not) by a parallel argument:

1*. Eros is desire for its object
2*. Whatever someone desires, they do not possess
3*. The object of Eros is femininity
4*. So, Eros does not possess femininity
5*. Therefore, Eros is not feminine

The precise problem with this argument is that Eros does not always have femininity as its object, but sometimes the non–feminine. Applying the logic of the argument again, Eros cannot be non–feminine either. So if we allow an object for Eros that has exceptions, we can generate contradictory conclusions with the argument. Thus, the integrity of the argument relies on taking the object of Eros as exceptionless.

We have seen, then, that the formal object of a relative is its exceptionlessly correct, reciprocal object, and this is important to the arguments which Socrates makes in his interrogation of Agathon. Something like the notion of a formal object outlined here must be in play in the argument. But it is important to note that apparently all relative terms which Socrates mentions here have a formal object: the argument is restricted to Eros, as that is the topic under

discussion, but the idea that there are formal objects for those terms which fall into the class of relatives is perfectly general, as far as we can so far tell.

Is it not a problem, then, that Plato uses the Greek term for 'father' (ὁ πατήρ), rather than 'parent' at *Symposium* 199d5? Should he not have used an expression that is gender-neutral, so as to make the relative to which 'offspring' is the correlative cover both 'mother' and 'father'? This seems a reasonable question, but it would not have been possible for Plato to pick a non–gender specific noun for 'parent', since the three Greek nouns used for 'parent' (ὁ γενήτης, ὁ τοκεύς, ὁ γονεύς) are all masculine, used generically to mean 'parent'. Moreover, οἱ τοκῆ ες means 'parents'. Note also that Aristotle, who explicitly formulates the rule that the correlative must be exhaustive, fails to adhere to the rule when gender is considered. He specifies 'master' as the correlative of 'slave', but does not mention the possible correlative 'mistress' (*Cat.* 6b28–35; likewise *Parmenides* 133d6–134a1 mentions masters, but not mistresses). That term does exist in the feminine (δέσποινα), but it seems that Aristotle (like Plato) is quite happy to use the masculine noun as generic and does not worry whether this violates the rule that correlatives should be exhaustive.

What is remarkable about the *Symposium* argument is its apparently technical use of 'ά δελφός, αύ τὸ τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἕ στιν' (199e3–4). Literally, the expression means 'brother, that which it is itself' and is glossed as 'brother *qua* brother' by Dover, 1980:134. This gloss can be used, but only with care: *qua* is a term of art in modern philosophy of language and epistemology, which specifies the aspect under which something is considered.[61] For example, one might say that Hume's dialogues *qua* philosophy are lucid, but *qua* literature are obscure. The *qua* or *as* qualifier allows us to specify how we are thinking of an object, and different ways of thinking of an object may result in incompatible descriptions being true of an item.[62] In none of the uses I can find in Plato does he use the qualifier in this 'multiple aspect' way, and because of this, we must be wary of Dover's gloss: in modern philosophy, *qua* is used sometimes to introduce and sometimes to exclude aspects under which something may be considered. Plato, as we will see, uses the expression only to exclude possible aspects under which a thing could be considered, never to introduce them. It is as if the only use Plato allowed were: 'Hume's

[61] Aristotle is often thought to be the originator of this use of ᾗ, from which we derive the *qua* qualifier, but see Empedocles B17, line 9 in DK. This line is also line 8 of Empedocles 26 in DK.

[62] Alternatively, it may be that the descriptions are true of the ordered pair of the item and way of thinking, i.e. the properties being lucid and being obscure apply respectively to the ordered pairs <Hume's dialogues, philosophy> and <Hume's dialogues, literature>. In this case the descriptions would be true or false of different ordered pairs and so not incompatible.

dialogues *qua* dialogues are thus–and–so'. This warns us not to think of Hume's dialogues as literature, nor as philosophy, but only as dialogues.[63]

To prove this point let us look at the occurrence at *Theaetetus* 204e11. There Socrates is trying, in the face of determined resistance, to get Theaetetus to accept that the 'whole' (τὸ ὅλον) and the 'sum' (πᾶν) mean the same thing. Socrates says that if a whole consisted of parts, it would be all the parts. Something that is all the parts is a sum. So the 'whole' and 'sum' mean the same thing; unless a part is what it is of anything other than the whole (μέρος δ' ἔσθ' ὅτου ἄλλου ἐστὶν ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἢ τοῦ ὅλου 204e11). Socrates here moves to exclude the possibility that the part is considered under another aspect, say, the aspect of being a hand of somebody. Under that aspect the 'part' might be relative to a body, as well as relative to a whole. But Socrates' point is to exclude the other possible aspects of the item, and consider it just *qua* part. Note also that the ὅπερ ἐστίν is again used in the context of an apparent relative term: the part is part of the whole.

A slightly trickier example comes from *Sophist* 255d7, again in the context of relative terms. This is the conclusion of an important argument for understanding relatives in Plato, to which I will devote much of Chapter 3. For now, we can say that the proof, beginning at 255c9, is an attempt to show that, amongst the very great kinds, 'being' and 'other' are different. The argument is that 'being' and 'other' have at least one different property, and so cannot be the same. That different property is as follows: 'other' can only apply in relation to something else, while 'being' can apply both in relation to something else and not in relation to something else. The Stranger formulates that claim using the negation, saying that if it were not the case, 'other' could be other *without* being other than something else. He then concludes that the negation is impossible because 'other', when considered under the aspect of being other, is other than something else: 'But now it turns out for us that whatever is other, necessarily, is that which it is than something other' (255d6–7).[64]

The Stranger's point seems to contrast two situations: one where we consider the term, in this case 'other', under the specified aspect, and one where we do not. It is clear that under the aspect specified, 'other' will turn out to be necessarily other than something. Under another aspect, say, the aspect of being, 'other' is not necessarily other than something, since there are many beings that, *qua* beings, are not other than something. This is the same kind of thinking that

[63] Shorey, 1930:393 and Thompson, 1901: 71b notice this use of ὅπερ ἔστιν in Plato and tell us that it is to specify the 'absolute, abstract or ideal' case of a term. This is consistent with the uses I can find.

[64] νῦν δὲ ἀτεχνῶς ἠμῖν ὅτιπερ ἂν ἕτερον ᾖ, συμβέβηκεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἑτέρου τοῦ τὸ ὅπερ ἐστὶν εἶναι.

marks the *Theaetetus* passage above, as well as our *Symposium* passage. The *Parmenides* 139c1 also has a comparable use of ὅ περ ἐ στί. The argument is that 'the one' cannot be the same as something else, since then it would be the same as that other thing, and would not be 'just what it is', i.e. one, but different from one. The implication is that 'the one' should always be correctly describable as 'one'.

Finally, here are two uses of ὅ περ ἔ στιν in connection with the *Republic* IV discussion of relatives. At 438e5 Socrates uses the periphrasis 'αὐ τοῦ οὗ περ ἐ πιστήμη ἐ στίν' for whatever the formal object of knowledge is, namely, the knowable. The point is that, taken independently of further specification, e.g. as knowledge of health (medicine), knowledge is knowledge of the knowable. This is an interesting use of the expression because it is used to specify the formal object of the relative. Then we encounter the expression a little later, at 439a, where it is, as is more usual, used to pick out the relevant aspect of a relative term, rather than the relevant aspect of the formal object: 'I said, "Will you not place thirst amongst the things which are what they are of something?'" (439a1–2),[65] the point being that thirst is thirst for something.[66] Again, relative terms provide the context for the use of the expression.[67]

We can see from looking at other passages where Plato uses this terminology that it regularly seems to specify that something should be viewed under the description '*qua* itself'; it is used to exclude other incidental ways of looking at the relative, for example, under a non–relative description. In the context of the *Symposium*, we should be alive to the sense in which Socrates uses it. In so far as someone is a brother, he must be brother of something. The point is to differentiate a relative description such as 'brother' from another, non–relative, description which will apply to all brothers, for example, 'being male' or 'being a son'. If this is the thought, it prefigures Aristotle's discussion at *Cat*. 7 7a31–b9. There Aristotle makes the point that when all the possible 'accidental' (συμβεβηκότα) descriptions are excluded from a master, such as 'being a biped', 'being capable of reason', we will say that a slave is a slave of a master. His point is that it is, if not exactly false, not ideal to say that 'a slave is slave of a biped'; he would prefer a more perspicuous designation of the correlative.[68]

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[65] τὸ δὲ δὴ δίψος, ἦ ν δ' ἐ γώ, οὐ τούτων θήσεις τῶν τινὸ ς εἶ ναι τοῦ το ὅ περ ἐ στίν;

[66] The only other use of the expression in Plato is *Philebus* 54a11. Protarchus, slightly baffled, uses the expression ὅ περ ἐ στί when discussing 'being' (οὐ σία). However, because Protarchus is confused in the context, and it is not clear what is at stake, I cannot claim that this use of ὅ περ ἐ στί conforms to the rule.

[67] For further discussion of this point, see Chapter 2, §2.3.

[68] *Topics* H5 155a8–13 has useful information about Aristotle's use of συμβεβηκός: when something is predicated κατὰ συμβεβηκός, it does not specify the way in which it is predicated: it may or may not pick out something essential to the thing it is predicated of.

The last issue to arise about the nature of relatives in Plato is reciprocity. All relative terms have a correlative. This is a feature of relative terms which is not explicitly relied upon in the argument of the *Symposium*, but Aristotle's discussion in *Cat.* 7 is again helpful here. He says that, 'all relatives are said in relation to reciprocals, for example the slave is said to be slave of a master and the master is said to be master of a slave' (*Cat*. 7 6b28–30). His point is that relative terms always have a reciprocal partner that is a relative term. Aristotle's example of 'master' and 'slave' makes reciprocity easy to see: every master is master of some slave and every slave is slave of some master (or mistress: see above).

The central example in the *Symposium* is that of καλόν (beautiful) and ἔ ρως (love). These do seem not to reciprocate as obviously as 'master' and 'slave', or 'master' and 'the mastered'. Intuitively, it seems that love may be love of something other than the beautiful: the loveable, for example.[69] This difficulty could be explained away by the fact that Diotima rejects Socrates' account of love as of the beautiful at 206e2–207a4. Therefore, during the elenchus of Agathon, the full story of ἔ ρως is not yet known. If this is so, it may simply be that Plato assumes ἔ ρως is a genuine reciprocating relative, with a reciprocal correlative, but has not yet identified the correlative, or at any rate, has not told us. At this stage, all Socrates needs in the elenchus of Agathon is the (plausible) claim that 'beauty' is the formal, i.e. exceptionlessly correct, object of love.

Reciprocity can be shown more clearly using the technical terminology that we introduced above. A relative such as 'slave' picks out some item in the domain of the relation in question, some item which bears the 'is a slave of' relation to something in the converse domain. A relation, as defined above, maps at least one item in the domain to at least one item in the converse domain.[70] We can define the 'reciprocal' of that relation in the same way, except that the reciprocal relation links at least one item in the co–domain to at least one item in the domain. Thus, the 'is a slave of' relation links some item in the domain of slaves to some item in the converse domain, made up of masters ('master' being the formal object of 'slave'). The reciprocal relation links some item in the converse domain to some item in the domain, that is, it links a number of masters to a number of slaves. Such a relation is the 'is a master of' relation. Thus, we can see that the 'is a master of' relation and the 'is a slave of' relation are a relation and

[69] It is also troubling that 'beautiful' does not seem to be straightforwardly a relative term at all (except in the irrelevant sense of comparatively beautiful in some context). It doesn't appear elsewhere as a relative in the relevant sense, so in this passage it could simply be introduced in this particular case, to make the somewhat playful argument that ἔ ρως is not beautiful.

[70] This correspondence is not one–to–one: a master may have many slaves, and a slave may have many masters, as far as the definition of reciprocity is concerned. It might be called a 'many–to–many' correspondence.

its reciprocal, and thus the relative terms 'master' and 'slave' can be called reciprocal relative terms.[71]

Without the technicalities that we have employed above, how might Plato think about reciprocal relatives? Say that Plato is taking a relative as a term which, when looked at as a relative, needs something else in order to be an apt description. It will also be 'of' a formal object. An apt way of describing the relative and the formal object (e.g. master and slave) would be as *relative to each other*. The Greek for this expression is πρὸς ἄλληλα.[72] And this is the language that Plato employs in many of the passages where relatives are under discussion. These passages, where relatives and correlatives are described as πρὸς ἄλληλα, are *Charmides* 166a7; *Parmenides* 133c8 and the Platonic, if not authentic Plato, *Epinomis* 979a1. Comparative adjectives will reciprocate just as readily as the examples given above: 'larger' reciprocates with 'smaller'. Similarly, if they are interpreted as the Greek use of the comparative to 'soften' an expression: 'comparatively large' will reciprocate with 'comparatively small'. Because *Theaetetus* 186a10–11 uses πρὸς ἄλληλα terminology to discuss the relation which pairs of opposite descriptions (e.g. fair and foul, like and unlike) have to each other, we cannot conclude that that expression is exclusively used to describe the relationship of relatives to their reciprocals.[73] But it is another helpful indicator. Importantly, it shows that Plato is working with the idea of reciprocal relatives.[74]

To summarise: the point that marks the difference between the Owenian and conjunctive readings is how they read the copula in the 'the *f* is *F* of *y*' formula. The Owenian reads it as an identity sign, and the conjunctive reading takes it as a mark of predication. From this syntactic difference we were able to infer a metaphysical difference. The conjunctive reading holds that there is a property which an individual father has, conjoined with some 'towardsness', an intentional orientation. This intentional orientation comes about because of the reciprocity

[71] This notion of reciprocal relations, which is still our contemporary one, I take from Russell, 1903. Note that 'is a sibling of' is the same relation as its reciprocal relation because all symmetric relations are the same as their reciprocals.

[72] Nick Denyer has suggested to me that πρὸς ἄλληλα best describes what we call symmetric relations and not a relation and its converse. So two siblings would be πρὸς ἄλληλα, but a master and a slave would not be. *Parmenides* 133c8 does, however, use πρὸς ἄλληλας to describe the relationship masters and slaves have to each other.

[73] Indeed, πρὸς ἄλληλα also has a non–technical meaning in Plato and so there are many cases where that terminology is used, but relatives as such are not obviously under discussion, for example, at *Phaedo* 86c2, where it specifies that things are in tune with each other, at *Phaedo* 98a4, where it describes the velocity of stars relative to each other.

[74] The only discussion of relatives in Plato that emphasises this feature is Cavarnos, 1975: 20–21. However, Cavarnos, I think wrongly, distinguishes the idea of a 'correlative' from that of a 'converse' (which I have called reciprocal).

between the relative and its correlative. The Owenian reading does not recognise these two elements.

Both readings can accommodate the idea that relatives have formal objects. They can both accommodate the idea of reciprocity. But the watershed is between reading the copula in the formulation of relatives as expressing predication and as expressing identity. Owenian readings take the relational situation, such as Achilles being taller than Hector, to have as elements two individuals, Achilles and Hector, and a dyadic relation which runs from one to the other. A narrower relational situation, such as the situation that Achilles is tall, will involve one individual, a suitable comparison class, and a dyadic relation that falls between them: the apparently monadic predicate 'is tall' is actually represents the dyadic relation of being taller than. The conjunctive reading takes it that there is a general term and an item that constitutes the 'towardsness' of the relative term: the taller is taller relative to the smaller. The truth of Achilles is taller than Hector is dependent on this more general conception. Achilles falls into the domain of the taller and so is taller than Hector, who falls into the domain of the smaller. For simplicity, I will often examine cases of the conjunctive reading of relatives which mention the individuals, but it must be borne in mind that these cases of individuals bearing relative terms are derivative from general cases.

1.3 An objection to the conjunctive reading

Denyer (1991:142–145) points out that, independently of any interpretive considerations, there are two philosophical problems that face the conjunctive theory of relatives but not the Owenian theory. The first is that the conjunctive theory cannot successfully explain relativity, because one of the conjuncts is relational. The second problem is that each of the conjuncts can be satisfied independently, which produces absurd consequences. Denyer also points out that the Owenian position is subject to neither of these objections. I will outline these objections in more detail, before showing, concerning each of them, why I think they are not fatal to the conjunctive reading of Plato's views on relatives.

On the conjunctive model, one of the two conjuncts into which the truth–maker for a relational statement is divided is itself relational. 'Priam is father of Hector' reflects the conjunction of 'Priam is a father' and 'Priam is of Hector'. Clearly, in the latter case, the relation is not specified. But it is difficult to see what could be being represented there, apart from some

relativity. And if that is the case, it seems that Priam is of Hector must itself be analysed into the conjunction of 'Priam is' and 'Priam is of Hector'. This begins an infinite regress. That regress exposes the non–explanatory nature of the conjunctive theory of relatives; we cannot explain relativity simply by appealing to more relativity. The Owenian theory is not subject to the same regress. The relativity in 'Priam is father of Hector' is explained by the dyadic nature of one element in the truth–maker. Likewise, the relativity of 'Priam is a father' is explained by the dyadic nature of the same truth–maker.

There are two possible responses on behalf of the conjunctive theory. The first is to argue that the conjunctive theory does actually add some level of explanation. The second is a *tu quoque*: any account of relativity, including the Owenian one, will be subject to a similar regress. The first response is as follows. In cases like 'Priam is a father', we do indeed do some explaining when we cite the conjunctive account; we explain why it is that 'father' is a relative term, that is, by having some intentional orientation to the son in question. Unlike the case of 'Priam is father of Hector', 'Priam is a father' is not obviously relational, and so the 'towardsness' does some work explaining why it is relational. So the conjunctive theory does not merely appeal to relativity to explain relativity: it appeals to relativity to explain non–obvious relativity.

The second response is that, even on the Owenian reading, there is a regress problem. The truthmaker for 'Priam is father of Hector' involves the dyadic relation being a father of and Priam and Hector, each of which relates to the relation. This appears to begin a regress of relations, for what relates Priam to being a father of if not a relation?[75] If Owenians respond that this is an undue reification of the dyadic 'being a father of' relation, it is hard to see how their position differs from Leibnizian anti–realism about relations; for what, if not a relation, is there to connect Priam and Hector? So both theories of relations are vulnerable to a regress problem.

Denyer's second objection is that the conjunctive theory of relations leads to absurd consequences. 'Laomedon is the father of Priam' is the conjunction of two propositions: that Laomedon is a father and that Laomedon is of Priam. But Laomedon is also the grandfather of Hector, a fact made of the conjunction of Laomedon being a grandfather and Laomedon being of Hector. So, we have, as it turns out, four propositions: Laomedon is a father; Laomedon is a grandfather; Laomedon is of Priam and Laomedon is of Hector. But from the conjunction of these four, we can infer the following absurdity: Laomedon is a father of Hector and a

[75] This is a version of Bradley's regress, applied to relations.

grandfather of Hector. This is because we can infer the conjunction of a proper subset of the conjuncts from any longer conjunction: from ((*p* & *q*) & *r*) we can infer (*p* & *q*) or (*p* & *r*) or (*q* & *r*). The problem with the conjunctive theory is that the two conditions for being relative to something, namely having a relative term and having it towards some other item, can each be satisfied independently.

Denyer imagines a reply to this objection along the following lines: Plato might wish to make a distinction between two kinds of 'towardsness'. On the one hand, the 'towardsness' which a grandfather has with respect to his grandchildren, and on the other, the 'towardsness' which a father has with respect to his children. This would appear to block the difficulty, for now we cannot infer from 'Laomedon is the father of Priam' and 'Laomedon is the grandfather of Hector' that 'Laomedon is the father and grandfather of Hector'. For, in the first fact, the conjunction is between 'Laomedon is a father' and 'Laomedon is–in–a–fatherly–way of Priam' and the second fact is the conjunction of 'Laomedon is a grandfather' and 'Laomedon is–in–a–grandfatherly–way of Hector'. From these, we cannot infer that 'Laomedon is–in–a–fatherly–and–grandfatherly–way of Hector'. When this is generalised, the move of making the 'towardsness' conjunct specifically tied to the relative in question would block the absurd consequences that Denyer identifies above.

But if we move to tie the 'towardsness' to the specific relation, it seems that the conjunctive theory ceases to be 'conjunctive' in any meaningful sense. The 'towardsness' conjunct appears to be doing all of the work. If that is the case, then the conjunctive theory seems to collapse into a theory of relatives which uses a simple, dyadic relation, such as 'is a father of'. This, then, is the dilemma that Denyer poses to conjunctive theorists: either there is or there is not something to tie the individual relative specifically to the individual correlative. If we think that there is something specifically tying them together (Laomedon's 'towardsness–in–a–fatherly–way'), our theory collapses into the Owenian dyadic–terms reading. If we think there is nothing that ties the individual relative specifically to the individual correlative, then we have to accept the absurd consequences that follow when the two come apart. Is there a way that Plato can avoid this impasse?

Philosophically, it may be impossible to give a fully satisfactory defence of Plato's theory. After all, Denyer's objections might be ones that Plato was not in a position to consider. Nonetheless, there are some resources present in the *Symposium* passage which might show us a way to deal with the dilemma posed. The first is Plato's use of τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν. As we noted above, Plato, in the *Symposium* and elsewhere, tends to use this to specify that something be

considered under its own aspect: 'brother *qua* brother' means that the brother is to be considered under the aspect of being a brother and nothing else. Transferring this to the case posed in the dilemma, it would rule out considering Laomedon as both a father and a grandfather at the same time. This might give us a way to grasp the second horn of the dilemma. There is something that ties Laomedon specifically to his son, rather than his grandson, which is the fact that on any one occasion he can be considered as a father or as a grandfather, but not as both. Even though every grandfather is, in virtue of being a grandfather, also a father, that does not mean that every grandfather must always also be considered under the aspect of being a father. This restriction does not appeal to the notion of 'towardsness–as–a–father' to tie Laomedon to his son, and so can avoid collapse into a dyadic conception of relatives.

The second resource from the *Symposium* of which Plato might wish to avail himself is the idea of a formal object for a relative. We saw above that a relative term such as 'father' will have something which it is always and only of. This is the exceptionlessly correct object of that relative. This idea could also help us to grasp the second horn of Denyer's dilemma. There is something that ties the relative specifically to the correlative, but without appealing to 'towardsness–in–a–fatherly–way'. Since there are formal objects for relatives, the relative term 'father' will always have a correlative term 'offspring'. Similarly, the relative term 'grandfather' will have as its formal, exceptionlessly correct, object 'grandchild'. These relative terms will be tied specifically to those formal objects. Thus, we can avoid the absurd consequences which begin when they come apart. Denyer's dilemma showed us very clearly how the two views compare in terms of metaphysics: the conjunctive reading posits two conjoined elements in a relational fact, while the Owenian reading posits only one dyadic relation.

There is a second point of metaphysical comparison that I will briefly mention here before moving on to logical considerations. Owenian readings make a great deal of use of individuals, and their examples typically involve two named individuals which co–instantiate a relation: 'Achilles is taller than Hector', for example. But in examining the *Symposium* passage we saw that Plato does not take named individuals and the relations between them as the guiding example in his thinking. Rather, he takes the non–individual part of the fact, such as 'brother' or 'father' as the basic bearer of relativity: why is it that a brother is brother of something? It is because being a brother of something is in the nature of a brother, not because it is in the nature of Hector. It is the nature of the properties, not of the individuals, with which Plato concerns himself.[76] This

[76] *Phaedo* 102b8–d2 also makes the point that it is not the individual that is the basic bearer of relativity.

is the force of the τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν (just what it is). Hector is of something but only *qua* brother, not *qua* Hector or *qua* man or *qua* warrior. From the point of view of relativity, all those other properties are merely accidental. But more than that, it means that we must focus on the properties and descriptions of the individuals when we discuss relativity in Plato, rather than misapplying an ontology where the individual is primary.

This point also helps us to deal with possible deviant cases. Take Jocasta's relationship to Antigone. On my reading, Jocasta could only be described as one of 'mother' and 'grandmother' with respect to Antigone at a time, because mothers are exclusively relative to offspring and grandmothers are exclusively relative to grand–offspring. This seems wrong – we can consider Jocasta as both mother and grandmother at the same time, due to her unusual domestic situation. But we can now see that the force of this τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν suggests that Jocasta is not the basic bearer of relativity at all, but rather Jocasta *qua* mother. And mothers are mothers only of offspring and never mothers of grandchildren.[77]

So far we have been comparing the Owenian and conjunctive readings in terms of their metaphysics, asking whether relatives are best represented as dyadic relations or as conjunctions. We can now move to compare the two readings in terms of logical considerations. We saw above that the Owenian reading of relatives in Plato deals with the phenomenon of variable –adicity by introducing two kinds of incompleteness for predicates: syntactic and semantic. How would the conjunctive reading make sense of variable –adicity? The conjunctive reading already has an inbuilt mechanism for dealing with variable –adicity: depending on which conjunct in the relational fact we emphasise, that fact can be expressed in language as monadic or dyadic. The conjunctive relational fact that Hector is a brother and Hector is of Paris is the truthmaker for both 'Hector is a brother' and 'Hector is brother of Paris'. So although the term 'brother' appears to change between being monadic and being dyadic, on the conjunctive reading we can see that it corresponds to the same part of the truthmaker. In this way, I can account for the variable –adicity of relative terms, but without appealing to the overt or concealed 'incompleteness' of a statement.

The next point of comparison is reciprocity. We saw in the *Symposium* passage above that there is reciprocity between some of the descriptions that we are discussing. Take the example of 'master' and 'slave': anyone who is a master is a master of a slave, and anyone who is a slave is a slave of a master. These two descriptions, 'master' and 'slave', reciprocate, as do the properties

[77] The question of the basic bearers of relativity was highlighted in the introduction, in my discussion of Mignucci and Castañeda. Both of them seemed to hold, like Owen, that individuals, for Plato, are the basic bearers of relativity.

being a master and being a slave. Owen does not have an official story to account for this reciprocity, but he could deal with it in the following manner. In the standard definition, a dyadic relation maps an item in the domain to an item in the co–domain of a relation (see §1.2 above). We can define the converse of a relation as a dyadic relation that maps an item in the co–domain to an item in the domain of a relation. That is to say, if *x* bears a relation *R* to *y*, *y* will bear the converse of *R* (R^{-1}) to *y*. Thus, 'is a slave of' is the converse relation of 'is a master of'.[78] Owen can then say that 'master' and 'slave' are reciprocal in the sense that they are monadic descriptions that are derived from those pairs of converse dyadic relations. The dyadic relations upon which they rely are the converses of each other. So the monadic terms that are derived from them will be converses in a derivative sense, and that is all there is to reciprocity.

My reading deals with reciprocity in a way that we are familiar with from our reading of the *Symposium* passage above. Unlike an Owenian account of reciprocity, which relies on dyadic relations, mine relies on the idea of formal objects. We saw in the *Symposium* that in all cases a relative has a formal object. That formal object is something that allows us to make exceptionlessly correct assertions, of a certain kind, about the relative. Thus, we can always assert that a master is master of a slave. We can also assert that for any slave he/she is a slave of a master. This, I claim, is what reciprocity amounts to for Plato: two monadic relatives having each other as their formal object. Is this true of all relatives for Plato? The fact that it is true of the examples we have met so far, of siblings, parents and offspring, and masters and slaves is good *prima face* evidence. But can I prove that Plato thinks that all relatives reciprocate? Chapter 3 answers this question in the affirmative.

Finally, how do the two readings compare on the taxonomic question? Owen's view is that, for Plato, there really is a two–class taxonomy of terms. The 'relative' class of terms is all those which are syntactically or semantically incomplete, and so permit the application of that (relative) term and its opposite. I agree with Owen that Plato sometimes draws a distinction between two classes of terms. But I doubt that these are 'absolute' and 'relative' in the sense Owen means, since I do not accept that relatives are incomplete. I also reject the view, which Owen and others have advanced, that all and only 'relative' terms are those terms for which Plato posits Forms as unambiguous bearers of those predicates. This claim is the focus of Chapter 4. My reading does not rule out a connection with the so–called Old Academic Categories, but they

[78] The converse of a relation is different from a symmetric relation. A symmetric relation, *R*, is such that if *x* bears *R* to *y*, *y* bears *R* to *x*. 'Is a master of' is not a symmetric relation, but, like all relations, it does have a converse. For further reflections on converse relations, see Williamson, 1985.

would need to be carefully examined before such judgments could be made. Such an examination is carried out in Chapter 5.

1.4 Passages where relatives are discussed

§§1.2 and 1.3 of this chapter started to contrast the conjunctive and Owenian readings, and have shown both the characteristics of the conjunctive reading, and the ways in which it gives a better reading than Owen's of the discussion of relatives in *Symposium* 199c–201c. Chapters 2 and 3 will continue to investigate which of these approaches to Plato's account of relative terms is superior, looking at three key passages: *Republic* 438b–d, *Sophist* 255c and *Parmenides* 133c–134a. To extract useful information, we should look at passages where the characteristics relatives have *as relatives* play a role, rather than passages where relative terms play a role by functioning as opposite predicates, or where they are used merely to illustrate some other point. Owen himself admits that relatives are at stake in *Republic* 438b–d and *Sophist* 255c (Owen, 1957:107n27), so it looks damaging to his position if he cannot account for how the nature of relatives is presented in those passages. I think that the investigation of *Parmenides* 133c–134a is also legitimate because it explicitly indicates that it discusses the relative nature of the terms.

Chapters 4 and 5 are not directly aimed at deciding between the Owenian and conjunctive accounts of relative terms, but rather discuss the purpose served by relative terms in Plato. I rely there on evidence from *Charmides* 168b–c. This passage can be argued to concern relative terms, not only for the *ad hominem* reason that Owen cites it as such, but also because it shares a cluster of examples with other passages that invoke Plato's views on relatives. If the same examples cluster together in certain passages, this is a good reason to think that the same idea is being discussed in all of the passages. These are summarised in the table from the Appendix. I have included the examples from Aristotle's *Categories* 7 as a comparison.

Looking at the table, we can see that the five passages in Plato share the relative pair 'larger' and 'smaller' in three cases (*Charmides*, *Republic* and *Theaetetus*). 'Knowledge' occurs as an example of a relative in the *Republic*, *Charmides* and *Parmenides*. The *Parmenides* is unique in Plato, having 'master' and 'slave' as a pair, but Aristotle picks up that pair. In the *Parmenides*, it does not seem that these are picked at random: the paradox that the gods are not our masters requires the master/slave pair. The *Republic* and *Charmides*, as well as the *Symposium*, pick up 'desire' as a relative. The pairs 'perception and percept' arise in both the

Charmides and the *Theaetetus*. These examples are closely clustered. In fact only one of the five target Platonic passages doesn't share at least one example with at least one other passage. That is *Sophist* 255c. This, however, keeps its place, as it provides such important evidence on the question whether Plato posits relatives as a separate category. I am not going to claim, at this stage, that the above list of passages exhausts those where Plato discusses or relies on his notion of relative terms. However, I do think that these passages form a sufficiently close–knit cluster to justify discussing them together in the thesis. Moreover, the clustering of examples gives good evidence for a provisional hypothesis that there is one unified account of the nature of relative terms in Plato: here we see evidence of Plato returning to the same paradigms of a theory when invoking it.

Conclusion

This opening chapter focused on developing and contrasting two accounts of the nature of relative terms in Plato. It fell into four sections. In the first, I outlined what I take to be the mainstream view of relatives in Plato, a view that seems to derive ultimately from Diogenes Laertius, and which Owen transposes into the modern literature. That view was that relatives are, on a logical level, incomplete predicates, while metaphysically they are dyadic relations. Taxonomically, relatives in Owen's reading of Plato form one half of the absolute/relative dichotomy alluded to by Diogenes. For Owen, these three fall together: logical incompleteness, metaphysical dyadicity and taxonomic relativity. In the second section, I focused on a *Symposium* passage which seems to me to involve a clear–cut use of relatives. A close reading of this passage revealed a notion of relatives at work which, on the logical level, involves the idea of formal objects and reciprocity between them, and on the metaphysical level does not involve dyadic terms, but still makes sense of the way in which they are relative, by understanding the *qua* or 'as' qualifier to focus on the relativity of the subject. On the taxonomic level the conjunctive reading makes no clear–cut claims about category distinctions.

Owenians take a distinctively modern approach to relatives in Plato. They attribute to him a dyadic understanding of relations, defined in terms of pure extension. For Owen, individuals are the basic bearers of relativity: Priam bears the being–a–father–of relation towards Hector. But I have attempted to develop a more historically faithful reading based on the *Symposium* 199c–d discussion of relatives, in terms of the conjunction of a monadic property and an intentional orientation towards a formal object. We also saw that general terms are the basic bearers of

relativity: ‘Fathers are fathers of offspring’ more accurately reflects the way Plato conceives of and talks about relatives. These allow us a simple test for relativity in Plato: is there an exceptionlessly correct formal object for a term? If so, it is a relative and the formal object is its correlative. The next chapter will begin to compare the success of the Owenian and conjunctive readings in interpreting a passage that contains what is perhaps Plato’s most sustained discussion of relatives: *Republic* IV 438a–439a.

Chapter 2

The first chapter of this thesis presented two opposing views of the nature of relative terms in Plato: the Owenian and the conjunctive. I compared them in terms of their approach to the logic, metaphysics and taxonomy of relatives. The purpose of the present chapter is to provide confirmation of the logic and metaphysics suggested by the conjunctive reading by looking at one of the most sustained discussions of relative terms in Plato's corpus: that of *Republic* IV. This confirmation will come from two arguments. First, in §2.1, I will show that the conjunctive account gives the best overall reading of the text where relatives are introduced and that the Owenian reading has difficulty making sense of the passage. Second, I will respond to a possible reply that the Owenian could give, namely that the section on relatives has a restricted scope in the partition argument: the section only characterises desires, not relatives in general. To refute this, in §2.2 I will argue that relative terms are essential to making the partition argument valid. Then, in §2.3, I argue that even if we think the discussion of relatives is primarily directed towards another end, namely towards the denial of a certain Socratic paradox, relatives are best construed as conjunctive. Thus, no matter how the Owenian tries to manoeuvre, he is forced to accept the conjunctive reading of relatives for this passage. Taken together, these arguments give us confirmation of the conjunctive view of the logic and metaphysics of relatives, while supplying additional detail. Chapter 3 then goes on to discuss the taxonomic question and the reciprocal nature of relatives.

2.1 Relatives in the partition argument

In the course of Book IV, Socrates argues that the city and the soul are structurally isomorphic in a way sufficient to allow the term 'justice' to apply to both city and individual (see, for example, 435d9–436a3). At 436a5, Socrates turns to the topic of the soul and asks whether 'we learn with one thing in the soul, grow angry with another, and with a third desire the pleasures of eating and sex, or whether it is with the entire soul that we do each of these things' (436a7–b3). He then

proceeds to argue that, in fact, there are three different things (whether these are parts, aspects or something else is disputed) in the soul, one for each of those functions.[79]

This partition argument begins with the claim that 'the same thing cannot act or be acted upon in opposite ways at the same time, in the same respect and in relation to the same thing' (436b9–10). This is sometimes called the 'principle of opposites'.[80] Socrates illustrates this principle with the famous examples of the man standing still and moving his arms, and the spinning top: neither of these is impossible, because each moves with respect to one part of itself, but not with respect to another. Socrates then points out that desire and aversion are opposite ways of acting and being affected (437b1–c9). To show that the soul is partitioned, Socrates takes the example of thirst. Thirst is desire for drink. But there are cases where someone is thirsty, but has an aversion to drinking (439c3–5). To respect the principle of opposites, there must be at least two parts in the soul: one pulling towards drink, the other pulling away from it (439c6–9).

The discussion of relatives is introduced to ward off a possible objection to this argument. You might think that there are not two opposing drives when I am thirsty but have an aversion to drinking: thirst is a desire and all desires are directed towards the good. So thirst should be thought of as desire for good drink (438a4–6). So, either: (1) we say that thirst for good drink is not opposed to aversion to drink because 'drink' and 'good drink' represent different aspects of a thing, so that desiring one and rejecting the other still respects the principle of opposites, or (2) we say that all desires and aversions are directed towards the good, so there can be no conflict between a desire and an aversion because both will ultimately be directed towards the same thing. It is not quite clear which of these points Socrates wishes to make, but in either case, there can be no genuine conflict between the thirst and aversion to drink and so the argument would not go through. Socrates' discussion of relatives, then, is introduced to show that there can be genuine conflict between desires and aversions. In detail, that discussion runs thus:

> But surely, I said, of all the things which are of such a kind as to be of something (ὅ σα γ' ἐ στὶ τοιαῦ τα οἷ α εἶ ναί του), those that are qualified are of something qualified, so it seems to me, while those that are unqualified are only of things unqualified. I don't understand, he said. Don't you understand that the greater is

[79] On the 'parts or aspects' question, see Shields, 2010 and Shields, 2001.

[80] It differs from our principle of non–contradiction in two important ways: first it is phrased in terms of an item not being able to have opposite *properties*, while the PNC (roughly) denies that a *proposition* and its negation can be true together. The second difference is that Plato's principle concerns opposites, whereas PNC and its siblings are about negations: if *X* is opposite to *Y*, then *X* and *Y* are exclusive, but need not be exhaustive. But if *X* is the negation of *Y*, then *X* and *Y* are exclusive and exhaustive.

> the sort of thing to be of or than something? Of course. Surely, greater than the smaller? Yes. And, perhaps, the much greater than the much smaller: isn't that right? Yes. So is the at–a–time (ποτέ) greater than the at–a–time smaller and the going–to–be (έ σόμενον) greater to than the going–to–be? Certainly, said he. And similarly the more in relation to the fewer, and the double in relation to the half and all like cases; again, the heavier in relation to the lighter, the faster in relation to the slower and moreover, perhaps, the hot in relation to the cold: surely it is also like that for all similar cases? But what about knowledges? Isn't it the same way? Knowledge itself[81] is knowledge of learning (μαθήματος) itself – or of whatever we ought to posit that knowledge is of – but a certain knowledge (έπιστήμη τις) of a certain sort (ποιά τις) is of something of a certain sort. I mean something like this: when there came about a knowledge of constructing houses didn't it differ from the other knowledges, so as to be called 'house–building'? Certainly. And wasn't this because it was of a certain sort (ποιά τις) such as to be none of the others? Yes. And was it not because it was of something of a certain sort (ποιοῦ τινος) that it itself became a certain sort (ποιά τις)? And similarly with the other crafts and knowledges. (438a7–d7)

Thus, a qualified relative relates to a qualified correlative and an unqualified correlative relates to an unqualified correlative. Thirst is a relative, so thirst unqualified relates to drink unqualified, not to good drink. In this way the objection can be avoided. There is no doubt that relative terms are under discussion in this passage.[82] The examples given here very closely track the examples of relative terms that are given elsewhere by Plato and indeed Aristotle: greater and smaller are given as relatives in the *Charmides* (168b5–8) and *Categories* 7 (6a36–b10). Double and half are also given in the *Charmides* (168c4–5) and *Categories* 7 (7a15–17). Heavier and lighter are also mentioned in the *Charmides* as relatives (168c9–10). Desire is mentioned as a relative in *Symposium* (200a5) as well as the *Charmides* (167e1–2). Finally, knowledge is mentioned as a relative in *Charmides* (168b2–3), *Categories* 7 (6a36–b10; 6b28–35; 7b15ff) and *Parmenides* (134a–4). But as well as the examples, the manner in which relative terms are introduced is familiar from other discussions.

[81] If knowledge is a relative, how can there be 'knowledge itself', which sounds like the language used for absolute terms? This question of the taxonomic place of knowledge itself is addressed in §5.4.
[82] This point is made by Shorey, 1930:393 and Carone, 2001: 118.

Relatives are introduced very casually. This passage does not argue that there is a class of unqualified relative terms. That may be because the notion of relative terms is supposed to be familiar to us as readers of the *Symposium* and *Charmides* (although probably not yet the *Parmenides* and *Categories* 7).[83] Socrates uses a periphrastic expression, ὅ σα γ' ἔ στὶ τοιαῦ τα οἷ α εἶ ναί του ('all the things which are of such a kind as to be of something') (438a7), to pick out the class of relative terms which he divides into the qualified and the unqualified, thus also anticipating Aristotle's definition of relatives as 'those things which are what they are of or than other things' (*Cat.* 6a35), by mentioning that relative terms are the terms that are of something, but the periphrasis needs no further explanation or explication for Plato. The similarity of examples and the similarity of manner of introduction are good evidence that the same ideas are at stake in this passage as others where relatives are under discussion.

What is unique amongst Plato's discussions is the idea that relatives can be qualified or not qualified. In the context of the partition argument, this point makes sense. The discussion is supposed to rule out the objection that desire might be for the correlative of desire *qua* good. That is, the discussion is supposed to rule out the possibility of a relative being related to a qualified correlative. It does this by asserting that qualified relatives relate only to suitably qualified correlatives and non–qualified relatives only to non–qualified correlatives. If we do not keep these principles in mind, it might turn out that there is no opposition when someone desires drink and abjures drink: he might desire drink under one aspect, drink *qua* drink, but abjure it under another aspect, drink *qua* good. In the following paragraphs, I expand on the idea that relatives can be qualified or unqualified. I then compare the Owenian and conjunctive readings to see which can better explain the position developed in the text of the *Republic*. It is clear in this passage that Socrates conceives of relative terms as relative to a correlative: greater is of the smaller; knowledge is of learning. To these there correspond two ways in which Socrates describes the qualification of a relative: addition of a qualification to the relative and the division of the correlative into sorts.

First, Socrates discusses the former case: qualification by addition to the relative. 'Much' can be added to 'greater' to give the further relative term 'much greater': a sub–species of 'greater', i.e. 'much greater', is identified by qualification of the relative. Call these 'qualification by addition', because we identify different sorts of the relative by addition of a qualification.

[83] My preferred explanation of the lackadaisical fashion in which relatives are introduced is explored in Chapter 5, §§5.1 and 5.4. I suggest there that relative terms are a feature of the rational background of dialectic, and were probably known to the experienced debaters in Plato's audience, and indeed, to any rational agent. As such, the notion of relative terms would not need to be flagged upon introduction.

Such a qualification may result in our having to qualify the correlative as well. The relative 'much greater' has as its correlative 'much less'. This is not true of all relatives specified this way: a good master is not necessarily master of good slaves (a point which Socrates himself makes at 438e, discussed below). But it is clear that in either case, we can divide the relative by giving it some further specification, even if that does not always automatically apply to the correlative.

How do these qualifications by addition come about? Plato makes the metaphysical point that a relative term can be *added* to, when we qualify the relative by addition at 437e1–6:

> If through the presence (παρουσίαν) of muchness there is much thirst (πολλὴ ἡ δίψα), would it be thirst for much, and if little (ὀ λίγη), thirst for little? But thirst itself will never be desire for something other than what is for by nature (πέφυκεν), drink itself? And the same goes for hunger and food?

In discussing thirst, which Socrates later identifies as a relative term (439a1–2), Socrates, at 437d7–e1, makes the point that thirst, in so far as it is thirst, is for drink, but becomes a qualified relative through the addition of heat, cold, much or little. The correlative then becomes appropriately qualified: if heat is added to thirst, the correlative becomes cool drink; if much is added to thirst, the correlative becomes much (not little) drink. Plato uses the language of addition, such as προσῇ at line 437d10, to describe the relationship between the thirst and the qualifiers. It suggests that Plato is thinking of the qualities being literally added to the relative term.

From 438c6–d9, Socrates discusses the second type of qualification. These are cases where the relative becomes qualified not because it has something added to it, but rather because its correlative is divided into sorts. These are qualifications that divide the relative term into sorts because its correlative is divided into sorts. Call these 'qualifications by sorting the correlative'. The example that Socrates chooses to illustrate them is 'knowledge'. We saw in Chapter 1 that each relative term, for Plato, has a correlative which is its exceptionlessly correct object. I called this the formal object. The formal object of 'knowledge' is learning. But Socrates here makes the further point that learning has some species, such as constructing houses. What are we to say about the species of the object of knowledge? Are they correlatives to knowledge or to specific sorts of knowledge? Socrates claims that they are correlative to specific sorts of knowledge, in

this case the sort the building art.[84] He is right to claim this: if knowledge were relative to all the sorts of knowledge, then anyone with some knowledge would have knowledge of all domains of knowledge, and so would be omniscient.

Qualification by sorting the correlative is only discussed briefly in Plato's corpus, but Aristotle reflects on the idea a little further (*Cat*. 7 11a20–33). He points out that when we identify one sort of a correlative such as knowledge, the result might not be a relative term at all: grammar, for example is a sort of the object of knowledge, but it is not relative. Grammar is not grammar of anything, so it is not relative, says Aristotle, applying a test for relative terms given at *Cat*. 6a36. So specification of the correlative does not necessarily result in a further relative term, but rather a non–relative term. Plato could have made the same point about constructing houses, but he does not. For Plato, learning is a relative term because it is the correlative of a relative term, knowledge (see Chapter 1, §1.2).[85] Does the corresponding relative become non–relative? Is the building art, which is identified by being correlative to constructing houses, a non–relative term? It seems not, for Plato: a particular knowledge is still related to something, it is just that it is related to a particular sort of object of knowledge (438d).

What, then, is the relationship between these two ways of qualifying relative terms, that is, qualification by addition and qualification by sorting the correlative? At 438d9–e10, Socrates wards off the misunderstanding that might arise given the definition that 'of all the things that are of something, those that are just themselves are of things just themselves, but things of a certain kind are of things of a certain kind' (438d9–e1). The last clause seems ambiguous, Socrates points out. At first sight, it looks as if it would allow, for example, that knowledge of the good would be good knowledge.[86] But Socrates is at pains to point out that this does not hold. We might paraphrase the point by saying that when we qualify the relative by sorting the correlative, we do not necessarily qualify the relative by addition to the relative. Both sorts of qualification can be expressed in Greek with the qualifier in the genitive, and this gives rise to the ambiguity. But, as Socrates is aware, the counter–example is plain: knowledge of good and bad is not itself good and bad. If it were itself good and bad, it would be an item that has as properties both of two pairs of opposites, an inference Socrates here declines to draw. Thus, Socrates presses us to keep

[84] This idea is also found at *Sophist*, 257c–d.
[85] At least in the standard cases: there is a sense, according to Aristotle, in which grammar is a relative. In virtue of its being a species of knowledge we could say that grammar is knowledge of something (i.e. the letters) (*Cat*. 8 11a20ff).
[86] See *Gorgias* 476b–c for a fallacy along these lines: if doing justice is good, it does not follow that having justice done to one is good.

the distinction between the two ways relatives can be qualified clearly in mind, so as to avoid such fallacies.

Plato has here introduced some new notions into his logic and metaphysics of relatives. The first logical point is that relative terms, such as knowledge, are related to their formal objects, such as learning. However, there are also objects of relative terms which are not identical to the formal object, but rather are species of the formal object. Thus, knowledge, when it is relative to constructing houses, turns out not to be knowledge, but a species of knowledge, namely the building art. But the building art is still a relative, it is just that it now has a new formal object: constructing houses. Thus, there is a strict parallelism for Plato between the species of relative and correlative: if a relative relates to a correlative and the correlative has a species, then a species of the relative relates to the species of the correlative. If knowledge is of the knowable and constructing houses is a species of the knowable, then a species of knowledge, i.e. the building art, relates to constructing houses. This is the logical parallelism between the relative and correlative. The reasons that this might differ from Aristotle's ideas about relatives with species are discussed in the conclusion of the thesis.[87]

Metaphysically, Plato seems to countenance the addition of qualifications to the relative. When relatives are qualified by addition, and maybe when qualified by sorts of correlative, this 'addition' may be taken literally. We saw that in 437d7–e6 Plato uses the language of addition to describe the relationship between a relative and the qualification. In that case, 'thirst' and 'drink' were used. But there are serviceable equivalents for the non–psychological cases given at 438a–c: the addition of the qualification '(by) five feet' to 'greater' would yield the relative 'five feet greater'. Even if the language is not taken literally, this raises a point about the identity conditions of a relative term, when it has been qualified: in what sense is thirst continuous with much thirst? Is it the same term with an addition or a completely new term? Plato's language of addition, even if taken metaphorically, suggests that he thinks that thirst and much thirst have something important in common.

These two ideas with which Plato refines the notion of relatives are difficult to account for on the Owenian view. But before discussing those difficulties let me point out that the discussion

[87] Another logical point that Plato makes concerns not qualification by the sort of the correlative, but qualification by addition. When discussing thirst as a relative term at 437d7–e6 Socrates makes the point that qualifying by addition can also sometimes qualify the correlative. Qualifying thirst with heat leads someone to thirst for cool drink: qualifying thirst with much leads to the desire for much drink. So qualifying the relative leads to the qualification of the correlative. But, and this is a problem that Plato does not identify, it is not clear how one should qualify the correlative. Should we qualify with the same addition as the relative? Not in all cases: in the case of thirst and drink, when thirst is qualified with heat, drink is qualified with the opposite of heat, cold. It is not clear whether there is a principled way of determining how to qualify the correlative in such cases.

of relatives in *Republic* 438b–d does not respect Owen's characteristic logical claim about relatives: that they are incomplete.[88] To be sure, Plato does give the examples of 'larger than the smaller', 'more than the fewer' 'heavier than the lighter' and 'swifter than the slower', and the examples of 'larger' and 'swifter' appear in DL iii 108–9 (see Chapter 1, §1.1). Owen could certainly make the case that these comparative adjectives are syntactically incomplete. But it is harder to make such an argument for the examples of 'hot compared with the cold' and 'knowledge of the objects of knowledge'. For it seems that, both semantically and syntactically, 'hot' and 'knowledge' are not incomplete. Moreover, there do not appear to be any examples of actual incomplete predicates in the text: all the examples are like 'larger than the smaller', which is actually a syntactically complete expression. Owenians would have to permit themselves some licence in order to remove the 'than the smaller', leaving only 'larger'. In fact, Owenians render these complete expressions incomplete when they do so, which seems question–begging: Plato gives as examples complete expressions, and, in order to fit their interpretation, Owenians must interpret them as incomplete! The section concerning relatives in the partition argument, then, seems to pose a problem for the Owenian reading.

To turn back to the innovations, let us consider the logical parallelism between a relative and a correlative. We saw above that if a relative relates to a correlative and the correlative has a particular species, then a species of the relative relates to the species of the correlative. Under the Owenian view of relatives this principle may be respected, but there is nothing to guarantee that it will be. Owen views relative terms as logically incomplete. If knowledge is of the knowable and constructing houses is a species of the knowable, then it does not follow, on Owen's account, that a species of knowledge, i.e. the building art, relates to constructing houses. The building art does not seem to be an incomplete term, for one thing, so it cannot relate to constructing houses. But, more importantly, there is nothing to bar the 'incomplete' genus term, in this case knowledge, from being completed with the species of the correlative, in this case, building houses. For Owen it is possible to have knowledge of constructing houses. For Plato, according to *Republic* 438a9–d8, this would be impossible: only the building art can be of constructing houses.

The conjunctive reading does not face this difficulty. Relative terms do not need to be 'incomplete', under the conjunctive reading. But each relative term does have an intentional orientation towards its proper correlative object. That 'formal' object of the relative term will be exceptionlessly correct (see Chapter 1, §1.2). This means that a relative, such as knowledge, will

[88] See Fine, 1993: 172.

only ever be relative to its formal object, learning. In cases where the correlative is divided into species, say, constructing houses and shape, knowledge, *qua* knowledge, will not be relative to either of them: *qua* knowledge it will only be relative to learning. So in any case where something is relative to one of the species of the correlative, that thing will be a species of knowledge: it will not be knowledge *qua* knowledge. Similarly, geometry *qua* geometry may be relative to shape. So the principle of parallelism is respected: no relative, *qua* that relative, will be able to relate to the species of its proper correlative.

When we consider the metaphysical idea of addition, Owen is also in difficult territory. Socrates' point is that within the class of relative terms there are 'qualified' relatives and 'unqualified' relatives. The former include a novel set of examples such as 'much larger' and 'much smaller', related as 'larger' is to 'smaller'. The 'unqualified' relatives are the familiar examples of 'larger' and 'smaller'. Whether or not the language of addition is taken literally, the difficulty for the Owenian reading is to explain precisely what it is that 'larger' and 'much larger' have in common. The most obvious answer, and the one that Plato seems to be happy with, is that 'much' is added to 'larger' in the case of the qualified predicates (this is the force of the προσγενομένου at 438e8). And so 'larger' is common to both relative terms: 'larger' unqualified and 'much larger'. Owenian readings cannot avail themselves of this solution. For Owen, any relative must, on a metaphysical level, be a dyadic property. This must be true of being much larger, just as much as it is true of being larger. Thus being larger is a unified, if incomplete, item that falls between two objects, and being much larger is similarly a unitary item that falls between two objects. On a metaphysical level, being larger and being much larger have no single thing in common; there is no element called 'larger' that is common to being larger unqualified and the qualified property being much larger.

To put the point another way, on the Owenian reading, there is no *sub*–relational structure for relative terms, and so we cannot say what 'larger' and 'much larger' have in common, only that they are different.[89] It was precisely this feature of the Owenian approach to relatives that allowed it to avoid the objection Denyer levelled at the conjunctive reading: the fact that we cannot further analyse the relation means that it cannot be broken down into a relative part and a non–relative part, and so we can avoid the dilemma that Denyer posed for the conjunctive reading (§1.3). However, this resilience also means that the Owenian reading fails to fit some of

[89] Compare this to the difference between predicate logic and propositional logic: in propositional logic 'Achilles is a warrior' and 'Hector is a warrior' are simply different propositions and we cannot say what they have in common. In predicate logic, we can say that one element, namely, the predicate 'is a warrior' is shared between the propositions.

the important examples given in this discussion of relatives, according to which we can add qualifications to relatives.

But on the conjunctive reading, there is metaphysical structure below the level of the relation: there is the conjunction of the property and the 'towardsness' that it bears to the correlative. In an example such as 'Hercules is larger than Achilles', 'larger' is analysed in terms of 'largeness' that an item has 'towards' another: Hercules is large and has that towards Achilles. There are two parts on the metaphysical level: the largeness and the towardsness. When we add 'muchness' to the truth–maker as well, to make true a statement like 'Hercules is much larger than Achilles' it is clear what 'larger' and 'much larger' have in common, under the conjunctive reading: the common factor is the relative property 'largeness' and the intentional orientation towards the proper correlative object.

In conclusion, we have seen that the section concerning relative terms in the partition argument of *Republic* IV introduces some novel ideas concerning such terms. The ideas are: logical parallelism between the relative and the correlative and the metaphysical idea that relatives have sufficient internal structure for the language of 'addition' to make sense. I argued that the Owenian reading of relative terms in Plato had difficulty accounting for these ideas, but that the conjunctive reading had excellent ways to explain them. A determined Owenian, however, might respond that the relatives section of the partition argument should not be taken as part of Plato's official view of relative terms. On the one hand, the whole section is introduced to analyse the notion of 'desire', and so the specific logical and metaphysical details can only be taken to apply to that term. So the Owenian reading of relatives more generally is not threatened. That this section is intended to analyse the notion of desire is supported by the influential scholarly view that the section is not intended to play a direct role in the partition argument, but is rather introduced to reject one of the so–called Socratic paradoxes, that all desires are directed towards the good (*Protagoras* 358b7–c1 and 358c6–d2).

The next two sections of this chapter aim to show that this possible Owenian response would be misguided. §2.2 argues that the partition argument cannot derive its conclusion that the soul has at least two parts without the discussion of relatives, but that the argument is valid if the section is included and interpreted conjunctively. This indicates that general considerations regarding relative terms are necessary for the argument, so the section cannot be sidelined in the way Owenians might suggest. §2.3 goes on to show that the discussion of relative terms plays a crucial role the rejection of the Socratic paradox. In fact, such a rejection relies on the additional ideas about relative terms which we have outlined above. So even if the Owenian tried bracketing

the discussion of relatives, he will end up having to admit that Plato does sign up to the view of relatives outlined in §2.1.

2.2 The role of relatives in the validity of the partition argument

Here we take a wider view of the partition argument and discuss the role that relatives play in its validity. Over and above the official purpose of the discussion of relative terms, to ward off the objection that all desires are not for the proper object of each desire, but rather for some good, the discussion of relatives is necessary for the validity of the argument. I will show this by demonstrating that the two most common objections to the argument can be avoided if we take the conjunctive reading of relatives. In this way, I hope to show that the discussion of relatives cannot be side–lined, and so presents a problem for Owen. But also, the way the objections are answered relies on understanding the discussion to apply generally to relative terms, not just to desire. So the Owenians' possible reply that the discussion applies only to desire is frustrated.

Commentators generally take the partition argument to be invalid. The literature has two main kinds of objection. On the one hand, there is the kind of criticism offered by Jordan (1983: 40) and Robinson (1971:42), who hold that Plato does not put his finger on an opposition that can *only* be solved by partitioning the soul. Therefore, the soul need not be partitioned, at least as far as this argument shows. The other objection to the argument is that it is too strong: it will divide the soul into indefinitely many parts. This objection comes from Annas (1981: 138) and Reeve (1988: 124ff). Before discussing the objections in detail, here is a reconstruction of the partition argument as a whole:

i. The same thing cannot act or be acted upon in opposite ways at the same time, in the same respect and in relation to the same object (436b9–c2).
ii. Desire and aversion should be classed along with opposite ways of acting or being affected (437b1–c9).
iii. Thirst is the desire for drink (437d1–10).

iv. All the terms that are 'of something' and which are qualified are of a qualified 'something', while unqualified terms of that class are of an unqualified 'something' (438a7–b2).[90]

v. From iii and iv: thirst unqualified is the desire for drink unqualified.

vi. From i, ii and v: if someone is thirsty and at the same time feels an aversion to drinking, there must be within him two different entities, one of which leads him to unqualified drink and one of which draws him back from unqualified drink (439b3–6).

vii. It does sometimes happen that people are thirsty and at the same time have an aversion to drinking (439c3–5).

viii. Therefore there must be separate entities within such people, one of which leads them to drink and one of which prevents them from doing so (439c6–8).[91]

Let us take the Jordan/Robinson objection first. They claim it is possible that an agent, *a*, desires drink *qua* formal object, but rejects all the examples of drinks put in front of him. Following Robinson, we could put the point thus: 'thirst itself is for drink itself' is a truth of logic, but Plato mistakenly treats it as a truth of psychology, and that logical principle will never tell us what kinds of liquid people do in fact thirst for, and what kinds they reject. If this is a possibility, the argument has not ruled out all the options for *a*'s *particular* desire: his particular desire must always be for some kind of drink, but it cannot be for drink *qua* formal object of desire. So, although formally speaking *a*'s thirst is for drink, it is perfectly consistent with his rejecting all examples of drink that could be put in front of him. Because none of the particular examples of drink that are put in front of *a* are identical to the formal object drink, it is consistent to thirst for the formal object of thirst, i.e. drink, and not thirst for any drinks put in front of you. Therefore, there need not be any violation of the principle of opposites when *a* has a desire for drink and an aversion to drink. 'Thirst is desire for drink', as a truth of logic, is not opposed to any psychological truth such as 'this mental state is an aversion to this drink'.

For example: imagine a child who particularly loves eating sweets. The child says 'I'm hungry', and her father replies 'you can have some bread and butter'. 'But I'm not hungry for bread and butter, I'm hungry for sweets!' she retorts. Jordan and Robinson's point is that what she said is perfectly coherent. When we introduce the notion of formal objects of desire (see §2.1, above), we can analyse that familial exchange as follows: the father took his daughter's hunger to

[90] This is the focus of §2.1 above.
[91] Based on Stalley, 2007: 69

be for *any* instance of the formal object of hunger, i.e. any instance of food, in this case, bread and butter. The reply of the child shows that it is psychologically possible to hunger for a particular instance of the formal object, where no other will do. So, although thirst is for drink and hunger for food, a particular thirst can be for a particular kind of drink.

I suggest that the partition argument can be saved if we take the whole argument to be operating on the level of formal objects, and that this is precisely what the discussion of relatives allows us to do, if we give it a direct role in the argument. The Jordan and Robinson objection aimed to show that there is an illegitimate slide between the (logical) claim that the formal object of a relative is exceptionlessly correct, and the psychological claim that some instance of thirst will be desire for any instance of the formal object. In fact, we could abjure any instance of the formal object and it would still be true that thirst is desire for drink. However, if an abjuration, as well as a desire, can take a formal object, then we can ensure that the argument is valid because it does not slide between the formal and the particular objects of the desire. If Plato can show that the desire and the abjuration have the same formal object, they have the same object. If they have the same object, but respectively desire and reject it, then there is no slide between the logical and the psychological truths, and so there is a genuine violation of the principle of opposites. Psychology does not come into the story at all: the whole argument operates on the level of formal objects.

The weakness of this approach is that Plato does not explicitly mention formal objects of abjurations. But the evidence is that he does conceive of both as having formal objects. Socrates discusses desires and abjurations at 437b–d:

> Ἆρ’ οὖν, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, τὸ ἐπινεύειν τῷ ἀνανεύειν καὶ τὸ ἐφίεσθαί τινος λαβεῖν τῷ ἀπαρνεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ προσάγεσθαι τῷ ἀπωθεῖσθαι, πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἐναντίων <ἃν> ἀλλήλοις θείης εἴ τε ποιημάτων εἴ τε παθημάτων; (437b1–4)[92]
>
> Therefore, I said, assent <opposite to> dissent, desiring to take something <opposite to> abjuring it, embracing <opposite to> rejecting: would you put all those sorts of things in the class of opposite ways of either acting or being acted upon?

[92] I follow Baiter against Burnet, and place the ἃν in the main clause.

In these lines and those that follow, Socrates discusses how opposites are speciated into the classes of terms mentioned above. He then discusses how the species of opposites are themselves speciated: he mentions, apparently as belonging to the classes of desires and abjurations, thirst, hunger and appetites, as well as wishing and willing.[93] Finally, we are told at 437d1–5 that there is a class of desires and the most conspicuous members of it are thirst and hunger, which are respectively for food and drink. As we saw above, the genus desire can be speciated by the sorting of its correlative, presumably the desirable, into food and drink: the species of desire that result are hunger and thirst, respectively. Desire for food is hunger, desire for drink is thirst. That is why the formal object of hunger is food and the formal object of thirst is drink.[94] We can see that these terms fit into exceptionlessly correct versions of statements: 'Thirst is for drink' is such a statement. We can see why this statement is exceptionlessly correct: because 'drink' is part of the definition of 'thirst'. Specifically, in the definition of 'thirst', 'for drink' is the differentia of the genus 'desire'.

The 437 b–d passage also mentions the opposites of desires, namely abjurations. What is the opposite, for example, of hunger? Because Plato, in these lines, retains a strict analogy between pairs of opposites, whatever is opposite to hunger will have to be an abjuration that is speciated by its object: the same object as the complementary desire. That is to say, the abjuration opposite to the desire for food is the abjuration of food. There is no word in English (or Greek, to my knowledge) that captures just the notion of the abjuration of food. The closest would be to take literally the etymology of 'disgust'. So taken, it is analytically true that 'disgust is for food', just as it is analytically true that 'hunger is for food'. Thus we can see that hunger and disgust will always have the same object, namely food. This is because they are species of, respectively, desire and abjuration, whose differentia is food. Hence hunger and disgust will have the same formal object. As long as the analogy between opposites is retained, both desires and abjurations will have a formal object.[95]

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[93] The flow of the text here and the sense seem in tension: the most natural way to take the (plural) τὰ εἴ δη of b8 is as picking up the (plural) τῶν ἐ ναντιῶν of Glaucon's most recent reply. But the point that Socrates goes on to make is that thirst and hunger and appetites in general are species of desire, not that they are species of opposites. This sense is reinforced by the fact that Socrates has stopped, by c1, mentioning pairs of terms that are opposite to each another, and so I take it that his point is that thirst and hunger are species of desire, rather than species of opposites.

[94] Compare this with the passage a little further down, 438c6–d1, where knowledge is speciated by what it is knowledge of.

[95] It might be a problem for Plato that two different relatives, hunger and disgust, have the same correlative, i.e. food. Aristotle may have an answer to this problem, because he denies that the species of relatives are always relatives (*Cat*. 7 11a20–36). Aristotle could deny that hunger and disgust are relative terms, even though they are species of desire and abjuration, so could avoid the worry that these are two relatives with the same correlative.

With this understood, we can show that the Jordan/ Robinson objection has no force. Their objection was that the argument slides between the formal and particular objects of desires: I can be hungry yet be disgusted by any particular food put in front of me. Jordan and Robinson claim that the argument simply slides from saying that the formal objects are invariable to saying that the particular objects are so. My response is to say that there is a valid version of the argument that operates purely on the level of formal objects: hunger and disgust both have the same formal object, and we have seen that the text supports the view that Plato carries the same notion of an object for relatives throughout the argument. Thus, the argument cannot be read as confusing the formal object of the desire and the particular object of desire: the object of hunger and disgust is always food. Thus, since the object of the hunger is identical throughout the argument, the subject of the hunger, the soul, rather than its object, must be partitioned.

The second kind of objection is that the argument threatens to produce an indefinite number of partitions in the soul, because it may generate a partition in the soul every time there are a desire and an abjuration for the same (particular) object. This kind of objection comes from Penner (Penner, 1971: 108–111), and a version of it is repeated by Annas (Annas, 1981: 125ff). The partition argument seems to imply that appetite can itself be divided again. Imagine, for example, that the appetitive part of *a*'s soul desires to drink. Because of the presence of coldness, it desires to drink a hot drink. But it also abjures sweetness. So it desires a hot, non–sweet drink. If there is then in front of him a hot, sweet drink it seems that appetite both desires and abjures the drink in question. Appetite must, therefore, according to the principle of opposites, be divided into two, non–identical parts because, *a* desires and abjures the same object, at the same time and in the same respect.

Socrates already has the resources to answer this objection, as we saw in detail in §2.1 above. The move he makes at 437e to introduce the idea of a formal object of a desire is what allows him to say that *a*'s desire is not for different objects here, but rather just different 'qualifications' of the same desire. At 437e7–8, Glaucon assets the principle that 'each appetite itself is only for its natural object, while appetite of a certain sort relies on additions'. The first part of this principle is that any appetite has to be an appetite for its formal object: hunger cannot be for anything other than food, thirst cannot be for anything other than drink. The second part of the principle is that when we divide an appetite into species using qualifications, we divide the object of that appetite into species as well: a lot of hunger can only be satisfied by a lot of food. After giving this special case, at 438a7–b2, Plato says that for all the relatives, the same applies.

In the case of all those terms that are of something, if the relative is qualified, the correlative is qualified, and if the relative is unqualified, the correlative is unqualified.

By attending both to the principle of opposites ((1) in the construction of the argument above) and to the principle of qualified relatives ((4) in our initial reconstruction), we can see that the interplay between them makes the argument valid. The basic validity problem is that the partition argument aims to show that there are at least two parts to the soul. The principle of opposites works to generate parts of souls. When it is understood in the light of the notion of formal objects, we can see that, contrary to Jordan and Robinson, it does indeed generate at least two parts of the soul. We saw that the notion of relatives, because of the notion of a formal object, made sure that there were not unlimited parts generated in the soul. We have seen, then, that the notion of formal objects is necessary and sufficient to ward off both of these objections to the validity of the argument. This notion of a formal object arose from the discussion of relatives which Socrates engages in at 438a–9b, and so that discussion does play a direct role in the argument.

Therefore, a characteristic of relative terms in general, that they have formal objects, is crucial to make the partition argument valid. The possible Owenian objection that the discussion of relatives has a scope restricted to desire seems in a perilous position: an Owenian might purchase security for this reading of relative terms at the expense of the validity of the partition argument. And when there is an alternative reading of relatives available which makes the argument valid this sort of move seems churlish, being solely directed towards preserving the Owenian reading of relatives. I have shown that the argument is valid, if we accept that relatives are conjunctive. But to show the dual purpose of the discussion of relatives here, I need to show that relatives play an important part in rejecting the 'Socratic' view that all desires aim at the good. I undertake this in §2.3.

2.3 Relatives and the denial of a Socratic paradox

Many scholars have taken the view that the discussion of relative terms in the partition argument plays an important part in Plato's apparent rejection of the Socratic paradox that all desires aim at

some good.[96] This section argues that the discussion of relative terms, construed conjunctively, is necessary for that rejection. This is part of a strategy to outmanoeuvre the Owenian. We saw in §2.1 that the pronouncements Socrates makes in the discussion of relatives here do not support the Owenian position. One possible response to that would be that the discussion of relatives is not integral to the partition argument, but that rather that discussion serves simply to reject the Socratic paradox that all desires aim at some good. This would be another attempt to limit the damage done in §2.1 to the Owenian position: §2.1 only shows that Owen's reading does not apply to the account of desires, not relatives in general. But even if the Owenian attempts this move, I show here that the way the relatives section rejects the Socratic paradox relies on relatives construed conjunctively. First, I will briefly develop the Socratic paradox and discuss the way it is supposed to be rejected in the relatives section of *Republic* IV. Then I will show that, to perform this role, relatives must be construed conjunctively.

Versions of this Socratic paradox are found in some earlier dialogues: *Meno* 77b6–78b2 and *Protagoras* 358b6–d4.[97] In the *Meno* Socrates formulates his point in the following way: 'It is clear that those who do not know that things are bad do not desire what is bad, but desire things they think are good, when these things, in fact, are bad' (77d3–e4). The *Protagoras* uses the famous formulation that no one errs willingly: 'Now, no one goes towards the bad, or what he believes to be the bad, willingly. Neither it is in human nature to want to go towards what one believes to be bad instead of the good' (358c6–e2).[98] All desires, therefore, aim at some good. Both of these formulations of the paradox make clear that no–one desires the bad unless she believes it to be good. It follows that any desire must aim at its object under the description 'good': this seems the only way to rule out the possibility of desiring a bad thing and respecting the requirement in the *Protagoras* that when someone desires something she must believe that it is good. That is to say, any desire aims at its object *qua* good, and never aims at its object *simpliciter*.

Irwin points out that the discussion of relative terms is necessary for the rejection of this Socratic paradox.[99] If the Socratic paradox is correct and all desires aim at the good, then, even if there are different tendencies in the soul, they will all aim at their objects *qua* good and not *simpliciter*. If tendencies in the soul were only to aim at their objets *qua* good and not *simpliciter*,

[96] See: Adam, 1902: i, 250; Murphy, 1951: 28–9; Penner, 1971:106–7; Irwin, 1995: 206–7; Stalley, 2007: 71. Lorenz endorses the view that the discussion of relatives is to ward off the Socratic paradox, but holds that it has another function as well (Lorenz, 2006: 28–30).
[97] See also *Gorgias* 468b1–e5.
[98] Based on Cooper, 1997: 787, modified.
[99] Irwin, 1977: 191.

then all desires would be for the good. Plato is concerned here to deny this Socratic paradox. In order to deny it, one must be able to give an account of how it is possible for desires to aim at their characteristic object *simpliciter* and not aim at that object *qua* good. We will see first that Socrates wishes to reject the Socratic paradox here, and introduces language to do so.[100] I will then argue that this conceptual apparatus relies on taking desire to be a relative term construed conjunctively.

The evidence that Socrates attempts to deny the paradox is compelling: he makes the point against the paradox that 'thirst', in so far as it is thirst, is for drink *simpliciter*. If thirst is a species of desire, then it is a desire which is for its own special object, not for that object as a good. For example, at 437d–e, Socrates is quite clear that 'in so far as it is thirst' (καθ' ὅ σον διψῇ , 437d7), thirst is for drink. If some qualification is added, this may change the object of thirst. For example, if heat is added, the object of hot thirst is cool drink. Analogously, if 'good' is added to thirst, then the thirst might be for good drink. But thirst, *simpliciter*, is for drink *simpliciter*. This is a clear contravention of the paradox, which would seem to block even a formulation like the following: thirst may be for drink, but it must be for drink *qua* good.

In the earlier Socratic view, there was no such tenet as 'thirst, in so far as it is thirst, is for drink *simpliciter*'. The object of the desire must *always* be qualified with something like 'as good'. This seems to be the force of *Gorgias* 468c2–8, although the exact interpretation may be disputed. For the example of 'fear' see *Protagoras* 358d5–e1 and *Laches* 198b8–9. In those dialogues, 'fear' is of future evils: i.e. future events as evils. The Socratic dictum would make all desires and aversions similar to this. For example, thirst would be thirst for drink as good, not for drink *simpliciter*.[101] The section on relatives seems to be an attempt to reject the dictum wholesale, and show that there is the possibility of 'thirst for drink' *simpliciter* and 'desire for the desirable' *simpliciter*.

Socrates offers us some explanation of how it is possible for thirst to be a desire, but to be desire for drink *simpliciter*, and not for the object *qua* good. Shortly after his introduction of the idea that thirst *simpliciter* has drink *simpliciter* as its object, Socrates makes the point that desires of any kind, in so far as they are desires, are desires for a 'natural' object: 'each desire is only of that thing of which it is by nature (πέφυκεν)' (437e7–9). Such a distinction would allow Plato to

[100] This has been challenged by Carone, 2001:118–9, who holds that the paradox is not rejected wholesale, but merely that a certain inference from it is rejected. I don't propose to discuss Carone's view in detail, since if it were correct, it would only strengthen my reply to the Owenian, in so far as the discussion of relatives would not simply be to reject the Socratic paradox.
[101] See Irwin, 1995:206–7.

help himself to the useful notion of καθ' ὅ σον διψῇ : thirst is by nature for drink, and so, in so far as it is thirst, is for drink. This notion of the 'natural object' of a desire means that the Socrates of the *Republic* can articulate what is wrong with the Socratic paradox. Take any desire you like: will it be desire for the good? Not by nature: the natural object of thirst will be the drink, not the good. And so we can say thirst, in so far as it is thirst, is for drink.

The following lines from later on in the discussion confirm that the Socrates of the *Republic* thinks that there can be no qualification added to the proper object of thirst: 'the soul of the thirsty man, in so far as it is thirsty, does not want anything other than to drink, and yearns for it and strives towards this' (Τοῦ διψῶντος ἄρα ἡ ψυχή, καθ' ὅ σον διψῇ, οὐκ ἄλλο τι βούλεται ἢ πιεῖν, καὶ τούτου ὀρέγεται καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτο ὁρμᾷ) (439a9–b1). This move relies on the distinction drawn at 439a5–6 between the object 'by nature' (πέφυκεν) of a relative and its non–natural objects. Note for now the clear similarity that obtains between the conjunctive account of relatives and the account of desires given here: conjunctive relatives have their own formal object, analogous to a natural object of desires (see Chapter 1, §1.3); conjunctive relatives, *qua* relative are only of that formal object, just as thirst, *qua* thirst is only of drink. In both cases, qualifications are possible, but they do not change the proper object (Chapter 2, §2.1).

This is the analysis of desire given in the *Republic* IV discussion. It is clearly antithetical to the Socratic paradox that all desires aim at their objects as goods. But are conjunctive relatives integral to this account of the rejection of the paradox? Could Owen limit the damage to his account of relatives done by this passage by bracketing it off from the discussion of relative terms? There is, it seems to me, no way to disconnect Plato's discussion of desire here from his discussion of relative terms, and no way to show that the rejection of the Socratic dictum is possible without conjunctive relatives.

First, we cannot dissociate the account of desire from the notion of relative terms because Socrates tells us that desires are a species of relatives. At 439a1–2, after his long characterisation of relative terms, Socrates says: 'to return to thirst, then, do you not place it amongst those things that are such as to be of something and that it is what it is in relation to something?'[102] Here,

[102] Slings prints: 'Τὸ δὲ δὴ δίψος, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οὐ τούτων θήσεις τῶν †τινὸς εἶναι τοῦ τὸ ὅπερ ἐστίν†; ἔστι δὲ δήπου δίψος' (439a1–2). There are two problems with the text here: the first sentence is ungrammatical, and the second sentence is incomplete. In the case of the first sentence, Adam's emendation, adding <καὶ τινὸς> after τῶν τινός, would make the construction syntactical and would yield the translation: 'I said, "Won't you posit thirst amongst these things that are of something and that it is just what it is of something? I presume it is thirst…"'. Alternatively, Madvig suggests reading τῶν <οἵων>, giving the translation: 'I said, "Won't you posit thirst amongst these things which are such as to be just what it is of something? I presume it is thirst…', while Shorey suggests we tolerate the mildly ungrammatical sentence found in the manuscripts. In any of these cases, the point is clear: thirst is a relative and it is 'just what it is' for something. The second sentence should be completed by supplying πώματος

Socrates explicitly says that thirst falls into the class of relative terms that he has characterised between 438a7 and 438d7. This makes it very difficult for someone with Owenian inclinations to claim that the pronouncements made about relative terms between 438a7 and 438d7 only apply to desires; Socrates point is that there is a broader class of terms, relatives, into which desires fall.

Second, the points that Socrates makes here concerning relatives seem to have an impact that extends beyond the analysis of the Socratic paradox that all desires aim at some good. As Lorenz points out, 'good' is not the only candidate qualification that is rejected.[103] The qualifications 'much' (πολύ) at 438b9 and 'at a certain time' (ποτέ) at 438b11–12 are also mentioned by Socrates as qualifications that will modify the correlative. They are ruled out as qualifications for the object of thirst on just the same grounds as the grounds that rule out 'good' as a qualification of 'drink', namely that 'much smaller' and 'going to be smaller' are not the natural, or formal, objects of 'larger'. Earlier, at 437d7–10, Socrates gave examples of the qualifications 'hot', 'cold', 'much', 'little' and in fact 'any particular quality'. He then went on to reject these qualifications as possible qualifications for the natural object of thirst: 'Thirst itself will be desire for nothing other than the very thing that it is for by nature: drink itself' (437e4–6). Because the thesis about relatives rejects more qualifications than simply 'good', the thesis does more than just play a role to refute the Socratic paradox.

The relationship between desire and the class of relative terms has now been established, and the Owenian cannot easily segregate the remarks pertaining to desires from the remarks concerning relatives: since desires are a species of relatives, whatever Socrates says about relatives in this passage applies to desires. So the damage done to the Owenian reading of relative terms in Plato by the discussion of relatives at 438a7–438d7 cannot be avoided by saying those points only apply to desires. All that remains to be shown is that the conjunctive account of relatives is sufficient and that the Owenian reading is insufficient, to understand the way the Socratic paradox is rejected here. I offer two arguments for this. First, the Owenian reading

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('for drink') from Glaucon's response. The question is whether we wish to emend the text to make this explicit, or leave it as an implication of the conversation. If we emended, we could not simply excise πώματος from 439a3 and use it to complete the sentence, since ἦ δ᾽ ὅ ς cannot end a sentence. So if we emended, we would hold that Plato wrote πώματος in both lines – that is, in 439a2 and immediately again at a3. This seems unwieldy Greek. My suggestion is that we understand Glaucon's response as having two parts: the ἔ γωγε as responding affirmatively to the first sentence and the πώματος as Glaucon completing the second sentence in the run of the conversation. With Adam's emendation, this would result in an exchange that reads as follows: 'I said, "Won't you posit thirst amongst these things that are of something and that it is just what it is of something? I presume it is thirst…". "Yes," he said, "for drink"'. This seems to reflect a natural enough conversational rhythm, even if not strictly grammatical. I think, however, that two textual difficulties in as many lines suggest broader corruption within the text, and so nothing I say should hang on any specific construal of the syntax here.

[103] Lorenz, 2006:30.

cannot make sense of the idea that desires (or indeed relatives of any kind) have a natural object. Without this move, we cannot explain the way in which Socrates attempts to deny the Socratic paradox, namely, by specifying that all desires are for the natural object of that desire. Second, I want to show the structural similarity between the characterisation of desire that Plato relies on in this passage and the points about relative terms that we developed in Chapter 1. In these ways, we will see that the conjunctive reading of relative terms is sufficient to explain the way the paradox is dealt with, but that the Owenian reading is not.

The Owenian account of relatives would have difficulty accounting for the way desires are characterised in this passage. For Owen 'desires' is an incomplete predicate which some agent possesses (Chapter 1, §1.2). There are only syntactic restrictions, on the Owenian account, on what a predicate can be completed with: 'Agamemnon desires…' could be completed with any expression which would make a grammatical statement. Correspondingly, there are no apparent restrictions on what can complete the metaphysical relation that the incomplete expression represents: Agamemnon could desire a drink, a meal or a bath (however ill–advised). But Plato's response to the Socratic paradox relies on there being a special object of desire, what Plato calls the natural object. As such, desire cannot be for just anything, but it must be for the natural object of desire. Without this structure, Plato's defence against the Socratic paradox fails. This is not to say that Owen's account of desire as an incomplete predicate and dyadic relation could not avoid this Socratic paradox, but simply that it cannot reflect the way in which Plato chooses to solve the problem in question.

The conjunctive account of relative terms, on the other hand, structurally mirrors the account of desires that Plato gives here in order to avoid the Socratic paradox. The tell–tale expression is τοῦ το ὅ περ ἑ στίν at 439a1. We saw in Chapter 1 that this typically indicates that the relative, as that relative, is relative to its formal object. In the context of the *Republic*, Shorey glosses this with Plotinus' remark that relative terms are those whose very being is the relation and whose being is not other than being in relation to each other (Shorey, 1930: i, 395). But this must be too strong here: it implies that there is nothing more to being thirsty than bearing a relationship to drink. This might be true of certain relative terms, such as 'to the left' or 'larger'. There is nothing more to being to on the left than having something to the right of you, and there is nothing more to being larger than having something smaller than you. But being thirsty seems to require that there is some non–relative property of the agent. The agent would need at least some kind of psychological state in order to be thirsty, and that state would be directed towards

the formal object of thirst, namely drink.[104] It seems better, then, to take the τοῦ το ὅ περ ἐ στίν in the way I suggested in Chapter 1, §1.2, namely, as indicating 'thirst as thirst'. The point of this sentence is that, as thirst, thirst is of drink. Thirst, *qua* thirst, is thirst for the relevant formal object.

The structural similarity between the conjunctive account of relatives and what Plato says here about desires should now be apparent. In order to deny the Socratic paradox, Plato argues that each desire has a natural object, and that it is trivially true to say the desire is the desire for that natural object. Thirst is trivially for drink, because drink is the natural object of thirst. We have seen that for relatives, each relative has a formal object and that formal object is the exceptionlessly correct correlative. We have also seen in the case of desires that Plato introduces language to indicate the aspect under which the desire should be considered: thirst, in so far as it is thirst, is for drink. Relative terms too have this feature: a relative, *qua* that relative, is relative to its formal object. The larger *qua* larger, is larger than the smaller. Add to these considerations the fact that Socrates at 438e10–439a2 asserts that desires are a species of relative, and there is a compelling case for the structural similarity between desires on the one hand and relatives in general on the other.

We have seen that the conjunctive construal of relative terms is sufficient for the rejection of the Socratic paradox that is offered in the middle of *Republic* IV. We have also seen that the Owenian reading of relative terms is insufficient to explain the way in which Plato attempts to deal with the Socratic paradox. Owen can neither sideline the discussion of relatives as only relevant to solving the Socratic paradox nor restrict the damage to his view by arguing that the discussion is confined to the treatment of desire. If he tries the former, the conjunctivist will respond that the resolution of the Socratic paradox relies on conjunctively construed relatives. If he attempts the latter, the conjunctivist will argue that Socrates in the *Republic* makes clear that the points that apply to desires apply to relatives too, since the points are made in the general case of relatives and then applied to the species, desire.

Conclusion

This chapter has added details of the conjunctive understanding of relatives in Plato, mostly in terms of its logic and metaphysics. I argued that on a metaphysical level the fact that relative

[104] See Sedley, 2002: 334ff for this distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' relatives in *Categories* 7.

terms can have qualifications added to them accounts for the language Socrates uses to describe the speciation of relatives by qualification (§2.1). We also found evidence that formal objects, rather than particular objects, are the correlatives in this passage. There is a new development presented in *Republic* IV: formal objects can be divided into species. Being smaller, as a formal object, has a species: e.g. being smaller than 5 feet. This in turn divides the relative, in this case larger, into species, giving the species being larger than 5 feet. These phenomena, described in the *Republic* passage, add extra detail to the basic conjunctive account worked out from the *Symposium*, and are also difficult for the Owenian reading to deal with.

The possible response on behalf of the Owenian reading was to suggest that the relatives section was not part of Plato's 'official' view of relative terms. The basic idea was that relatives are introduced here only to describe desires and avoid the Socratic paradox. §2.2 argued that there is a direct role for relatives to play in this argument and so this Owenian strategy seemed difficult from the start. §2.3 went further and showed that desire is treated as a species of relative term, so the characterisations of relatives that are uncomfortable for Owen cannot be sidelined. It also made the point that, even if Owen were correct and the relatives section here were primarily to analyse the notion of desire and avoid the Socratic paradox, it still relies on relatives construed conjunctively and not on dyadic relations.

Recall that there are three areas over which we are comparing the Owenian and conjunctive readings of the nature of relatives in Plato: the logic, metaphysics and taxonomy of relatives. The new details we have learnt have enriched our understanding of the logic and metaphysics of relatives. These extra details accord with the conjunctive reading of relative terms in Plato, and not with the Owenian account. So the *Republic* IV discussion supports a conjunctive reading of relatives in Plato. But this chapter does not offer us much more in the way of detail about the role they might play in an ontological taxonomy. Nor does this chapter tell us much about reciprocity between the relative and correlative, since that does not play a central role in the argument of *Republic* IV. The following chapter deals with the question of the role that relatives play in Plato's taxonomy, and goes into detail about the nature of reciprocation.

Chapter 3

The two previous chapters have discussed the logical and metaphysical characteristics of relative terms, as Plato understands them. This chapter discusses the taxonomic question regarding relatives, in two important dialogues: the *Parmenides* at 133c–134c and the *Sophist* at 255c–d. The taxonomic question was first posed in the introduction by Diogenes' remark that Plato divided beings into the absolute and the relative. The first question I will raise in this chapter concerns what sort of things are divided by a taxonomy of absolutes and relatives in Plato: does Plato hold that the taxonomic division between 'absolute' and 'relative' is between terms, the view I advocate, or between uses or senses of 'is'? In other words, is the taxonomic difference between having a predicate relatively and non–relatively, or between having a relative predicate and a non–relative predicate? This is important because some of the most influential views of taxonomy in Plato are predication readings. The next question is the nature of the 'relative' side of the taxonomic distinction: are relatives best understood as 'bare relatives', i.e. 'in relation to something', or maybe aliorelatives, 'in relation to others'? I argue that neither of these options captures Plato's thought and that the correct characterisation of the relatives group is as 'reciprocal' relatives. Finally, I argue that members of this group of reciprocal relatives are best understood as defining each other, not as bearing the relation that they exhibit towards each other.

I will treat each of these questions in turn. I begin by outlining the two broad approaches to the taxonomic question, namely, to understand the difference between 'absolute' and 'relative' in terms of a distinction between kinds of predication and between kinds of predicate. I will argue that the latter is preferable on the basis of a novel reading of *Sophist* 255c14, supported by a reading of *Parmenides* 133c–134c, the so called 'greatest difficulty' with the theory of forms. I will argue that the 'relatives' side of the distinction should be understood as 'reciprocal relatives' on the basis of both texts. Finally, I will argue that the *Parmenides* passage supports the view that the nature of reciprocal relatives is to be defined by their relationship to a relevant formal object.

3.1 Terms or Predications?

There are two broad approaches to the taxonomic question.[105] On the one hand, there is the 'predication' approach. Frede (1967 and 1992) and Meinwald (1991) are the most influential exponents of this approach. They hold that when Plato draws a distinction between 'absolute' and 'relative', he is drawing a distinction between two uses or senses of 'is', where 'is' is used as the copula in a predication.[106] Thus what are at stake are 'absolute' predications and 'relative' predications, not 'absolute' and 'relative' terms (see Meinwald, 1991: 53–6).[107] Put another way, their distinction is between having a predicate relatively and having a predicate non–relatively.

The Frede–Meinwald distinction between these two uses or senses of 'is' can be characterised as follows. We might call the first 'by itself' predication and the second 'with reference to something else' predication. 'By itself' predication, if true, tells us some feature of an item that it has in virtue of being the item it is. It does not tell us which features an item displays, it tells us which features constitute a certain item. Thus, we can make a 'by itself' predication by predicating 'animal' of 'man': 'man is an animal', where this is a 'by itself' predication, means that mankind has, by its nature, the feature of being an animal. Similarly with 'triangle' and 'three sides'. A 'with reference to something else' predication might be 'a man is white'. This would mean that some individual man is white, not in virtue of his own nature, but because of the relationship he bears to whiteness. To use Frede's language, 'he is white, not by being this feature, but by having it' (Frede, 1992: 400). Whiteness, on the other hand, could be said to be white by *being* whiteness. These kinds of 'self–predication', when interpreted as 'by itself' predication, are merely the limit–case of 'by itself' predication. It is simply trivial to say that white is white in virtue of its nature: after all it is just the property 'white'. It does not have the property of being white with reference to something else.

This distinction between two kinds of predication is not the distinction between essential and accidental predication. The distinction between essential and accidental predications typically distinguishes statements such as 'Socrates is a man' and 'Socrates is pale'. Roughly, the former are essential predications because an identity condition of Socrates would fail if he ceased to be a

[105] Crivelli, 2012: 142–145 gives an overview of the interpretative options concerning these lines. He narrows the plausible options down to what I call the 'predication' approach and the 'term–based' approaches that I discuss here. Crivelli himself endorses the 'predication' approach (Crivelli, 2012:149).

[106] The Greek terminology for 'absolute' and 'relative' varies according to the interpreters under discussion here. Frede adverts to the distinction being captured at *Sophist* 255c14 by the vocabulary of καθ' αὐ τὰ and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα, while Meinwald (1991: 48–9) allows herself the vocabulary of πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό and πρὸ ς τἆ λλα as the standard contrast between 'absolute' and 'relative' (*Parmenides* 160b2–3) but also allows πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα to represent the 'relative' branch of the distinction, where necessary (*Parmenides* 166c2–5).

[107] Following the usage in this body of literature, 'predication' is not merely the linguistic operation of applying a predicate to a subject, but also often the metaphysical application of a property to an object. 'Terms' therefore also covers both linguistic predicates and metaphysical properties.

man; he would no longer be Socrates. The latter are merely accidental predications because Socrates would not lose an identity condition if he ceased to be pale; he would still be Socrates. But under the 'predication' reading of the absolute/relative distinction, both 'Socrates is a man' and 'Socrates is pale' are 'with reference to something else' predications, since in both cases Socrates has the feature in question in virtue of something else.

The other way to understand Plato's distinction between 'absolute' and 'relative' here is as a distinction between two classes of terms, classes that have a very wide extension. This term–based reading focuses on the predicates, rather than predications. It focuses on grouping terms, rather than uses of 'is'. Absolute terms might include 'man', 'horse' or 'animal', while relative might include 'large', 'father' and 'to the left'. The difference between 'absolute' and 'relative' marks a difference in kinds of terms, not a difference in how terms apply to their subjects.[108]

The main text that we can use to distinguish between the predication– and term–based readings of the 'absolute/'relative' distinction is *Sophist* 255c14. Frede's version of the predication reading relies on rejecting what might be called the 'traditional' term–based reading of this passage. I argue here that a more sophisticated term–based reading is immune to Frede's criticisms, and that Frede's reading faces serious problems of its own. A translation of the traditionally printed text is as follows:

> Eleatic Stranger [henceforth ES]: So then, must one say that other is a fifth? Or ought one to think of that and being as two names for one kind?
> Theaetetus: Perhaps.
> ES: Well I think you agree that amongst beings some are spoken of themselves in themselves (αὐ τὰ καθ' αὐ τά) while some are always spoken of in relation to other things (πρὸ ς ἄ λλα).
> Th: Certainly.
> ES: But other is always [spoken of] in relation to something other, right?
> Th: Yes.
> ES: It wouldn't be, if being and other were not totally different: if, instead, other participated in both forms, just as being does, then some of the things that are other would be other without being in relation to another. In fact, though, we find

[108] Versions of this view are defended by Apelt, 1897:172; Cornford, 1935:282; Ross, 1953:113–4; Owen, 1957: 107; Vlastos, 1970:290; Seligman, 1974:60–3; Heinaman, 1983: 14; Movia, 1991:335–6, 342; Szaif, 1998: 353–4; Dancy, 1999: 49–53; Malcolm, 2006b: 282–4. These are cited in Crivelli, 2012: 145.

that whatever is other turns out by necessity to be just what it is (ὅ περ ἐ στίν) of, or than, another.

Th: It is exactly as you say.

This argument aims to show that 'being' and 'other' are different amongst the 'very great kinds'. The basis of the argument is a distinction between αὐ τὰ καθ' αὐ τά and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα. The traditional way to understand this distinction is as between two classes of terms. Frede argues, however, that this term–based reading fails to make sense of the *Sophist* passage, and that we should therefore prefer a reading of the αὐ τὰ καθ' αὐ τά and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα distinction as dividing up predications not predicates. I agree that the traditional term–based approach fails to make sense of the passage here, but I propose an alternative way to understand the text of the *Sophist*, which preserves the general term–based approach, but which does make sense of the language used in this passage.

The traditional reading would understand this *Sophist* passage to claim that two mutually exclusive classes of beings are mentioned in Plato's text: the 'absolute' and the 'relative'.[109] The traditional reading distinguishes absolute from relative terms by saying that relative terms need some additional supplementation to determine their sense. They are therefore 'incomplete'. Recall that this is the Owenian reading of relative terms in Plato. We saw that this reading takes its inspiration from Diogenes Laertius' *Lives*, iii 108–9, where Diogenes suggests that Plato had an analysis of relative terms as 'incomplete'. This falls at the end of the so–called 'Divisions of Aristotle' (DL iii 80–109: see Chapter 1). Following Diogenes, the examples given are usually comparative adjectives, 'greater', 'larger', 'quicker' and 'more beautiful'.[110] As well as such syntactically incomplete terms, there are semantically incomplete terms like 'large': 'Socrates is large' may make a syntactic sentence, but one cannot assess the truth or falsehood of it without some addition. One example of such an addition is 'for a *Y*' where '*Y*' represents a kind term (e.g. 'Socrates is large *for a human*'). The other main example of such an addition would be 'compared to *Y*', where '*Y*' represents an individual, rather than a kind term.[111] Examples of the

[109] For this view of the *Sophist* see Owen, 1957: 108–9; Dancy, 1999: 49–53, 56–59 and Malcolm, 2006: 284.

[110] Note that the Greek comparative, unlike the English, can be used as syntactically complete to mean that an item has a property only to a limited extent: in Greek, 'Socrates is larger' could mean 'Socrates is somewhat large'. However, it is clear that this is not the sense of the comparative here, since Diogenes specifies that 'the larger is larger than the smaller' (iii 109 5).

[111] Even though all the examples in DL are syntactically as well as semantically incomplete, most commentators take DL to indicate semantic, not syntactic incompleteness, which is not unreasonable: Diogenes' claimed source for Plato's view, Aristotle (DL iii 80), slides readily from syntactically incomplete examples (e.g. τὸ μεῖ ζον at *Cat*. 6a38) to semantically incomplete ones (e.g. ἕ ξις, διάθεσις, αἴ σθησις, ἐ πιστήμη and θέσις at *Cat*. 6b1–3).

contrasting, 'absolute' terms are 'man' and 'horse'. These do not require further supplementation to be meaningful: they are complete. Since, for the traditional reading, incompleteness is the mark of relative terms, we should take these other terms, including 'man' and 'horse', as complete and we can call them 'absolute'.

As well as exclusive, the traditional reading takes the distinction at *Sophist* 255c13–14 to be exhaustive. The *Sophist*'s αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα are interpreted as having the same extension as the 'absolute' and 'relative' classes of terms distinguished at Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* iii 108–9. This source attributes to Plato a term–based distinction between 'absolute' and 'relative' terms. The latter distinction is exhaustive since Diogenes uses the 'τὰ μέν…τὰ δέ…'[112] construction throughout this series of divisions (iii 80–109), to indicate an exhaustive division of a given genus into species. Particularly similar to 108–9 is 107–8, where that construction is used to distinguish the 'divisible' (τὰ μέν μέριστα) from the 'indivisible' (τὰ δὲ ἀμέριστα), which is obviously an exclusive and exhaustive contrast (DL iii107, 5). Moreover, in DL iii 109, the 'absolute' and 'relative' classes of terms have proved to be identical with the classes of what we may call 'complete' and 'incomplete' terms. Since every term is either complete or incomplete, the distinction between αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα is also exhaustive. For these reasons, the DL reading takes αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα to be exclusive and exhaustive classes of terms.

Exhaustivity is targeted by the standard objection to the Diogenes–based traditional reading, which is raised by Frede, amongst others.[113] 'πρὸς ἄλλα' means 'in relation to other things'. Therefore, any term that 'πρὸς ἄλλα' correctly describes cannot relate a thing to itself. This entails that if *X* and *Y* are related by a πρὸς ἄλλα term, then *X* and *Y* are numerically distinct. Call this kind of relative 'aliorelative'.[114] The *Sophist* passage says that 'other' (255d9) is a πρὸς ἄλλα term, and it is indeed an excellent example of an aliorelative. 'Other' is a relative under the DL reading, because '*X* is other' entails that *X* is other than some *Y*. Moreover, 'other' is aliorelative, because if *X* is other than *Y*, then *X* and *Y* are, for that very reason, non–identical.

[112] Sometimes adding a second 'τὰ δέ…' as at §104. But regardless of how many there are, the contrast is supposed to be exhaustive.
[113] Frede, 1967:17; Owen, 1970: 256; Malcolm, 2006: 278.
[114] This is an old term for what are now known as 'irreflexive relations'. I adopt the old term with a new meaning, so as to avoid simply assuming that Plato has a modern understanding of relations. Usually, an irreflexive relation is thought of thus: $\forall x \neg Rxx$. That is, if anything bears an irreflexive relation, it does not bear it to itself. If it is possible for *x* to bear the relation to itself, the relation is known as 'non–reflexive'. But since Plato does not clearly recognise 'individuals' and 'relations', I wish to allow 'relative' and 'aliorelative' to range over both.

Now, the objectors ask, where do we place 'same' in this scheme? It cannot simply be ignored. It is one of the five 'very great kinds', and it features prominently in the discussion from *Sophist* 254e2 onwards: in particular, the proof that precedes ours picks out 'same' explicitly (255b8–c8). But if, as scholars have urged,[115] we take seriously the logical implications of πρὸς ἄλλα, then 'same' will not fall into either category. 'Same' cannot be in the class of πρὸς ἄλλα terms, because if *X* is the same as *Y*, they are not numerically distinct. But 'same' *is* relational, in the sense that 'same' is an incomplete term: '*X* is the same' must be completed with an 'as *Y*'. So 'same' does not fit into the category of αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτά either. Thus the division of terms in this passage is not exhaustive. Since the classes of terms are supposed to be exhaustive under the traditional reading, it is argued that the reading must be rejected.

Frede suggests that taking the distinction to be between kinds of predication, not kinds of predicates, can solve this problem. Frede distinguishes two kinds of predication: (i) καθ' αὑτά predictions are such that 'is *F*' is said of *x* with regard to itself; and (ii) πρὸς ἄλλα predications are such that 'is *F*' is said of *x* with regard to something other than *x*.[116] Clearly, this does not face the problem of where to place 'same' in the scheme: same can be predicated in either of the two ways. If 'same' is predicated of same, then it is predicated καθ' αὑτό, as 'same' is said of the subject with regard to itself: it has that nature, it does not exhibit the property. There is no question of what 'same' is the same as, since 'same' has only 'same' as part of its nature; it does not have anything that is 'other' as part of its nature. But if 'same' is predicated, for example, of 'other', it will be predicated πρὸς ἄλλα: it does not describe the nature of 'other' so 'other is the same' is said with regard to something else. Confusingly, this 'something else' is the other itself. Since it is not part of the nature of 'other' to be self–identical, this must be a πρὸς ἄλλα predication.

There are a number of difficulties with Frede's reading. First, it seems that καθ' αὑτά predications can apply only to Forms: no other entities have natures which the καθ' αὑτά predicates can map. Likewise all predications involving participants will be πρὸς ἄλλα. It is difficult to see what sense this restriction makes in the context of *Sophist* 255c–d. The ES is attempting to divide being and other so as to reformulate 'non–being' as 'being other than'. But this move should apply to all cases of predication, including ones involving non–Form entities, which, after all, feature prominently in the examples used to explain the doctrine (e.g. 'Theaetetus' in 'Theaetetus sits'). Although Frede may not wish to use it on the example of

[115] Frede, 1967: 17; Owen, 1970: 256; Malcolm, 2006: 282.
[116] Frede, 1967: 29.

'Theaetetus sits', his account of predication should be able to handle it. Unfortunately, it seems that it cannot.

Second, note how strange Frede's view turns out to be when identicals are introduced into the scheme. Identity claims, such as 'motion is motion' intuitively expand into 'motion is the same as motion', and would therefore be a πρὸ ς ἄ λλα predication. Equally, statements of non–identity will be πρὸ ς ἄ λλα: 'motion is not rest' expands into 'motion is other than rest', which is πρὸ ς ἄ λλα. But the divorce of statements involving καθ' αὐ τά predications from statements asserting identity and non–identity has strange consequences: 'same is not other' expands into 'same is other than the other', which is πρὸ ς ἄ λλα. 'other is other' ought to be καθ' αὐ τά, because it is a self–predication mapping the nature of 'other', but in fact expands into 'other is other than (e.g.) the same', which, like 'same is not other', is a πρὸ ς ἄ λλα predication.[117]

If Frede's reading of the distinction as between kinds of predication is unpersuasive, we might wish to resort to a term–based reading. To save such a reading from Frede's criticism, we would need a logical class of terms that accommodates both 'otherness' and 'sameness'. The natural move for any interpretation which relies on the DL passage is to understand πρὸ ς ἄ λλα as describing not only aliorelatives, but all relative terms, in line with DL iii, 108: that is, to take πρὸ ς ἄ λλα as equivalent to πρός τι ('in relation to something'), which would include not only aliorelatives, such as 'other', but also non–aliorelative terms, such as 'the same'. Bostock and Dancy suggest such a move.[118] But this fails to take seriously the sense of πρὸ ς ἄ λλα, and so fails to answer the objection as posed. We must, therefore, look elsewhere to find a class description of 'relatives' that will accommodate both 'other' and 'same'.

3.2 An alternative term–based reading

Adopting an alternative reading, favoured by one major manuscript family, can do this. At 255c14, the B and D manuscripts read πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα ('in relation to each other'), instead of πρὸ ς ἄ λλα ('in relation to others'). As far as I am aware, no commentator or editor has suggested

[117] Self–predication is usually thought to be involved in statements of the form '*F*–ness is *F*'. In this section of the *Sophist*, it seems that the words 'same' and 'other' are ambiguous between their use as abstract nouns and the adjectives. Thus, 'other is other' could be a traditional self–predication, as long as the word 'other' can be used as an abstract noun in the first occurrence and as an adjective in the second.
[118] Bostock, 1984: 93 and Dancy, 1999: 59.

adopting the B and D reading.[119] So before discussing the philosophical advantages of the alternative reading, let me make the palaeographical case for it. B and D belong to the same family of manuscripts, while T and W represent two separate manuscript families (Duke, *et al.* 1995: 384; Nicoll, 1975, 41). So editors may prefer the T and W reading of πρὸ ς ἅ λλα partly on the grounds that two independent readings that agree are more likely to be correct.

However, B is reliable for the *Sophist*: of the eight cases where T and W share an error, B has the better reading in three cases and shares the error in five.[120] So even in cases where B is the minority reading, as at 255c14, editors often prefer it. Second, the error of reading πρὸ ς ἅ λλα for πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα at 255c14 could have crept into either the T or W tradition by the anticipation of a scribe: 'in themselves' contrasts naturally with 'in relation to others' but less naturally with 'in relation to each other'. The eight errors shared by T and W in the text of the *Sophist* suggests some degree of contamination between the T and W traditions. So the error could then have been transmitted horizontally from one tradition to the other.[121] Note also that πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα is unlikely to be a casual scribal error. The relation that beings that are 'other' have to each other will again be described as πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα at 258e1–2, and we should read that as consistent with 255c14, if possible. Thus, because of the general soundness of B, the possibility of contamination between T and W, and the ease with which πρὸ ς ἅ λλα could have been introduced in error, from a palaeographical standpoint πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα is at least as plausible a reading as πρὸ ς ἅ λλα.

From a philosophical standpoint, πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα is much the more plausible reading, as it has a logic that will accommodate both 'same' and 'other'. The logic implied by the reciprocal pronoun is what I have been calling a reciprocal relative (see §1.2). To recap briefly: under the Owenian view, *X* is a relative iff *X* is incomplete, either semantically or syntactically, because it is identical to some relation *R*. *X* becomes complete when some appropriate *Y* is specified. The

[119] Silverman 2002, 165n57 and Crivelli, 2012: 145 note that the manuscripts differ, but make nothing of this observation. Crivelli, 2012: 141n111 directs us to Simp. *In Cat.* 159, 17. There Simplicius does use the expression πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα to describe relative terms in Plato. That in itself is intriguing, for the general reading I offer of relative terms in Plato. But I do not wish to argue that Simplicius' use of πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα is evidence that his copy of the *Sophist* read πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα at 255c14: first, Simplicius does not allude to the *Sophist* in particular in this sentence. Second, he is making a rather different point, that Plato talks of relatives *being* towards each other, rather than *being spoken of* as towards each other. Finally, Simplicius may think, *in propria persona*, that relatives come in pairs that are πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα (see Simp. *In Cat.* 159, 22–160, 9).

[120] Those eight cases are 224a7; 225b1; 230c2; 233b5; 237c2; 252b9; 252d6 and 253a9. B is preferred over T and W at 224a7; 225b1; 237c2.

[121] A correcting hand in B, B^2, corrects from a source in W's family, but predates both W and T (Duke, *et al*., 1995: xi, 384). B^2 does not correct B at 255c14 from πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα to πρὸ ς ἅ λλα. So it is possible that the archetype of W also read πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα. This suggests an error introduced into the W tradition and transmitted to T. I admit that this argument is not probative, however, as B^2 is not a very frequent corrector of the *Sophist* text.

reciprocal account adds the characterisation that *Y* is also a relative term and that it bears the inverse of *R*, namely, R^{-1} to *X* (further explanation of reciprocal relatives is found in §3.5 of this chapter).

We can define 'reciprocal relatives' thus: *X* and *Y* are reciprocal relatives iff *X* bears the relation *R* to *Y* and *Y* bears the relation R^{-1} to *X*, where R^{-1} is the inverse of *R*.[122] In Chapter 1, §1.2, we saw that a relation, *R* can be defined as the set of ordered pairs, such that the first member of the pair bears *R* to the second. The 'domain' of *R* is defined as the set of all items that bear *R* to something, and the co–domain of *R* is the set of all items that have *R* borne to them. Thus, everybody is in the domain of 'is taller than', except the shortest person, since everyone else is taller than someone or other. The co–domain of 'is taller than' includes everybody except the tallest person, since everyone else has the relation 'is taller than' borne to it by someone or other. Inverse relations are defined as follows: for any relation, *R,* R^{-1} is the relation such that domain R^{-1} is the co–domain of *R* and the co–domain of R^{-1} is the domain of *R*.[123] The inverse of *R* is R^{-1}, also defined as the relation which has $\langle x,y \rangle$ in its extension iff $\langle y,x \rangle$ is in the extension of the original relation. For example, if the relation is 'is larger than' then the inverse is 'is smaller than'; 'is larger than' takes an item in its domain, and links it to an item in its co–domain, while the inverse 'is smaller than' does the reverse. Note that a statement involving a relation and a statement involving its inverse are equivalent, providing they mention the same subjects but in the inverse order: 'Ajax is larger than Achilles' is equivalent to 'Achilles is smaller than Ajax'.[124]

The B and D manuscript reading, supported by the notion of a reciprocal relative, allows 'same' and 'other' each to fit into one of the two categories. As it happens, the 'same' relation and its inverse are identical: if *X* is the same as *Y*, then *Y* is the same as *X*. But we can see that *X* and *Y* here conform to the definition of reciprocal relatives, so that same will fit into a class of πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα terms. πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα will also accommodate 'other': some subject *X* is other in so far as it is other than something else, *Y*, where *X* and *Y* are non–identical. If *X* is other than *Y*, *Y* is other than *X*. Again, these *X* and *Y* conform to the definition of reciprocal relatives. Hence, if we read πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα, both 'same' and 'other' fit comfortably into the 'relatives' category of terms.

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[122] Ultimately, I reject the 'Owenian' way of understanding reciprocal relatives as derivative from converse relations. I rely on it here as a mere heuristic device, since the *Sophist* passage is too underdetermined to license firm statements as to the nature of reciprocal relatives. See §3.5 of this chapter.

[123] For further reflections on inverse relation, see Williamson, 1985: 249–262.

[124] This equivalence fails if we allow quantificational phrases to replace the proper names in the statement: "Every number is smaller than most numbers" is true, while "most numbers are bigger than every number" is false (thanks to Nick Denyer for this example). Plato does not consider relational statements with quantifiers, so this feature will not trouble him. Moreover, our use of converse relations is merely heuristic, so I will not try to chase down philosophical problems concerning them. For more on philosophical worries about relations and their converses, see Fine, 2000.

It is useful at this point to distinguish the notion of a symmetric relation from the notion of the inverse of a relation. A symmetric relation is a relation such that for all *x* and for all *y,* if *Rxy* then *Ryx*. That is to say, if the relation holds between *x* and *y* then it holds between *y* and *x*. For example 'is a neighbour of': if *x* is a neighbour of *y*, then *y* is a neighbour of *x.* One easy way to see that symmetric relations are distinct from the inverse of relations is to see that all relations have an inverse, but that not all relations are symmetric. The relation 'is larger than' has an inverse, namely, 'is smaller than', but it is not symmetric: if *x* is larger than *y*, *y* is not larger than *x*!

I distinguish these two notions because, at first sight, it might be thought that the vocabulary Plato uses to describe relations picks out symmetric relations, rather than inverse relations.[125] That is to say, πρὸς ἀλλήλα seems to make better sense in cases such as '*x* and *y* are neighbours πρὸς ἀλλήλα' than in cases such as '*x* and *y* are larger and smaller πρὸς ἀλλήλα'. However, an examination of the texts confirms that Plato does use πρὸς ἀλλήλα in the apparently less natural way throughout his discussion of relatives. At *Parmenides* 133c8–134b1 'master' and 'slave', as well as 'knowledge' and 'truth' are precisely the terms that are described as πρὸς ἀλλήλα. The relation 'is a master of' is clearly not symmetric, but 'is a master of' and 'is a slave of' are each the inverse of the other.

By adopting the B and D manuscript reading we can undergird an alternative term–based reading. This reading differs slightly from the traditional term–based reading. That reading suggested that the dichotomy between αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα was between absolute and relative terms. Because of the logic of πρὸς ἄλλα, the relative terms were read as aliorelative. The B and D manuscript reading also suggests that the dichotomy is between the absolute and relative terms. Unlike the traditional reading, since the alternative term–based reading reads πρὸς ἀλληλα for πρὸς ἄλλα, the relative class of terms will be reciprocal relatives. Thus, the alternative term–based reading is the claim that there are two classes of terms: those that are complete, and those that come in pairs of reciprocating terms.

The taxonomic question now has the beginnings of an answer: the *Sophist* 255c14 passage suggests that Plato has a distinction between absolute and reciprocal relatives. Reciprocity is what the conjunctive reading predicted. But there should be further evidence of this reciprocal taxonomy, and of reciprocity between relatives and their correlative formal objects. We will see this evidence in the following section.

[125] As Nick Denyer has impressed upon me.

3.3 Parmenides 133c–134e

The above reading of the *Sophist* draws confirmation from a passage that we can now see involves a parallel distinction: *Parmenides* 133c–134e. §3.3 offers a discussion of the interpretation of this argument. I will briefly argue for my preferred reading of *Parmenides* 133c3–d5, which I call the 'reciprocal definition reading'. Much of the scholarly debate over this passage has sought to understand which of several possible 'principles of separation' between Forms and participants is relied upon. I argue that Forms and participants are isolated from each other in so far as the relative and correlative reciprocate in the definitions of each other. This is developed from an 'unrefined' definitional reading. I then show that the notion of reciprocal relatives makes sense of this difficult stretch of Platonic argument, and so reciprocal relatives are likely to be how Plato thinks of relative terms. Finally, I argue that the reading I have presented of *Parmenides* 133c–4e supports the view that Plato has a taxonomic distinction between terms and not predications. This, therefore, connects it to the argument of §3.2.

At 133c–134e, Parmenides presents the young Socrates' theory of Forms with 'the greatest difficulty': 'If the Forms are as we claim they must be, they cannot even be known' (133b4–6). The argument relies on a principle of separation between Forms and participants, although there is no agreement on which of several possible principles of separation is relied upon in the argument.[126] Parmenides then invokes two pairs of relative terms: the master–slave pair (133d7–134a1) and the knowledge–truth pair (134a3–b1). Because of the separation between forms and participants, it is concluded that, just as we cannot be masters of the form Slave, so we cannot know the form Truth.[127]

The text of the argument is as follows:

[126] To see the diversity of approach, compare Cornford, 1939: 99; Cherniss, 1962: 284; Runciman, 1962:159; Prior, 1985:75–6; McCabe, 1994: 91; Gill, 1996: 46; Allen, 1997: 193; Rickless, 2007: 85–93.

[127] It seems to me that both of Parmenides' illustrations have philosophical force: Parmenides tries to persuade Socrates to accept both that the gods cannot be our masters and that they cannot know our affairs. Compare this point with *Phaedo* 62d2–3, where the gods are described as our managers and we as their possessions. So it seems that Plato is not picking his examples of relatives at random, or deriving them from another source. This is significant because if Plato's examples are deliberate, Aristotle's use of 'master' and 'slave' as examples of relatives in *Cat.* 7 indicates that he was influenced directly by this passage in his thinking about relatives. If, contrary to fact, Plato had both picked the example of 'master' and 'slave' without a philosophical point, it may have suggested that Plato and Aristotle were both following an existing (perhaps shared) tradition.

(P1) Because, Socrates, I think that you, and anyone else who posits that there is some essence of each thing itself by itself (ὅ στις αὐ τήν τινα καθ' αὐ τὴ ν ἐ κάστου οὐ σίαν τίθεται εἶ ναι), would agree, first, that none of them is in our vicinity (ἐ ν ἡ μῖ ν) (133c3–5).

(P2) Therefore, all the Ideas which are what they are in relation to each other (ὅ σαι τῶν ἰ δεῶν πρὸ ς ἀ λλήλας εἰ σὶ ν αἵ εἰ σιν) have their essence (οὐ σίαν) in relation to themselves (πρὸ ς αὐ τάς), but not in relation to the things in our vicinity, whether one posits these as likenesses or otherwise, by partaking in which we are called after each of them (133c8–d2).

Before getting into the detail of the argument given here, let me note an important linguistic similarity between *Sophist* 255c14, following the B and D manuscripts, and *Parmenides* 133c8. Both passages use different forms of the reciprocal pronoun 'πρὸ ς ἀ λλήλα' to describe the relationship that ideas or kinds have to each other. This is striking *prima facie* evidence in favour of a parallelism between these two passages and also some evidence in favour of reading of *Parmenides* 133c–134e which gives reciprocity pride of place.

P1 and P2 express the notion of separation that Parmenides is relying on in this argument. P1 asserts that (a) each thing has an essence that is 'itself by itself'[128] and (b) none of those essences are in our vicinity. The second sentence applies this thinking to a class of Forms, namely, those that 'are what they are in relation to each other'. It asserts (c) that members of this class have their essence in relation to themselves and not in relation to things in our vicinity. Parmenides then repeats the complementary point for the things in our vicinity.[129] Whatever the principle of separation is, and however it is interpreted, it seems that an equivalent principle must govern the participants:

(P3) But these things in our vicinity (τὰ δὲ παρ' ἡ μῖ ν ταῦ τα) which have the same names as each of those, are, again, themselves in relation to themselves but not in relation to the Forms (πρὸ ς αὐ τά ἐ στιν ἀ λλ' οὐ πρὸ ς τὰ εἴ δη), and all the things which are named in this way are of themselves and not of those things (133c8–d5).

[128] Cf. 129a

[129] That there is an isomorphism between the principles which govern forms and participants has been challenged by Shields, 2011. I disagree with his reading here, for reasons that I will outline below.

Clearly, then, there is separation, in some sense, between the Forms and the things in our vicinity. The first question is what this separation amounts to. The majority view is that the answer to this question is that 'separation is radical'.[130]

(RS) For all *X,* for all *Y*, (if (*X* is a form and *X* bears a relation to *Y*), then *Y* is a form).[131]

This radical separation of forms and particulars is the strongest possible version of a separation reading. The premise is strong enough to motivate the conclusion of the argument that we cannot know the forms, as long as we hold that 'knows' is, or entails, a relation. But if this is the correct principle, then the majority of the 'Greatest Difficulty' argument is irrelevant: if RS holds, then there is no participation in forms, so not only is knowing forms impossible, but so is participation, or being named after the Forms or anything else (provided that 'participates in' and 'is named after' are relations). The theory of Forms collapses immediately.

The RS reading of the principle must be rejected on four grounds. The first, mentioned above, is that understanding P1 as radical separation would move too quickly to the conclusion; the rest of the text would be superfluous. Second, radical separation would not be a principle acceptable to an advocate of the middle period theory of Forms. As Prior says:

> Several of the premises would have seemed objectionable to a proponent of the Theory of Forms of the middle dialogues. He would accept the existence of Forms as separate from phenomena but he would not agree that this separation precludes the immanence of Forms in things (Prior, 1985: 78).

The fact that this radical separation reading of the argument makes a straw man out of the theory of Forms is at least a *prima facie* reason for reservation, although I admit that in several places in the first part of the *Parmenides* Socrates appears to accept premises which a more mature theorist might not (for example, at 130b; 130e–131e, specifically, 131b; 132a).

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[130] Allen, 1997:193. A similar line is taken by Cornford, 1939: 99; Cherniss, 1962: 284; Runciman, 1962: 159; McCabe, 1994: 91; Prior, 1985: 75–6 and Gill, 1996: 46.

[131] Or, using more familiar notation: $\forall x \forall y((Fx \wedge Rxy) \supset Fy)$, where '*F*' is 'is a form' and '*R*' is a schematic letter for any relation. If the notion of a schematic letter is unacceptable, this position could only be formalised in a language allowing quantification over relations, i.e. second–order logic.

The third reason to reject the RS reading is that the text invokes some relations between Forms and participants. The sentences at 133d1–2: 'εἴ τε ὸ μοιώματα εἴ τε ὅ πῃ δή τις αύ τὰ τίθεται, ὧν ὴ μεῖ ς μετέχοντες εἶ ναι ἕ καστα ἑ πονομαζόμεθα' clearly mentions three kinds of relation which might hold between Forms and participants, namely, the relations '…participates in…', '…is like…' and '…is named after…'. If, as is implied by this sentence, some relations can obtain between Forms and participants, then radical separation is too strong a way to read the separation between Forms and participants, as it rules out any relations between them.

As well as mentioning certain relations, the argument assumes that some relations must obtain between Forms and participants, since this is how the participants are distinguished from the Forms. To generate two worlds, it seems to me that Parmenides uses the differentiae 'is named after' and 'participates in'. Anything that participates in something else is a participant, and things that do not are forms. So not only is radical separation inconsistent with the text, it also makes it difficult to see exactly how we can mark off one realm from the other. We could press this point further: 'separate from' is a relation, and if no relations can obtain between forms and participants, they cannot bear the 'separate from' relation to one another. It seems that radical separation undermines itself.

These objections give us reason to examine other possible ways of construing the Greatest Difficulty argument. The most promising reading in the literature could be called the 'definitional separation' reading (see Peterson, 1981 and Rickless, 2007:85–93). Because of Plato's use of εἰ σὶ ν αἵ εἰ σιν (they are what they are), the definitional separation reading takes the point of P2 to be the extraction of a principle governing the relations between Forms:

(A) All the Forms which are what they are in relation to each other have their essence in relation to themselves.

Which is to say:

(A) For all *X,* for all *Y*, (if (*X* is a Form and *X* is what it is in relation to *Y*), then *Y* is a Form).[132]

This principle looks ambiguous between two possible interpretations of the 'is' implicit in εἰ σὶ ν αἵ εἰ σιν ('are what they are').[133] In the *Parmenides* case, the ambiguity is between the

[132] Or, using more familiar notation: $\forall x \forall y((Fx \wedge Rxy) \supset Fy)$, where '*F*' is 'is a form' and '*R*' is 'is what it is in relation to'.

'is' of identity and the 'is' of definition. If we understand the 'is' here as the 'is' of definition, we would read the principle in the following way:

(A') All the Ideas which are what they are in relation to something are defined with reference to that thing.

Instantiating with the example in the text, we would arrive at the conclusion that the definition of the Form Master includes reference to the Form Slave.[134] We could attempt to use this idea to divide Forms into two categories: the 'absolute' and the 'relative'. The former are those forms whose nature it is possible to describe without reference to something else to which it is related, while the latter are those whose nature it is impossible to describe without reference to something else to which it is related (Rickless, 2007: 87). The same considerations apply to the realm of things in our vicinity.

Before endorsing or rejecting this interpretation, we must be clear about an ambiguity concerning characterisation of the 'relatives' category using the notion of 'describing their nature with reference to something else to which it is related'. It could be the loose notion that describing the nature of something must refer to something else *in some way or other*. For Plato, and any orthodox Platonist, describing the nature of many 'absolute' terms will involve reference to something else.[135] Describing the nature of 'man' will involve appealing to the Form Man, and describing the nature of the Form Man will appeal to the (non–identical) Form Animal and the differentia rational. Or to take a more modern example, which does not rely on hypostatized Forms: it is impossible to define the nature of gold without reference to atomic number 79, an item to which gold is related. Under the loose account, almost any item could fit into the category of relatives.

There is another problem that the unrefined definitional separation reading faces which a more sophisticated one might overcome. Whatever the principle of separation is, and however it is interpreted, it seems that an equivalent principle must govern the participants (see P3). This would give rise to a principle such as the following:

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[133] As pointed out by Peterson herself (1981:12)
[134] This position is shared with Shields, 2011.
[135] See Fine, 1983: 225–249.

(B) For all *X*, for all *Y*, (if (*X* is in our vicinity and *X* is what it is in relation to *Y*), then *Y* is in our vicinity).[136]

If we interpret this principle along the lines given by the unrefined definitional reading, this would seem to imply that it is possible for some participants to have their nature defined by their relationship to each other. But this seems not to be a premise that Plato would accept. Participants are not the sort of thing which can define one another, or indeed be defined: those are characteristics of the Forms.

We have seen that the 'unrefined' definitional reading has some drawbacks, despite being initially promising. At this stage, I'd like to suggest a more refined definitional reading based on the idea that it is only pairs of reciprocal relatives that define each other. This will not only allow us to make sense of the principle of separation that is at work in *Parmenides* 133c–134e, it will also re–enforce the connection we mooted between the idea that relatives are reciprocal, which was present in *Sophist* 255c14, and Chapter 1, §1.2. We will also see how the notion of a 'formal object' is relied on in the *Parmenides* argument, and so how that argument relates to the overarching characterisation of relative terms in Plato that I am defending: the conjunctive reading. The principle of separation I suggest is as follows:

> (A'') All the Forms which are what they are in relation to each other come in pairs which are 'of' each other.

The examples of 'master' and 'slave' would then be integrated into the story in the following way. We can introduce into this discussion the notion of the 'formal object' of a relative term from Chapter 1, §1.2 and Chapter 2, §2.2. It is clear that the formal object of 'master' will be 'slave': having the property of being a slave is a necessary condition of having the relation of being a master borne to you. 'Slave' will be the formal object of 'master'. And in an exactly parallel way, 'master' will be the formal object of 'slave'. This surely gives a suitable sense to the idea that some Forms 'are what they are in relation to each other': Master is what it is in relation to its formal object, and Slave is what it is in relation to its formal object.

Unlike the definitional reading discussed above, there is more than merely being related to something to featuring in the definition of a term, say master. The term must be related to

[136] $\forall x \forall y((Fx \wedge Rxy) \supset Fy)$, where '*F*' is 'is in us' and '*R*' is 'is what it is in relation to'.

some other appropriate term, in this case, slave. That is to say, it must be related to some reciprocating partner: that reciprocating partner tells us what the essence is. We could put the point in general terms thus: *F* and *G* are correlative iff (i) an account of *F* necessarily makes reference to *G* and (ii) an account of *G* necessarily makes reference to *F*. (iii) *F* and *G* are formal objects of each other.[137]

Like the unrefined definitional reading, the reciprocal definition reading allows us to distinguish 'absolute' and 'relative' categories. It would say that the relative category is comprised of terms for which describing their nature without reference to something else *to which it is related as reciprocal correlative* is impossible. How can we tell that 'master' is a relative term? Under the definitional reading, the definition of 'master' mentions some other item, a slave. But this requirement is not strong enough: the definition of 'man' will mention 'animal', the definition of 'gold' will mention atomic number 79. But 'master' is related to 'slave' in a special way, namely that they each feature in the definition of the other, because they are the formal objects of each other. They are what they are in relation to each other, which is precisely what the text says.

Thus, we can properly characterise the premises that the Greatest Difficulty argument relies on, under the reading that I advocate here:

(A) For all *X*, for all *Y*, (if (*X* is a Form and *X* has *Y* as its reciprocating correlative) then *Y* is a Form).
(B) For all *X*, for all *Y*, (if (*X* is a participant and *X* has *Y* as a reciprocating correlative, then *Y* is a participant).

[137] Nick Denyer has pressed me on whether the account of *F* or *G* is supposed to explain the nature of *F* or *G* and if so, whether the explanation is circular. Given Plato's criteria, an account of *F* is supposed to explain why something is *F*, not merely pick out a property that is concurrent with *F*–ness. A test for this is represented by *Euthyprho* 9e–11d: a thing is holy iff it is loved by all the gods; nevertheless gods love things because they are holy, and not the other way around, so holiness is not explained by being what all the gods love. The accounts above explain, and I do not think the explanations fail the *Euthythro* test. An account of *F* that makes reference to *G* is not thereby unexplanatory; neither is an account of *G* that makes reference to *F*. 'Master $=_{def}$ a person who owns one or more slaves' gives an adequate explanation of what a master is and it applies to all and only masters, just as 'slave $=_{def}$ a person who is owned by a master' gives an adequate explanation of what a slave is. We can substitute the definition of 'slave' into the definition of 'master' to give 'master $=_{def}$ a person who owns a person who is owned by a master', which is in some sense circular. But that does not mean that the definition of either is merely concurrent with, not explanatory of, *F*–ness.

Note that these two principles do not bar all relations between Forms and participants: specifically, they do not bar the participation relation. The only thing that they block is having the reciprocating correlation between Forms and participants.

This account is not yet complete, and may face a problem. It seems that the account in terms of reciprocating correlatives may drag all Forms into the realm of participants, if we accept that the relation between Forms and participants is that of a model to a copy. This idea is already in play in the *Parmenides* at 132d–e.[138] If 'model' and 'copy' are reciprocal correlatives, and they each feature in the definition of one another, we cannot give an account of the nature of a model without discussing a copy, and vice versa. But given this, and the assumption that participants are copies of Forms, we seem to face the following problem:

(i) If some *x* is a participant–copy of the Form Large itself, then the Large itself is the reciprocal correlative of *x* (as the Large itself is the model for *x*).
(ii) But by (B) because *x* is a participant, and the Large itself reciprocates with it, the Large itself is also a participant.
(iii) But nothing can be a Form and a participant.

I think that we can respond here by pointing out that Plato has already assumed separation of forms from participants, before and during the Greatest Difficulty argument. Consequently, problems such as the one above are not faced by Plato. When he comes to discuss the first of his examples, the master/slave pair, Parmenides says:

> If one of us is somebody's master or somebody's slave, surely he is not [a slave] of Master itself, of what a master is, nor is the master a master of Slave itself, of what a slave is. On the contrary, because he is a human being he is it [viz. a master or a slave] of a human being; Mastery itself is what it is of Slavery itself (αὐ τὴ δὲ δεσποτεία αὐ τῆ ς δουλείας έ στὶ ν ὅ έ στι), and similarly Slavery itself [is what it is] of Mastery itself (133d7–e4).

Because of principles (A) and (B), the terms 'master' and 'slave' are isolated together in either the realm of Forms or the realm of participants. Consequently, any item that bears such a term

[138] There is evidence for this internal to the Greatest Difficulty too: at 133c9–d2, Parmenides reminds us that we do not yet have a clear account of the participation relationship.

must bear that term only towards the reciprocating partner which is in the same realm as the item.[139] The relative and its formal object must belong in the same realm. But this seems circular: Parmenides has assumed that Mastery and Slavery are separate, in some sense, from any given master and any given slave. To avoid this circularity, the notion of 'separation' contained within the statement 'the Forms are what they are in relation to themselves' (133c8) should be *antecedent* to the idea of the isolation of pairs of reciprocating correlatives. And this is what we find: the idea that there are two realms, one for Forms and one for participants, has been in play since *Parmenides* 132a–b. If this is right, then the principles (A) and (B), which isolate pairs of correlative Forms from their correlative participants, are different from some suppressed principle that separates Forms from participants. The latter principle is already in play and allows Parmenides to make the point that relative terms and their correlative formal objects must all operate in the same realm. This point is clear from the οὐ κοῦ ν ('therefore') at line 133c8: the isolation of pairs of reciprocal correlatives follows from a separation assumption, and is not constitutive of it.

Once we see that separation is already assumed by, not argued for in, the Greatest Difficulty, we see that Plato would deny the conditional in (i) of the challenge given above. It does not follow from the fact that *x* is a participant–copy of the Form Large itself that the Large itself is reciprocal correlative with *x*, even if it does provide the model for *x*. This is because there is a separation assumption blocking the Large itself from reciprocating with a participant. Effectively, Plato restricts the scope of the universal quantifiers in (A) and (B). In both cases, the scope is restricted to entities of the same kind, where the kinds are Forms and participants. Under this reading, *x* can still participate in the Large itself, but it does not follow from that that the Large itself participates in *x*, only that the Large itself is participated in by *x*. And this seems right: participants participate in Forms, but Forms do not participate in participants.

Above, I have shown that the text of the Greatest Difficulty relies on reciprocal relatives defining each other. I now aim to show that the best reading of 'relative' here is as a class of terms, not a kind of predication. For this, I need to show that Meinwald's reading of the distinction as between types of predication is not possible. Meinwald (1991: 159–162) holds that the Greatest Difficulty is a prime case where she could apply her distinction between two kinds of predication. The application would resolve the Greatest Difficulty for the theory of Forms and

[139] I use singulars here because the reciprocating partner is a formal object, not because I think that a master can only have one slave. It is rather that one *notion*, the notion of slave, features in the (singular) account of master. Clearly, any given master can have more than one slave; but master, considered in the abstract, needs the notion of slave in the abstract for its account.

it is her claim that Plato would therefore endorse our adopting the distinction between two types of predication. Meinwald gives a detailed argument for the claim a distinction can be found in the *Parmenides* between what she calls (i) the πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό and (ii) the πρὸ ς τᾶ λλα predications.[140] Like Frede's distinction between two types of predication, Meinwald's point is that (i) '*x* is *F*' πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό means that *F* is partly or wholly what it is to be *x*; (ii) '*x* is *F*' πρὸ ς τᾶ λλα means that *x* exhibits the property *F*, and *F* is in no way constitutive of *x*.

Meinwald claims that this distinction can resolve the Greatest Difficulty by taking the example of knowledge and truth. 'Knowledge knows Truth' seemed to exclude the possibility that Knowledge would know truths in our world. Thus, the gods would not be able to know our affairs (134c10–11). But Meinwald thinks that we can see that 'Knowledge knows Truth' is a πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό predication, and a perfectly true one: it is part of being Knowledge to know Truth. Describing 'knowledge' will include mention of 'truth'. But the error of the Greatest Difficulty is to confuse this true πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό predication with the false πρὸ ς τᾶ λλα predication that has the same linguistic form. Likewise, an application of Meinwald's distinction to the claim apparently ruled out by the Greatest Difficulty, that we could know the Forms (134b6–8), shows that 'we know the Truth' is true πρὸ ς τᾶ λλα, but false πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό. It is not constitutive of us to know the Form Truth. But 'knowing the Truth' is a predicate we can have πρὸ ς τᾶ λλα as it is neither constituent nor partly constituent of us.

I do not think that Meinwald's distinction between these kinds of predication is applicable here. The foremost reason is that the correct reading of the Greatest Difficulty means that the difficulty is not amenable to Meinwald's solution: the Greatest Difficulty does not suggest that we can predicate the 'knows' relation of the Form Knowledge, as we saw above (p. 95–6). If it is parallel to the 'master' and 'slave' case discussed above, the Greatest Difficulty does not suggest that the Form Knowledge knows. So Meinwald's point that such predication can be interpreted in two divergent ways is moot. Thus, if my reading of the Greatest Difficulty is accepted, Meinwald's solution to the difficulty is off target. Since Meinwald's predication reading does not enable the Greatest Difficulty to make better sense than my term–based reading with reciprocal relatives, there is no reason to accept her reading.

To summarise the discussion regarding the type of taxonomy – terms or predications – that is at issue: I have presented arguments to show that the distinction between 'absolute' and 'relative' in the *Sophist* and *Parmenides* passages should be understood as between groups of

[140] Meinwald, 1991: 64–75

terms, rather than between uses of 'is'. The former view was defended on the grounds that (a) Frede's criticism of a term–based reading of *Sophist* 255c14 can be overcome by adopting an alternative manuscript reading, and (b) Frede's own reading of the distinction is implausible. My position was bolstered by the evidence of *Parmenides* 133c–134e, which suggests a term–based distinction between relative (in this case, πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα) terms and non–relative terms. I also argued that the distinction between two uses of 'is' to solve the Greatest Difficulty, as proposed by Meinwald, is not successful, and so we have no good reasons, as far as that argument goes, for thinking that Plato intended us to uncover a distinction between two kinds of predication. Having established that we have a term–based reading of the relative and absolute groups of terms, in the next section I will characterise the nature of the relatives group as 'reciprocal', again using *Sophist* 255c14 and *Parmenides* 133c–134e.

3.4 The Classes as Reciprocal Relatives and Absolute Terms

I suggested in §3.2 that the *Sophist* makes a division of terms into the 'absolute' and 'reciprocal relatives'. I also argued that this distinction was exclusive and exhaustive. To maintain the latter claim, I need to deal with an objection, namely, that it is not obvious that all relatives are reciprocal relatives. If there are some non–reciprocal relatives, the distinction between 'absolute' and 'reciprocal relative' is not exhaustive. This would undermine my claim that Plato is identifying the two widest possible classes of terms. There could be some 'relatives' which are not 'reciprocal relatives'.[141] I argue in this section that the objection is not persuasive as far as the *Sophist* is concerned. I then re–examine the *Parmenides* passage we have been discussing for further support of my view.

There seem to be pairs of terms that fit neither into the αὐ τὰ καθ' αὐ τά class of terms, nor into that of 'reciprocal relatives', since we can use them without their reciprocal partner. An example would be the pair 'animal' and 'foot'. A 'foot' is always the foot of an animal, and is therefore, arguably, a relative.[142] If so, 'foot' is aliorelative because nothing is ever the foot of itself. But an animal is not always (or perhaps ever) the animal of a foot. So there is no reciprocity between the pair. 'Foot' seems to be *merely* aliorelative.

[141] As suggested by Malcolm, 2006.
[142] Aristotle, at least, would count 'foot' as a relative. At *Cat.* 8a13–25 he posits organic parts as relative to the whole organism, which creates problems for his definition because it implies that substances (in this case, the organic parts) can be relatives. *Cat.* 7a4–5, 7a16–17 and 7a21–23 also mention organic parts as relatives. cf. *Pol*. 1254a8–13.

To ward off the objection that there are some mere aliorelatives, we must show that for Plato, if something is a relative of any kind, it is a reciprocal relative. This is accomplished by showing that being a relative entails having a reciprocating partner. A consequence of the definition of reciprocal relatives given above (§3.2) is that only a reciprocal pair of terms can feature in a certain exceptionlessly correct statement. This serves as a test for whether two terms are a reciprocal pair. To illustrate this, take the example of 'master' and 'slave'. We find both Plato (*Parmenides*, 133c8) and Aristotle (*Cat*. 6b29) asserting that 'master' and 'slave' are a reciprocal pair. If *X* is a master, then *X* is a master of some *Y*. This shows that 'master' is a relative. But what kind of thing is *Y*? The reciprocating partner, *Y*, will bear the inverse of the relation 'is a master of' to *X*. That is to say, it will bear the 'is a slave of' relation to *X*. So *Y* will be a slave.

Aristotle certainly holds that all relatives reciprocate. He shows that for any relative term, we can *create* (ὀνοματοποιεῖν, 'name–make', *Cat*. 7a5–7) the other term in the pair that reciprocates with the first. This ability to create reciprocating partners is what guarantees that all relatives have one. To create a partner, Aristotle coins a new term that constitutes the reciprocating partner in a reciprocal pair. For example, Aristotle says, take 'rudder' as a relative. Like 'foot', it is an aliorelative (nothing can be a rudder of itself). Nevertheless, we can always make exceptionlessly correct statements involving the relative and its reciprocating partner, by coining the passive verbal noun 'ruddered' for the reciprocating partner of 'rudder'. Moreover, a rudder, *X*, and a ruddered *Y*, will conform to the definition of reciprocal relatives, because if *X* is a rudder of *Y*, *Y* is ruddered by *X*. Or, as Aristotle puts it: 'A rudder is the rudder of a ruddered thing… and a ruddered thing is ruddered by a rudder' (*Cat*. 7a12–15). This ability to coin terms for the other item in a pair of reciprocal relatives guarantees that any relative has a reciprocating partner, including aliorelatives. This is, perhaps, why Aristotle thinks that all relatives are reciprocal relatives.

But does Plato already think the same way? We would have some good evidence that he does if we could show that Plato allows himself to coin new terms for the reciprocating partner to give exceptionlessly correct statements involving the relative and its partner. As we saw in Chapter 2, in the context of the discussion of relatives in *Republic* IV, Plato says that we can do this with the relative 'knowledge'. 'Knowledge' is a standard example of a relative in Plato and Aristotle.[143] To generate an exceptionless partner for 'knowledge' we would choose 'object of

[143] Plato, *Republic* 438c–d; *Parmenides* 134a, where the partner is ἀλήθεια; *Charmides* 168b–c, where the partner for knowledge is also τὰ μαθήματα. Aristotle: *Cat*. 6b34, where the partner is ἐπιστητόν.

knowledge': If *X* knows *Y*, *Y* is an object of knowledge for *X*. 'Object of knowledge', then, just means 'whatever knowledge is of'.

Plato suggests an indefinite reciprocating partner in *Republic* 438c6–9. Knowledge is of learnings (τὰ μαθήματα) or 'whatever one ought to say that knowledge is of' (ὅ του δὴ δεῖ θεῖ ναι τὴ ν ἐ πιστήμην). Even if Plato has not yet coined the single–term reciprocating partner for 'knowledge' (i.e. 'the knowable': see below), he, like Aristotle, does not make the reciprocating partner a hostage to natural language. This leaves him free to agree with Aristotle that all relatives have a reciprocating partner so that there are no mere aliorelatives, even if he has not yet found the *mot juste* in every case. Thus, we are not forced to admit that there are some mere aliorelatives, and so are not forced to concede the objection that there are relatives that do not fit into the class of reciprocal relatives.

So far we have seen that Plato uses a variety of expressions to ensure that all relatives have a reciprocal partner. But what about the cases where Plato mentions a pair of correlatives which apparently do not reciprocate? There is such an example given in one of our target passages: 'knowledge' and 'truth' (*Parmenides* 134a3–4). Plato mentions these as a centrally important part of an argument that, I argued above, demonstrates his commitment to reciprocity. On the face of it, 'knowledge' and 'truth' are not related as 'master' is to 'slave': although it is impossible to know without knowing truths, it is perfectly possible for there to be a truth that is not known. Put another way, the inverse of the 'is knowledge of' relation is the 'is an object of knowledge for' relation. The inverse of 'is knowledge of' has nothing to do with 'truth'. To be a reciprocal pair, these should be 'knowledge' (ἡ ἐ πιστήμη) and the 'knowable' (τὸ ἐ πιστητόν), which are the terms Aristotle uses (*Cat*. 6b34). Does this show that Plato does not have a view of relatives where all relatives are reciprocal relatives?

I offer two responses to this: the first is relevant to the specific case of the 'knowledge'/'truth' pair. In the second, I will raise some considerations that apply to all cases where it seems that there is a failure of reciprocity between a relative and its correlative. The counterexample which 'knowledge' and 'truth' present to the claim that all relatives are reciprocal is merely apparent. 'Truth' should be understood here as 'object of knowledge' or 'the knowable'. At *Theaetetus* 201d2–3, Theaetetus recalls the term 'ἐ πιστητός' (knowable) as a surprising innovation by an anonymous third party. This suggests that Plato is uncomfortable with the term. It is likely that when he wrote the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*, dialogues perhaps slightly earlier than the *Theaetetus*, he was shy of using the neologism. This, of course, does not suggest that Plato thought that 'ἐ πιστητός' might be incomprehensible to Greek speakers but

simply that he tends to avoid neologisms, at least before the *Sophist.*[144] This seems especially true with respect to the correlative partners of well–established relative terms. As we saw with reference to *Republic* 438c6–9, Plato prefers to refer to the reciprocal partner of 'knowledge' as 'learning' (μάθημα), and the use of 'truth' (and 'beings' at 134a7–8) in the *Parmenides*, I suggest, is another example of Plato still feeling his way with the terminology, and avoiding 'ἑ πιστητόν'.

Moreover, the *Parmenides* argument does not require a more specific partner for 'knowledge', so Plato does not use one. The argument is supposed to show that the Forms are unknowable. Insofar as that is the aim of the argument, it focuses only on the term 'knowledge' and can leave its reciprocal partner less well specified: Parmenides needs only the claim that our knowledge cannot have an object that is in the realm of the Forms, and it does not matter whether the reciprocal partner of knowledge is 'truth', 'beings' or 'knowables'. Plato recognizes in this argument that 'knowledge' is a relative, and has a reciprocal partner, but, because nothing turns on what the partner is, he leaves it indefinite.

The general considerations for resolving apparent failures of reciprocity are important because this issue has been looming since Chapter 1, §1.2. There we saw that 'beauty' and 'love', although counted as a correlative pair by Plato, do not reciprocate. Love could be thought of as 'of beauty', as long as beauty is construed weakly, as something like 'whatever love is of', but we cannot use the same move to show that 'love' is the object of beauty: it is not clear that beauty has an object at all. The proper relative–correlative pair should be 'love' and 'beloved': love always loves the beloved and the beloved is always loved by love.

An answer to this challenge begins by being clear about the difference between expressions in language and items in the world. Aristotle's notion of 'name–making' and Plato's flexibility with natural language when it comes to describing the relevant correlatives both rely on relative terms being expressions in language. We can create new expressions, but we do not thereby create new items in the world: we can be vague with words, but not with things.[145] The disambiguation of 'relative terms' into 'relative items' and 'relative expressions' also allows us to specify that 'relative expressions' are descriptions of parts of the world: the relative expression 'wing', to take Aristotle's example again, describes a certain portion of the world, and, since it is a relative expression, it describes it as being relative to something.

[144] The English equivalent might be to coin an adjective such as 'mowable' to describe the correlative of a mower. It is formed regularly, its meaning is clear and it is not an obvious barbarism. But nonetheless, a linguistically sensitive writer might well apologise for such a word, and only use it if it were unavoidable.
[145] Note also Aristotle's use of λέγεται at *Cat*. 6b28: 'All relatives are spoken of relative to reciprocals'.

Now, as Aristotle points out (*Cat*. 7a1), it is not *qua* bird that something is the correlative of wing, but *qua* winged. Aristotle coins the Greek expression equivalent to 'winged' to describe the items which wings are correlative to. But clearly, birds have all sorts of other possible descriptions: 'beaked', 'bipedal', 'feathered' and indeed 'bird'. Moreover, many things other than birds have wings, a motley crew including insects, sycamore seeds and bats. But only under the specified aspect, 'winged', is a bird, or any other item, a suitable correlative for 'wing'. To be a relative and correlative pair, for Aristotle, both items have to be described in the right way.

Plato, as we saw in Chapter 1, §1.2, makes use of the very same idea. At *Theaetetus* 204e11, *Sophist* 255d7 and *Symposium* 199e3, all of them important sources for his discussion of relatives, Plato uses the expression ὅ περ ἐ στίν to specify the aspect under which a relative should be considered in order to make it a proper correlative. Plato's use of the plural form αἵ εἰ σιν at *Parmenides* 133c8 must, then, make the point that 'master' and 'slave', considered under those aspects, are the proper correlatives of each other. This, I suggest, provides a more general answer to questions concerning reciprocity.

I have argued in this section that the distinction Plato draws is between absolute and reciprocal terms. I argued for this on the basis that in the cases where Plato appears to mention a non–reciprocating pair of relative terms, the evidence supports equally well the claim that Plato takes the same attitude as Aristotle towards the proper correlative of any relative term, namely, that we should not be restricted by natural language as to which correlatives we posit. Rather, Plato is flexible, sometimes using a place–holder expression for the correlative, sometimes using an appropriate term, while still retaining his aversion to neologisms. In the final section of this chapter, I will try to explain the nature of the 'reciprocal' relationship between a relative and its correlative: what does it mean to 'reciprocate' in this way?

3.5 The nature of reciprocation

Section §3.1 of this chapter made the case that the taxonomic distinction at stake in the *Sophist* and *Parmenides* passages is a distinction between classes of terms and not kinds of predication. Section §3.2 argued that the 'relatives' group of terms are best understood as 'reciprocal relatives'. This final section argues that those reciprocal–relative pairs of terms are best understood not, as Owen would have it, as identical with two–place relations, one the converse of the other, but rather as one–place predicates which have some 'towardsness' in relation to each

other, a notion captured by the idea of a formal object. I have been using the idea of a relation and the converse of a relation as a heuristic to give some basis to the notion of a 'reciprocal relative'. The Owenian reading would take this to be the correct account, rather than a temporary explanation. We will now see that this Owenian view is not fit to give a satisfactory reading of *Parmenides* 133c–134e, because of problems to do with self–predication.

According to the Owenian account of relatives, in the Greatest Difficulty argument we must take the predicates 'is a master' and 'is a slave' as identical to the relations 'is a master of' and 'is a slave of'. This is simply another way of putting the claim that 'is a master' is an incomplete predicate. Given this and the fact that 'Master' presumably carries the predicate 'is a master' (133e3–4), 'Master' will also bear the relation 'is a master of' to Slave. 'Slave' certainly is mentioned as being 'Slave of Master itself' (133e3–6). Owenians may also think that there is self–predication at play here because of the discussion of powers. '[T]hings in us do not have their power in relation to forms, nor do they in relation to us' (133e5). But Master does have the power 'being a master'. If these self–predications are true, according to the Owenian reading of relatives, in the Greatest Difficulty we have the claim that Master is a master of Slave, and Slave is a slave of Master.

But as Cornford points out, this would be to confuse a Form with a perfect instance of a Form.[146] There is no reason to think that the Form Master bears the relation with which it is a congener, i.e. the being a master of relation to anything. In principle, some ideal or perfect instance of the Form Master, that is to say, some perfect master, could bear that relation 'is a master of' to some instance of the Form Slave. But to say that Master bears the cognate relation to Slave is to confuse those two items, the Form Master and the perfect instance of the Form Master. Master is not the master of Slave or anything else. But the Owenian reading of relative terms as identical to dyadic relations has the consequence that self–predicating relational Forms are confused with their perfect instances. Since Plato is the great proponent of self–predication, he is liable to such confusions. But it is a disadvantage of the Owenian reading that it forces us to attribute this particular misconception to Plato.

If there are no relations here, due to problems of self–predication, then there can be no converse relations. If there are no converse relations, then how do we make sense of reciprocity? We cannot make use of the properties of relations to define a relation and its converse, as we did in §3.2. My account of relativity, however, can make sense of reciprocity without resorting to the

[146] Cornford, 1939: 98.

anachronistic notion of relations. In §3.3 I concluded that the Greatest Difficulty should be understood along the line of a 'reciprocal definition' reading. Each relative has a formal object with which it reciprocates: *F* and *G* are reciprocal correlatives iff (i) an account of *F* necessarily makes reference to *G* and (ii) an account of *G* necessarily makes reference to *F* and (iii) *F* and *G* are the formal objects of each other.

This account of reciprocity is not vulnerable to the objection that I made against the Owenian reading because there are no self–predications of dyadic relations in this account. Even if the Form Master were to bear the predicate 'is a master', that would not mean that the 'is a master of' relation would hold between Master and Slave. All that would be true is that a full account of Master would make reference to Slave. And this seems uncontroversial. The 'reciprocal correlatives' account helps us to solve the difficulty of understanding how, for example, Master and Slave are supposed to have their 'essence' in relation to each other. Under the reading presented here, if two Forms are reciprocal correlatives, then accounts of their nature make reference to each other.

So it turns out that the formal object of a relative term is an essential part of our understanding of a relative, and essential even for picking out which of several possible relative terms are under discussion. For example, 'more' is a relative term. But it could connote greater number or greater quantity. We cannot determine which of these two possible relatives 'more' represents until we have specified the reciprocal correlative: either the correlative is 'fewer', in which case 'more' is numerical, or it is 'less' in which case it is quantitative. But we can see that what the formal object is tells us what the nature of the relative term is.[147] So my account explains why the correlative of a reciprocal relative term is important for giving the nature of the relative term.

Also important for giving an account of a relative is the aspect under which an item is considered. As we saw, Plato uses the expression ὅ περ ἐ στίν to specify the aspect under which a relative should be considered in order to make it a proper correlative. He uses the plural form αἵ εἰ σιν at *Parmenides* 133c8 to make the point that 'master' and 'slave', considered under those aspects, are the proper correlatives of each other. That is, the properly specified relative and correlative pair reciprocate, because each will feature in the definition of the other. Reciprocation, then, occurs between a relative term, properly specified, and its correlative object,

[147] An equivalent phenomenon occurs in Greek: the irregular comparative χείρων, when ἀ ρείων is its correlative, means inferior in rank, while when βελτίων is the correlative, χείρων means morally inferior. Cf. Harari, 2011: 530–537 for a somewhat similar account of the ambiguity of relatives in Aristotle.

properly specified. Each features in an account of the nature of the other. Plato's views on reciprocation cannot be captured simply in terms of a relation and its converse.

Conclusion

What impact do the results of this Chapter have on our wider understanding of the nature of relative terms in Plato? At least as far as these two central passages for understanding taxonomy are concerned, §3.1 of this Chapter argued that the taxonomy of 'absolute' and 'relative' is best understood as a taxonomy dividing terms into classes rather than as kinds of predication. Thus, 'master' and 'knows' would be in one class, the 'relative' class, while 'man' would be in the 'absolute' class. This reading was persuasive because it was able to solve two traditional interpretative problems: to find the place of 'same' in the scheme of *Sophist* 255c14, and to find the principle that lies at the bottom of the Greatest Difficulty of *Parmenides* 133c–134e. §3.4 argued that, on the basis of both the *Sophist* and *Parmenides* passages, the 'relative' class of terms should be understood as 'reciprocal relatives', which is to say, all the relative terms come in pairs of correlative terms: there is no evidence of a wider class of terms which are merely relative, in these passages. Finally, I characterised these relative terms without appealing to Owenian notions such as dyadic relations and their converses: reciprocal relatives can be specified as pairs of relative terms which feature each other as formal objects.

The first impact that these findings have on our wider understanding of relative terms in Plato is that we can give a characterisation of the relationship between the taxonomic question and the logical question. In Chapters 1 and 2, I discussed the notion of formal objects, but now we can see that this notion is relevant to the taxonomic question as well. One of the classes of terms in Plato's taxonomy is the 'reciprocal relative'. The *Parmenides* has helped us to see that the taxonomy is dividing 'absolute' terms from the so called 'reciprocal relative' terms, and that means that the relative class in the taxonomy is those terms which (a) have formal objects and (b) have a correlative term which has the relative as its formal object. An answer to the logical question 'What are relative terms relative to?' helps us answer the taxonomic question 'What is the difference between relative and absolute terms?'

This chapter has also helped us to flesh out the sense of ὅ περ ἔ στιν. We saw in the *Parmenides* passage that this expression is used in the plural to describe what reciprocal relatives are in relation to each other. In Chapter 1, §1.2, we saw this expression, unusual for Plato, is

found in the context of relative terms, and that it specifies that a thing should be considered '*qua* itself', that is to say, picking it out not by any accidental quality it may have, but rather by the quality under discussion. Having examined the *Parmenides* discussion of relatives as reciprocal relatives that define each other, we can see that that initial assessment was justified. 'Master' *qua* master has 'slave' as its formal object. Likewise, 'slave' *qua* slave has 'master' as its formal object. In this sense they 'are what they are' in relation to each other. But, as we have seen in the *Parmenides*, this notion of reciprocal correlatives defining each other is what makes it true that a master *qua* master is what it is of slave. We used this understanding to help solve a problem which has been present since Chapter 1, namely that Plato mentions relatives as having certain 'correlatives' which neither reciprocate nor seem to be relative terms at all.

This chapter helps us to see that the Owenian metaphysics of dyadic relations is not needed for two of the most important passages bearing on relative terms in Plato. Although initially I relied on an account of reciprocal relatives which would be amenable to the Owenian reading, namely one using the notion of a two–place relation, we saw that that account was in fact redundant as a reading of the discussion of relatives in the *Parmenides*: reciprocity in terms of mutual definition was able to do the job perfectly adequately, when the notion of formal objects for relatives was introduced. This also lends further support to the conjunctive reading of relatives in Plato, since that reading emphasised the importance of formal objects in understanding relatives, as well as their importance for the definition of relative terms.

Finally, we were able to see how to solve the apparent problems of non–reciprocating relatives in Plato. When described in the correct way, relatives do always reciprocate with their correlatives. Plato has available to him the tools to ensure that he can specify that relatives are described in the correct way: the relative is always properly described *qua* itself and the correlative can always be properly described in the correct way. In summary, we can see that, under the conjunctive reading, relatives are a conjunction of a monadic property with an intentional orientation towards a correlative formal object. Both the relative and the correlative are general terms, not individuals and they are guaranteed to reciprocate with each other, when described properly. Taxonomically, there is a distinction between relatives as described above and absolute terms. This is the conception of the nature of relatives we have discerned in Plato. The two following chapters will examine the purpose Plato had in introducing a conception of relative terms.

Chapter 4

The previous chapters have presented my reconstruction of the nature of relative terms for Plato. This chapter and the next examine two attempts to explain why Plato developed the concept of relative terms. Chapter 5 looks at an answer that has not yet been proposed in the literature: that Plato developed the concept of relatives to assist in the construction and criticism of arguments. But this chapter looks at an answer that has proved popular, namely, that Plato distinguished a class of relative terms for an ontological purpose, that is, as part of an argument for the introduction of Forms.

A certain line of argument concerning the introduction of Forms is sometimes attributed to Plato, including by Owen himself.[148] Along with other similar arguments, it is sometimes called the 'Argument from Relativity'. It runs like this. Exemplars of certain terms are never found in the sensible world, because those terms are semantically ambiguous, or otherwise suspect. There must be some exemplar, because that is how we acquire the ability to correctly apply a term. So there are Forms, which are exemplars of these terms. If this is a correct construal of Plato's thought, it seems that the terms in question are ambiguous *because* they are relative terms. So relative terms are introduced by Plato to help articulate one of his reasons for introducing Forms. Relative terms explain the ambiguity, which explains why there are no exemplars in the sensible world, which, with certain other assumptions, explains why Plato posits Forms. So, the Owenian may conclude, since relative terms are part of the story of why Plato posits Forms, relative terms have an ontological purpose in Plato's thought.

Clearly, a number of the claims that this line of thought makes are questionable. But in the present chapter I want to resist the conclusion by denying that Plato thinks certain terms are suspect because they are relatives. None of the texts on which this Owenian line of thought relies claim that relatives *qua* relatives are suspicious or ambiguous.[149] It may be true that Plato thinks that certain terms are suspect, or ambiguous, or do not have exemplars in the sensible world. It may be true that some relatives are included in that class of terms, and even used as examples in the texts where that argument is presented. But it is not *because* those terms are relatives that they

[148] In the context of discussing a certain argument in the *Peri Ideon*, Owen attributes this line of thought to Plato as a correct characterisation of Plato's thought by the author of the *Peri Ideon* (Owen, 1957: 109–10); cf. Bostock, 1994: iii. 10–27.
[149] Cf. McCabe, 1994: 38; 43–4.

are suspicious. Thus, my criticism will be effective against any attempt to claim that relatives are suspicious because they are relatives.

4.1 Owen and the 'Argument from Relativity'

Much of Owen's discussion of relatives in Plato comes from his discussion of a certain argument in a fragment of Aristotle's *Peri Ideon*.[150] Alexander records an argument for the separation of Forms and participants, along with criticisms of it. This is, in Owen's view, a logically sharpened version of Plato's 'Argument from Relativity'. The passage begins with the observation that there are three ways in which a predicate, *F*, can apply to items non–homonymously: (a) because those things are strictly what the predicate signifies (e.g. when we call Socrates and Plato 'men'); (b) because they are likenesses of things that are really *F* (such as when we call two paintings of men 'men'); (c) because one of them is the model and the others are likenesses (e.g. if we were to call Socrates and a painting of Socrates 'men'). The author proceeds to argue that 'the equal itself' cannot be predicated of things in the sensible world in any of these ways, so, when used of items in this world, can only be used homonymously:

> II Now when we predicate 'absolutely equal' (*to ison auto*) of things in this world, we use the predicate homonymously. For (a) the same definition (*logos*) does not fit them all; (b) nor are we referring to things that are really equal, since the dimensions of sensible things are fluctuating continuously and indeterminate. (c) Nor yet does the definition of 'equal' apply without qualification (*akribōs*) to anything in this world.[151]

This argument is widely taken to reflect a line of thought attributable to Plato himself.[152] I am not here investigating the argument from relatives as presented in the *Peri Ideon*; rather, my interest

[150] This treatise appears in Alexander's commentary on *Metaphysics* I.9. The text discussing the 'Argument from Relativity' is printed on 124–5 of Ross' *Fragmenta Selecta Aristotelis*. See Owen, 1957. As well as Owen's paper, Fine devoted a book, *On Ideas* to the treatise (Fine, 1993). Dirk Baltzly discusses both Fine's and Owen's positions on the 'Argument from Relativity' in Baltzly, 1997.

[151] This is Owen's own translation (Owen, 1957:103). I have retained the labels he uses for the various clauses.

[152] See Owen, 1957:109; Owen, 1968:114–5; Fine, 1993:151; Baltzly, 1997: 178. Clearly, the question of how to construe the argument in the *Peri Ideon* and what one takes to be Plato's line of thought are not independent questions: we may want to construe the argument one way, depending on how we think Plato is arguing, and vice versa.

is in the way Owen interprets this argument because he thinks it represents a line of thought discernable in Plato.

Under Owen's reading, II(a) says that for different cases of equality, the *logos* must be completed in different ways. For example, I have two pairs of rulers, *ab* and *cd*, such that *a* is equal in length to *b*, and *c* is equal in length to *d*, but *a* and *b* are 30cm and *c* and *d* are 50cm. In the case of the pair *ab* the *definition* of 'equal', as it applies to *a*, must be 'having the same length as *b*' and the definition of 'equal', as it applies to *b*, must be 'having the same length as *a*'. In the case of the pair *cd* the definition of 'equal', as it applies to *c,* must be 'having the same length as *d*' and vice versa. II(c) makes, for Owen, the complementary point that the definition of 'equal' does not apply, without further specification, to anything in this world: 'having the same length as…' does not apply to anything in the sensible world, without a further specification, because it is not a complete syntactic or semantic unit.

Thus, for Owen, the point of II(a) is that the specification of various expressions which would complete the predicate 'equal' can form no part of the meaning of the predicate. If the specifications did form part of the meaning, 'equal' would have to be ambiguous: 'is equal to *b*' is true of *a*, but not true of *c*. So in the two cases, 'equal' would mean different things. The point of II(c) is that when the specifications are removed, then the definition ceases to apply to any items that there are in the sensible world. 'Being equal to …' does not correctly describe anything in this world, because it is not a well formed predicate and so it cannot describe anything. And if that were the definition of 'equal', 'equal' would not apply to anything. We could put the point as a dilemma: either the specifications form part of the meaning of 'equal' or they do not. If they do, then 'equal' is ambiguous. If they do not, then 'equal' does not apply to anything in this world. But in neither case can we use the predicate 'equal' accurately of things in this world.[153] The same goes, with the appropriate changes, for 'beautiful' and 'good'.[154]

It is important to note that that fact that the example used is a relative term is essential to the functioning of Owen's 'Argument from Relativity'. The argument works, if it works, because 'equal' is a relative term; the argument relies on what Owen takes to be the logical properties of the predicate 'equal', namely, that it is incomplete and can be completed with different objects. Owen could have put his point in the following way. Equal is an incomplete term. In a use like '*a* is equal', if we do not complete the term, then it fails to apply. If we do complete it, with '*b*', then it successfully applies to '*a*', but will not apply to '*c*' unless we complete it in a different way.

[153] See Baltzly, 1997: 198 for criticism of this reading.
[154] Owen, 1957: 109.

Hence it is ambiguous. In short, the argument relies on 'equal' being a relative term: if it were not relative, for Owen, it would not be incomplete and so the argument would not be able to run. It could not work, for example, with 'man' substituted for 'equal'. But it does work for the predicates 'beautiful' and 'good', because Owen's reading of 'incomplete' is so generous: 'beautiful' is incomplete under Owen's account because '*a* is beautiful', even though it is a syntactically complete unit, can be supplemented with 'for a woman'.[155]

If Owen is correct, and this line of thought is reflected in Plato's own writings, then it seems that relatives do have an ontological purpose. This argument for the Forms requires only that relative terms are eitherambiguous or non-applicable: the argument could still go through even if all non-relative terms were unambiguous and applicable. Since the argument only works because the terms in question are relative, the purpose of relatives must be, at least, to make arguments like the one above persuasive. One response would be that the line of thought given in the *Peri Ideon* argument, at least on Owen's reading, is not found in Plato. There certainly are no passages where Plato advances an argument with the same logical structure as that in the *Peri Ideon*. But such a reply seems captious: such arguments were clearly being presented in the Academy, Owen might reply, and this argument was, if not Platonic in origin, at least written by someone with a deep knowledge of Platonism. Indeed, the argument provides good, if partial, evidence for Plato's reasons for positing the Forms.

A better reply might be this. As far as the 'Argument from Relativity' can be recovered from Plato's texts, it does not make essential use of the fact that the terms of the argument are relative terms. So in this one way, the argument Owen recovers from the *Peri Ideon* does not reflect Plato's thinking. But that is sufficient to show that there is no ontological purpose for the introduction of relative terms. If it merely happens to be the case that relative terms are used in the 'Argument from Relativity', then Plato did not introduce them to argue for the Forms. If that is the case, then they do not have an ontological purpose. So the classic assumption about why Plato introduced relative terms has no basis. Hence, the bulk of this chapter will be devoted to examining the Platonic arguments that most resemble that in the *Peri Ideon*. I will argue that they do not make use of relative terms *qua* relative.

4.2 The Equals Argument

[155] Owen, 1968: 113–4.

Owen agrees that the passage from Plato that most resembles the argument from relatives in the *Peri Ideon* is the 'equals argument' at *Phaedo* 74a9–d7.[156] Unfortunately, its interpretation is contentious. In this section I will argue that on any plausible reading, the argument does not make any use of the properties of the term equal as a relative and so the line of thought above attributed to Owen does not have a foothold in Plato's own texts. First, I will outline the argument and three lines of reply to one particular interpretative crux. Only one of these ways of reading the argument would make the argument rely on the relative properties of the term equal. But I will show that that reading is implausible. I will argue for a preference between the remaining two readings, but, whichever we prefer, we will be able to see that the argument does not rely on equal being a relative term.

In the *Phaedo* the equals argument is introduced to show that Forms are not identical to any sensible, and so can satisfy one of the conditions on recollection, namely, that the item that reminds you is different from the item of which you are reminded (*Phaedo* 73c7–9). Socrates goes on to give the following argument for the non–identity of items that we can encounter in the sensible world and items in the Form realm:

> σκόπει δὲ καὶ τῇ δε. ἆ ρ' ού λίθοι μὲ ν ἴ σοι καὶ ξύλα έ νίοτε ταύ τὰ ὅ ντα τῷ μὲ ν ἴ σα φαίνεται, τῷ δ' οὔ ;[157] Πάνυ μὲ ν οὖ ν. Τί δέ; αύ τὰ τὰ ἴ σα ἔ στιν ὅ τε ἄ νισά σοι έ φάνη, ἢ ὴ ί σότης ά νισότης; Ού δεπώποτέ γε, ὦ Σώκρατες. Ού ταύ τὸ ν ἄ ρα έ στίν, ἦ δ' ὅ ς, ταῦ τά τε τὰ ἴ σα καὶ αύ τὸ τὸ ἴ σον. (74b8–c5)
>
> 'Look at it this way: don't equal stones and sticks, while being the very same ones, sometimes seem equal to one but not to another?' 'Certainly.' 'What then? Have the equals themselves ever seemed to you to be unequal or equality inequality?' 'Never yet, Socrates.' 'So,' said he, 'the equal itself and those equal things are not the same.'

The argument applies the principle that identical items have all the same properties. If there is a property that one item has and another does not, then the two items are not identical. The argument suggests that the sensible equals have a property that the Form Equals lacks. At first, it seems that the property which the sensible equals have, but which the Forms lack is *sometimes*

[156] Owen, 1957: 108–9; Owen, 1968: 114–115.
[157] The T and W manuscripts read τοτέ μὲ ν…τοτέ δ' οὔ …

seeming equal to one, but not to another, although we will consider immediately below whether this, or some other property, operates here. Whatever property it is, Socrates goes on to claim that the sensible equals have that property, but the Form Equals lacks it. So the Form Equals cannot be identical to any sensible equal.

The following interpretative question is the one most relevant to whether the argument makes essential use of the relative nature of the term equal: what property do the equal sticks have which the Equals themselves lack? The answer largely depends on how we understand the datives at 74b8–9, 'τῷ μὲ ν… τῷ δ' οὔ ', a line which I translated as 'equal stones and sticks, while being the very same ones, sometimes seem equal to one but not to another'. There are three interpretative options on the table: Either, we read the datives as neuter; we read them as masculine; or, we follow an alternative manuscript reading of 'τότε…τότε…' at 74b8–9, and take the contrast to be between different times. Only the first of these readings supports the view that this argument makes essential use of the relative nature of 'equal'. I will deal with that reading first, and show that that it is not plausible. Of the remaining two readings, I will state and argue for my preferred reading, but you could pick either and it would be consistent with my assertion that the relative nature of these terms plays no role in the argument.

First, then, we might think that the datives are neuter.[158] This would give a reading of the premise as 'don't equal stones and sticks, while being the very same ones, sometimes seem equal to one stick but not equal to another stick?' This forces us to envisage three sticks, not a pair. This version suggests that we take a stick, *a,* and sometimes it seems equal to a second stick, *b*, and not to a third stick, *c*. This reading, with three items at stake, would perhaps make the equals argument a closer parallel to the arguments of *Republic*, 523c10ff, *Theaetetus*, 154c1–d6 and *Phaedo* 102a11ff. But Sedley, 2007: 76 argues that the language of the argument does not support an interpretation involving three sticks: the language suggests that it is a pair of sticks that are being considered and sometimes they appear equal *to each other* and sometimes not.[159] I find this compelling, but I will not rest my argument on it – the reading of the datives as neuter fails for more reasons than one.

Taking the datives as neuter makes the argument rely on the relativity of the term 'equal'. The first premise is that sensible items sometimes appear *F* and sometimes appear un–*F*. The second premise is that the Form *F* never appears un–*F*, so the sensible *F* things cannot be

[158] This is Owen's own way of taking the datives: Owen, 1957:108n35. See also, McCabe, 1994:41. Dancy, 2004: 269 also may take this line, but his views on this are not clear to me.
[159] Matthen, 1983:98 makes a similar point.

identical to the Form *F*. In the case where *F* is replaced with 'equal' and the datives are understood to indicate that *a* is equal to *b*, but not to *c*, what explains the fact that *a* sometimes appears equal but sometimes does not is the fact that *a* is related to two different relata. So it makes essential use of the fact that 'equal' is a relative term. The argument simply would not work with 'man' substituted for 'equal': *a* cannot be a man in relation to *b*, but not to *c.* So taking the datives as neuter supports the broader Owenian line that in the 'Argument from Relativity' the status of the terms as relatives plays an essential role.

But there are some serious problems with taking the datives in this passage as neuter.[160] One is that every case of the correct application of 'equal' to some item, will also come with the correct application of the term 'unequal' to that item, at least in the sensible world. This makes it difficult to explain why Plato uses the expression 'sometimes' at 74b8: such sticks should always seem equal to one, but not to another. A response to this might be to deny that every correct application of the term 'equal' to something will also be a correct application of the term unequal: if there exist only two items, which are the same length, they are equal, without there being a third thing to which they are unequal. This reply is inadequate because the neuter reading implies that Socrates is considering precisely the first scenario and excluding the second: he is supposed to be making the point that, in cases where there are three items, two equal to each other, one unequal to the first two, *a* may appear equal to *b* but not to *c*. In all cases, where there are three items with those properties, these conflicting appearances will hold, not only in some cases.

The reading of these datives as neuter poses the greatest threat to my view that the 'Argument from Relativity' in Plato does not need use the terms in question because they are relative. Reading the datives as neuter means that 'equal' turns out to be a relation that holds between *a* and *b*, but not between *a* and *c*. If this is the case, then the argument will only work with relative terms and relative terms construed the Owenian way. But reading the datives as neuter seems to face some grave difficulties. That is not to say that these difficulties could not be overcome with determined effort on the part of a committed Owenian, or someone committed to the position that the 'Argument from Relativity' in Plato relies on the examples being relative terms. That is why a compelling, alternative account of the equals argument is needed. Before I articulate one, however, I wish to mention another reading of the datives, as masculine, which is compatible with my view, but which I do not endorse.

[160] See Gallop, 1975: 122.

If we read the datives as masculine, the first premise of the argument should be read as 'seem equal to one person… not seem equal to another person'. For some pair of sticks, *a* and *b*, to some viewing subject it appears that *a* and *b* are equal to each other, but the same pair of sticks appears unequal to a different viewing subject. This is never the case with the Form Equal. So the two are not identical. So differing points of view are involved and the property the sticks have which the Equal lacks is that the former, but not the latter, appear different from different points of view. In this case, it is obvious that the argument makes no essential use of the relative nature of the example of 'equal'. Substituting a non–relative term, such as 'man' yields an argument which is just as valid: to some subject, it appears that Achilles is a man, to another subject it appears that he is not a man. But this is never the case with the Form Man, so Achilles is not identical with the Form Man.

While it would be consistent with my position, reading the datives as masculine is not satisfying for a number of reasons.[161] First, the σοί at line 74c1 refers to Simmias. This means that the argument is that the equal things seem equal to someone and unequal to someone else, but the Equals themselves never seemed unequal to Simmias. But then the argument fails to pick out a property that the equal things have which the Equal itself lacks. Instead, the argument is invalid, picking out a property that the equal things have (appearing different to different observers) and picking out a *different* property that the Equals themselves lack (always appearing equal to Simmias). We could, with enough interpretative licence, understand 'Simmias' to simply stand in not for just somebody, but for *every*body. That is, the σοί could represent the consensus of intersubjective agreement. The argument would then make the point that people disagree over whether equal things are equal, but never whether the Equals themselves are equal.

Even if we make that reply, this reading still faces a difficulty. Reading the datives as masculine makes the argument commit the fallacy of substituting co–referring terms into an intentional context. Compare the equals argument with the following:

> (1) To some people it has appeared that the evening star is the morning star, but to others it has not;
> (2) To no one has it appeared that the evening star is not the evening star;
> (3) So, the morning star is not the evening star.[162]

[161] These reasons are detailed in Mills, 1957: 129–30; Sedley, 2007: 77–78.
[162] Based on Sedley, 2007:78.

As the above counter–example shows, intentional contexts, like those involving 'appears', stop such substitutions from being truth preserving. Thus, reading the datives as masculine makes Plato's argument a fallacy. As I pointed out above, this reading does not yield a version of the equals argument which is inconsistent with my broader aims of showing that the 'Argument from Relativity' does not make essential use of relative terms. So if there are some means of saving it, my overall view will not be upset. However, I think that the reasons for taking the alternative manuscript reading of these lines is compelling, and it offers more security against an Owenian reading, as I will now show.

In light of the difficulties for both the masculine and neuter readings of the datives, some scholars have adopted an alternative manuscript reading of 74b8. The T manuscript and **β** manuscript family of the *Phaedo* read 'τότε…τότε…' against the **δ** manuscript family, which has 'τῷ… τῷ…'.[163] T and **β** give a reading of the lines as 'Look at it this way: don't equal stones and sticks, while being the very same ones, sometimes seem equal at one time but not at another?'[164] The property which the sensible equals have but which the Equals themselves lack is that they appear equal or unequal at different times. Adopting this reading would make the argument have the following form: (1) *F* sensibles appear *F* at one time, but un–*F* at another; (2) The Form *F* never appears un–*F*; (3) So, *F* sensibles are not the same as the Form *F*. This argument may not escape the fallacy of substituting into an intentional context.[165] Nevertheless, the other terms mentioned at 75c11–d1 will fit easily into the argument here: it is well known that the same thing can seem good or beautiful at one time, but not another.

The text–critical evidence bears out the preference for the reading. According to the apparatus of the latest OCT (Duke, *et al*. 1995), the T and W (**β** family**)** manuscripts agree, reading 'τότε…τότε…' against B (and the **δ** family**)**, which alone reads 'τῷ… τῷ…'. And of the large number of cases in the *Phaedo* where T and W disagree with B, B is held to carry the right

[163] The details of the families of MSS are given in Duke, *et al*. 1995: 86–87. Burnet's older OCT just refers to the principle source in each family, that is W for the **β** family and B for the **δ** family. Burnet tends to prefer the readings of B over T and W (i.e. prefer **δ** over **β** and T), when compared to Duke *et al*.

[164] Those who adopt this manuscript reading include Verdenius (1958), Vicaire (1983), Dixsaut (1991), Ebert (2004: 34 n. 2 and 210 n. 12), Dancy (2004: 267), Sedley, 2007: 79. Neither the OCT of Burnet nor that of Duke *et al.* adopts the reading, and the only English translator to do so is Alex Long in Sedley and Long, 2010. I think my contribution to this side of the debate is to add some further evidence for this alternative manuscript reading, and buttress it against some possible objections.

[165] A counterexample might be: (1) The only even prime sometimes appears to be 2, sometimes not; (2) 2 never appears not to be 2; (3) therefore 2 is not the only even prime.

reading in fewer than 3 out of 10 cases.[166] So, on the whole, an agreement between T and W is good text–critical evidence for the T and W reading.

One worry with this reading is the specifically temporal character of the property that the sensible equals have but which the Form lacks. It seems strange that Plato should insist that sensible equals appear unequal to each other only at *different* times, not allowing them to appear simultaneously unequal, whether to the same observer or not. However, it does not seem that the wording excludes two sticks appearing simultaneously equal and unequal and indeed it is a familiar enough experience from optical illusions that two lines may appear equal and unequal to the same observer at the same time.[167] In fact, the synchronicity of these experiences is what renders them puzzling. The 'τότε…τότε…' reading seems to stress the diachronic differing appearances for no obvious reason.

We could, however, find support for this reading from *Theaetetus* 207d10–e3. There, Theaetetus rearticulates Socrates' principle concerning the relationship between knowledge and the elements constituting an item: 'Do you mean that we believed that the same syllable at one time (τοτὲ μέν) had one letter and at another time (τοτὲ δέ) another letter and at one time (τοτὲ μέν) placed the same letter in the proper syllable and at another time (τοτὲ δέ) in the wrong syllable?' It becomes clear when Socrates gives his example that these different 'times' actually refer to different *contexts*, specifically, which letters belong to which syllables in the contexts of specific words. Someone learning to spell might write the syllable 'The' correctly in 'Theaetetus', but wrongly write the same syllable as 'Te' in 'Theodorus'. The judgements about which letters belong to which syllables might take place at different times, but that is irrelevant to the point Socrates is making: only the differing contexts matter.

The argument is supposed to refute the second attempt to cash out the idea of an 'account' in the definition of knowledge as true judgement with an account. The second notion of 'account', introduced at 207a–b is the enumeration of elements. The point of 207e5–208a3 is that in one word, 'Theaetetus', a learner might correctly specify the elements of that name, but in

[166] There are 175 cases in the *Phaedo* where T and W agree with each other and disagree with B. In 127 of these cases, T and W carry what is judged to be the right reading. This count is my own and is based on Burnet's apparatus. Burnet tends to trust B more readily than Duke *et al*. do

[167] The Müller–Lyer illusion is modern. The closest ancient counterpart may be from architecture. The Greeks did understand optical illusions well enough to construct columns that were in fact bowed so that the sides would appear straight (entasis). Entasis is not quite a parallel (!) case, as it uses non–straight lines to give the appearance of straight lines, while the Müller–Lyer illusion makes lines of identical length appear non–identical in length. See also Sextus Empiricus, *PH*. I.118–119.

another word, 'Theodorus', he might not. In this case, it is hard to say that he knows the spelling of the *first* word, even though he correctly gave an account of it. The learner just got lucky. It seems that, without being able to reliably re–identify the syllable 'The' in other contexts, enumerating the letters correctly in one context is not sufficient for knowledge.

But why does Socrates assume that we cannot know the syllable in one context but not in another?[168] One might be tempted to say that the learner knows the syllable 'The' in the context of 'Theaetetus', but not in the context of 'Theodorus'. Or, to put the point in terms of functional elements,[169] someone might know how gears function in a bike, but not how they function in a car. There are, intuitively, many cases where we would say that an agent knows something in one context, but not in another. But Plato seems not to allow that this context–sensitivity resolves the apparent contradiction between knowing the syllable 'The' (in 'Theaetetus') and not knowing the syllable 'The' (in 'Theodorus'). The fact that different contexts are available does not seem to matter to Plato: either you know the syllable in all contexts, or none.[170]

If we adopt the 'τότε…τότε…' reading of *Phaedo* 74b8 and that construction can be thought of as parallel its use in the *Theaetetus* passage, then we can understand 'context' quite broadly. In the *Theaetetus* passage, the difference in context of the syllables is the difference between structured wholes. Those structured wholes also appear to have functional parts. The emphasis is on the contexts in which the letters find themselves, not the perspectives of differing observers. Transposed to the equals argument we could understand the argument to be making the following point. Two sticks appear equal to each other in one context, but appear unequal to each other in another context. The Form Equal, being free from context, would not have this property, so the Form Equal will not be identical to any instance of the Form equal. The context does affect whether two sticks appear equal in length or not, as the Müller–Lyer illusion shows. The expression that Plato uses to characterise the Forms, saying that each Form is αὐ τὸ καθ᾽ αὐ τό, simply means that they are context–independent. Whatever further characteristics Forms might have, their context–independence must be central; this contrasts with sensibles, which are embedded in a context.

We can now see that the equals argument does not make any essential use of the fact that 'equal' is a relative term. First, on the reading I am presenting here, we can explain Socrates'

[168] McDowell, 1973:253; Jordan, 1983: 33
[169] Cf. Sedley, 2004: 171.
[170] The claim that it is not possible to both know and not know is put forward several times in the *Theaetetus*' discussion of false belief (see 188a10–b2; b3–5; 191b7–9; 196cl–2; c7–d3; 198c7–9; 199a7–9; c5–6) but also before (165b2–4) and after (203d4–6) that discussion.

remark at 75c11–d1 that larger, smaller, beautiful, good and holy fit into the argument on the grounds that, like equal, they are *context–sensitive*. That is to say, the context matters to whether we can legitimately call something 'larger' or 'beautiful'. Any sensible thing that has those properties has them in virtue of the context in which it finds itself. It seems to me that this is the aspect of the terms on which the equals argument focuses – the apparent context–dependence of properties when applied to sensible items as opposed to the context–free way in which properties are exhibited by the Forms.

I admit that the argument works with 'equal' or 'larger' or 'beautiful', but not *because* they are relative terms: it works with those terms because they are context–sensitive. Just as equal lines appear unequal in some contexts (and the Müller–Lyer diagram is one such context), so whether some item is beautiful depends on the context in which it finds itself; whether an action is just or pious depends on the context in which it is done.[171] The fact that the example given in this argument is a relative is incidental to the functioning of the argument. Owen, I believe, has been misled into thinking that the 'Argument from Relativity' relies on the examples given being relative. But the above shows that the equals argument, at least, is best construed as exploiting the fact that some terms are context–sensitive in their application. Those will be ones which can be shown to be non–identical to any Form. So this construal of the argument resists the idea that relative terms play an essential role in the 'Argument from Relativity'. My claim that the 'Argument from Relativity' does not rely on relatives has a pleasing air of paradox which allows us to see that the Argument relies on relativity in the sense of context-sensitivity, but not relativity in the sense that it employs relative terms.

But, Owen might reply, surely it is obvious that all relative terms are context–sensitive, and all context–sensitive terms are relative. It is easy to see that, for Plato, neither generalisation holds. Take the claim that all relatives are context–sensitive. A counter–example to this would be slave. Slave is a perfectly good relative, for Plato (*Parmenides* 133d7–134a1). But, regardless of the context, an individual who is a slave is still a slave and never a non–slave.[172] The same applies to relative terms such as master (*Parmenides* 133d–134a), father and brother (*Symposium* 199d2–7). Indeed, knowledge, also given in *Parmenides* 133c–134a, is an excellent example,

[171] As Plato was aware, e.g. *Republic*, 331e–334a; *Euthyphro*, 6e–7a.

[172] One possible difficulty with this claim is an individual slave moving from one jurisdiction, where slavery was legal, to another, where it was not. In practice, this typically did not result in the automatic emancipation of the slave. The example of the relative term 'husband' may be better here: if you are a husband in one jurisdiction, you are a husband in all, even if some jurisdictions do not recognise the possibility of your union, for example in gay marriage. If two men are legally married in Massachusetts, they are married in Maryland even though the latter does not allow gay marriage.

since it does have an opposite, ignorance, but there is no context in which knowledge becomes ignorance. And we have already seen counter–examples to the converse claim, that for Plato all context–sensitive terms are relative: beautiful, holy and just (*Phaedo* 7411–d1) are cases that are context–sensitive, but not relative, on Plato's account.[173]

As well as the issue of how to take the datives, one other interpretative crux is why Plato suddenly switches to the plural at 74c1: 'the Equals themselves' (αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα). Various explanations have been put forward for this unannounced switch in grammatical number. One family of explanations tries to take the plural as a reference to something other than the Form Equal.[174] But if the expression does refer to something other than the Form Equal, then that suggestion is not taken up elsewhere in the text of the equals argument or the recollection argument. This is a good reason to think that the plural has the same referent as the singular used elsewhere in the equals argument (74c4–5).

The most popular way to explain the use of the plural is by appeal to the concept of equality: the grammatical plural reflects something in the metaphysics or semantics of equality. Sedley (2007:82–4) argues that this view can be supported because the only other places where Plato uses the plural designation for Forms are places where the logical features of the concept to which the Form corresponds make the plural appropriate: e.g. αὐτὰ τὰ ὅμοια, 'the Similars themselves', (*Parmenides* 129b1). Sedley says that 'Similarity, like Equality, is naturally viewed as an internal relation between two or more symmetrically related items. If *x* is equal to *y*, *y* is equal to *x*; and likewise, if *x* is similar to *y*, *y* is similar to *x*' (Sedley, 2007:83). He goes on to point out that this 'logical' explanation of the plural does not force us to follow Geach (Geach, 1956) into positing some kind of double headed Form of Equal, exhibiting perfect equality; according to Sedley, then, there is no reason to regard Forms as paradigmatic examples.

The conjunctive reading of relatives allows us to see why the conceptual explanation of the switch is correct. What explains the switch to 'the Equals themselves' is that, analogously to the relative 'same' discussed in Chapter 3, the correlative of 'equal' is 'equal'. Therefore, an abrupt switch to the plural is perfectly explicable: the Equals themselves never appear unequal, since the Equals themselves are reciprocally equal. At *Parmenides* 133d7–134a1, the reciprocal correlative Forms Master and Slave seem to be presented as master and slave of each other. This

[173] This supports a growing trend in the literature to view Aristotle's notion of relative terms as not having a significantly wider scope than Plato's. See Harari, 2011: 536n42. I agree with Harari's claim that the scope of Plato and Aristotle's relatives is not significantly different, but for the opposite reason: I hold that Aristotle and Plato have a narrow class, which excludes examples like 'beautiful' and 'just', while Harari holds that they both share a broader class, which includes both those terms.

[174] E.g. Bluck 1955: 67 n. 3; Hackworth 1955: 69 n. 2;Wedin 1978; cf. reply by Smith (1980), Dimas 2003: 197–203.

would make their correlativity bind them into a pairing, for which a plural designation would be appropriate, if Master and Slave were not different Forms. Compare this example with the relative and correlative pair 'husband' and 'wife'. For this pairing, there is a generic plural, namely 'spouses'. Like the pairing 'husband' and 'wife' the reciprocal 'equals' does have a plural which is a perfectly natural designation for the pairing. So because it helps to solve an important interpretative question about this argument, we can hold that conjunctive relatives are operative here. This explanation of the sudden switch to the plural is not available to Owen because he does not recognise the reciprocity between a relative and a correlative, so he would not recognise that the reciprocally related pair would be naturally designated by a plural.

If Plato's argument concerning the Forms made essential use of relatives, then it could have been argued that relative terms were introduced for ontological reasons, namely, as part of an argument for the separation of Forms and participants. On the basis of the *Peri Ideon*, an Owenian might argue that, for Plato, the argument does make essential use of relative terms. I have shown that this way of understanding the argument, at least as presented in the *Phaedo*, fails. The best way to understand *Phaedo* 74b–c is as making essential use of the context–sensitivity of some terms, rather than the relative nature of those terms. Of course, many relative terms will be context–sensitive, as will many non–relative terms. But the most likely reading of the argument makes it rely on context–sensitivity, rather than the relative nature of certain terms. This section has been quite narrow in its proofs: I have shown that, in one case, context–sensitivity is the operative feature. In the next section, I extend the analysis of 'context–sensitivity' and offer some general considerations that militate against relatives being the logical driving force of what may be other presentations of the 'Argument from Relativity'.

4.3 Context–sensitivity and relative terms

It seems that there are two objections to the above criticism of Owen's position. The first is that the idea of context–sensitive terms is under developed. I have assumed an intuitive contrast between context–sensitive and context–insensitive terms and asserted that it is different from the contrast between relative and non–relative terms. But Owen could put pressure on this point: is the former intuition well-founded? We might think, for example, that there is no important difference between a context–sensitive term and a relation. After all, it appears that in many cases, a context–sensitive term will simply be a relation. 'Large' I take to be context-sensitive,

and ‘larger than’ I take to be relative. But, Owen might ask, if I say ‘*x* is large’, do I not mean ‘*x* is larger than average’? Call this the ‘analysis of context’ objection. The second objection might be that the criticism outlined above is too narrow. The ‘Argument from Relativity’ was supposed to be a general line of thought in Plato. I have only shown, at best, that context–sensitivity is the operative notion in one, albeit important, source for the ‘Argument from Relativity’: there are more sources to consider. Call this the ‘scope’ objection. §4.3 addresses these criticisms. First, I will identify a passage where Plato is explicitly discussing the notion of context. This will help me to formulate what could be a Platonic analysis of context. It will become clear that this analysis does not identify relations with context–sensitive terms. I will then go on to show how these general considerations of context–sensitivity would apply to other sources which one might claim reflect the ‘Argument from Relativity’.

What is the basis for the claim that, for Plato, certain terms are context–sensitive? The first, and best–known, passage is at *Symposium* 211a.[175] There a contrast is drawn between the beautiful things that a lover encounters, and Beauty itself which he encounters at the height of his ascent:

1. 211a1–2 [Beauty itself] always is and never becomes, nor is destroyed nor waxes nor wanes (ἀ εὶ ὂ ν καὶ οὔ τε γιγνόμενον οὔ τε ἀ πολλύμενον, οὔ τε αὐ ξανόμενον οὔ τε φθίνον).
2. 211a2 Neither is beautiful it in some aspect and ugly in some aspect (ἔ πειτα ού τῇ μὲ ν καλόν, τῇ δ' αἰ σχρόν).
3. 211a3 Nor at one time beautiful and at another time not (ού δὲ τοτὲ μέν, τοτὲ δὲ οὔ).
4. 211a3–4 Nor in relation to one thing beautiful, in relation to another ugly (ού δὲ πρὸ ς μὲ ν τὸ καλόν, πρὸ ς δὲ τὸ αἰ σχρόν).
5. 211a4 Nor in one place beautiful, but in another ugly (ού δ' ἔ νθα μὲ ν καλόν, ἔ νθα δὲ αἰ σχρόν).
6. 211a5 Nor is it beautiful to some people, but not beautiful to other people (τισὶ μὲ ν ὂ ν καλόν, τισὶ δὲ αἰ σχρόν).

This passage endeavours to list ways in which the Form Beauty is free from context. We can infer from this the ways in which things can be embedded in a context. The text mentions a set of

[175] Although cf. *Phaedo* 78d10–e6.

contextualizing factors that apply to the sensible beautiful things but which do not apply to the Form Beauty. The first of these factors, that Beauty always is and never becomes, is arguably explained in (2)–(6).

The explanation is that sensible things find themselves in contexts of various kinds. (2) represents the 'aspect' contextualizing factor. 'Aspect' is vague, and we are left to guess at examples, but Vlastos' suggestion that a sensible might be beautiful in colour, but ugly in shape seems plausible.[176] (3) seems more straightforward, mentioning different times as a contextualizing factor. But does Plato mean that sensible beautiful things change their state between times, making this a point about physical mutability;[177] or is the point that even without undergoing internal change, something can come to be different at a different time by being placed in a different context? Given that beauty is being discussed here, I tend towards the latter: fashions change over time and with them what counts as beautiful changes. (4) uses πρὸ ς and probably means that it is not the case that Beauty is beautiful relative to one thing, but not relative to another. The relations that a sensible bears to other things may affect its aesthetic value: is Helen being compared to a woman or a goddess? (5) mentions spatial contextualizing factors, for example being in the Tate Modern or being in Tracy Emin's bedroom. Finally, (6) mentions subject–related contextualizing factors: for whatever reason, different people make irreducibly divergent aesthetic judgements about the same items.[178]

To the modern reader, it seems that all of these factors can be brought under one logical analysis.[179] Statements involving each of the different factors all have the same logical form. In each of the cases above, a sensible particular will be characterised by a context–sensitive term in relation to a contextualizing factor. For example, a statement involving a sensible item, such as 'Helen is beautiful', will turn out to mean that Helen is beautiful at time t_1 but ugly at time t_2. We could put the statement in a sort of English–Logic hybrid language in this way, where '*a*' names Helen and '*F*' represents beautiful: '*a* is *F* at t_1 and *a* is un–*F* at t_2'. But this 'Loglish' statement just says that *a* bears two different relations: one to a point in time labelled 't_1' and one to a different point in time labelled 't_2'. So the context-sensitive term 'beautiful' turns out to be identical to a relation between the subject of predication and the contextualizing factor.

[176] Vlastos, 1981: 67.
[177] In fact it is characteristic of Plato's contrast between forms and sensibles: *Phaedo* 78d–79e, 80b; *Republic* 479a, 484b, 530b; *Philebus* 59c. cf. *Cratylus*, 439d; *Timaeus* 49e.
[178] Vlastos 1981:67 misses this last contextualizing factor off his list, eliding it with location. But the run of μέν… δέ… contrasts makes it clear that this last factor is as important as any other and should be treated separately.
[179] For example, McCabe, 1994: 43.

Plato does not just mention times as a contextualizing factor in the *Symposium* passage: there are aspects, relations, places and subject–related factors. Let one or more of these factors combine to form a context. Under this analysis, 'Helen in beautiful' means that Helen it beautiful at time *t*, in aspect *a*, in relation to object *o*, at place *p*, and for subject *x*, or any subset of those. Let us abbreviate by calling the subset of contextualizing factors a context and represent a context by '*c*'. We could put the point by saying that 'Helen is beautiful' means that Helen bears the 'is beautiful in' relation to a context, *c*. I think this would be a fairly natural way to present, using contemporary logical notions, what Plato appears to say in the *Symposium* passage. This would then allow us to capture the thought of the passage by saying that Helen is beautiful in c_1 but ugly in c_2.

If this were the correct analysis, context–sensitive terms would turn out to be identified with dyadic relations. They would be relations between an object and a specific sort of object, namely, a context.[180] Context–sensitivity is now perfectly explained. Beauty is context–sensitive because being beautiful is a relation to a context. When the context within the statement changes, either explicitly or implicitly, the truth–value of statements involving context–sensitive terms also changes. 'Helen is beautiful' may go from being true to being false, if the implied context changes from 'in c_1' to 'in c_2'. So it seems that if a term is context–sensitive, then it is a dyadic relation, either overtly or covertly. And if this is right then context–sensitive terms just are relative terms, at least on Owen's understanding of relative terms. It will also be the case that all relative terms are context–sensitive: all the relative terms, on Owen's view, are relations to some relatum. So the contextualizing factor (4) will always be triggered for relative terms. Since all that is needed for a context is a relation to one factor, any relative term will be context–sensitive. So, on this understanding of 'context–sensitive' terms, all and only relatives will be context sensitive. The wedge I tried to drive between relative terms and context–sensitive terms cannot be so driven.

I do not think that this analysis of context–sensitivity in Plato can be correct. One reason for doubt is factor (4), the relativity factor in the list from *Symposium* 211a. There Plato mentions a 'relation to one thing' (πρὸ ς μὲ ν) and a 'relation to another thing' (πρὸ ς δὲ) as a factor like any other. But the reading of contextualizing factors outlined above should privilege this factor: the relations that an individual bears to times, places, judging subjects and so on are what go together to make up a context. The relations themselves are not part of the context: they explain

[180] I have not developed this account far enough to say whether a context can have relations to other contexts.

the context. So the analysis of context–sensitive terms given above does not fit with Plato's text. If context–sensitive terms are identical to relations to some context, they just are relations. It would be an error on the part of Plato to mention 'relations' as a contextualizing factor, when, in fact, relations are what explains the work contextualizing factors do.

A further reason to resist the identification of context–sensitive terms with relations of any kind is that plausible substitutions *salva veritate* of context–sensitive terms for their relational counterpart only hold in one direction. For example, the statement 'Hector is large' is true, and it is true when 'is large' is substituted for its relational counterpart 'is larger than someone' to give 'Hector is larger than someone'. But the reverse substitution fails: if 'Hector is larger than someone' is true, 'Hector is large' may be false: Hector could be the world's second–shortest man. Without the intersubstitutivity, the identification of a context–sensitive term with a relation looks hopeless.

So does Plato have an *analysis* of context–sensitivity? It is clear from the *Symposium* passage that he recognises the phenomenon. Maybe it will be sufficient to say that we could make some suggestions about context–sensitivity that are rather different from identifying context–sensitive terms with dyadic relations between objects and contexts. One might think that an exemplary contrast between context–sensitive and context–insensitive properties is the contrast between weight and mass. The mass of an item is invariable, regardless of the context in which that item finds itself. Weight changes, depending on the context. But weight is not identical to the relationship between an item and the context it finds itself in. Weight is a measure of the force exerted, by another body, on a certain amount of mass. Weight supervenes on a relation: without the other body, there would be no weight, only mass, and if there is a relation between two bodies, they have weight. But weight is not identical to a relation between those two bodies, it is identical to the force exerted by one on the other.

This suggestive difference could be extended to the problematic case of 'large'. Clearly, whether something is large depends on the context in which it finds itself. But equally clearly, 'large' is not identical to the 'is larger than' relation. So we could say that, like weight, large is a property that applies only in relation to things, but is not identical to a relation. Whether or not something is large does track the relationships that thing has to other items, but that tracking does not amount to identity. Obviously, this has not done away with the idea of 'relations' all together: but it has put it into the background. But with relations firmly out of sight, we can say something about what 'context–sensitivity' might amount to without simply relying on identification with

dyadic relations: A property is context–sensitive when it supervenes on a relation, but is not identical to any given relation.

In short, there is no collapse between relative terms and context–sensitive terms, for Plato. The intuitive contrast between relative terms and context–sensitive terms that I sketched in §4.2 can be borne out by looking at the *Symposium* passage. For it is clear there that Plato thinks of relatives, not as being identical to context–sensitive terms, but rather as being one way amongst others that some item can be embedded in a context. This makes perfect sense: there will be some relatives, such as 'large' that are also context–sensitive in their application. But this will not always be the case, as with the examples of 'slave', discussed above. Of course, under the conjunctive reading, relatives will always be relative to their formal object, no matter what the context: large is always relative to small, slave always relative to master. But the point here is rather about the particular applications of relative terms: 'large' is always context–sensitive, while in no application is 'slave' context–sensitive. So there is a well–founded, discernable difference for Plato between relative terms and context–sensitive terms. The 'analysis of context' objection fails.

4.4 The Scope Objection

How does the scope objection fare? The scope objection to the reasoning presented in §4.2 is that I had only shown, for one particular source for the 'Argument from Relativity', that context–sensitive, not relative, terms were central to the argument. I will examine two of the other sources often supposed to exhibit the 'Argument from Relativity'. We will see in both cases that it is context–sensitivity that is at stake.

The long 'summoners' passage from *Republic* VII is often claimed to exhibit the 'Argument from Relativity'. Again, I think there are reasons to hold that context–sensitivity, not the fact that some of these terms are relative terms, gives the argument its force. At *Republic* 524d, Socrates has finished his introductory example of large and small fingers and is asking Glaucon to apply the same reasoning to the case of 'number and one'. Socrates helpfully summarises the previous reasoning:

> Well, work it out from the things we said before. For if the one is seen sufficiently itself by itself (αὐ τὸ καθ' αὐ τό) or is perceived in this manner by some other

> sense, it would not be attractive towards being, just as we were saying in the case of the finger. But if something opposite (ἑ ναντίωμα) is seen by someone at the same time, so that it never appears one rather than the opposite, then something to do the deciding (τοῦ ἑ πικρινοῦ ντος) would be necessary and the soul in him would be at a loss and would search, stirring up the understanding in itself and asking 'what on earth is the one itself?' (τί ποτέ ἑ στιν αὐ τὸ τὸ ἕ ν;). (524d8–525a1)

The possibility that the one is seen 'itself by itself', and by parity of example, the fact that the finger is cognized 'itself by itself', prompted Owen and others to suggest that there is here an example of the Academic categorial contrast between 'absolute' (καθ' αὐ τό) and 'relative' terms, somehow specified.[181] This is not the point that I wish to pursue here.[182] I will, however, fix the sense of αὐ τὸ καθ' αὐ τό in this passage by comparison with other Platonic passages.

As well as being one of his standard descriptions of the Forms, αὐ τὸ καθ' αὐ τό is used by Plato to contrast context–dependent and context–independent uses of terms.[183] This is a very natural use of 'in itself' in English; Jordan (1983: 31–2) gives the example of 'speed, in itself, is not dangerous'. In this case, the qualification seems to serve to eliminate all real–world cases, because driving a car at speed always occurs in come context: with an alert or drowsy driver; on a motorway or country road; in traffic or alone. In any of those contexts, speed can be dangerous. It is only when any context is discounted that speed is not dangerous. An equivalent thought can be found in Plato at *Sophist* 250a4–7, where Plato points out that τὸ ὂ ν according to its own nature (κατὰ τὴ ν αὐ τοῦ φύσιν), neither moves nor is at rest. Here κατὰ τὴ ν αὐ τοῦ φύσιν serves to discount every real world case, because as the Stranger points out, anything that is not changing ought to be resting, and anything not resting ought to be changing (*Sophist*, 250c12–d3).

Being a finger will be a context–independent property, that is, one like mass. Being a finger can apply to an item regardless of differing contexts, such as whether it is in the middle of a triplet of fingers or at either end. But largeness and smallness are context–sensitive: the context in which they are encountered matters. When Socrates asks about sight, 'does sight see

[181] Owen, 1957: 108–9; Owen, 1970: 257; Annas, 1974: 267n3. Jordan, 1983:31.
[182] I do, however, pursue the question of a Platonic category scheme in Chapter 5, §5.4. I think that Owen's attempt to identify in Plato the 'absolute'/'relative' contrast from terminology alone is misguided. Plato simply changes the terminology too readily. We saw in Chapter 3 that there is some evidence for a contrast between 'absolute' and 'reciprocal relatives'. But it cannot be the case that every use of καθ' αὐ τό indicates the class of 'absolute' terms, not least because αὐ τὸ καθ' αὐ τό is one of Plato's standard designations for the forms.
[183] It is generally agreed that it is used to describe the forms in the following passages: *Phaedo* 78d5; *Phaedo* 100b6; *Parmenides* 128e6; *Parmenides* 130b8; *Symposium* 183b5; 211b1.

adequately their bigness and smallness, and does it make no difference to it that one of them lies in the middle or at the end?' (523e1–3), the answer to both parts of this question is negative.[184] Sight does not adequately see their bigness or smallness and it *does* make a difference to sight whether the finger lies in the middle or at either end. The context matters to sight, but not to the understanding.

The next remarks of Socrates explain why this is. The faculties of sensation are 'set over' particular domains: one sense can detect a property and the opposite property. This idea is familiar from *Republic* 477c–d. 'The sense set over the hard is also necessarily set over the soft and it reports to the soul that the same thing is perceived by it to be hard and soft' (524a). Socrates is relying on the fact that the same sense faculty will detect both the hard and the soft to make the point that, in cases where both of these are present, the soul receives from the sense a report of both of those mixed up together. This indicates that it is not that the sense is somehow mistaken about the compresence of hard and soft; both hard and soft are present and are both correctly reported to the soul. Thus, I think Kirwan (1974: 123) is wrong to hold that the point of the passage is that sight is led into error: sight correctly reports a confounded real–world situation to the soul. There is no suggestion in this passage that the reports of sight are non–veridical. Plato's point is that large is *in fact* mixed with small, and not that this is a mere (non–veridical) appearance.[185]

Socrates' prior remarks, warding off Glaucon's misunderstanding at 523b5–6, confirm this reading. When Socrates says at 523a10–b4 that sight fails to produce a coherent result, Glaucon thinks that Socrates is referring to 'things in the distance' and 'shadow–paintings' (τὰ ἑ σκιαγραφημένα). This latter are often treated as if they were a mere optical illusion. However, 'τὰ ἑ σκιαγραφημένα' indicates paintings that, from a distance, give the appearance of depth by contrasting light and shadow (see *Parmenides*, 165c7). In both cases, Glaucon is imagining an item viewed from a distance. That this is the misunderstanding is again confirmed by Socrates' emphasis, at 523c7–8, that the fingers are being viewed close up, which would not be a relevant remark if mere optical illusion were at stake, and it would not be sufficient if both distance and optical illusion were the worry. So Socrates' point is not that perception is deceptive when it reports that the ring finger is both large and small. Perception is indeed deceptive in cases where

[184] Kirwan, 1974: 122.

[185] Contra Kirwan, who holds that this whole passage is about non–veridical appearances. This point foreshadows the idea that context is to be explained as an irreducible fact about the sensible world, and that that is why context–sensitive terms change their meaning when applied to things in the sensible world. Because the appearance of compresence is veridical, the sensible world exhibits genuine compresence. Context–sensitive terms, such as 'large' and 'small', therefore, are always and only applied in some context, and so are liable to change their meaning.

things that are large close up appear small in the distance. But that is not what is being envisaged in the fingers case. In the fingers case, sight is non–deceptively reporting that the ring finger is both large and small. Put another way, the ring finger is actually both large and small, and sight is reporting the world the way it is.

Context–sensitive properties now seem to be the only model for the properties being large, small, thick, thin, hard and soft. The faculty of sense correctly reports that both opposites are present in the ring finger. If those properties were context–independent, it would not be possible for sense to *correctly* report the compresence. It would be impossible for sight to correctly report that it saw a finger which is a non–finger: the faculty would have to be deceived or mistaken about whether it was a finger or not. But in the case of context–sensitive predicates, there is no reason why opposite properties cannot both apply in reality to the same item, given two different contexts. To return to the paradigm example: it would not be possible for an item to have a mass of 10kg and not have a mass of 10kg; but it would be possible for an item to have a weight of 120N and not have a weight of 120N.[186]

If this is the correct understanding of the summoners passage, the properties which summon the understanding are context–sensitive properties, not relatives. The summoners passage actually relies on the properties in question being context–sensitive. The argument relies on the distinction between properties that are context–sensitive and those that are context–independent. So if the summoners passage is an instance of the 'Argument from Relativity' then the argument relies on context–sensitive, not relative, properties.

Conclusion

Chapters 1–3 gave an argument to show what Plato's view of the nature of relatives is. The present chapter is the first of two to address the question of why Plato introduced such a class. Owen's suggestion is that Plato introduced relative terms as part of an articulation of the

[186] This reading of Socrates' remarks about context–sensitive properties can only be maintained if large and small are what one might call 'brute' properties, i.e. they are not grounded in some more basic property. One possible thought is that there is no such property as 'large', and when we make a judgement that something is 'large' that is simply a feature of our perspective. What is real is the 'size', specified in some appropriate measurement. Thus, calling the ring finger 'large' is, strictly speaking, incorrect; but it is no more incorrect than calling it 'small' or 'medium'. The only feature it has is *being 4cm long*, and in a suitably redacted language of physics, that is the only feature that would be mentioned. This is not Plato's view: for Plato there is nothing reducible about 'large' and 'small', they are not *simply* a feature we impose on the world. But they are unavoidably context–sensitive.

difference between Forms and participants. That is, they have an ontological purpose. An argument, known as 'the 'Argument from Relativity', is voiced in the *Peri Ideon* and, Owen thinks, has discernable roots in Plato's thought sufficient to merit calling certain arguments of Plato's by the same name. Owen holds that relative terms, as he construes them, play a vital role in the 'Argument from Relativity'. Because there are different ways of completing '*x* is equal to…' for any *x* in the sensible world, 'equal' is ambivalent. The Form Equal is not ambivalent in that way, so it must be non–identical to any sensible instance. This argument only works if the terms in question are relative terms, so the 'Argument from Relativity' needs relative terms. Therefore, Owen could conclude, the concept of relative terms is introduced as part of the 'Argument from Relativity'.

The present chapter has refuted this argument by questioning whether the 'Argument from Relativity' really does rely on relative terms. I have allowed Owen to use his preferred notion of relatives as incomplete dyadic relations throughout, but still have managed to show that the 'Argument from Relativity' does not make essential use of relative terms. Rather, in the case of *Phaedo* 74c and *Republic* VII we saw that context–sensitivity is relied upon to make the 'Argument from Relativity' work. Therefore, relative terms do not play an essential role; so they cannot have been introduced to give an argument for the Forms.

I think there is a broader lesson that we can draw out here. It seems to me that Owen is misled as to the work that relative terms do in Plato because of his account of the nature of relative terms. In contemporary philosophy, we use relations for all sorts of analyses. For example, relativism of a certain kind might try to frame the truth–predicate as a relation, so that '*p* is true' turns out to mean '*p* is true for someone'. Or, as we saw above, if we want to discuss the context in which something finds itself, we immediately reach for the language of dyadic relations: *a* is *F* at time *t*, place *x*, etc.[187] Owen's conception of the nature of relative terms in Plato makes them dyadic relations, which is precisely the same tool which we use in contemporary philosophy to articulate these notions. So it is very easy to slip from the idea that context plays a role in the 'Argument from Relativity' to the idea that relatives play a role in the 'Argument from Relativity', because the analysis of context and the analysis of relative terms both use dyadic relations.

Adopting the conjunctive reading of relatives in Plato allows us to see precisely why this is unsatisfactory. Conjunctively construed relatives cannot be used in the way dyadic relations are

[187] For a real–life example of this, see Kaplan (1989:481–563), where he gives an account of the semantics of indexicals employing relations and context.

used by modern philosophical analyses of relativism or of context. Conjunctive relatives reciprocate with their correlatives, which are formal objects. But the idea of formal objects as correlatives is antithetical to the variability which is needed to specify a context. The context can change, but a formal object cannot. So it would make no sense to try to apply the conjunctive analysis of relatives to explain how contexts can *vary*. But if contexts cannot vary, they do not do any of the explanatory work demanded of them. So we cannot use conjunctively construed relatives in the full range of ways we can use dyadic relations, including analysing the notion of context. A conjunctive account of relatives makes clear that, for Plato, very different considerations motivate the identification of relative terms and context–sensitive terms. Owen's account of relative terms obscures this difference. In the following chapter, we will see what considerations do motivate Plato's introduction of relative terms, construed conjunctively.

Chapter 5

The focus of this chapter is the origin and purpose of the distinction between relative and non–relative terms, rather than the nature of relatives, which was the focus of Chapters 1–3. Chapters 4 and 5 examine two explanations of Plato's introduction this class. Chapter 4 examined and rejected the commonplace view that Plato introduced relative terms as part of an argument for the separation of Forms and participants, that is, for ontological reasons. This chapter defends the novel position that Plato isolates relative terms for dialectical purposes. The distinction between relative and non–relative terms is primarily used in exposing bad arguments for what they are and constructing good arguments. Put another way, the distinction is one of the conceptual tools that a dialectician might use.

I present two arguments in this chapter. §5.1 and §5.2 argue that the relative/non–relative distinction is one of the tools that are invoked in the *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*. These provide evidence for the use of that distinction in the agonistic context of Socratic-style dialogues. The use we will see is to expose fallacies and construct arguments. Thus, there is solid textual evidence that the distinction is dialectical from the point at which it is introduced. The second argument, given in §5.3, is an inference to the best explanation of a certain feature of the distinction. That feature is neutrality. If the distinction were to belong in the dialectical toolbox, and not to Plato's ontological commitments, we would expect the distinction between relative and non–relative terms to be neutral in various ways. We would expect it to be topic–neutral. That is, we would expect that it could be applied to and in arguments in a range of domains such as metaphysics, psychology and mathematics. It should also be commitment–neutral: the distinction between relative and non–relative terms should be consistent with Plato's ontological views and also consistent with the negation of those views.[188] Finally, in §5.4 I will return to the issue of whether the relative/non–relative distinction is an ontological one. If we read the relative/non–relative taxonomy as a category distinction, then we might think that the taxonomy has an ontological motivation. I will explain what sort of category scheme is justified by Plato's texts and show that it is best characterised as dialectical, not ontological.

[188] Note that this neutrality does not extend to all commitments: there are some views that Plato's account of relatives commits him to, such as the existence of formal objects for relatives.

5.1 Sophisms in the Euthydemus

This section examines three arguments in the *Euthydemus*. The first task in each case will be to determine the nature of the fallacy committed. This will provide us with information about which distinctions Plato is suggesting we need in order to expose these fallacies. We will see that the notion of relative terms, construed according to the conjunctive reading, is involved in the resolution of the fallacies. We also need to look globally at these arguments and the hints that the text provides to determine how Plato thinks these sophisms might be dealt with: a logical analysis alone will not suffice to determine the character of the fallacies one way or another.[189]

First, I will discuss the 'omniscience sophism'. This sophism occurs in the final 'dialectical display' section of the *Euthydemus*. Socrates has fallen into a difficulty giving an account of the 'knowledge we ought to have if we are going to spend the remainder of our lives in the right way' (293a4–6). Socrates asks the brothers for help with this question, and Euthydemus offers something better: to show that Socrates already has the knowledge he seeks, because he already knows everything. The argument runs from 293b7 to d1. The key term in this sophism is 'knowledge', a term which Plato flags as a relative elsewhere, for example, at *Parmenides* 134a1–b1. As we will see, this is probably no accident. I have inserted enumeration for ease of reference:

i. Come then and answer me, he said: is there something that you know?
ii. Oh yes, I said, many things, small ones at any rate.
iii. That's enough, he said. Do you think that it is possible for some being not to be the very thing that it in fact is? (δοκεῖ ς οἶ όν τέ τι τῶν ὄ ντων τοῦ το ὃ τυγχάνει ὄ ν, αὐ τὸ τοῦ το μὴ εἶ ναι;) No, by Zeus, not I!
iv. Do you know something? I do.
v. Therefore, you are knowledgeable (ἐ πιστήμων), if you know?
vi. Yes, about that actual thing at any rate (Πάνυ γε, τούτου γε αὐ τοῦ).
vii. It makes no difference: but isn't it necessary that you know everything, if you are knowledgeable?
viii. By Zeus, I exclaimed, there are many other things that I don't know.
ix. Then if you don't know something, you are not knowledgeable.

[189] This is very much the method suggested by McCabe, 2005: 107–9. I differ from McCabe in terms of how I think Plato would resolve the sophisms, but I agree with her overall approach.

x. About that, at any rate, my friend, I said.

xi. So are you less not–knowledgeable because of that? And just now you said that you are knowledgeable: and in this way it turns out that you both are the man who you are and again you are not the man who you are with regard to the same things at the same time (κατὰ ταύ τὰ ἅ μα).

This sophism attempts to motivate its conclusion by invocation of some principle of non–contradiction. It is well known that Plato tends to formulate such a principle by referring to properties of an object (or maybe predicates of a subject), such that *x* cannot be both *F* and un–*F*, rather than in terms of propositions, as we now tend to formulate the principle of non–contradiction (PNC).[190] The Platonic structure for the PNC seems to be voiced by Euthydemus in (iii). There is also a contrast between the PNC as it is formulated in (iii) and the qualified PNC in the conclusion of the argument (xi). The former is what McCabe calls the 'gross principle of non–contradiction' (McCabe, 2005: 114). It seems to be that, for all *x*, if *x* is *F*, it is not possible for *x* not to be *F*.

The gross PNC may be, in general, too strong for a rational agent to accept. But in the context of this argument, the gross PNC might be the correct principle to hold. The gross PNC could be understood as a principle that rules out the same thing having more than one identity; each thing is the thing it is and nothing else. Then we could read the argument as making identity claims throughout: at (iv) Socrates admits that he is identical to a knower, rather than that knowing is a property of him. The moves at (v)–(vii) could then be read as establishing that because Socrates is identical to a knower, there is no other possible identity for him, including being a not–knower. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by what Euthydemus says in (xi), which implies that the identity of Socrates has been at stake throughout the argument: Euthydemus concludes that Socrates both is the man he is and is not the man he is. It is most natural to read this as the claim that Socrates' identity has been compromised.

But there must be a fallacy in this sophism, even if that fallacy is not that the argument relies on the gross PNC: the argument does fail to motivate its conclusion, for there are many people who know some things, but do not know everything, a point that is pursued at some length at 294a–295a. It is plain that the conclusion that Socrates is omniscient is false. But for an argument to arrive at a false conclusion, either one or more premises must be false, or the

[190] Compare with Chapter 2, §2.1. I take no view on whether the PNC relied on here is different from the principle of opposites relied upon in *Republic* IV.

argument must not be of a valid form. And it is true that Socrates knows something. So the first premise is true. That must mean either that at least one of the other premises is false or that the argument makes one or more illegitimate moves.

The consensus is that the moves from (iv) to (v) and then on to (vii) and from (viii) to (ix) and then on to (xi) are illegitimate.[191] Let us examine the first of these in more detail. The move from (iv) to (vii) is a move between the following:

(1) Socrates knows something
(2) Socrates is knowledgeable (ἐ πιστήμων)
(3) So, Socrates knows everything

Socrates seems, at (iii), to immediately identify what is wrong with this argument: it misses out the important point that if you know something, you are not knowledgeable *unqualifiedly*. So the move from (1) to (2) is illicit. This illicit removal and addition of qualifiers is usually called in the commentaries the '*secundum quid*' fallacy, and generally it is thought that this sophism fails to persuade because it commits that fallacy. Buridan's *Summulae de Dialectica* 7.4.2 gives a definition of that fallacy: 'The fallacy *secundum quid et simpliciter* is … a deception arising from the fact that we believe what is predicated *simpliciter* follows from what is predicated *secundum quid* or conversely.'[192]

But this alone is not sufficient to give a satisfactory reading of the argument. First, as McCabe (2005: 110) points out, the sophism here was presented before any formal classifications of fallacies existed. So, even though Aristotle originally identified the *secundum quid* fallacy at *Soph. El.* 166b28–36, if we are planning to argue that Plato or Socrates has a possible reply to the sophisms, it is perhaps better to rely on an analysis of the fallacy that Plato would definitely have been able to give, not one that was developed later. Second, note that reading the argument in the *Euthydemus* as a *secundum quid* does not distinguish it from other, apparently good, arguments.

[191] Sprague, 1962: 23; Hawtrey, 1981: 140–2; Chance, 1992: 133; Jansen, 2006: 3.
[192] It might be thought that if the argument relies on the 'one identity only' principle, the charge of committing the *secundum quid* fallacy is ill–founded: if Socrates can have precisely one identity, then he cannot be identical to both a knower and a non–knower. However, even accepting this 'one identity only' principle Socrates is not knowledgeable unqualifiedly: 'Socrates is identical to a knower *of some x*' and Socrates is identical to a knower *of all y*' represent different propositions. Even if the 'one identity only' principle is operative in the argument, the gross PNC must still be invoked to make the argument go through. The qualifications italicised in the statements above show that, even on an identity reading of this argument, the qualifications are illegitimately removed and added. I argue that the charge of a *secundum quid* fallacy is not the right diagnosis, but this is not because of the 'one identity only' principle.

It is unclear whether removal or addition of qualifiers would be illicit in all contexts. The following argument form is a good one:

(1') Socrates teaches philosophy;
(2') (from (1')) Socrates teaches;
(3') (from 2') Socrates teaches something.

Despite being a good argument, it removes and adds important qualifiers. The *secundum quid* fallacy does not seem to show a principled way to draw a distinction between the omniscience sophism and the above argument, which is not to say there is no principled way to draw the distinction, but simply that a principled distinction is desirable.

We can now see that there are some desiderata of a persuasive reading of this passage, based on the criticisms I have levelled at the *secundum quid* reading of the sophism. First, whatever analysis we choose, there is across–the–board agreement that Socrates is presented as being aware that the sophism is a fallacy with a solution.[193] We would like any solution to be one that Plato could have given. Second, the sophism does arbitrarily add and remove important qualifiers, and a successful solution should explain why this is logically problematic. That is, a successful solution should be able to say what the difference between the 'knowing' and the 'teaching' examples is.

The account of relative terms in Plato that I have been developing since Chapter 1 will help us meet all these desirable criteria for a reading of the sophism. The sophism is a fallacy because of the illicit moves contained within the following sub–argument:

(1) Socrates knows something
(2) Socrates is knowledgeable (ἐ πιστήμων)
(3) So, Socrates knows everything

The illicit move seems to be the arbitrary addition and removal of important qualifiers. The conjunctive reading of relatives can easily expose why this sophism is a fallacy: knowledge should be 'of' its proper correlative because knowledge is the conjunction of a one–place property and an intentional orientation of the bearer of that property towards the correlative,

[193] Canto, 1989: 217; Hawtrey, 1991: 141; McCabe, 2005

knowable. Thus in (1), where Socrates knows something, under the conjunctive account of relatives, Socrates is a knower and Socrates is related to the object of knowledge, the knowable. Under this analysis, we can see that it is possible to infer from (1) that (2) is the case, i.e. from the fact that Socrates knows something, it is possible to infer that Socrates knows (by the rule that if *p&q* is true, then *p* is true). This is simply because 'Socrates knows something', under the conjunctive analysis, is the conjunction of the fact that Socrates is knowledgeable and Socrates has an intentional orientation towards the formal object of knowledge, the knowable.[194] But, the move from (2) to (3), under the conjunctive analysis of relatives, is not legitimate: the proper object of knowledge is not 'everything', but merely the proper object of knowledge. Plato's usual expression for that proper object is not the ambiguous ἐπιστητόν, but rather μάθημα, which implies that the formal object of knowledge is a domain of learning. So 'Socrates knows a μάθημα' would be a schematic statement, where μάθημα would be filled out with, for example, geometry, or shoemaking or some other area of expertise. So we cannot legitimately conclude that Socrates knows everything from the fact that Socrates knows, because Plato's notion of relatives does not require that knowledge be of everything, knowledge can merely be of one or more specific domains. This does not, of course, rule out that knowledge could be of everything, merely that knowledge does not entail knowledge of everything.

Plato could have given this analysis, so it meets the first requirement of a good reading. If I am right that Plato does formulate an account of relative terms, and that account is the conjunctive account (the conjunction of a one–place property, the correlative as a formal object and the intentional orientation towards the correlative), then the solution to the sophism given above is not anachronistic. So we can meet the first desideratum of a reading of the fallacy in the omniscience sophism.

The second desideratum is to explain precisely why the addition and removal of some qualifiers is permitted and the addition and removal of others is not. This can easily be done if we understand a conjunctive reading of relatives to be in the background here. We saw in Chapter 1, §1.2 and §1.3 that each relative term has a specific correlative: for example, fathers are fathers of offspring. That correlative is also the formal object of the relative term. Thus, in each case of a relative term, there is some means by which we can distinguish legitimate qualifications from illegitimate ones. It is legitimate to infer from (1) Socrates knows something that (2) Socrates knows. But because the proper formal object of 'knowledge' is a μάθημα or some equivalent, and

[194] Recall from §1.3 that this is an exceptionless, but uninformative, object for knowledge.

not ‘everything’, we cannot infer (3) from (2). The fact that each relative term has a correlative gives us a principled way to say which qualifications need to be added and which need not.

Finally, we can see that the solution I propose to the sophisms is a ‘category error’ solution. In the case of the conjunctive reading, the fallacy is not explained merely by the distinction between non–relative terms and relative terms. My explanation of the fallacies relies on understanding some of the features of relative terms, including their having correlative objects and being the conjunction of a one–place property and an intentional orientation. There are, on my reading, two sorts of term: the relative and the non–relative. The sophistical brothers do not respect this category distinction and so generate the fallacies. A further reason to think that the ‘category error’ reading of this sophism is the correct one is that the refined PNC that is presented at 293c8–d1 is almost identical to the PNC presented at *Republic*, 436b9–c2, except that one of the qualifiers is omitted in the *Euthydemus* version, namely the πρός ταύ τόν qualification. If we are supposed to pick up on this elision, as we surely are, then we find here a clear indication that it is the omission of the relativity qualification which allows the sophism to go through.

Above I made the point that the fallacy that the sophism commits is identified by Plato as relying on relative terms in the conjunctive sense that I have been discussing throughout this thesis. We can find further evidence for this claim if we look to the sophisms that follow the omniscience sophism: let us call the first the ‘no father sophism’ (297e4–298a9), and the second the ‘father of all’ sophism (298b7–d9). Like the omniscience sophism, the two father sophisms rely on a key term, which is elsewhere flagged by Plato as a relative term (*Symposium* 199d4–7), and we will again see that this is unlikely to be an accident. The ‘no father’ sophism runs as follows:

i. And Patrocles, said Dionysodorus, is your (σός) brother?
ii. Yes, I said, we have the same mother, but not the same father.
iii. So he both is and is not your brother?
iv. Not by the same father, my dear fellow, I said: for Chaeredemus was his father while Sophroniscus was mine.
v. But Sophroniscus was a father and so was Chaeredemus?
vi. Yes, I said: the one mine and the other his.
vii. So Chaeredemus was other than the father?
viii. Other than mine, at any rate, I said.

ix. So he was a father while at the same time being other than a father (ἕ τερος ὢν πατρός)? Or are you the same as a stone? <Soc:> I fear you might show that I am one, but I don't think I am.

x. Therefore, he said, you are other than a stone? <Soc:> I am other.

xi. But being other than a stone you are not a stone, and being other than gold you are not gold? <Soc:> That is the case.

xii. Therefore, Chaeredemus, who is other than a father, is not a father (οὔ κουν ... ἕ τερος ὢν πατρὸ ς πατήρ ἐ στιν).

xiii. It seems that he is not a father, said I.

xiv. But if Chaeredemus is a father, said Euthydemus, interrupting, then Sophroniscus, being other than a father, is not a father, and so you, Socrates, are fatherless.

The strategy of this argument is to derive the following lemma:

(L) At most one of Sophroniscus and Chaeredemus is a father.

From there it is straightforward to show that Socrates is fatherless, since if Chaeredemus is a father, then Sophroniscus is not a father and since Sophroniscus is identical to the father of Socrates, Socrates' father is not a father, and Socrates is fatherless. Deriving (L) comes in two symmetrical stages: the first shows that, from the assumption that Sophroniscus is a father and Chaeredemus is a father, it follows that Chaeredemus is not a father. This is done in (v)–(xiii), and is summarised below.

(1) Sophroniscus is a father and Chaeredemus is a father.
(2) From (1): Some *x* is a father and *x* is other than Chaeredemus.
(3) So, Chaeredemus is other than a father.
(4) For all *x*, and for all y, if *x* is other than *y*, then *x* is not *y*.
(5) Therefore, Chaeredemus is not a father.

The second symmetrical stage is to use the same argument with 'Chaeredemus' substituted for 'Sophroniscus' to show that if Sophroniscus is a father, then Sophroniscus is not a father. This is done in (xiv). So it cannot be the case that both Chaeredemus is a father and Sophroniscus is a father. And this is equivalent to (L).

What, then, is the fallacy by which this sophism moves to the false conclusion that Sophroniscus is not Socrates' father? As with the omniscience sophism, the most common explanation found in the commentaries is that the argument commits the *secundum quid* fallacy. This is supported by the exchange at (v)–(vi) and (vii)–(viii) where Socrates twice corrects Dionysodorus when he fails to specify that Chaeredemus is the father of Socrates' half–brother Patrocles, while Sophroniscus is the father of Socrates himself. But, if properly construed, these corrections do not necessarily show that Socrates is indicating that he thinks there is a *secundum quid* fallacy here, any more than confusion between relative and non–relative terms. This is especially true if these relative terms are construed as conjunctive.

The notion of relatives, construed conjunctively, can explain how these arguments are fallacies. The argument represented in (1) – (5) relies on taking 'father' to be all that needs to be said about Sophroniscus or Chaeredemus. In other words, 'father' is predicated of them without specifying whose fathers they are, or even noting that 'father' needs some further specification. Of course, Plato, as is shown by *Symposium* 199c–d, is aware that 'father' is the sort of term that has a formal object: a father is always and only father of offspring. And a father, considered under the aspect of being a father, will always be father of the offspring in question. Articulated with the full resources of Plato's views on relative terms the argument would look like this:

(1) Sophroniscus *qua* father is father of Socrates and Chaeredemus *qua* father is father of Patrocles.
(2) From (1): Some *x qua* father is father of Socrates and *x* is other than Chaeredemus.
(3) So, Chaeredemus is other than father of Socrates.
(4) For all *x*, and for all y, if *x* is other than *y*, then *x* is not *y*.
(5) Therefore, Chaeredemus is not father of Socrates.

This argument, now valid, arrives at a true conclusion that Chaeredemus is not father of Socrates. This suggests that the fallacy in the sophism is that it does not correctly account for the logical properties of the term 'father', that is to say, it does not properly account for relative terms.

So we have seen, regarding the father sophism, that the distinction between relative and non–relative terms could explain how it is that the argument is a fallacy. Taken with the arguments earlier in the thesis that Plato is aware of and uses the notion of relative terms, this is good evidence that Plato could have solved the fallacies. But does he realise this? And does he realise that the key is the distinction between relative and non–relative terms? I think there are

hints that he does. At 298b, following the 'no father' sophism, Ctesippus tries to turn the same argument against Euthydemus with limited success. Euthydemus bites the bullet on the first premise and denies that his father is other than Ctesippus' father. Ctesippus presses the point further and Euthydemus admits his father is the father of everyone on the grounds that, if this were not the case, his father would be a father and not a father:

i. … do you think the same man is a father and not a father? (ἦ οἴ ει τὸ ν αὺ τὸ ν πατέρα ὅ ντα οὺ πατέρα εἶ ναι;)
ii. I was certainly of that opinion, said Ctesippus.
iii. What? Do you think that a thing can be both gold (χρυσὸ ν) and not gold? Or a man (ἄ νθρωπον) and not a man?
iv. Maybe, Euthydemus, said Ctesippus, you are not joining flax with flax, as they say. (Μὴ γάρ, ἔ φη ὸ Κτήσιππος, ὦ Εύ θύδημε, τὸ λεγόμενον, οὺ λίνον λίνῳ συνάπτεις)

The accusation that Ctesippus levels in (iv), that Euthydemus is 'not joining flax with flax', gives us good evidence that Plato has a category error in mind. Aristotle, *Physics* 207a17 uses this expression to describe Melissus' identification of 'the whole' with the 'unlimited'. This confirms that the expression was used when things of different kinds are confused. In the context, there are two binary confusions that Ctesippus could be referring to: the confusion of a term and its contradictory term (gold and not gold) and the confusion of terms like 'father' with those like 'gold'. But the context of 298c rules out the former possibility, since Euthydemus relies on the difference between contradictory terms to make the argument go through. So it cannot be the case that Ctesippus is concerned about that particular confusion. Therefore, he must have the confusion of two different sorts of terms in mind when he makes that remark. Taken together with the fact that relative terms, at least construed conjunctively, can solve the sophism, this gives good evidence that Plato could give, and knows he could give, a category–error solution to the sophism.

So far I have examined the evidence offered by the *Euthydemus* and I have argued that the sophisms contained within that dialogue can be resolved by appealing to the distinction between relative and non–relative terms, where relative terms are construed as conjunctive relatives. I wish to now make the point that the distinction as we find it in the *Euthydemus* is dialectical rather than ontological. It is a distinction that any rational arguer would accept, not one that is motivated by specific ontological commitments.

The manner of introduction of the distinction is evidence of its dialectical, rather than ontological, nature.[195] The idea is introduced by implication and suggestion. For example, the sub–argument at 293c2–d1 can be exposed as a sophism by invoking the distinction between relative and non–relative terms, as we saw. Socrates indicates *that* this is a sophism (293e) and so can be resolved, but Socrates never tells us *how* to resolve this sophism. We have to work this out ourselves. I have argued above that Plato did have the resources to expose this sophism, but the point here must be that we are expected to pick up on the distinction intuitively, because there is no explicit statement of it and of the logical properties of the terms of one of the classes distinguished.

This is in contrast to the way relatives are introduced in *Symposium* 199c–d, *Parmenides* 133c–134a and *Sophist* 255c. In those passages, relatives are introduced explicitly: the notion is defined and in at least one case, contrasted with non–relative terms. In the *Euthydemus* there is no critical reflection on the notion of relatives. Yet they are relied upon in the resolution of certain fallacies. The fact that there is no argument for the distinction presented in the *Euthydemus* suggests that the distinction is instrumental rather than a philosophical view to be pursued in its own right. If it is an instrument, it is an instrument primarily useful in argument. So the distinction is dialectical. Because the distinction is not introduced explicitly in the *Euthydemus*, it seems likely Plato thinks it is a background condition of argumentation.[196]

The *Euthydemus* presupposes a philosophical context in which the idea of relative terms was already current. The dialogue exhibits for us us a thoroughly adversarial context, and is in that way a closer relative of the Socratic dialogues than dialogues such as the *Symposium* or *Republic*. We might ask what problems the distinction was introduced to solve in such an agonistic context. The answer provided by the *Euthydemus* is that it is intended to articulate the idea that there is a 'category error' at the base of certain sophisms. Since exposing these category mistakes seems to have been an original purpose of the distinction – that is, the use is dialectical – it is plausible that this purpose continues throughout Plato's use of the notion of relative terms.

[195] Compare with Chapter 2, §2.1 where we saw that relative terms were introduced in a similar way in the partition argument of *Republic* IV, one of the most important sources for relative terms in Plato.

[196] A defender of an ontological reading of the distinction could argue that the most obvious reason for concealing the distinction would be that Plato has hidden the distinction in plain sight, to be recognised by his pupils, and sharp–eyed apprentices, who would be able to use it to resolve the fallacies. If this is the case, then Plato may have hidden an ontological view of his in the dialogue, as many people think he has hidden references to his own doctrine of anamnesis at 294e–296d. But what this objection shows, at most, is that when we consider something to be 'hidden' in the *Euthydemus*, then it may be a doctrine that Plato subscribes to. And this is not sufficient to show that we cannot read the distinction dialectically in the *Euthydemus*. Afterall, it may be a doctrine of Plato's that the distinction is dialectically useful, as well as obvious to any rational arguer.

This basic purpose would hold even if the account of relative terms were given some additional theoretical articulation, for example, by explaining that relatives reciprocate. Indeed, we will see below (§5.4) that the basic purpose of relatives remains a dialectical one, even when relatives are contrasted with 'absolute' terms. If the distinction was originally intended to expose category mistakes like these, it fulfils a necessary condition of dialectic, not just of argument. For dialectic to function properly, the participants must not be talking past each other. The linguistic similarity, whether semantic or syntactic, must be properly analysed so that both parties are genuinely disagreeing.[197]

These reflections on the resolutions of certain sophisms in the *Euthydemus* help us to see that the distinction between relative and non–relative terms is introduced as an instrument to help argument. Essentially, it helps us to expose a category mistake. That category mistake is to confuse terms of one sort with terms of another, because the two sorts of term are syntactically similar. In the next section of this chapter, we will see that the distinction between relative and non–relative terms can also be used as a tool to assist the construction of good arguments as well as exposing bad ones.

5.2 Relatives in the Charmides

Above we saw one possible use of the notion of relative terms: drawing a distinction between relative and non–relative terms in a case where they are confused for underhand purposes. This section looks at an argument in the *Charmides* that uses the notion of relative terms in order to help support a conclusion, rather than to show some particular argument to be a fallacy. This point concerns not so much the distinction between relative and non–relative terms, as the properties that relatives have in virtue of being relatives. The argument I will focus on is sometimes called 'the relations argument'.[198] It occurs within the second attempt, by Critias, to define temperance. The relations argument at 167c–169a is used against the proposal, put forward by Critias at 164d3–165b4, that temperance (σωφροσύνη) is self–knowledge. That claim is formulated by Critias at 166c2–3 and 166e5–6 in the following terms:

[197] *Soph. Elench.* 166b10–14 and 178a4–8: cf. Jansen, 2005: 5.
[198] For example, by McCabe, 2007: 3. I would prefer the label 'the relatives argument', as I have been reserving the label 'relation' for dyadic relations, which I don't think are operative here. But I will follow the received usage in naming this argument only.

(C) Temperance is knowledge of knowledges and of itself,[199]

At 167c4–5 Socrates adds the following condition:

(S) Temperance is knowledge of nothing except itself and other knowledges.

(C) is weaker than (S). (C) claims that temperance is a sort of knowledge which has knowledges as objects, whether those knowledges are itself (reflexive) or other knowledges. As McCabe puts it, temperance is a sort of second–order knowledge. (S) adds the condition that the knowledge that constitutes temperance is just of itself (as a knowledge) and of other knowledges. Which is to say, temperance is a sort of knowledge that is only second order.

The argument against the conjunction of (C) and (S), a conjunction which I attribute to Critias, falls into two broad stages. The first phase, at 167c8–168a9, introduces seven cases that Socrates presents as analogous to knowledge. In none of the analogous cases does it seem plausible that a principle equivalent to (C) holds of those terms. The second phase of the argument also aims to show that (C) does not hold in a series of analogous cases, but it also aims to show that the equivalent of (S) does not hold either: not only are the analogous cases non–reflexive, but they are not only second order either.[200] I will mention the detail of each phase of the argument, before making the case that the argument is best analysed using the notions that I developed earlier in the thesis, rather than the terms that are typically used. Finally, I will show that the distinction between relative and non–relative terms is dialectical here.

In the first phase of the argument, Socrates gives a series of analogous examples, starting at 167c–168a with vision:

> Consider whether you think that there is some (kind of) vision (ὅ ψις τις) that is not vision of the things other visions are of, but rather is vision of itself and of other visions and also lack of vision, and, although it is a vision, sees no colour, but rather itself and other visions. Do you think there is such a thing?

[199] 'Knowledge' is a non–count noun in English, but my using it in the plural, while strictly speaking incorrect usage, reflects the Greek use of the plural ἐ πιστῆ μαι, which is good usage in Greek.

[200] Here I follow McCabe, 2007:3–7. The usual reading is that this second stage of the argument just repeats the result of the first stage, namely, that it is to show that the terms in question, including knowledge, are non–reflexive. This line is taken by Benson, 2003 and Jordan, 1983: 28–30. But if that were the right way to read the argument, why would Socrates need to get Critias to accept both (C) and (S)? If the first two phases of the argument were to motivate the conclusion that (C) is false, then (S) goes unchallenged and the introduction of (S) is pointless.

In this case, it is specified that we would usually expect vision (ὅ ψις) to be of colour (χρῶμα), rather than of other visions. Socrates then gives seven other examples of mental states which he would expect to conform to the usual model: hearing of sound (ἀ κοήν φωνῆ ς); other perceptions of the corresponding percepts (ὧν δὲ αἰ ἄ λλαι αἱ θήσεις αἱ σθάνονται, μηδενὸ ς αἱ σθανομένη); desire for pleasure (ἑ πιθυμία ἡ δονῆ ς); wish for good (βούλησις βούλεται ἀ γαθόν); love of beauty (ἔ ρως καλοῦ); fear of terrible things (φόβον δεινῶν); belief of the (here unspecified) regular objects of belief (... δόξαν, ὧν δὲ αἰ ἄ λλαι δοξάζουσιν μηδὲ ν δοξάζουσαν). We are then given 'knowledge' (ἑ πιστήμη) again, with 'branch of learning' (μαθήματος) specified as the characteristic object.[201]

The analogy is intended to make it difficult for Critias to sustain (S), because he seems to reject principles equivalent to (S) in the seven analogous cases. But this phase of the argument does not have anything obvious to say to (C), i.e. the claim that there is a knowledge that is knowledge of itself and other knowledges; all of the apparent counterexamples are to the view that there is a knowledge which is *only* of itself and other knowledges. Nothing has yet dealt with both (C) and (S) simultaneously and made explicit the claim that knowledge is always and only of its own special object. Socrates concludes that it would be a strange result if knowledge turned out to be the only term in the class which was only of other knowledges and itself and not of the special object of knowledge (as yet unspecified) (168a6–8), but refuses to rule it out. The second phase of the argument proceeds to attempt just that.

At the beginning of the second phase, Socrates asks Critias to accept the following:

> Come then, is knowledge itself (αὐ τὴ ἡ ἑ πιστήμη)[202] knowledge of something, and does it have a certain power (δύναμιν) so as to be of something? Doesn't it?

Socrates then gives the following argument:

[201] Under my reading of relatives this is precisely what is to be expected: each relative has a 'formal' object as its correlative, and it is always and only related to this formal correlative. Given the notion of relatives that is in the background here, Socrates is right to stress that each of these relative terms has a characteristic object. But mine is the only reading of this passage that can explain why it is that Socrates is so insistent on this notion of a formal object, an idea totally alien to modern notions of relations.

[202] Accepting Shorey (Shorey, 1907: 340). Shorey, reading αὐ τή rather than αὔ τη, correctly says that the accentuation should be such as to indicate that knowledge *simpliciter*, rather than the previously mentioned branches of knowledge, is under discussion. But he wrongly calls this an 'emendation': Plato wrote without accents, so such decisions are at the discretion of editors.

> Then if we should discover something larger (μεῖζον), which is larger than the larger things and than itself (ὃ τῶν μὲν μειζόνων ἔστιν μεῖζον καὶ ἐαυτοῦ), but larger than none of the things than which the other larger things are larger [i.e. the smaller], what would happen to it is that, if it were larger than itself, then also it would be smaller than itself (εἴπερ ἐαυτοῦ μεῖζον εἴη, καὶ ἔλαττον ἐαυτοῦ εἶναι). Or wouldn't it?

Socrates' argument is often taken to have the following structure:[203]

1. If the larger were larger than itself, then it would also be smaller than itself;
2. But it is not the case that anything is both larger and smaller than itself;
3. So, the larger is not larger than itself.

The argument, under this reading, relies on the fact that there are no reflexive, asymmetric relations. 'Larger' is an asymmetric relation, so it cannot be reflexive. But there are two difficulties with taking the argument this way. First, it leaves us without an account of how Plato thinks the argument works. Plato did not have the notion of a reflexive or asymmetric relation.[204] Hence, to make the argument rely on those logical properties of relations deprives Plato of an understanding of the argument that he proposes. Second, the reading of the argument usually given would miss out the force of the second clause in the text.[205] The argument does not move directly from (1) to (2), but via the second clause, that the larger is 'larger than none of the things than which the other larger things are larger [i.e. the smaller]', that is, it takes the object of 'larger' not immediately to be itself, but to be the special object of 'larger', namely, the smaller. So the argument is better reconstructed in the following way:

1. The larger is larger than itself.

[203] See Jordan, 1983: 29; Benson, 2003.
[204] *pace* Jordan, 1983: 28, who argues, in an obviously invalid substitution into an opaque context, that because Plato *exploits* these logical properties of 'larger' he is aware of these logical properties. My own view is that Plato's account of relatives is that all relatives have a reciprocal correlative and all are aliorelative. 'Reflexive' and 'symmetric' are notions that Plato doesn't apply to relatives; they are notions that apply to dyadic relations in contemporary logic.
[205] As McCabe points out (McCabe, 2005: 4n9). Her explanation of how the argument should include this clause, however, would make the argument invalid, moving from '*x* is larger than *x*' and '*x* is larger than *y*' (i.e. that which the other larger things are larger than) to '*x* is larger and smaller than *x*'. Since *x* could be the same size as *y*, the conclusion would not follow.

2. The larger is larger than the special object of the larger (i.e. the smaller).
3. Suppressed: the smaller is smaller than the larger.
4. Since the smaller and the larger have the same properties (i.e. the larger is larger than them), they are identical.
5. By 3 and 4, the larger is larger than itself and smaller than itself.

This reconstruction shows an important feature of the second phase of the relations argument. The second phase relies not just on what I have been calling the 'reflexivity' of the term in question, but also on what I will call its transparency. By 'transparent' here I mean that the second–order term can have not only the first–order term as its object, but also the objects of the first–order term.[206] An example of a transparent relation would be '…applies to…': Where *R* is a first–order relation, and *x* is an object, we can say '*R* applies to *x*'. But '…applies to...' is a second–order relation, because one of the relata is a first–order relation, namely, *R*. So '…applies to…' is 'transparent' because one of the relata is a first–order relation and the other relatum is the object of a first order relation. Any second–order relation that has at least one relation and at least one object of that relation as relata is transparent.[207]

The argument shows that it is not just the reflexivity of terms that creates problems for Critias' account of temperance as knowledge of itself and other knowledges. If we assume that the relations are not transparent, Critias' argument falls into problems. The first premise of Socrates' refutation is that a relation like 'larger' is reflexive. The second is that it is transparent. The conjunction of these two premises is what entails the absurd conclusion that the larger would be both larger and smaller than itself. So Critias' first claim about temperance, that it is knowledge of itself, is shown to be problematic by Socrates' argument. Critias' second claim about temperance, that it is a knowledge that is non–transparent, is shown at length to be absurd by Socrates at 170a ff. Thus, the second phase of the argument challenges the assumption that the

[206] McCabe (McCabe, 2007) refers to this property as 'transitivity', but that terminology is confusing in the context of relations: a transitive relation is a relation such that if *R* holds between *x* and *y* and *R* holds between *y* and *z*, then the relation holds between *x* and *z*. But *x*, *y* and *z* are all individuals and objects of the first–order relation, *R*. What McCabe needs for her analysis is a property of relations such that the second–order relation can apply to both objects, such as *x*, *y* and *z*, and first–order relations at the same time. I call this property of relations 'transparency'.

[207] Plato seems to be applying this notion of transparency at *Sophist*, 251dff where the ES asks whether we can *apply* (προσάπτω) being not only to individuals, but also to kinds like change and rest, or whether all the kinds can *partake* (μεταλαμβάνω) of each other. The relations named by προσάπτω and μεταλαμβάνω would certainly be transparent in the sense given here.

relevant relations are reflexive and transparent.[208] Why does Socrates impress on Critias that all relative terms are not reflexive but are transparent, when we know that, in fact, some relations are reflexive and none are transparent?[209]

The conjunctive account of relative terms explains how it is that relative terms are thought to all be non–reflexive and to be transparent. It is misleading to use the expression 'reflexive', as I noted in Chapter 3, §3.1. 'Reflexive' describes a property of dyadic relations and I have been arguing that Plato does not have such a conception. I preferred the expression 'aliorelative'. All relatives for Plato are 'aliorelative' in the sense that each relative has a formal object as its correlative. Thus, to take the example from Chapter 1, love is love of the beloved. There are no examples where relatives have themselves as their formal object: no relative is its own correlative.[210] This would explain why Socrates in the *Charmides* seems to suggest that no relations are reflexive; what he means is that all relatives are aliorelative.

So why would Socrates in the *Charmides* hold that all relatives are transparent? Under the notion of relatives that I have attributed to Plato, to be transparent would be equivalent to being a second–order relative and a first–order relative at the same time, since a transparent relation is one that (a) has a relation as a relatum and (b) has an object of that relation as a relatum. The Platonic equivalent of (a) is to be a second–order relative (e.g. 'applies to') and the Platonic equivalent of (b) is to be a first–order relative (e.g. 'knowledge'). Take the example of 'knowledge': the formal object, let us say, is 'the knowable', so to be a second–order relative, 'knowledge' would have to have other relatives fall under its formal object. To be transparent, 'knowledge' would have as a formal object any formal objects of the relatives that fall under 'knowledge'. The formal object of knowledge is the knowable, whether the 'knowledge' is first–order or second–order.

So simply by being second order, 'knowledge' is transparent. Let 'knowledge$_1$' name first–order knowledge and 'knowledge$_2$' name second–order knowledge. 'knowledge$_1$' will have 'the knowable' as its correlative, because 'the knowable' is the formal object of knowledge. To be second–order. 'knowledge$_2$' must have a first order relative as its object, i.e. 'knowledge$_1$'. So 'knowledge$_2$' has 'knowledge$_1$' as its object. But to be any sort of 'knowledge', 'knowledge$_2$'

[208] Along with the 'larger' argument, there is a version of this argument given with 'double'. Under my reading, 'larger' in the argument could simply be substituted with 'double' and the argument would go through. McCabe has to make some additional moves to deal with 'double', see McCabe 2007: 4n10.

[209] A relation such as 'is the same height as' is reflexive: everything that has a height is the same height as itself. No relation is transparent, because second–order relations relate relations to other relations, while first–order relations relate objects to other objects. No relation relates relations to objects, under threat of infinite regress.

[210] I have also argued that relatives reciprocate, but that is a different notion from a relative being its own correlative; when a relative reciprocates with a correlative, the correlative becomes the relative in a new relationship.

must have 'the knowable' as its object (that is the definition of a formal object). So 'knowledge$_2$' must have both 'knowledge$_1$' and 'the knowable' as its objects. Thus, simply in virtue of being second order, 'knowledge$_2$' has a first–order relative and an object of a first–order relative as objects. But having a first–order relative and an object of a first–order relative as objects is the definition of 'transparency'. So simply in virtue of being second–order, 'knowledge' is transparent.

So, if the notion of relatives with formal objects is accepted, then there is no real difference between transparent and non–transparent relatives, provided a relative can be second order. Thus, my account of relatives can make sense of the fact that Socrates' argument here relies on the transparency of relative terms.

The fact that relative terms provide the background rational standards against which the arguments operate becomes even more important when discussing the second phase of the argument. There the scope of relatives was extended to include all sorts of non–psychological relative predicates and to make various claims about them, e.g. that they are all aliorelative and transparent. Critias accepts these moves without any protest, which is a further reason to think that the notion of relative terms is part of the shared rational background of the discussion. Neither party to the discussion challenges the fact that there is a class of relative terms, to which examples such as 'knowledge' and 'larger' both belong. Critias and Socrates simply assume that there is a class of relative terms, and make a number of more specific assumptions about the properties of relative terms (such as that they have a formal, correlative object), which suggests that the distinction and the characterisation simply are one of the assumptions that are shared by the parties engaged in argument.

In both the *Euthydemus* and the *Charmides*, the distinction between relative terms and non–relative terms seems to be part of the background of rational assumptions, which frame the discussion. And in neither case do the disputants implicitly or explicitly challenge the distinction between relative and non–relative terms. In the case of the *Euthydemus*, the distinction is only implicitly appealed to (for example, by Ctesippus at 298c), and it is left to the reader to recognise that the distinction is pertinent to exposing the sophisms. But Ctesippus and Socrates both seem to accept the distinction as part of the rational background that is required in the dialectical context; it is just that they choose not to challenge the sophistical brothers on this point, and it is left to the reader to do that. In the *Charmides*, both Socrates and Critias tacitly agree to the distinction when conducting their argument, as we have seen, so it is even more straightforward to say that the distinction is part of the shared rational background.

This and the previous section of this chapter show the dialectical nature of the relative/non–relative distinction, based on examination of two passages where that distinction occurs in a dialectical context; it invites an inference from particular cases of the use of relative terms to a general rule that relatives are an instrumental assumption in argument, rather than an ontological commitment on the part of Plato. The next section offers a different sort of argument for the same conclusion, namely an inference to the best explanation of one feature of the distinction.

5.3 The Neutrality of the Relative/Non–relative distinction

That feature is the neutrality of the distinction. By 'neutrality', I mean that the distinction is applicable to different topics or domains of discussion, such as psychology, mathematics, ontology, and physical science. Much of this section will be devoted to establishing neutrality, but once it is established, the inference is easy: the best explanation of that neutrality is that the distinction is dialectical, rather than ontological. If we found a distinction that was applicable to only one domain, we might think that it to be an 'axiom' of that domain of argument, rather than a 'common notion' applying to many domains. But if the distinction applies in many domains, it cannot be simply an axiom of one domain. Dialectical distinctions help with arguments from a range of domains, because they apply regardless of the axioms of any given domain. Just as we expect 'identical' to be a term that we can apply in geometrical, political or any other domain of discussion, so we would expect dialectical distinctions to apply across a range of domains of discussion. As well as looking at the neutrality as suggested in the *Euthydemus* and *Charmides* passages, I will examine the neutrality of the distinction as it is presented in other parts of Plato's corpus.

We can see the topic–neutrality of the distinction beginning with the *Charmides* 167c–169a. What is at stake there is whether there is a knowledge of itself and other knowledges, and whether such a knowledge is temperance, 166c2–3 and 166e5–6. In his examination of this idea, Socrates relies, as we saw above, on the fact that 'knowledge' is a term that bears an analogy to a group of other terms, all of which are relatives. But even within this class, there is a variety of terms, each of which seems to have its own domain: we have the cognitive psychological terms such as vision (167c8–9) and hearing (167d4–5); propositional attitudes such as desiring, wishing and loving (167e4–8); and more straight–forwardly representational mental states such as opining

(168c9–d4). The class, however, also includes many terms that are not psychological or epistemic: greater and less (168b5–8) which are probably two of the most topic–neutral terms there are. But the comparison class also includes the mathematical (168c4–7) and the physical (168c–d9–d4). Relative terms, Socrates makes clear, crop up across a range of domains of discussion.

We can also see this neutrality quite clearly in the *Euthydemus.* The sophisms range over domains from the epistemological (293bff) to the familial (297bff). If the sophisms all concerned one topic, we might think that the distinction which resolved them was topic–specific: that there was something wrong with our epistemology or with our notion of a family relation. But since sophisms dealing with different domains of inquiry are dealt with using the same conceptual refinement, we can be sure that the distinction is a feature of arguments in general, not just the specific domains discussed in the *Euthydemus*. If the distinction is applicable across a variety of domains, then it does not have any *prima facie* topic–specific commitments.

This topic–neutrality is not confined to the earlier uses of the distinction. We can see neutrality in the *Sophist* 255c–d argument, which we looked at in Chapter 3. There is good reason to hold that the distinction mooted there, between αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτά and πρὸς ἄλλα/ πρὸς ἄλληλα is neutral as regards particular philosophical commitments, despite an argument to the contrary given by Owen. I hold that the distinction is one which is, at bottom, simply an articulation of a dialectical distinction to which any rational agent would agree.

In his 1971 paper 'Plato and Not–Being', Owen argues that the distinction at *Sophist* 255c14, between αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτά and πρὸς ἄλλα/ πρὸς ἄλληλα marks a distinction not between terms but between identity and predicative uses of εἶναι.[211] I argued in Chapter 3 that we should read πρὸς ἄλληλα at 255c14 rather than πρὸς ἄλλα, but for now I will follow Owen's reading of the text as πρὸς ἄλλα, as it does not affect the point at issue here, provided we accept that πρὸς ἄλλα could name a class of terms, as well as predicative uses of 'being'. Owen's view is that when the ES argues that the kind 'other' is different from 'being' on the basis that 'other' is only predicated πρὸς ἄλλα, but 'being' is predicated both αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτὰ and πρὸς ἄλλα we should understand the point that 'being' is used both to indicate identity and predication: πρὸς ἄλλα indicates the predicative use of 'being' because in predication the complement of the verb 'to be' imports into the proposition something different from the subject.

[211] This position is one that must be resisted if the reading of *Sophist* 255c14 that I propose in Chapter 3 is to be accepted. Also note that Frede, 1992:400–402 expresses a view similar to Owen's, in that Frede also thinks the distinction is between two uses or senses of εἶναι. Frede does not explicitly cite a connection between 255c10 and the opsimaths passage when arguing for his case, but he believes that there is a connection (1992:400).

αύ τὰ καθ' αὐ τὰ indicates the identity use of 'to be' because in that case the 'expressions which flank the verb cannot designate different things' (Owen, 1970: 256).

Owen's principal argument for the reading of αύ τὰ καθ' αὐ τά being as identity and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα being as predication is that this is the best explanation of the way that the dichotomy between αύ τὰ καθ' αὐ τὰ and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα is introduced.[212] At 255c13 the ES says 'I think you agree…' (often translated as 'I think you will agree…'), before going on to make the distinction. Why, Owen asks, does the ES assume Theaetetus' assent to this obscure distinction? Owen's response is that the distinction between predication and identity has already been relied on in the discussion of the opsimaths, who, at 252c2–9, deny that anything can have any other thing as its property, and so deny that anything can have the name of any other thing. But these people are forced to use the expressions 'εἶ ναι' 'χωρίς' 'τῶν ἄ λλων' 'καθ' αὐ τό' even to express their position. The penultimate expression, according to Owen, indicates the predications that the opsimaths do not allow and the final expression indicates the identity statements that they do allow. Owen claims that this distinction is precisely the one we find later, drawn in the same language, at 255c14. The only way to explain why the ES takes Theaetetus to agree to the distinction is that he has already encountered it in the earlier attack on the opsimaths. Therefore, the distinction at 255c14 is between identity and predication.

But we can now see that there is a better explanation for why the ES expects Theaetetus to agree to the distinction. The distinction is a topic– and commitment– neutral dialectical distinction between non–relative and relative terms. It seems that a competent arguer of any philosophical persuasion would agree to a distinction between non–relative and relative terms: the distinction is implicit in dialectical practice, as we saw in the discussions of the *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*, and the ES simply makes it explicit here. Theaetetus, with his native gifts, agrees to the distinction because it articulates a distinction used in dialectical practice, not because the distinction has already been encountered in the discussion of the *Sophist*. If this is the case then there is no reason to think, with Owen, that αύ τὰ καθ' αὐ τὰ and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα distinguish between identity and predicative uses of 'being', as there is no need to look beyond usual dialectical practice to understand why the ES would assume that Theaetetus agrees to mark a distinction between the non–relative and the relative.[213]

[212] Owen, 1970: 257. A similar point is made by Crivelli, 2012: 147–8.

[213] This reply will also satisfy Crivelli, 2012: 148, who also wonders why Theaetetus should be taken to agree to the distinction, but without pushing Owen's party line. We can now see that the distinction is simply one that any rational dialectician could be expected to recognise.

Importantly for the reading I presented in Chapter 3, when Owen's argument is defused, there is nothing standing in the way of reading αὐ τὰ καθ' αὐ τὰ and πρὸ ς ἅ λλα as a distinction between classes of non–relative and relative terms. When taken together with the result in Chapter 3 that πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα should be read in place of πρὸ ς ἅ λλα, and that there is a link between the πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα at *Sophist* 255c14 and *Parmenides* 133c, we can see a strong case that the distinction at *Sophist* 255c14 is a distinction between relative and non–relative terms, since πρὸ ς ἅ λληλα would seem to be a standard Platonic way of referring to relative terms. What are not at stake are two different uses or senses of 'being'. But this result is also significant for the present chapter. With Owen's reading of the αὐ τὰ καθ' αὐ τὰ and πρὸ ς ἅ λλα declawed, my reading of that distinction as a topic–neutral distinction available to any rational arguer looks attractive. If this is the case, then it seems that the distinction mentioned in the *Sophist* would be topic–neutral, just like the relative/non–relative distinction we have discussed in the *Euthydemus* and *Charmides*.

So far, this chapter has offered two sorts of argument for the claim that the distinction between relative and non–relative terms is a dialectical one. The first was a generalisation from cases. Key arguments in the *Euthydemus* and the *Charmides* relied on the distinction. Whatever the dating of those dialogues, they represent the possibly earlier Socratic, confrontational style of Platonic writing. So the perhaps earlier use of the notion of relative terms is as an assumption in argument, not as part of a doctrine in ontology. The second sort of argument was based on the neutrality of the distinction: the relative/ non–relative distinction is topic–neutral. Even when explicitly articulated in the *Sophist* at 255c14, the distinction is neutral.

One counter argument to my claim that the relative/ non–relative distinction is a dialectical one is that the distinction constitutes a Platonic category scheme. A category scheme is an ontological division. Since I have used the notion of a category error in §5.1 of my discussion, I have already, my critic may continue, committed myself to the distinction's being a categorial, and hence, ontological one. In §5.4 of this chapter, I will argue that the 'category scheme' Plato presents is not ontological, but rather has its origins in argumentation. Thus, I can avoid the force of this counter–argument.

5.4 Taxonomy and Categories

In the introduction, I distinguished three sorts of question raised by Diogenes Laertius' brief discussion of relative terms in Plato: the syntactic, the metaphysical and the taxonomic. The taxonomic question was raised by the final sentence of the DL passage: 'Amongst beings (τῶν ὅ ντων), some are absolute (καθ' ἐ αυτά), others are said in relation to something (πρός τι)' (DL iii 108–9). Diogenes suggests that, for Plato, 'beings' can be divided into two distinct sorts: the 'absolute' sort, which includes man, horse and animal, and the relative sort, which includes things such as 'greater, quicker and more beautiful'. The question that Diogenes' text raised was whether Plato has a taxonomy of 'absolute' and 'relative' terms, and whether it should be drawn in the terms suggested by Diogenes. In short, does Plato have a two–category ontological scheme, based on the distinction at *Sophist* 255c14, as many ancient and modern commentators have thought?[214]

There are two families of readings that tackle the idea of a 'category', as I discussed in Chapter 3. The first family have in common the suggestion that 'categories' are classes of properties. The other draws a distinction between ways of having a particular property, between ways of being *F*. If this second way of understanding 'categories' is adopted, then I argue that it is not the case that Plato has a category scheme. This is the category division suggested by Frede for *Sophist* 255c14 and, significantly, the way he attempts to read the notion of categories in Aristotle.[215] For Frede, the distinction between categories in either Plato or Aristotle is to do with the way that something has a property: categories divide up ways that a property can apply to a subject, not the properties themselves. Thus for Frede, 'is larger', a paradigmatic relative term, could be predicated absolutely or relatively if there is a two–category scheme, or relatively, qualitatively, quantitatively and so on, if there are more categories in the scheme. Specifically, 'is larger' could be predicated absolutely of the Form Large, according to Frede, or it could be predicated relatively of some large thing.

I cannot here discuss the merits of Frede's reading of categories in Aristotle. However, with respect to Plato, we can rule out Frede's reading of 'categories'. His way of characterising the categories that he attributes to Plato turns on precisely one line, *Sophist* 255c14, and that line was examined in Chapter 3, §1 and §2. We saw there that Frede's reading of the line faced serious difficulties and that there was an attractive alternative interpretation available, suggested by an alternative manuscript reading. Frede's understanding of the notion of 'categories' in Plato,

[214] For Xenocrates see Simp. *In Cat*. 66, 22; for Boethus of Sidon, *ib*. 159.9–22); for Hermodorus, *ib*. 247, 30ff = Hermodorus, Fr. 7 Isnardi Parente. For comment see Annas, 1974: 267; Dancy, 1999: 45ff; Dillon, 2003:151. *Philebus* 51c–d and *Theaetetus* 157a8–b1 are sometimes cited as further sources for a Platonic category scheme.
[215] Frede, 1987: 47.

therefore, lacks the textual support it needs from *Sophist* 255c14. So I submit that Plato does not have a category scheme, where 'category scheme' is taken in Frede's sense.

Dancy offers a different attempt to understand the 'categories' in the *Sophist* at 255c14 as between two ways of using predicates. Dancy's view is that the ES is drawing a distinction between καθ' αὐ τά and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα kinds of being. The former are those cases where 'saying what a thing is…requires the introduction of no new entities' and the latter are cases where 'a new entity must be introduced *without presupposing any answer to the question which entities these are*'.[216] Dancy calls these Standalone and Relative being. In the case of Standalone being, when we assert a claim like '*a* is *F*', where that is a standalone predication, we have done all we need to do to plot the essence of *a* on the map of beings. Thus, Standalone predications are essential predications. In the case where we assert '*a* is *G*', where that is a Relative predication, i.e. it stands in need of supplementation, then we have not answered the 'what is *a?*' question, and so we have given a merely accidental predication.

Dancy's view is that any given property can apply to an object in either of the two ways he identifies (i.e. as an essential property or as an accidental property). Thus, there are two 'categories' in Plato: the essential and the accidental. The difficulty with Dancy's account is that he fails to take the logic of πρὸ ς ἄ λλα seriously. Because of the influence the DL passage exerts on his reading, he simply takes πρὸ ς ἄ λλα to be equivalent to the πρός τι that is found in DL. Intuitively, πρός τι has a somewhat wider scope than πρὸ ς ἄ λλα (and indeed πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα), in that it should include all relative terms, while πρὸ ς ἄ λλα and πρὸ ς ἄ λληλα should include only the aliorelatives and the reciprocal relatives respectively. And indeed, we were able to give a reading of *Sophist* 255c14 which eliminates the need for reading πρὸ ς ἄ λλα in this passage at all. Thus having briefly explored its two main advocates, we can see that, *prima facie*, a two–category scheme in Plato is not a distinction between two ways in which properties apply to their objects.

John Malcolm offers a more ambitious reading of categories in Plato.[217] His view is that the 'categories' in Plato do not divide up ways of possessing a property, but rather divide terms into classes.[218] First of all, like Owen, he asserts that the kind of distinction in question is between complete and incomplete predicates.[219] To repeat an example, 'Socrates is a man' is a complete predication, as it needs nothing more to make it a grammatical sentence. However,

[216] Dancy, 1999: 68. Italics in original.
[217] Malcolm, 2006.
[218] Compare with Owen, 1957 and Owen 1968. See Chapter 1.
[219] Malcolm, 2006: 277.

'Socrates is larger' does not make a grammatical sentence, unless completed with a 'than someone'. Malcolm quickly identifies these two kinds of predication with καθ' αὐ τά and πρὸ ς ἄ λλα ways of being. καθ' αὐ τά being is represented by complete statements, while πρὸ ς ἄ λλα being is represented by incomplete statements. Malcolm then suggests that the scope of the καθ' αὐ τά/πρὸ ς ἄ λλα contrast is non–exhaustive. That is to say, not all things fit into one or the other. Instead, Malcolm takes the DL.III.108–9 passage as background, with its distinction between καθ' αὐ τά and πρός τι dividing all terms, and then as sub–categories of πρός τι posits πρὸ ς ἄ λλα (in relation to others) and πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό (in relation to itself).

Malcolm gives a richer category scheme than other interpreters of Plato, with an exclusive division of καθ' αὐ τά terms and πρός τι terms. Not only is it richer, it is also built on the idea that categories divide terms into classes (and sub–classes), rather than dividing ways of using predicates. However, I think that there are insurmountable historical difficulties with Malcolm's account. There is no evidence that anyone in the ancient world, let alone Plato, held a scheme like this. There are two passages in which the ancients may have attributed to Plato a category scheme that has sub–divisions: Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* X 269–75 and Simplicius, *In Arist. Phys.* 247.30. Take the Simplicius passage, where the commentator cites Hermodorus, an early Academic. This fragment does not support Malcolm's view of Plato's category scheme. Hermodorus draws a distinction between items which are καθ' αὐ τά and items which are πρὸ ς ἕ τερα. The latter are then sub–divided, but not into the classes that Malcolm wants: Hermodorus, rather strangely, divides πρὸ ς ἕ τερα into πρὸ ς ἐ ναντία (in relation to opposites) and πρός τι (in relation to something), with no mention whatsoever of πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό.

The Sextus passage, discussing the views of 'Pythagoreans', does not mention a class of things that are πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό. It does mention a class of πρός τι, but only to place this within a higher genus of 'excess' and 'deficiency', the idea apparently being that 'the great and greater, much and more, high and higher' are excesses and 'small and smaller, few and fewer, low and lower' are deficiencies. Thus there is no room for πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό in this class. Under the 'Pythagorean' scheme, πρὸ ς ἐ αυτό would probably have to fit into the class of καθ' ἐ αυτά, an example of which is given as 'equality'. But this clearly doesn't help Malcolm's argument, since καθ' ἐ αυτά is supposed to be the 'absolute' category and so cannot have one of the 'relative' sub–categories as a sub–category. In the absence of stronger historical evidence, it seems that Malcolm's more elaborate category scheme is just speculation.

These three proposed accounts of the two–category scheme in Plato suggest an ontological purpose for the division; Plato introduces the categories because he thinks that they

correspond to a division in the world. But none of the three accounts gives a satisfactory story about what the categories are supposed to be. I suggest a different motivation for Plato's taxonomic distinction between relative and non–relative terms. Chapter 5, §§5.1–3, argue that the distinction is both originally and latterly a dialectical distinction between two classes of terms.[220] If this is true, then 'categories' in Plato distinguish between two classes of terms, not two ways of terms applying to things.

Moreover, mine is a logical distinction, that is, a distinction that helps us create arguments that lead from true premises to true conclusions only. After a certain amount of time spent on the practice of dialectic, perhaps in the Academy, it would become clear that one must distinguish between properties that an item has independently of any other item, and properties it has in virtue of another item. Otherwise, fallacies such as those of the sophistical brothers in the *Euthydemus* will be irresistible. In this sense, the 'categorial' distinction between absolute and relative terms is dialectical. Dialecticians would learn to ensure that, when someone uses a term such as 'is knowledgeable', it is not used in a logically loose way; they must ensure that the correlative is specified, so that it is not confused with a non–relative term.[221]

There is one final piece of evidence that the category scheme I propose that Plato holds is dialectical. At *Theaetetus* 146e7–10 Socrates gives a reason to reject Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as 'the crafts such as cobbling' (146d1–3). At first, it appears that Socrates is making the point familiar from *Meno* (72a6–b9), that a definition should be a singular item, not a plurality. But Sedley (2004: 22–23) suggests that Socrates here objects to Theaetetus' response because it involves a category mistake.[222] Socrates glosses Theaetetus' definition of knowledge ('knowledge is cobbling (etc.)') as 'knowledge is knowledge of making shoes' (146d7–9). Here he has done two things: first, substituted 'cobbling' with the synonymous expression 'knowledge of making shoes', then removed the second occurrence of 'knowledge' as being redundant. The

[220] This reading of the two–category taxonomy makes sense of the fact that the 'absolute/ relative' distinction is only mentioned once in the whole Platonic corpus, at *Sophist* 255c14. If the distinction were the important ontological distinction that Frede, Dancy and Malcolm take it to be, it would be very surprising if it were mentioned only once and only on the way towards what, in the context of the *Sophist*, is a much more important conclusion. If, however, the distinction were a dialectical one, and an assumption that Plato thinks underlies rational discussion, then the fact that it is only brought to the surface in one instance would be perfectly understandable.

[221] As far as I can discern, I am the first to suggest this origin for Plato's two–category taxonomy. However, a 'dialectical' origin for Aristotle's categories has been suggested by Frede (1987:47) himself and Menn (1995). I discuss possible connections to Aristotle's categories and Aristotle's *Categories* in the conclusion.

[222] Sedley is developing a hint in the anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus* (*In Plat. Tht.* 20.24–37 cf. Sedley and Brown, 1993: 141–2): In print, Sedley does not himself endorse the commentator's reading as a reading of Plato, but does not reject it either.

result is that Socrates addresses the definition 'knowledge is of making shoes' as Theaetetus' attempted definition.

Part of Socrates' response to this attempted definition is to say that Theaetetus was not asked 'what things knowledge is of' (146e7–8), but 'what knowledge itself is' (146e8–10). We could construe Socrates as saying that Theaetetus answers the question 'what is knowledge?' as if the question were looking for a response in the category of relatives. Theaetetus answers with some examples of formal objects of knowledge. This would be a perfectly good answer to the question if Socrates had been pursuing the characteristics of knowledge as a relative. But Socrates clarifies that he was pursuing the substantive characteristics. The question was a 'What is it?' question, inviting an answer in the category of substance. In short, Theaetetus made precisely the sort of dialectical category error we have been discussing: because he did not have a clear idea of the difference between the relative and the non–relative categories, his answer in the dialectic did not match up to Socrates' intended construal of the question. If Socrates' intention is to point out this category mistake, such a move is perfectly explicable, given the dialectical understanding of the category scheme which I have here proposed.

One worry about this way of reading the passage might be Socrates' invocation of 'knowledge itself' at 147e10. 'Knowledge itself' seems as if it ought to be a non–relative term. In addition, Socrates introduces an analogy between 'knowledge itself' and clay (147a–b), presumably also a non–relative term. If the category error construal is correct, it seems that Socrates would be suggesting 'knowledge' falls into the non–relative category. And that would be deeply problematic, since throughout this thesis I have argued that 'knowledge' is a paradigmatic relative term for Plato. But this, I believe, is evidence that Plato is thinking of categories dialectically, not ontologically. On an ontological construal of the categories, we would wish to place each term into exactly one category: this motivates the urge to put 'knowledge' uniquely into either the relative or the non–relative category. But in dialectic, the use of categories is to ensure that the participants are not talking past each other: the question and the answer must be in the same category, but there is no requirement that each term fits into exactly one category. 'We wanted to know what knowledge itself is' simply indicates that Socrates has identified that Theaetetus' answer was not in the same category as Socrates' question: his question was a definitional, not relational one. It does not need to imply that 'knowledge itself' is in the non–relative category, since Socrates does not construe the categories ontologically. On the latter construal, the categories are rigid, but on the former, dialectical

construal there is more flexibility. This flexibility is exploited by Socrates here, and so gives further evidence that Plato thinks of the categories dialectically.

What is the difference between the 'absolute' and the 'relative' categories, on my view? There are two ways of answering this question: either we take the 'absolute' terms to all share some specific characteristic (or conjunction of characteristics), and pick out the relative terms as all those terms that lack this specifiable characteristic, or we do the reverse, and say that all relatives have a specific characteristic and 'absolute' terms are just those that lack it.[223] The first of these alternatives predominates in the literature, but I defend the second approach.

The best example of the first approach is Annas (1974: 267n33). Annas distinguishes three contrasts of 'absolute' and 'relative'. The three contrasts are as follows: (a) relatives are those items to which another item is correlative, e.g. double, which is correlative to half. Absolute terms do not have a correlative, because they are not relative. (b) Relatives are essentially *alio*relative; absolute terms are not relative, so not aliorelative. (c) A relative term is incomplete; an absolute term is complete. Annas argues that the 'absolute' class is the one that 'retains the idea of completeness and independence', and is therefore the stable class, with which 'relative' is contrasted.[224] It is clear, then, that, Annas sees relative terms as simply all those terms that are not absolute.

However, if my reading of the category distinction is correct, the 'relative' class becomes the primary class, in Plato at any rate, with 'absolute' terms simply being all those that are not relatives. In argumentation, it is the relative class of terms that plays a functional role in exposing fallacies and constructing arguments. We have also seen that Plato has a very clear idea of the characteristics of relative terms (such as their reciprocity and aliorelativity) and the role that these characteristics play in argument. But Plato does not have an equivalently sharp idea of the characteristics of 'absolute' terms. The label 'absolute', not the label 'relative', seems, for Plato, to be the one that picks out the leftover terms.[225] Thus, if the dialectical understanding of the category distinction and my characterisation of relative terms are correct, Plato sees relatives as having a set of specifiable characteristics in common, and 'absolute' terms as the derivative class.

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[223] There is, I admit, a third option, namely, that both the absolute and the relatives categories are given a specific characterisation. This has not been suggested in the literature, and it seems unlikely to result in an exclusive and exhaustive contrast, which I take as a necessary feature of a category scheme.

[224] So it seems that Annas, like Owen, thinks that the complete/incomplete contrast is co–extensive with the absolute/relative contrast.

[225] This is supported by the fact that, at *Parmenides*, 133c–134e, Parmenides does not even name the class that he contrasts with 'relatives'.

So we have an answer to the taxonomic question posed by Diogenes' account of relative terms in Plato: there is a categorial distinction between 'absolute' and 'relative' terms. Relative terms are a conjunction of a one–place property and an intentional orientation towards their correlative formal object (see Chapter 1, §1.2). That answers the metaphysical question. But we can now see that the two answers are related. For the taxonomic distinction to be dialectical it must be reflected in the metaphysics of relatives, since Plato does not recognise that there could be a logical distinction without a corresponding distinction in the world; he simply does not have the philosophical apparatus to do that. Plato lacks the notion of the logical form of a proposition. He would not be able to formulate the idea that 'Hector is a brother' has the logical form of '$\exists xRax$', and so has the same logical form as another sentence such as 'Hector is larger than someone'.

So any distinctions that rely on logical form, such as the distinction between relative and non–relative terms, will also have metaphysical significance for Plato: they are good distinctions not because they allow us to better reflect the logical form of a proposition, but because they map onto distinctions that are really present in the world. There is a real distinction between brothers and men, not merely a distinction between the logical forms of the expressions with which we mention them: men are non–relative, brothers are relative. So the dialectical distinction between relative and non–relative terms must correspond to a world–level distinction between relative and non–relative properties.

We have seen how the taxonomy of absolute and relative terms relates to the metaphysics of relatives. We might finally ask how the taxonomy relates to the syntax of relative terms: how does the dialectical answer to the taxonomic question relate to the syntactic question raised in the introduction? The dialectical account of the taxonomy shows that there is no single syntactic criterion, such as being 'incomplete', or being completable with a genitive which will distinguish relatives from non–relatives, because the distinction cannot be read off the surface grammar. The contours of the distinction are arrived at through experience in dialectic and argument. Some cases of relatives will, of course, reflect relativity in their surface grammar: paradigmatic cases of this phenomenon include expressions such as 'larger'. But in many interesting cases the distinction cannot simply be read off from the grammar. A good dialectician does not wish to confuse different sorts of terms with different logical properties; the grammatical properties of expressions are not a reliable guide to the logical properties of the terms they express. So, although there are syntactically incomplete relatives, such as 'larger', which Plato counts as relative, there are also syntactically complete cases, such as 'brother', which may be completed

with a genitive, but which need not be. But since the taxonomic distinction is a dialectical one, the dialectician, through experience with arguments, comes to be able to distinguish relatives from non–relatives on logical, not syntactic, grounds.

This explanation has a further significance. One of the oldest questions regarding Aristotle's categories is whether they divide words or things. There could, of course, be a parallel debate regarding the putative categories that I claim Plato develops. However, the dialectical origins of the Platonic categories render this question moot. The Platonic categories divide terms of one logical type from terms of another logical type. This distinction does track a division in the world, as we have seen, but there is no meaningful question about whether 'absolute' and 'relative' divide words or things: the categories divide terms with one logical property from terms with another, and there is a corresponding metaphysical distinction between things.

Before I leave the issue of categories in Plato, I want to make some remarks about the virtue of my way of understanding the two–category scheme. One traditional problem in scholarship on Aristotle is the question of how Aristotle arrived at his list of categories. One answer is the 'question' approach, advocated by Ackrill in his 1963 commentary on the *Categories*. Ackrill suggests that Aristotle arrived at his list by two orthogonal sets of questions. First, we ask all the questions that are interesting concerning an item, e.g. we might ask: 'How tall is Achilles?' 'Where is Achilles?' 'What is Achilles?' In answering these questions, we will respond: 'Six feet', 'In the battle', and 'Human'. Second, by pressing each of the answers with further questions – 'What is six feet?', 'What is a battle?', 'What is a human?' – we will eventually arrive at the answers which constitute the headings for the ten categories. The difficulties with Ackrill's approach are well known. Why should we think that what we yield by this questioning, even if the questioning is systematic, maps ontological distinctions in the world? Our questioning inclinations could result in 'categories' which diverge widely from the broadest ontological distinctions that there are.

Corresponding to the debate about Aristotle's list of categories, we could ask how Plato arrived at his. An answer is available which does not suffer from the defects of Ackrill's 'question' approach. The answer, in the case of Plato, is to say that the distinction between absolute and relative terms is arrived at by the articulation of a distinction implicit in our grasp of argumentation. Any rational arguer will recognise the distinction when it is presented to them. The distinction might be discovered through long hours of practice at dialectic, and we saw in this chapter that the notion of relative terms is relied upon in creating and defending arguments. But it is not 'discovered' by the questions we happen to ask about some item; the distinction is

already available to rational arguers. And since, for Plato, there is no distinction in logical form without a corresponding metaphysical distinction, we can be sure that the distinction does track a genuine taxonomic one.

Conclusion

The overall aim of this chapter has been to further strengthen the claim that the relative/ non–relative distinction in Plato is not primarily ontological, by arguing that it is based on dialectical considerations. §5.1 and §5.2 showed, through textual evidence, the origin of the distinction in the needs of argumentation, both in exposing fallacies and in constructing arguments. §5.3 argued, on the basis of an inference to the best explanation of the distinction's neutrality, that it is not ontological, but rather dialectical.

§5.4 considered a possible response to these considerations: the relative/non–relative distinction is an ontological distinction because it is a category distinction. I argued, however, that if there is a Platonic category scheme, it also has its origins in dialectical practice and so is not ontological. I fleshed out my account of the apparent Platonic category scheme, arguing that the 'relatives' category is the primary one, with the 'absolute' category delineated by privation, and showing how this answer to Diogenes' taxonomic question relates to his metaphysical and syntactic questions. This fleshing out of the Platonic category scheme, I hope, makes it plausible that the scheme is dialectically, not ontologically, motivated. The conclusion of the thesis will briefly consider the impact of this reading of Plato's category scheme on our interpretation of Aristotle's.

Conclusion

To what extent have I illuminated Plato's understanding of relative terms in the course of this dissertation? The first three chapters dealt with the question of the nature of relative terms, on Plato's view: their logic, metaphysics and taxonomy. In these chapters, I continually contrasted conjunctivism with the most commonplace view of the nature of relative terms in Plato, the eponymously named Owenian view. Chapters 4 and 5 dealt with Plato's reasons for introducing relative terms, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, §5.4, dealt with two ontological explanations of Plato's account of relative terms, while the remainder of Chapter 5 argued for a dialectical explanation. The first section of this concluding chapter reviews the results of the investigations as they correspond to the themes that structured the thesis. The second section looks at the possible connection between the picture of relatives I have discerned in Plato and the picture of relative terms in Plato's immediate successors.

The first theme under the nature of relative terms is logic. Chapter 1, §1.1 discussed Owen's account: exemplary relative terms, such as being larger than and being smaller than, cannot be used without a complementary term. Owen's basic picture is that we take a statement such as 'Ajax is larger than Hector' and make it 'incomplete' by removing the second term. This gives a statement such as 'Ajax is larger than'. So, relative terms are incomplete, two–place terms. This basic version of Owen's view faces a problem. Some terms are not syntactically incomplete, but they are relative. An example of this would be being large. That is, certain terms are variably –adic. The solution I proposed for Owen was to say that some terms are syntactically incomplete, while others are semantically incomplete: being larger than is an example of the former, while being large is an example of the latter. Being larger than is an overt relative, because it is obviously incomplete, while being large might be thought a concealed relative, because it is incomplete, but not obviously incomplete.

I have moved the debate on from Owen's view by showing that the logic of relatives is much richer than previously thought. We saw in Chapter 1, §1.2, that, for Plato, one central feature of that logic is that relative terms have formal objects. A relative term, like larger, will have an object to which it is always and exclusively relative. For example, the larger is always larger than the smaller. Chapter 1, §1.2 gave this notion a rigorous characterisation. Chapter 2, §§2.1 and 2.2 confirmed that relative terms have formal objects, because Plato deploys that notion in one of his most important and distinctive arguments. Connected to this is the idea of an

intentional orientation. How does one determine what the formal object of a relative term is? The link is an intentional one: large is relative to small, father is relative to offspring. Owen's view fails to take into account Plato's talk of each relative having a special connection to its correlative term: Owen allows any individual term to complete a relative. 'Ajax is larger than' could be completed with any individual hero, man, god or inanimate object.

Of course, any large object will have all sorts of properties attached to it, relational and non–relational. But in Plato's logic of relative terms, only some of these are relevant for determining what the formal object of a relative term is. Chapter 1, §1.2 made this clear in the discussion of the expression τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν, which Plato often uses in the context of relatives. From looking at the evidence of various passages, it seems that Plato habitually uses the expression to specify that a particular term is being described as a given relative. With due caution, I gloss this τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν using the *qua* operator. This allows us to specify that a term is being viewed as the particular relative term that it is, and discuss it as that relative. For example, we can say that the larger, *qua* larger, is relative to the smaller. That is to say, understood as the relative term being larger, being larger is larger than the smaller. The *qua* operator allows Plato to specify that a relative is not being described in some deviant way, and that it therefore has the formal object we would expect. Larger *qua* larger, will be relative to the smaller, not relative to much smaller, or the going to be smaller. In Chapter 2, §2.3, we saw this reflected in the way that Plato rejects the Socratic paradox.

The idea that a relative, *qua* that relative, is relative to something was also crucial for understanding Plato's attitude towards the speciation of relatives. Remember that for Plato relative terms are types, not tokens. Because they are types, they can have species. The object of a relative can help determine what the species of that relative are. We saw in Chapter 2, §2.1 that the speciation of the formal object of a relative can lead to the speciation of the relative term. Thus desire, *qua* desire, is for the good.[226] Drink is a sort of good. So desire can be for drink. But desire, *qua* desire, cannot be for drink, since drink is not the formal object of desire. However, desire, *qua* thirst, is for drink. So the species of the formal object generate species of the relative, using the *qua* operator.

There is one final point to make about the logic of relative terms. Each relative term has a formal object, to which it is relative. But those formal objects are themselves relatives and are correlative to the relative term. I called this characteristic 'reciprocity'. We saw the evidence of it

[226] At least in the *Republic*: In the *Charmides* at 167e1–2 desire is for pleasure, wish is for the good.

most clearly in Chapter 3, §3.3, where reciprocity plays a central role in the Greatest Difficulty argument of the *Parmenides*, and, if my advocacy of an alternative manuscript reading is accepted, in the *Sophist* at 255c14. Reciprocity, as *Parmenides* 133c–134e shows, draws together many of the logical characteristics of relative terms. For example, master, *in so far as he is a master*, is of slave. This relies on taking master as τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν of slave. Slave is also the formal object of master, and master has an intentional orientation towards a slave. But, slave also has these characteristics in the reverse direction: *qua* slave, slave is of master, master is the formal object of slave, and slave has an intentional orientation towards master. So there is a unique and robust relationship between a relative and a correlative, under the conjunctive reading. The Owenian reading lacks any unique or robust relationship here: any individual or class term can complete an incomplete relative term to form a statement.

The characteristic from which the conjunctive reading gets its name is a metaphysical one. Metaphysics discusses what there would have to be in the world for statements such as 'Achilles is larger than Hector' to be true. Three options were examined in this thesis. Castañeda's approach, that Achilles and Hector are individuals, each related to different ends of a 'Form chain', was discussed in the introduction and found to be incoherent. But it did useful work to highlight the fact that Plato may not have a dyadic conception of the truth–maker for relational statements. Owen, on the other hand, thinks that Plato does have such a conception. For Owen, Plato's metaphysics of relatives is to construe them as a dyadic relation, which is a unitary item with two gaps, one for each of the subjects. This is reflected in Chapter 1, §1.1 and Chapter 4, §§4.1 and 4.2. Thus, the truth–maker for 'Achilles is larger than Hector' involves three items: Achilles and Hector (in that order) and the dyadic relation of being larger than.

The difficulty for Owen's reading, as outlined in Chapter 1, §1.1, is that it seems anachronistic. To attribute to Plato an understanding of dyadic relations, an understanding that we do not have any clear evidence of before late antique thought, seems problematic. The conjunctive reading, at least, does not face such a problem, although it has some of its own, discussed in Chapter 1, §1.3. The conjunctive reading takes it that the truth–maker for a statement such as 'Achilles is larger than Hector' is the conjunction of a relative property, such as being large, and an intentional orientation towards the object. Unlike Owen's metaphysical analysis of the statement, which has the logical form '*Rab*', the conjunctive reading has the logical form '*Ra* & *Oab*' where '*O*' represents an intentional orientation. This invocation of an intentional orientation allowed the conjunctive reading to ward off, if not refute, Denyer's objections cited in Chapter 1, §1.3. In this way I move the debate beyond Owen's anachronistic dyadic reading, but

also move it forward by showing how some difficulties, usually thought to be fatal to a conjunctive approach, could be dealt with.

It is a question how the metaphysical and logical points about conjunctivism relate. Logically, conjunctivism takes the line that relative terms are terms for types, such as 'the larger' or 'the brother'. So surely we should only discuss the truth–makers for relational statements of that sort. It seems to be an extension of Plato's account to discuss the truth–makers of relational statements that mention individuals. I suggest, however, that such an extension is not unduly radical. Plato does often use relational statements that mention individuals, as we saw in Chapter 4, and so it seems legitimate to at least ask how their truth–makers might be treated. This allowed us to compare the metaphysical structures of the conjunctive reading and those of the dyadic, Owenian reading.

The final theme to consider about the nature of relative terms is the taxonomic one. We saw in Chapter 3, §§3.1 and 3.2 and Chapter 5, §5.4 that the best way to take the distinction between relative and non–relative is as a distinction between two classes of terms, not between two ways that terms can apply to objects. The distinction is between relative and non–relative terms, not relative and non–relative predications. Chapter 3, §3.4 also argued that the relevant classification was a distinction between reciprocal relatives and non–relative terms. All terms in the class of relatives are reciprocal relatives. Following the results of Chapter 5, §§5.1–5.3, which argued that relative terms were introduced for dialectical purposes, we were able to see that this taxonomy of relative and non–relative could be viewed as a category scheme: those are the 'highest' genera of terms, at least where general argumentative practice is concerned. The taxonomy of reciprocal relative and non–relative can be mapped onto a dialectically motivated Platonic category scheme.

Alongside the nature of relative terms in Plato, this thesis has tried to determine the purpose they have in Plato's thought. The view of many is that, one way or another, Plato introduced relative terms for an ontological purpose. Chapter 4 discussed the main contender for such an account, which is that Plato introduced the notion of relative terms to make an argument for the separation of forms from their participants. That argument is known as the 'Argument from Relativity'. This approach is characteristic of Owen himself, and much of the literature on relative terms follows him in it. But by distinguishing the notion of a context–sensitive term from that of a relative term, I was able to move forward the debate over the purpose of relative terms. It seems likely that there is a notion of context–sensitivity at play in key sources for the 'Argument from Relativity'. The 'Argument from Relativity' does not involve relatives.

Suggesting a separation between context–sensitivity and relativity also represents an advance in understanding Plato on relatives.

Having clarified this point, I was able to advocate a dialectical purpose for Plato's introduction of relative terms. The results of my discussion of the nature of relatives were applied, in Chapter 5, §§5.1–5.2, to arguments that seem obscure without understanding the nature of relative terms. The applicability of the notion to those arguments proves its topic–neutrality, further discussed in Chapter 5, §5.3. This evidence suggested that relatives were distinguished from non–relative terms for dialectical purposes. I was then able to show, in Chapter 5, §5.4, that this dialectical distinction did not collapse into an ontological categorial distinction. That in turn allowed me to make the novel suggestion that Plato introduced the contrast between 'absolute' and 'relative' terms for dialectical purposes, and that, of the two, 'relative' is the more stable, more thoroughly characterised class of terms.

Relatives in Plato and Categories *7*

Above, we saw a brief summary of the main points I made about Plato's view of relative terms in this thesis, and the ways that they advance the debate over this issue. In what follows, I wish to open out the discussion and mention some connections that my work here may have to other issues in ancient philosophy. The first speaks to the relationship between Plato and Aristotle. Specifically, we can see that Plato shares much of his view of relatives with Aristotle's view in *Categories* 7. How much of Aristotle's view of relatives has its origins in Plato is a question that goes back to the earliest commentaries on the *Categories*, and has been taken up in the modern discussion of *Categories* 7.[227] I argue here that Aristotle shares many of the concepts of relativity with Plato, but that his terminology differs dramatically. The main point of contrast is that Aristotle worries a good deal about the extension of the class of relative terms, whereas that issue does not feature strongly in Plato's thought on the matter.[228]

First are the points of comparison. After giving his first definition of relatives at 6a36–b2, Aristotle goes on to list some characteristics that relative terms have. At 6b15–18 he points out that some, but not all, relatives have contraries: knowledge has a contrary, ignorance, but double

[227] e.g. Boethus of Sidon, cited in Simp. *In Cat*. 159, 9–22. cf. Morales, 1994: 257n6; Bodéüs, 2001: 117–118.
[228] In fact, the bulk of the literature on Aristotle's *Categories* 7 discusses the issue of the extension of the category for Aristotle by discussing the relationship between the two definitions Aristotle gives, at 6a36–b2 and 8a28–34. See Ackrill, 1963: 98–103; Morales, 1994; Sedley, 2002; Harari, 2011.

does not. At 6b19–27 Aristotle says that some but not all relatives admit of degrees: similar and unequal have this characteristic, but double and treble do not. What Aristotle is very clear about is that all relative terms reciprocate with their correlatives (6b28–35). To illustrate this point, Aristotle actually uses the example of master and slave: 'the slave is called slave of a master, and the master is called master of a slave' (6b29–30). Aristotle also gives the example of knowledge and the knowable (6b34–5). All of these examples (master, slave, knowledge and knowable) come from Plato's discussion of relatives in the *Parmenides*. Like Plato, Aristotle seems to conceive of relatives as reciprocal, with a relative term bearing a relation to a correlative, and the correlative bearing the inverse of that relation to the relative. This correspondence of example and conception between Aristotle and Plato (at *Parmenides* 133c–134e; see Chapter 3, §3.2 and the Appendix) is so striking that it seems difficult to dismiss it as mere coincidence.

However, the correspondence is not perfect. Plato does not have a single word expression to describe 'reciprocation'. He uses periphrases such as saying that relative ideas 'are what they are relative to each other' (πρὸ ς ἀ λλήλας εἰ σὶ ν αἵ εἰ σιν) at *Parmenides* 133c8–9. Aristotle apparently coins a single–word expression for reciprocity: 'All relatives are said in relation to reciprocals (ἀ ντιστρέφοντα)' (6b28). This is a feature that we will see repeated across Aristotle's discussion of relatives in the *Categories*: there is a strong correspondence of conception and examples, but a different, neater, language for discussing them.

Aristotle worries about this reciprocity criterion. It seems that there are counter–examples to the generalisation that all relatives reciprocate with their correlative. Aristotle ponders the relative 'wing' and its correlative 'bird'. It seems that 'wing is wing of a bird' is a statement of relativity, but the inverse 'a bird is bird of a wing' does not obtain. Many items that are not birds have wings. Aristotle therefore refines his generalisation about relatives, saying that 'All relatives are said in relation to reciprocals, provided that they are appropriately formulated (πάντα οὖ ν τὰ πρός τι, ἐ άνπερ οἱ κείως ἀ ποδιδῶται, πρὸ ς ἀ ντιστρέφοντα λέγεται)' (7a22–3). What does his idea of appropriately formulating a relative amount to? At 7a31, he tells us that, when all of the irrelevant predicates of a relative are ignored, then it will reciprocate with its correlative: ignoring the fact a master is also a man, and a biped and rational, a master is master of a slave. Aristotle could say that master, *qua* master, is master of a slave.

Again, the conceptual background for this point is found in Plato, but the language is novel with Aristotle. We saw in Chapter 1, §1.2, that Plato develops the concepts and terminology for precisely this sort of move. Saying that a father, τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν, is relative to a son or daughter means, for Plato, that when all of the other things true of the father are ignored,

a father is father of offspring.[229] Aristotle's metaphor of 'stripping away all the other things' (πάντων περιαιρουμένων τῶν ἄλλων) (7a33) seems a metaphor based on Plato's conception of how a relative and correlative formal object interact: a relative *in so far as it is that relative,* is relative to its proper correlative. Not only is the idea of 'stripping away' adumbrated by Plato, but Aristotle's analysis seems to rely on the correlative being the exceptionlessly correct formal object of a relative. Otherwise, Aristotle's remarks seem poorly motivated: how are we to determine that there is no reciprocation between man and slave? Aristotle gives us no criterion, and merely asserts that there is no reciprocation. Implicit in this must be the idea that there are proper correlatives for each relative: slaves are correlative to masters, not to men *qua* men.

Aristotle says that relatives admit of degrees (6b19–27) and relatives are simultaneous with their correlatives, (7b15–8a12). It is debatable, but *Republic* IV, 438b, specifies that the relative and its correlative, greater and less, may turn out to be much greater and much less. This seems to suggest that Plato has an awareness of the point relatives admit of a more and a less. The same passage specifies that at–one–time–greater and at–one–time–less are a relative and correlative pair, just like going–to be–greater and going–to–be–less. This could be an indication of Plato's foreshadowing of the Aristotelian point that relatives and correlatives are simultaneous: in the past, present or future, greater and less are relative to each other.

As I mentioned above, there are some differences between Plato's account of relatives and the one Aristotle gives in *Categories* 7. Aristotle mentions one characteristic of relatives that Plato does not. For Aristotle, relatives admit of contraries, (6b15–18); This is not obviously discussed by Plato. One partial explanation for the discrepancy is that Aristotle discusses contrariety for several of his categories. The form of the treatise compels the author to examine whether they have contraries (substance at 3b24ff.; quantity at 5b11ff.; quality at 10b12ff.). But Aristotle may simply be making the point there that both of a pair of opposites can be admitted to the category of relatives, a point Plato would feel no need to discuss. Indeed, Aristotle immediately points out that not every relative has an opposite, giving the examples of double and treble (6b17–19).

Another difficulty is that, at 11a20–23, Aristotle seems to say that species of relatives are not necessarily themselves relatives; grammar is a species of knowledge, but 'grammar' does not meet Aristotle's definition at 6a36. Grammar is not called grammar of something. So it does not meet the definition and therefore is not a relative. This appears to contradict Plato's view in

[229] Aristotle uses precisely Plato's language of τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν at 6a36 when giving the example of 'larger', 'the larger is just what it is (τοῦ θ' ὅ περ ἔ στιν) of something else'.

Republic IV, (discussed in Chapter 2, §2.1) that species of relatives are themselves relatives. However, Plato need not be committed to the claim all species of relatives are themselves relatives. So there is not be any contradiction at all.

I wish to touch briefly on the question of whether Aristotle's definition of relatives, given at 6a36, really has its origins in Plato's thought. Aristotle's definition is as follows: 'All the things which are said to be just what they are of other things, or are in some other way in relation to something else are said to be relatives' (Πρός τι δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγεται, ὅσα αὐτὰ ἅπερ ἐστὶν ἑτέρων εἶναι λέγεται ἢ ὁπωσοῦν ἄλλως πρὸς ἕτερον) (6a36). The supposed Platonic source for this is *Republic* 438b1–2.[230] There Socrates says, 'But surely, I said, of all the things which are of such a kind as to be of something (ὅσα γ' ἐστὶ τοιαῦτα οἷα εἶναί του)...'. These two definitions seem to share the crucial thought that what distinguishes relatives from non–relatives is that relatives are *of something*. Thus, those who say that Aristotle's definition has a Platonic source claim this as proof definitive that the two thinkers agree.

However, it is clear from the context of Plato's 'definition' that Socrates is not defining relative terms at all, but merely using that periphrasis to label them as a group. His concern is not to pick out all and only relative terms with a definition, but merely to allude to them as a class so that Glaucon can understand the points he goes on to make. Those points do apply to all and only relative terms (438b–c), but the 'definition' is more of a descriptive label. By 'descriptive label', I mean an expression that functions like a name, but has some descriptive content. There is a coalmine in south Wales named 'Big Pit': that would be an excellent example of a descriptive label. Hence, Shorey's translation of 'ὅσα γ' ἐστὶ τοιαῦτα οἷα εἶναί του' as simply 'relative terms', is an excellent translation, even though it is not a literal one.[231]

We can immediately see the force of this distinction. Aristotle's criterion is for distinguishing relative terms from non–relative terms, while Plato's is nothing more than a descriptive label for the class of relative terms. Aristotle has a particular criterion and that criterion blocks certain species of relative terms from being relatives. Plato's descriptive label, however, does not commit him to any particular firm boundary for relative terms: the boundaries of relatives, for Plato, would be fixed by dialectical practice, not some hard and fast criterion. So he can continue to sustain his view that species of relatives are themselves relatives.

This brings us to the point of contrast between Plato and Aristotle, to which I here wish to draw attention. Aristotle worries quite a lot, in the *Categories*, about the extension of the class of

[230] Simp. *In Cat*. 159, 15–20.
[231] Shorey, 1930, i: 391.

relative terms. But no such worry is in evidence in Plato. This seems profoundly odd, until we recognise that Plato is not attempting to give a criterion for picking out all and only relative terms. Plato's idea that relatives are essentially used for dialectic means that a sense of which terms are relative and which are not can be built up over a period of dialectical training.[232] I will briefly mention Aristotle's concerns about the extension of the class of relative terms and make some suggestions as to the relationship between Plato's and Aristotle's attitudes towards this extension.

Aristotle notoriously offers two definitions of relative terms in *Categories* 7. The first, at 6a36, has already been mentioned. He gives as examples of relatives that fall under this definition: larger (τὸ μεῖζον) (6a38) double (τὸ διπλάσιον) (6a39), state (ἕξις), condition (διάθεσις), perception (αἴσθησις), knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and position (θέσις) (6b1–3). Aristotle explains that all of these are relatives because each is of something. For example, a state is a state *of* something. In effect, the definition at 6a36 gives a criterion for determining, for any term, whether it is a relative: is it of something? If so, it is a relative, if not, then it's not. But at 8a13 Aristotle introduces a worry with this definition/criterion: it seems broad enough to allow some secondary substances to be relatives. For example, 'head' and 'hand' are said to be 'the head of something' or 'the hand of something'. But 'head' and 'hand' are parts of secondary substances, and are therefore themselves secondary substances. So some substances seem to be relatives.

To avoid this consequence, Aristotle gives, at 8a31–3 a different definition of relatives: 'Relatives are those things for which being that thing is to be somehow disposed towards something' (τὰ πρός τι οἷς τὸ εἶναι ταὐτόν ἐστι τῷ πρός τί πως ἔχειν). It is agreed that Aristotle intends this second definition to narrow the extension of relative terms to exclude organic parts.[233] What is rather less clear is whether the second definition excludes some or all of the first set of examples: larger, double, state, condition, perception, knowledge and position. That is, it is not clear what the respective extensions of the classes of relative terms delineated by the two definitions are.

Philoponus and Ackrill point out that the first definition/criterion seems generous enough to accommodate all non–substance terms.[234] Knowledge is of the knower, in the sense that

[232] I mentioned above that I am sympathetic to the 'dialectical' reading of Aristotle's categories. But here I reverting to a more common reading where Aristotle attempts to give definitive boundries to the category of relatives, and this seems in tension with Plato's approach.
[233] Ackrill, 1963: 101; Sedley, 2002: 326–30; Harari, 2011: 534
[234] Ackrill, 1963: 99; Philoponus, *In Cat.* 1092–7.

knowledge is a property of the knower. Likewise, the property of being generous will always be a property of someone, and so the term 'generous' will be a relative. Thus, any non–substance term will be relative, because the property corresponding to it will belong to something. This, however, just tells us that the first definition is very capacious, not what the relationship to the second definition is.

Sedley (2002: 334–5) gives a precise formulation of the difference between the two definitions of relatives. The examples that fall only under the first definition are 'soft' relatives, while those that fall under the second definition are 'hard' relatives. Soft relatives are such that there is an internal attribute necessary to have a relative term, as well as some relativity; for hard relatives there is no such internal attribute. Soft relatives will include examples like knowledge: in order to know something, not only must a subject be in the right relationship to the object of knowledge, but she must be in a certain internal state. Hard relatives are not like this: examples such as double and larger do not require the bearer to have some additional internal state. For a subject to be larger all that is necessary is that something be smaller than it. The exemplary hard relative would be the property of being to the left. All the internal attributes of an item are irrelevant for determining whether it is to the left or not. Sedley's account makes the second definition stronger than the first: all terms that fall under the second definition fall under the first, but the reverse does not obtain. Organic parts, for example, fall under the first definition, but not the second.

Sedley's reading of the relationship between the first and second definitions has been questioned recently.[235] But the clarity his reading offers is useful for the point I wish to make. One very tempting thought would be this. Given the testimony of the ancient commentators that Aristotle's first definition is the same as Plato's definition, and given that Aristotle's second definition is stronger than his first, this represents Aristotle's attempt at a revision of Plato's definition of relative terms. This thought could be bolstered by the evidence that Aristotle repeats his second definition elsewhere (*Topics* VI. 4. 124a26–31). It may be that Aristotle needs to maintain a strict distinction between substance and relative because of his own theoretical commitments, so he introduces the second definition. But nonetheless, Aristotle's own account leaves him with a narrower extension of the class of relatives. And this narrowing of the extension leaves room for his other non–substance categories. Thus, Plato's relatives are all the

[235] Harari, 2011: 524ff.

non–substance terms and Aristotle's are just those given by Aristotle's second definition, that is, the hard relatives.

But, as we saw above, this focus on the extension of the class of relative terms seems alien to Plato's approach. And in Chapter 5, §5.4, I argued that attributing to Plato an ontological category scheme of this sort would make the boundaries of the category more rigid than Plato seems to be willing to countenance. What I suggest, then, is that the discrepancies can be explained because Plato's relatives are arrived at through dialectical training. Aristotle borrows for his own discussion many of the characteristics Plato attributes to relatives, but the use he puts relatives to may be fundamentally different: Aristotle needs hard and fast criteria for picking out all and only relative terms because he is engaged in an ontological project; Plato can leave the boundaries vague as long as the dialectican can identify a relative when he needs to do so. Clearly, this makes a deeply debatable assumption as to the nature of Aristotle's project in the *Categories*, to be discussed on another occasion. But this closing thought illustrates how, by close analysis of Plato's thought, we can hope to illuminate in addition the nature of his influence on Aristotle's early work, as well as the nature and purpose of relative terms in Plato.

Appendix

Charmides	Parmenides	Republic	Sophist	Symposium	Theaetetus	Categories 7
				Brother/brother or sister		
Belief/Object of Belief						
						Condition
Double/ Half		Double/Half			Double/Half	Double/Half
Desire/Pleasure		Desire/Desirable		Desire/ what one lacks		
				Father/ son or daughter		
						Head/Headed
Hearing/ Sound						
Heavier/Lighter		Heavier/Lighter			Heavy/Light	
		Hots/Colds			Hot/Cold	
		Hunger/Food				
						Ignorace
Knowledge/Learnings	Knowledge/Truth	Knowledge/ whatever knowledge is of				Knowledge/Knowable
Larger/ Smaller		Larger/Smaller			Large/ Small, Larger/Smaller	Larger/Large/Smaller
Love/ Beatuty				Love/ of something		
	Master/Slave					Master/Slave
			Other			
Perception/Percept					Perception/Percept	Perception
						Position
						Rudder/Ruddered
			Same			
						Similar
						State
		Swifter/Slower				
		Thirst/Drink				
						Treble
						Unequal
						Vice
Vision/Colour						
						Virtue
						Wing/Winged
Wish/Good						
Younger/Older						

Where both relative and correlative are mentioned, the terms are separated by a '/'. Otherwise, only the single term is mentioned as a relative. The references are to: *Charmides* 167c–168c; *Parmenides* 133c–134a; *Republic* 438b–e; *Symposium* 199d–200a; *Theaetetus* 152a–c and *Categories* 6a36–8b24.

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