How Does Plato's Exercise Work?

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ABSTRACT: I analyse the pros ta alla/pros heauto *distinction in Plato's* Parmenides *as a contrast between ordinary predication (corresponding to an individual's display of a feature or, more technically, instantiation) and tree predication (based on a nature X being involved in a nature Y). I engage with my critics and argue that this interpretation vindicates Plato's methodological remarks and maximizes his argumentative success. My interpretation shows how the* Parmenides *bridges the gap between Plato's Middle Dialogues and the outstanding technical developments of the Late Dialogues.*

RÉSUMÉ : Dans cet article, la paire pros ta alla/pros heauto *dans le* Parménide *de Platon est analysée dans les termes d'une distinction entre la prédication ordinaire (où un individu présente une qualité) et la prédication en arborescence (fondée sur la relation qui s'établit entre un X et un Y lorsque la nature X fait partie de la nature Y). J'engage une discussion avec mes critiques en soutenant que cette interprétation donne tout leur sens aux remarques méthodologiques de Platon, tout en rendant son argumentation plus efficace. Le* Parménide *fait le pont entre les dialogues de maturité et les développements techniques des derniers dialogues de Platon.*

1. Introduction and Overview

In the *Parmenides*, the promising youth Socrates makes assertions about forms that sound very familiar to readers of Plato's middle dialogues, but he fails to maintain his position under questioning by the venerable Eleatic. Does this mean Plato realized his famous theory was unviable?[1] The character Parmenides

[1] As G. Vlastos thought in his influential papers "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*" (1954) and "Plato's 'Third Man' Argument (*Parm*. 132a1-b2): Text and Logic" (1969).

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immediately goes on to endorse these entities. He prescribes and describes at length an exercise to be done taking in turn each of the forms, telling Socrates that without this exercise, the truth will escape him. Since this advice is hard to understand, the assembled company presses Parmenides to demonstrate what he recommends; the demonstration he gives taking as his dialectical partner a young audience member constitutes the second and major portion of the dialogue. Plato clearly holds out the promise that this gymnastic dialectic helps with the development of the Theory of Forms.

But how it does that—indeed, how it works at all—is left for us to figure out. The exercise generates a body of results that look maximally paradoxical: they are arranged in sections that appear systematically to contradict each other. Moreover, the results of many of the sections even taken in isolation seem strange, and many of the arguments leading to those conclusions seem outrageous. Yet both questioner and interlocutor remain calm—and the interlocutor goes to an extreme in accepting the final compressed summary of the results of the entire exercise with the superlative "most true" (ἀληθέστατα (*alêthestata*))—literally the dialogue's last word. What was Plato's purpose in composing such a text?

Because the content that the dialectic *seems on an initial reading* to be presenting is so intractable, it is out of the question that Plato wants us simply to accept it. Rather (and consonantly with the idea of exercise, at 135c8[2] and at 135d4), he must be setting us some significant philosophical activity of our own. Indeed, scholars of the *Parmenides* generally take this sort of line. What is tricky about doing this is that, since one is interpreting Plato, one needs one's activity to be based in some credible way in his text.

My approach is to take seriously the relationship Plato specifies between the methodological discussion and the gymnastic dialectic: the discussion describes the program of exercise that is then demonstrated. Since each is initially baffling on its own, I proceed by reading the demonstrated exercise and the methodological remarks in light of each other. This leads me to concentrate on the role in characterizing sections of argument of a certain pair of phrases (the "in-relation-to qualifications") that are pervasive in the methodological advice, and whose point is initially unclear. I tailor my interpretation of these qualifications so that the conclusions each implicitly qualifies are appropriately supported by the arguments given for them. This interpretative strategy takes every single argument of the 30 page exercise to bear on our understanding of the key innovation.[3] What emerges from all this is, roughly, a reading on which

[2] I use Burnet's Oxford Classical Texts for the convenience of readers. Those who prefer other editions will be able to find their place without much difficulty.

[3] Even if there is some small number of lines I fail to get right, (or if Plato makes better progress on some particular point in a later work), what is distinctive of my overall reading is its large-scale vindication of the arguments.

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the progress Plato is setting us up to make involves appreciating a distinction between two very different kinds of predication, and so between two very different kinds of facts about forms.

One of Plato's kinds of predication contains all the ones we ordinarily make. These concern states of affairs we can describe non-technically as involving the displays of features by individuals.[4] (Today, we are inclined to describe these states of affairs using the technical terminology that the subjects are instantiating or exemplifying something expressed by the predicate terms. Plato regards each such state of affairs as metaphysically dependent on a form. The forms, which correspond to universal qualities or properties, are for Plato *ousiai,* i.e., fundamental realities or "substances." Each form is specially associated with a nature.[5] Note that it is natural even for us to regard sweetness as a quality shared by sweet things, as well as the nature that one analyzes when inquiring into what it is to be sweet, and which makes sweet things sweet.) This group of ordinary predications includes "Socrates is pale," "Socrates is a man," "Beauty is eternal," and "The Good is at rest." Note that this grouping is indifferent to further distinctions some would like to make within this class based on taking the facts in question to be essential or accidental, necessary or contingent.

The dialogue's other thematized kind of predication—more fundamental for Plato—can be made only of forms; a predication of this special kind does not concern the display of a feature. Rather, predications of this kind articulate the underlying structure of fundamental reality. (I use the tag "tree predication" for these since I incline to the mainstream view that the Late Dialogues aim, in a way prefigured in the *Euthyphro*, to provide the accounts in question by researching genus-species trees. But as we will see, the main idea is available without this commitment.) It is important to realize that "X is Y" holds as a tree predication iff the nature associated with "Y" is involved in, that is, part[6] of the nature associated with "X"—and that is its whole force: there is no commitment to anything like X's instantiating Y-ness. "The Cat is vertebrate," "Animality is mortal," and "The Avocado is a fruit" seem likely to be true predications of this type.

A single form of words "A is B" can, if the subject is a Platonic form, be used on some occasions to make tree predications, and on other occasions to make ordinary ones. Even when these happen to have the same truth value, their truth conditions still differ. "The Beautiful is beautiful" as a tree truth is

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[4] As I use them, both "display" and "feature" are non-technical. In ordinary life, we can speak of displaying features without making commitments on such issues as whether features are private to individuals. Since forms are *not* private to individuals, this leaves it indeterminate whether forms are identical with features—thus I officially avoid using "display" to name the relation between individuals and forms.

[5] At this point it is an open question as to whether the association is so close as to amount to identity.

[6] "Part" here is not restricted to "proper part."

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safe if uninformative since being beautiful is involved in being beautiful. ("Being beautiful" and "what it is to be beautiful" are expressions that can be used to refer to the nature in question.) By contrast, "The Beautiful is beautiful" as an ordinary predication concerns a different sort of state of affairs: it concerns the display of features of the form Beauty in just the same way that "Helen is beautiful" does the display of its subject.

Let's look at some examples now where the truth values differ. "The Good is at rest" for Plato expresses a truth when made as an ordinary predication; if used to make a tree predication it would be false, since being at rest is not part of what it is to be good. "Man is (an) animal" is true when used to make a tree predication (being an animal is part of being a man, since man is a kind of animal) but false when used to make an ordinary one. Since it is not the case that being many is involved in being one, "The One is not many" can be used to express a truth: what I will call a "negative tree predication". But also "The One *is* many" is perfectly true as an ordinary predication: like all other forms, The One is in several different ways a whole of parts.

This reading strategy has the resources to dispel the threat of real contradiction between sections taken *en masse*: I interpret the results of the first section as (negative) tree predications, those of the second as ordinary ones, and so on. Thus this distinction has some claim to be what the surface appearance of contradiction between sections is designed to push us to develop. Similarly, the strategy has the resources to dispel the problem of the apparently bad arguments: when their conclusions are read as implicitly qualified by the in-relation-to qualifications (as I understand them), the arguments given *do* support those conclusions. But coming up with some deviant interpretation of the conclusions of certain arguments to "vindicate" them would be Pyrrhic if the inquiry so understood were pointless. Thus it is important that this reading of the exercise does make it the vehicle of progress in thinking about forms, so fulfilling the promise Parmenides holds out in his methodological advice. Read my way, the exercise helps us to outgrow all problems of the first part of the dialogue; the *Parmenides* thus serves as a bridge connecting the motivations of the exciting middle dialogues with the technical research of the late works.

Obviously I cannot give all my evidence for all of my views on all of this in an essay of the present length. The content of my previous publications on the dialogue can't be contained in this scope. And besides, I hope my addressing the recent publications of others will be useful for readers. In what follows, I abstract and update my views insofar as they bear on my present title question. I start by considering "how the exercise works" in the minimal sense of how we should understand its structure. This is intimately connected with an exploration of "how it works" to generate significant results about the subject of this debut exhibition—the Platonic principle, The One—and how it can be expected to work in generating results concerning everything else. I go on to consider "how the exercise works" to equip us (as promised) to handle the most notorious of the problems of the first part of the dialogue. In general, I hope to indicate how

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coming to grips with the key notions of the exercise as I understand it leads to successful development in thinking about forms.

2. The Structure of the Exercise

The passage I call "the methodological remarks" (*Parm*. 135c8-137c3) is the bridge connecting the elenctic episode featuring Socrates and Parmenides with the dialectical display Parmenides gives with Aristotle the interlocutor. Parmenides offers two particular descriptions (with sample subjects) of the exercise he recommends, and then a general characterization; let's call this stretch of text (136a4-c5) "the description of the exercise:"

> For example, he said, if you wish, concerning that hypothesis which Zeno hypothesized, [you should examine] what must follow both for The Many themselves *in relation to themselves and in relation to The One* and for The One *in relation to itself and in relation to The Many*, on the hypothesis of the being of The Many[7]; and you should in turn examine what will follow for The One and The Many *in relation to themselves and in relation to each other*, on the hypothesis of the non-being of The Many; and again if you hypothesize if Likeness is, or if it is not, what on each hypothesis will follow for the very things hypothesized and for the others, *in relation to themselves and in relation to each other*. And concerning Unlike the same story and concerning Motion and concerning Rest and concerning Becoming and Perishing and concerning Being Itself and Not-Being; and in a word, concerning whatever you might hypothesize as being or as not being or as suffering any other affection, you must examine the consequences *in relation to itself and in relation to each one of the others, whichever you pick out, and in relation to several and in relation to all in the same way*, and then you must examine concerning the others *in relation to themselves and in relation to whatever other thing you pick out on occasion*; and all this must be done on the supposition that what you originally hypothesized is the case, and again on the supposition that it is not, if you are going to see the truth properly having exercised fully.[8]

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[7] A little "creaking of the machinery" results here that makes this phrase very awkward to translate, because the character Parmenides treats *to hen* (The One) and *ta polla* (The Many) not only as the subjects of the historical Eleatics but also as Platonic forms. On The One, see my *Plato's "Parmenides*" (1991: 177 n.16). At 136a4 ff, "the many" are changing from the many things Zeno was discussing into the Platonic form, The Many, which is called for in the exercise now being described. (See Peterson 2000: 45-46 against the claim of K. Sayre that there can't be a single nature of "the many" (1996: 111-112).) The infelicity inherent in this situation—due ultimately to Plato's presenting Parmenides as both the Eleatic philosopher and as a proponent of the theory of forms—may be one reason he goes on to give more examples. The others are straightforward.

[8] *Parm*. translation throughout (and emphasis here) are mine.

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The description is lengthy but obscure: it is in fact the inability of Socrates to understand it that leads to Parmenides' demonstration of the exercise. Since the reason for the demonstration is to provide an example of the project Parmenides describes here, the arguments of the dialectic must be understood as carrying out the exercise specified in the exhortation. This passage has paramount importance for interpreters of the second part of the dialogue.

What does Parmenides' exhortation tell us? He employs three pairs of specifications: "If a hypothesis obtains/If its negation does," "what follows for the subject/for the others," and "in relation to itself/in relation to the others" (*pros heauto*/*pros ta alla*). If we suppose that we are being told to produce, on each occasion of exercise, sections of argument generated by the possible combinations of one member from each of these three pairs, this will amount to eight sections of argument, the number that the second part of the dialogue in fact contains.

So, as I read it, the general plan[9] of the exercise recommended here is to consider:

I. If the original hypothesis obtains, what follows for the subject in relation to itself.
II. If the original hypothesis obtains, what follows for the subject in relation to the others.
III. If the original hypothesis obtains, what follows for the others in relation to themselves.
IV. If the original hypothesis obtains, what follows for the others in relation to the subject.
V. If the original hypothesis does not obtain, what follows for the subject in relation to itself.
VI. If the original hypothesis does not obtain, what follows for the subject in relation to the others.
VII. If the original hypothesis does not obtain, what follows for the others in relation to themselves.
VIII. If the original hypothesis does not obtain, what follows for the others in relation to the subject.

[9] In common with many others, I do not claim that we will always find the *ordering* rigidly followed: we will always find sections so characterized, and on some occasions particular reasons may cause minor variation in their order. Also in common with many others, I regard 155e4-157b5 as an Appendix appropriate on this first occasion but not needing to be repeated and so not one of the official sections the exercise will always contain. Chapter 6 of my 1991 book was devoted to arguing for this treatment of this portion of the text. For the alternative view, see Proclus and more recently S. Rangos in the present volume.

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Two of the pairs of qualifications used in generating these sections (the distinction between whether a hypothesis or its negation obtains, and that between the subject of the exercise and other things) are fairly clear. So the reason for Socrates'—and our—not fully seeing the point of all this is that we don't yet know the force of the in-relation-to qualifications. Their ineliminable role is underscored by their ubiquity throughout the description of the exercise (I italicized them in my quotation to make this evident at a glance): indeed their incessant repetition makes the passage read very clunkily. To me it seems obvious that the reason for Plato's making the passage so laboured and lengthy is that he is giving us necessary information concerning the recommended program, information to the importance of which the heavy cost in surface aesthetic appeal draws our attention. (The crucial role of the phrases is confirmed by their recurrence in the hyper-compressed and cryptic summaries of the first half of the exercise at 160b2-3 and of the whole thing at 166c2-5.)

So there is considerable evidence that the qualifications are meant to bear on the exercise, but on the surface it is not obvious *how*. That's one mystery. I've already mentioned another: when we initially read through the massive treasury of arguments constituting Plato's gymnastic dialectic, we are overwhelmed by the strangeness of their conclusions—sections seem arranged so as to contradict each other *en masse*, and even taken individually some seem to argue badly to bizarre results. The most natural reaction for the 20th century philosophical community was that obviously the thing must be meant as some sort of giant *reductio*. Yet for this to be one's interpretation of Plato, one has ideally to do two things: not just identify what one takes to be mistakes, but also show that Plato targets them.[10] The idea that he is simply documenting his confusion makes the production of these arguments redundant, since in the eyes of readers taking this type of view he had already done that, with much more economy and dramatic charm, in the first part of the dialogue.

Moreover, Plato is far from encouraging us to go down the *reductio* route in understanding the gymnastic dialectic. Consider his composition of the summary of the results from the positive hypothesis (160b2-3) and the grand finale of the dialogue (166c2-5). In each case, we get venerable Parmenides remaining calm when giving a compressed and superficially maximally paradoxical summary of the results of the exercise, and his dialectical partner in turn going to an extreme in accepting the summary. Aristotle assents with "absolutely" (παντελῶς μὲν οὖν) at 160b4 and "most true" (ἀληθέστατα) at 166c5. While this is not completely decisive by itself, it is certainly striking.

In their reactions, Parmenides and Aristotle contrast sharply with the *dramatis personae* in elenctic dialectic: we are familiar with moments in the Socratic dialogues (and in elenctic passages in *Rsp.* I, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedo*) where the appearance of contradiction on a much more limited scale cues consternation:

[10] As M. Frede pointed out to me many years ago.

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the interlocutor may admit that he has been shown to lack expertise (or register his recognition in some other way, as with the blush of Thrasymachus); he may blame Socrates, ask for help, etc. (With the twist that Socrates was the failing interlocutor, the first part of the *Parmenides* itself contained elenchus of this type.) Episodes of elenctic dialectic are typically composed in such a way as to make obvious that the contradiction shows that something has gone wrong: whether or not the interlocutor knows what modification to make, it is clear even to him that he needs to correct at least one of his premises or at least one of the inferences he has made from them. So the unusual handling by questioner and interlocutor alike of the results of Parmenides' new exercise cues us to consider that perhaps all these results can be accepted. An obvious start is via the thought that they are not really contradictory after all. In order to carry out such a reading fully, one must show both why that is, and that the individual results as one interprets them make sense. (Notice that at 127d6-130a2, Socrates takes Zeno's book to have a *reductio* agenda, but himself holds that Zeno does not derive a genuine impossibility when he shows his opponents' many to be like and unlike, etc.)

In fact, I believe our two mysteries—about the thematized in-relation-to qualifications and about the results—match up in such a way that they illuminate each other. Or to change the image, I see Plato as in effect assigning us[11] homework: we should try to work out the force of the in-relation-to qualifications, such that the arguments understood in light of them work well and have non-problematic results. The idea that we may need to do more than just "read off" a doctrine spelled out explicitly in our text connects up with a point of Myles Burnyeat's that asking such a task of us is characteristic of Plato in his advanced works.[12] This is understandable given the remarks in the *Phaedrus* (274c-277a) about the naïveté of thinking wisdom is transmitted automatically by written *formulae*: Plato's advanced texts are designed to challenge us to come to a developed understanding of whatever points are at issue. So I embrace the idea that as readers of the second part of the *Parmenides* we are asked to *do* something, to engage in philosophical activity, to create for ourselves an understanding of the distinction marked by the in-relation-to phrases in the

[11] M.M. McCabe (1996: 5-47) points out that the ending of our dialogue—with no return to the narrators or the frame—makes *us* the audience. I think the absence of interruption from the narrators in the course of the exercise is important as well (as I discuss in 2005: 9-20). It cannot be that we turn into the audience only at the end of the dialogue because the narrators do not then return to us; rather the audience is what we have been throughout the gymnastic dialectic, and the end of the work merely avoids disrupting the spell.

[12] Thematized in *The "Theaetetus" of Plato* (1990), where M.F. Burnyeat identifies a graded series of increasingly challenging tasks that Plato sets for readers in connection with each of the proposals about knowledge.

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description of the exercise. As developed above, I believe we should do this by harmonizing our understanding of each section's arguments with that of the in-relation-to qualification implicitly governing that section's results.[13]

3. The Schema "A is B in Relation to C" and its most Obvious Employment

We may begin from thinking about how the construction πρός (*pros*) followed by an accusative works: it is generally equivalent to "in relation to." In the simplest employment of the schema "A is B in relation to C," B itself is the relation in which A and C stand, i.e., πρός is merely a syntactic aid in the use of the sentence's own relational predicate; we can represent the fact in question in familiar notation as: B (A, C). Mary Louise Gill and Samuel Rickless claim that this is how we must understand the relevant phrases in our dialogue's methodological advice.[14]

While I had briefly considered (and rejected) this possibility in my book, I had imagined that "in relation to itself" and "in relation to the others" so understood would still characterize distinct sections. For without that, one has no mechanism within the description of the exercise for generating more than four sections. (Two pairs of qualifications afford only 2 x 2 rather than 2 x 2 x 2 combinations.) Rickless makes explicit what is only implicit in Gill: that Plato's description of the exercise (as they read it) mentions only four of the actual sections; Rickless is careful enough to mark the extra sections he adds to his list on first introducing them.[15]

Let's consider the sections of argument as described by Gill and Rickless, keeping in mind their understanding of the in-relation-to qualifications. I use the formulation of Rickless here but for the point at issue, they are identical.[16]

> Deduction 1 (137c4-142a8): If the one is, then the one is both not F and not con-F[17] in relation to itself and in relation to the others.

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[13] M.L. Gill urges—as she thinks, against me—that we "judge the meaning of the *pros*- phrases in the illustration ... and the summaries from their use in the deductions." I can only say that I believe that in the very deepest sense I *am* doing that. See Gill 2012: 52 and 1996: 56 n.90.

[14] M.L. Gill 1996: 56 n.90; 2012: 52; cf. paper in the present volume. S. Rickless 2007: 102-106.

[15] S. Rickless 2007: Chapter 3 especially 108-110.

[16] I use S. Rickless' formulation (in 2007: 109-110) because he identifies the hypotheses in the same way I do. M.L. Gill's formulation starts off with the first deduction asking "If it is one, what follows for the one in relation to itself and in relation to the others?" The second then reverts to "If one is, what follows for the one in relation to itself and in relation to the others?" (1996: 57).

[17] S. Rickless uses "F and con-F" for contrary pairs such as beautiful/ugly, just/unjust.

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Deduction 2 (142b1-155e3): If the one is, then the one is both F and con-F in relation to itself and in relation to the others.
Deduction 3 (157b6-159b1): If the one is, then the others are both F and con-F in relation to themselves and in relation to the one.
Deduction 4 (159b2-160b4): If the one is, then the others are both not F and not con-F in relation to themselves and in relation to the one.
Deduction 5 (160b5-163b6): If the one is not, then the one is both F and con-F in relation to itself and in relation to the others.
Deduction 6 (163b7-164b4): If the one is not, then the one is both not F and not con-F in relation to itself and in relation to the others.
Deduction 7 (164b5-165e1): If the one is not, then the others are both F and con-F in relation to themselves and in relation to the one.
Deduction 8 (165e2-166c5): If the one is not, then the others are both not F and not con-F in relation to themselves and in relation to the one.

In this scheme, "in relation to itself and in relation to the others" (with appropriate adjustments to singular and plural forms) characterizes each section of arguments. This is motivated by the fact—and it is a fact—that the phrases in question do sometimes both occur in this ordinary straightforward use within a single section. Note, however, that while at first blush this phraseology may make this listing of sections sound as if the inquiry it is specifying is exhaustive, that is not at all the case. For remember that "A is B in relation to C" understood in this way has the force "B (A, C)" i.e., it asserts that B itself is the relation in which A and C stand. Understood in this way, Parmenides' description of the exercise represents it as a study only of relational (i.e., two-place) predicates! The actual exercise we get includes but is certainly not confined to relational predicates—and rightly so, given its evident purpose to be exhaustive. We find inquiry in terms not only of relational predicates (whether the subject is like itself, like others, etc.) but also in terms of non-relational ones: results such as that a subject is one, many, etc.[18] Another problem: the advice understood in this manner keeps drawing attention to a distinction between results concerning relations a subject stands in to itself and those concerning relations it stands in to others. But in fact, nothing much is made in the second part of the dialogue of that distinction, leaving it mysterious why the methodological remarks should emphasize it so.

Summing up, it seems to me that this natural and straightforward way of taking the πρός -phrases makes it impossible to give an acceptable reading of Plato's description of the exercise. Despite its prosy length and utilitarian character, read this way the description mentions only half the sections of argument

[18] As M.L. Gill herself clearly recognizes when schematizing results e.g., that the first deduction finds that "The one is not F, G, H, and it is neither R nor not-R in relation to either itself or the others" (1996: 57).

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that will really be produced, describes less than the full contents of each section it does mention, and emphasizes through tedious repetition terms that don't point to anything important about the results.[19]

4. The Two Kinds of Predication

The difficulties just explored legitimate looking for some less obvious way of taking the in-relation-to phrases. In fact, the formulation "A is B *pros* C" ("A is B in relation to C") is not confined even in ordinary prose to indicating that B itself is the relation holding between A and C. The construction is also used by authors, including Xenophon, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristotle, and Demosthenes when some relation to C *not named* in the sentence is relevant to A's being B. The relation may be a causal relation, a comparative relation, a relation of suitability, etc., or a whole host of others. In such cases, the kinds of things A, B, and C are, or other elements of the context, determine what the relation in question is (and "B" may but need not be a two-place predicate).[20]

An example from Herodotus: πρὸς ὧν δὴ τοῦτο τὸ κήρυγμα οὔτε τίς οἱ διαλέγεσθαι οὔτε οἰκίοισι δέκεσθαι ἤθελε (3,52) could be rendered as, "In relation to this proclamation, no one was willing to speak to him or to receive him at home." But context interacts with the relationality marker to yield the more graceful translation "*As a result of* this proclamation, etc." Again, Aristotle writes in the *Politics* (1310a14) of the value of τὸ παιδεύεσθαι πρὸς τὰς πολιτείας (literally we could say "education in relation to constitutions"). *Pros* indicates some relation as desirable between people's education and their regime; given the context it is obvious that the relation is (as LSJ suggest) suitability. Thus we can translate "people's being educated *suitably to* their constitutions." The way in which the relationality marker interacts with context explains its long list of glosses in Smyth and LSJ, including "toward (hostile)," "toward (in a non-hostile sense)," "at (time)," and "compared with." I believe that our dialogue's two thematic in-relation-to qualifications turn out to indicate two distinct and philosophically significant relations, each of which grounds a distinct kind of predication. While I cannot now rehearse all the

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[19] Gill in her paper in the present volume uses "in relation to/πρός" in a way that is inconsistent with her own requirement. Consider: "It is highly relevant in an exercise about the many to consider what they are in relation to themselves (same as themselves, different from themselves, like, unlike, equal, unequal, etc.) and in relation to the one (collective wholes, unified, discrete individuals)" (Gill 2014: 505). What she calls considering the others "in relation to the one" is actually to consider them πρός The One in my sense; πρός is not playing the role of a syntactic aid in the use of a relational predicate to which she restricts the dialogue's thematized πρός -phrases. Cf. her remarks on the third deduction (2014: 515) and the general case (2014: 517).

[20] For detailed discussion, see Meinwald 1991: 49-53.

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evidence leading me to this interpretation, I would like to mention some key points, and to address some controversies of scholarship that have recently cropped up in connection with them.

I will start with my understanding of the thematized relation that grounds "ordinary" predication (followed by the corresponding thing for "tree" predication). My initial evidence for this came from occurrences of πρός that do not match the Gill/Rickless characterization: consider *Parm.* 161c7-d1.[21] It is uncontroversial that this stretch of text contains an argument concerning the ordinary state of affairs that the One and the others are unequal.[22] Let's call this the core result. Note now that this core result is said to be *in relation to Inequality* (161d1).

What relation to Inequality is the relationality marker indicating here? Keep in mind that context standardly helps to determine the relation whose bearing is indicated. Also keep in mind (what I am suggesting *is* the context in this case) that a central plank of Plato's theory is what was expressed perhaps most famously in the *deuteros plous* passage of the *Phaedo* by saying:

> If there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in (μετέχει) that Beautiful, and I say so with everything ... I simply ... cling to this, that nothing else makes it beautiful other than the presence of, or the sharing in (κοινωνία), or however you may describe its relationship to that Beautiful we mentioned, for I will not insist on the precise nature of the relationship, but that all beautiful things are beautiful by the Beautiful. (*Phaed.* 100c-d, trans. Grube[23])

Clearly, Plato thinks that to be perspicuous about the underlying metaphysics, we would have to note that Helen is beautiful because of some relation to Beauty, and so on for "everything." This applies as well in cases[24] in which ordinary expression employs a two-place rather than a one-place predicate: if Pooh sticks are unequal this will be due, for Plato, to a relation to Inequality. I see the formulation we are trying to understand in our *Parmenides'* passage as gesturing at that type of cause. In the *Parmenides'* case the unequal things are forms, but for them just as for Pooh sticks, their display must be due metaphysically to a relation to Inequality. Our passage is noting the bearing of *that* relation, which cannot, of course, be Inequality itself. (It's not a matter of The

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21 *Parm*. 161b3, which speaks of a fact that holds *pros* Unlikeness, is my other initial piece of evidence for this use of the relationality marker.

22 I take it that the same fact is in question whether we say that the others are unequal to The One or that The One is unequal to the others.

23 There is controversy about 100d6, but the overall point of the passage is clear.

24 The *Phaedo* immediately applies the pattern of explanation to things being bigger and smaller.

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One and the others being *unequal to* Inequality!) Rather, what is in view is the same relation that Helen has to Beauty.

We are in the area in which Plato had formerly invoked participation. But (as the *Phaedo* passage as well as the first part of our present dialogue show) he is aware of problems in identifying exactly what participation amounts to. Resemblance or having (a part of) a form as a physical ingredient don't work. For present purposes therefore we should keep our commitments as minimal as possible. Because Plato's long-term thoughts include that forms are responsible for and explain the displays of individuals, and that the natures in question are to be articulated by accounts that answer such questions as "What is Sweetness?" and "What is Justice?," we can do this if we regard the relation we seek as *conforming to* a nature (closely related to what we might call *satisfying* an account).

So to sum up: in ordinary speech when we report states of affairs that are matters of individuals displaying features, we simply say, for example, that Socrates is just. Plato's calling card has been to hold that this ordinary state of affairs cannot obtain without the form Justice having something to do with it. The *Parmenides* offers a linguistic regime to make the metaphysical situation fully clear: we can say most fully "Socrates is just *in relation to* Justice." I will return to consider why Plato applies the general tag "in relation to the others" for this type of assertion after we come to some understanding of the other sort of predication.

How do I arrive at my notion of "tree" predications? I proceed from the idea that the homework Plato gave us indicates that the first section of arguments (137c4-142a8) is *pros heauto* and that its arguments should be good ones. Thus, I propose we look for arguments in the first section that seem especially bad when their conclusions are read the ordinary way, and see if we can tailor our interpretation of the force of *pros heauto* so as to make the arguments appropriately establish their conclusions, now understood to be implicitly of the form: "The One is not X *pros heauto*." [25] Thus for example consider 139c3-d1. That argues, at first sight horribly,

> And it won't be other than another, while it is one. For it's not fitting for The One to be other than something, but only for The Other Than Another, and not for anything else. —Right. —Therefore it won't be other by being one. Or do you think so? —Certainly not. —But if not by this, it won't be by itself, and if not by itself neither [will] *it* (sc. be other); and it being in no way other will be other than nothing. —Right. (*Parm.* 139c3-d1)

[25] See my 1991: 63-70 and Chapter 4. The pronouncement of S. Rickless that "the 'demonstration' Meinwald identifies [in 139c3-d1] is an invalid piece of reasoning" (105) thus concerns a matter that is crucial for my project. The pronouncement was mistaken, as Rickless has agreed in a personal communication in 2011.

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Let's focus on the key move, "Therefore it won't be other by being one ... and if not by itself, neither will *it* be other." If the conclusion denies that The One displays a certain feature, it is problematic: why should our subject's features be limited to those it has by being one? I propose that we make use of the idea that the section is inquiring into what The One is [in relation to itself]. The argument's invoking what The One is "by being one" (and calling this what it is "by itself") now suggests that what The One is [in relation to itself] is a matter of what is involved in the nature of Unity: as we might say, a matter of what Unity *is* rather than of what features it *has*. [26]

The basic idea is that positive *pros heauto* truths are articulations of natures—they express what it is to be just, what it is to be an ox, etc. "A is B in relation to itself" holds if the natures associated with "A" and "B" are appropriately related: if the first involves the second (either as a proper part or in the uninformative but still safe case they are identical). Predications of this sort are perfectly adapted to express accounts articulating the structures of *ousiai* as those are mapped by the research agenda that goes by the name of Platonic Division. Already at *Euthyphro* 11e ff, when Socrates suggested his interlocutor try to say what part of Justice Piety is, the goal was to find an account that would answer the thematic "What is it?" question. We can trace a continuing thread via the declaration of the *Republic* that the job of dialectic is to give accounts of the *ousia* of each thing, i.e., to say of each thing what it is (*Rsp*. VII, 532a6-7, 533b1-3, 534b3-4) and the famous metaphor of *Phaedrus* 265e that the dialectician knows how to divide reality at the joints. The program of division as the way to come properly to grips with anything is featured throughout the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, and foregrounded as the "Promethean Method" at *Philebus* 16b ff.

In general, with this understanding of the force of "in relation to itself," "The One is not X in relation to itself" (interpreted as "It is not the case that The One is X in relation to itself") expresses what the arguments of the first section of Parmenides' dialectical demonstration in fact do show—that Sameness, Difference, etc. are not part of what it is to be one. So read, this section is no longer a collection of bad arguments to the absurd conclusions that The One lacks each of a series of features one would have thought any entity would have to possess.

If the way to give the account of the *ousia* of A is to reach it by genus-species division (i.e., by adding differentiae to an initial genus to produce species), the force of "A is B in relation to itself" is that the nature associated with "B" appears in a correct tree above or at the position of the one associated with "A." That is, the nature associated with "B" is a genus, species or differentia used in the division to produce the nature associated with "A" (or in the trivial case they are identical). As we will soon see, the core of my interpretation as explained before this paragraph is available even to those who deny that Platonic Division investigates genus-species trees. I continue to use the tag "tree

[26] To use English terms current for this distinction in Aristotle.

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predication" though, because I believe it is an effective reminder that "The Cat is vertebrate *pros heauto*" e.g., is not about instantiation.

Since the two kinds of predication are grounded in two different relations, why should their general tags include "itself" vs. "the others"? The type of investigation I have identified in the first section of Plato's gymnastic dialectic clearly concerns a relation that is internal to a subject's own nature. Safe but uninformative self-predications of course fall into this group, and these are clearly a matter of the subject "itself." But also in the potentially informative "Justice is Virtuous" and "The Avocado is a fruit," where the predicate terms *look* different from the subject terms, the natures associated with the predicate terms are not entirely distinct from those associated with the subject terms (since there is a mereological connection between them). This is still a matter internal to the subjects' own natures.

The contrast between the tags "in relation to itself" and "in relation to the others" thus indicates that "in relation to the others" is in some way much less intimate or proprietary. And indeed, the relation grounding predication "in relation to the others" has turned out to be one that even subjects that don't have any special nature (as Plato on my view believes is the case with sensible particulars) can have to a whole host of natures (as Socrates was perhaps related to Palor, Snubness, Bravery, and Man, among many, many others). In the *Parmenides,* Plato makes clear that forms, too, can be the subjects of this type of predication: they can stand in the relevant relation to all sorts of natures that typically are disjoint from their own special one.

So where do cases in which a form makes the eponymous display (as Unity displays unity, Rest is a thing that is at rest, etc.) go? In such cases, the form associated with the subject term is the same one associated with the predicate term. Yet Plato on my reading treats reports of such displays as predications "in relation to the others."[27] This shows that what is decisive is the *relation grounding* the predication: cases of eponymous display are still cases of *conforming to* a nature, even if the nature in question happens to be the form's own. Ordinary predication is tagged "in relation to *the others*" because this conforming relation is one which subjects can and typically do have to entities that are other.

One last point of this kind. We have already contemplated some ordinary cases that involve two-place (i.e., relational) predicates: we focused on the result that The One and the others are unequal, and saw how for Plato this involves conformity to Inequality. What about the special case of reflexive relations? How should we class a case like "The One is equal to itself"? On occasions when this is functioning as a correct report about The One's display of a feature, it will be for Plato as I read him a matter of The One's conforming to a nature, and so we should expect this to be "in relation to the others" in our

[27] As we have seen, the form of words "The rest is at rest" can be used on some occasions to express this predication, on other occasions to express a predication "in relation to itself" that has different truth conditions.

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thematized sense—as the pattern of results in our dialogue confirms.[28] Thus for any state of affairs we can describe non-technically as a matter of a subject's display of some feature, there is a true predication "in relation to the others." Plato takes any such display to be conformable to something that typically is other than the subject—namely the nature associated with the feature.

The interpretation of the *Parmenides* distinction I have developed amounts to reading the dialogue's tree predication *pros heauto* as coinciding with the *kath' hauto* use of "is" in the *Sophist* as explicated by Michael Frede; correspondingly, our dialogue's ordinary predication *pros ta alla* matches the *pros allo* use of "is" in the *Sophist*.[29] (We may now note briefly that what I said earlier about "A is B *pros heauto"* in the *Parmenides* also goes for "A is B *kath' hauto*" in the *Sophist*: they do not hold in virtue of A's displaying B in some special way since they are not about displaying at all.[30]) To me the

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[28] Thus my interpretation does not hold that if "aRb" is a predication in relation to the others, then a and b cannot be identical (as M.L. Gill 1996: 56 n.90; K. Sayre 1996: xviii, 112-113; and R. Turnbull 1998: 198 suppose in claiming that language found within sections does not match my characterization of the sections; for discussion with which I agree, see S. Peterson 2000: 38-40, 44-47, and 1996: n.20). On my view, to say that the predication is in relation to the others is to say that its truth condition includes this: that a and b stand in conformity to form R. That condition both logically and metaphysically leaves it entirely open whether R, a, and b are distinct from one another. Similarly, perhaps it is a tree truth that "The Large exceeds salient competitors in magnitude" or that "The Mother is female parent of a child." These will be "in relation to itself" in my thematized sense even though they are expressed by sentences of the form "aRb" where a and b are distinct.

[29] *Prädikation und Existenzaussage* (1967), summarized in the *Cambridge Companion to Plato* (1992: 400-402). On the significance of this point, see my 1992: 381-382. M. Frede actually experimented (in a seminar on the *Parmenides*) with bringing his uses of "is" to bear—but only on the hypotheses "If The One is" and "If The One is not" from which the sections of argument start. This had only partial success.

[30] M.L. Gill in early versions of her *Philosophos: Plato's Missing Dialogue* (2012) and the paper she read in Chania did not grasp this about either my proposal or M. Frede's. Interestingly, she said at the Chania conference that this was because of Frede's assertions that his *kath' hauto* and *pros allo* uses of "is" have the same *meaning*. In this connection it is vital to understand that Frede thought it would be anachronistic to use one's own theory of meaning in discussing the issue—and he thought that sameness of form guaranteed sameness of meaning in Plato's eyes. This is why I put things in terms of a difference in the force of assertions, in states of affairs, facts, and truth conditions (in addition to Frede's original formulation in terms of different uses). If, for anyone today, difference of use (or truth conditions, etc.) amounts to difference of meaning, then the two kinds of predication will obviously have different meaning *in that person's sense*.

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slight variation in terminology between *Parmenides* and *Sophist* is normal for Plato, who is perfectly able to do technical work without relying on dedicated technical vocabulary.[31] The continuity of thought in these two works (especially since it is linked to the program of the Late Dialogues as a group) is added confirmation for these interpretations of each dialogue.

5. The Alternative Gloss

Now comes a complication. In previous publications, I have used the genus-species model in talking about Platonic Division as a way of giving accounts, following the mainstream view that late Plato and others in the Academy are working with these notions. (On this view, Aristotle and later biologists will go on to develop a particular, technical way of carrying out Plato's original program. Thus in speaking of genera, species, and differentiae in connection with Plato I never meant these to be understood in Aristotle's way.) But whether Platonic Division should in fact be understood as genus-species division is somewhat controversial.[32] To review all passages on division is obviously beyond the scope of the present undertaking. But that is not necessary. I would simply like to show that the particular way of characterizing Platonic Division I tend to use is not actually required for my basic interpretation of the dialogue.

Invoking the genus-species model is an optional extra. I introduced it in my exposition above with "*If* the way to give an account of the *ousia* of A is to reach it by genus-species division" (emphasis now added) and confined discussion in genus-species terms to a single paragraph, precisely to make clear where this choice comes in. The really fundamental ideas came before that: A is B *pros heauto* when the nature associated with "B" is involved in that associated with "A." This connects with Plato's division project whether or not one believes the genus-species idea captures the exact form this will take. For as we just saw, Platonic division is designed to let us read off the

[31] In this connection, it is possible to see a characteristic difference between me and M.L. Gill. For me, context and most especially associated argument determine what (technical or quasi-technical) force phrases have on particular occasions of use, while she takes certain phrases to have fixed technical uses wherever they occur.

[32] K. Sayre has always rejected this understanding, and has objected to my work on that basis (1994: 114-116; 1996: 310, n.49; 2005: 125-140. Cf. 1969: 187-193). Sayre has it that Plato's program is to define a target kind by assembling "a set of features ... that belong jointly to all instances of the Kind in question, but only to things of that specific Kind" (2005: 128). Thus and crucially there will be no hierarchical ordering of ever-narrower sub-species.

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account of the *ousia* of each thing, since that account articulates the internal structure of the nature in question.[33]

Sandra Peterson in a series of papers adopting my main suggestion glosses the *pros heauto*/*pros ta alla* distinction as marking off inquiry into candidate definitions from inquiry into non-definitional assertions. This way of talking simply brackets the suggestion that accounts of natures are given in genus-species trees.[34] Certainly one can (and Peterson herself does) understand definitional truths in the core way I had specified for predication *pros heauto*.

But the new gloss has led in turn to another difficulty, for it can be understood in ways other than Peterson's. Those who detach the gloss from its intended force can unwittingly substitute their own standing idea of what is true of a subject by definition.[35] So read, the gloss can suggest the following idea: that among the features a subject displays, some are definitional, while others are non-definitional. Perhaps The United States of America is made up of states by definition, but is the third-most-populous nation non-definitionally. The notion of displaying a feature by definition may be even weaker: it may amount to doing so obviously and necessarily as in "College campuses are liberal by definition."[36] Or consider the very weak notion in play here: "Joe Echevarria, the chief executive of Deloitte, the accounting and consulting firm, said, 'I'm a Republican by definition and by registration, but ...'"[37]

Such notions are not at all what Peterson and I were getting at, since "A is B in relation to itself" is not about A's display of features at all. Nor does it have any true application except when A is a form on my view of Plato. It is Aristotle's innovation in the *Categories* that carries the trees down to sensible individuals.

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33 On K. Sayre's picture of division (*op cit*), we in effect replace the structure of the tree with a diagram using intersecting figures to represent the kinds or associated features that are relevant to defining a target kind: a target kind A is the intersection of (say) B, C, and D. This affords all the resources I need for my core suggestions about the *Parmenides*; it is another way (but it is a way) of mapping the nature (and so giving a *logos*) of the target kind A. On this model too, being B is part of being A; it even seems in order to say that "A is a kind of B." This makes "A is B *pros heauto*" read my way true.

34 S. Peterson 1996, 2000, 2003, and 2008. See especially 1996: n.17 on this point.

35 Though I focus in the main text on a misunderstanding I have come across in professional scholars' work, there is another family of misunderstandings to which philosophy students are vulnerable: that a definition is a linguistic item that we stipulate. "Definition" in S. Peterson is an equivalent for Greek *logos*, i.e., in its relevant occurrences a "real definition" or account of underlying reality.

36 Thanks to S. Peterson for this suggestion.

37 E. Lipton, N. Confessore, and N.D. Schwartz, "Business Groups See Loss of Sway Over House G.O.P." *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 2013.

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6. The Debut of The One as a Platonic Principle

Plato has the venerable Parmenides prescribe doing the exercise taking in turn each of the forms as subjects. The inaugural occasion, as I read it, gives us a plan and a model for subsequent studies of all other forms: such studies will introduce substantive results additional to those we have here (since the nature and role of each form is different); to complete all of them would be to have what Plato would regard as a complete map of reality. But our dialogue makes no arbitrary start. It begins with a veritable *archê*: the *Parmenides* represents the debut of The One as a Platonic principle.[38]

We can begin to see this by thinking in greater detail about the program of giving accounts that I have invoked. Notice that for any such program, there will have to be some things that don't have such an account.[39] I believe that one manifestation of The One's status as metaphysical *archê* is that it does not have the sort of account The Cat does (in virtue of being the kind of Animal with Vertebrae with [whatever the further differentiae may be]). Unity is not a kind of Manyness, Rest, Sameness, etc. Or, to put it the other way, being many, being at rest, being the same, etc. are not part of what it is to be one. This is why the first deduction in this case has pervasively negative results.

It is not immediately obvious what to make of the atypical final lines of the section, roughly *Parm.* 141e ff.: the interlocutor expresses doubt about these results. Others have been quick to point out that, on my interpretation, at least "The One is one" *pros heauto* ought to be correct; Peterson[40] has offered responses which I adopt with some modifications here. One suggestion is that "The One is one" may seem to involve the predication of Being in a problematic way. In assimilating my two kinds of predication to the *kath' hauto* and *pros allo* uses of "is" in the *Sophist*, I in fact had traded on an idea made explicit in Aristotle's claim that there is no difference between, e.g., ἄνθροπος βαδίζων ἐστίν and ἄνθροπος βαδίζει:

> For there is no difference between "the man is recovering" and "the man recovers", nor between "the man is walking" or "cutting" and "the man walks" or "cuts"; and similarly in all other cases. (*Met.* V, 1017a, revised Oxford Translation, ed. Barnes).

We ourselves translate by the same symbolic form both of the natural language sentences in each pair (whether that form looks like "Fa," or "a is F," etc.).

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38 A status reported by Aristotle, as K. Sayre points out in *Plato's Late Ontology* (1983). See also M.F. Burnyeat on The One as the technical version of The Good in "Platonism and Mathematics: A Prelude to Discussion" (1987). The One will of course be *the* principle for the Neoplatonists.

39 There is a structural parallel with Aristotle's point at *Post An* I. 3, that the principles of demonstration cannot themselves be known through demonstration.

40 S. Peterson 1996.

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Yet this requires at least some discussion or explanation. Whether and how Being is involved in all predication would thus register here as needing work, which as we know Plato will turn to in the *Sophist*.

The rest of the small number of negative predications about which doubt is expressed here are in fact unproblematically in order—once one has become familiar with the force they have. But with the interlocutor and reader new to these initially surprising-sounding results, Plato could be signaling the need for difficult thought. In any case, this is the only place where the interlocutor expresses doubt. Since his expression is rather weak (οὔκουν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ) and moreover is superseded by his strong acceptance ("absolutely," παντελῶς μὲν οὖν*)* of the summing-up of the results from the positive hypothesis and his superlative endorsement ("most true," ἀληθέστατα) of the summing-up and grand finale of the entire exercise, this blip can hardly license us to reject the exercise's conclusions pervasively—as readers such as Gill and Rickless must do.

Read my way, the characteristically negative results of the first section of arguments are special to the choice of subject. First sections of the exercise on subsequent occasions when the subject is an Animal, a Letter, a Virtue, a Metal, etc. will lay out relevant parts of the fundamental structure of reality (also perhaps noting the negative results that obtain). Indeed such sections will be doing what is advocated in the *Phaedrus* and the *Philebus*, and essayed in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

In any case, we should not suppose that since the conclusions of this section take the form "The One is not F" for each of the canonical predicates, we learn nothing from the section—or even nothing besides the fundamentality of The One. For there is significant interest in the variety of ways in which these negative predications are established.[41] We have the "starting point" that a thing cannot have as a *pros heauto* predicate its own opposite (i.e., nothing's opposite is involved in its nature); the idea that (positive) tree predication is transitive; the claim that a thing cannot have as a tree predicate anything separate from its nature; and a test for non-identity of natures from inspection of particulars: natures with unshared instances are not the same.

A principle should be such that everything else is derived from and dependent on it, while the reverse is not the case. We have just seen in the negative predications of the first deduction one manifestation of The One's non-derivative nature. The revelation of the dependence of everything else on The One begins in the third deduction, with the discussion showing that all other things are in fact unities (i.e., are one *pros to allo* in my sense), and that if we abstract their unity they fall apart utterly. Because of this, everything else is dependent on

41 See my 1991: Chapter 4.

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participation in The One to be anything at all.[42] That discussion, I believe, bears on the quick negative results of the fourth section, and indeed of the seventh and eighth as well.[43] For related reasons, the supposition that the original hypothesis does not obtain will lead very quickly to pervasively negative results, though the present undertaking does not afford scope to go through them all.[44] To sum up my reading of these passages, I am delighted to borrow a turn of phrase from Gill: they show that if The One is not (or indeed, if we deprive in thought the others of their actual relation to it), there is no world.[45] If by "world" someone understands the sensible world, simply make two steps: if The One is not, there are no forms; for Plato obviously if there are no forms, there can be no sensible world.

These extremely negative results are all a function of the choice of subject. Most other forms are not participated in by everything. Most other forms are not so important that if we consider their participants after abstracting in thought the relation to those forms we destroy their participants as viable subjects, and so *a fortiori* destroy any possibility of substantive truths about those participants' natures. (Consider how little it affects the others than The Cat if we consider them on their own.) Most other forms are not so important that if those forms are not, then nothing is anything. So the fundamental role of The One will be highlighted still more by the contrast when the exercise is done taking a series of other forms as subjects. Nevertheless, the outlines of The One's fundamentality clearly emerge already in the *Parmenides* as I read it. If results establishing The One as an *archê* are interesting and important, I have a good explanation of the negativity of these sections.[46]

7. Why the Results of the Second Section of Arguments are not in Problematic Tension

What about Gill's charge that the results of the second section of arguments are incompatible with each other?[47] At the surface level, we do find paired claims that we can schematize as "The One is F and The One is not F" or sometimes

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42 I do not think all the other forms are one *pros heauto*; that is, I do not think Unity is at the top of a tree-of-everything. Largeness e.g., is one form i.e., one *pros ta alla*; but being one is not part of what it is to be large so it is not one *pros heauto*.

43 For discussion of the agenda of section four (where I provide resources for seeing why its results aren't identical with the conjunction of the first sections of all future exercises, and why those first sections will typically *not* have the negative results of the present section four), see my 1991: 139-142.

44 I refer readers who are interested to my 1991: Chapters 7-8.

45 M.L. Gill 1996: 106; paper in the present volume.

46 Thus I believe my 1991: Chapters 7 and 8 answered in advance the queries of K. Sayre 1996: 113 echoed by M.L. Gill in the present volume.

47 M.L. Gill 1996: 72, 79; 2012: 50, 54, 62-63; paper in the present volume.

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"The One is F and The One is the opposite of F." Certainly my large-scale strategy for dealing with apparent tension between the results of this section and of the first (by pointing out the relevance of the section-structuring in-relation-to qualifications) does not apply to dispel the possibility of contradiction within this section—and I never thought it did. The section's results require no such application, since the qualifications that show them not to violate logic are of the same sort typically relevant in Plato's previous works. So my understanding of these results does not rely in the first instance on the novel in-relation-to qualifications that I believe are thematized in our exercise. Yet as we will see at the end of my discussion, the introduction of these special qualifications in our dialogue does bear indirectly on the possibility of the understanding that I recommend.

To trace this theme, let's return briefly to some earlier passages in Plato. Consider the beautiful girl of the *Hippias Major*: however much she loses in allure when we see that she is both beautiful and ugly (*Hip. I* 289a8-d2), she is not in violation of the laws of logic. In fact, Plato himself made a start on the more fully-specified formulations that show why: the *most beautiful girl* (i.e., one who is beautiful compared to all other girls) is ugly *in comparison with gods* (289a8-b7). And the *Symposium* ascent passage indicates many more qualifications we can use: a thing can be beautiful in one place but not another, at one time but not another, to someone but not to someone else, and so on (*Symp*. 211a ff).

Such passages fit the schema of the imaginary discussion (*Rsp.* V, 478d ff) with the lover of sights and sounds concerning the status of sensibles as objects of opinion, i.e., things that both are and are not—a condition Socrates pungently characterizes as "rolling around" between being and not-being at 479d4-5.[48] While Plato means this short-coming to show that engagement with sensibles cannot be our deepest cognitive achievement, the results themselves must be correct to establish that—and they could hardly be correct if they were logically contradictory.

In fact, Plato is on firm ground here. As his Argument from Opposites to establish the tripartite soul in the *Republic* shows, he realizes that a result of the form "a is F and a is the opposite of F" is no offense to logic just in case the most fully specified description of the state of affairs in question passes the test. Stephen Hawking can be extremely powerful (mentally) and the very opposite of powerful (physically). Is it correct in this case to say, "Hawking is and is not powerful"? *It is and it isn't!* Some but not all contexts invite such forms, whose logical propriety is underwritten by the fully specified ones.[49]

This is why the results of Deduction 2 are not logically problematic. After all, in this way, *everything* is one and many (as for example the case of one man

[48] At any rate for readers who believe as I do that the objects of opinion discussed in that passage are not limited to accounts in terms of sensible properties, but at least include sensible individuals.

[49] I explore this further in my *Plato* (Routledge Philosophers) Chapter 10 (now in draft).

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identical with many limbs at *Phil.* 14d-e). Everything is the same (as itself) and different (from something else). Such results no more violate logic than it does for a girl to be beautiful and not beautiful. So it will be no logical transgression to conclude that The One is one (one whole, or a single form) and that it is many (since it has many parts, and indeed does so in several ways). In some passages of the *Parmenides* Plato actually puts in the phrases that make explicit thinking along the very lines I have been retracing.[50]

If the results of the second section aren't violations of logic, they may still seem to be violations of Platonism. The thought that they are derives from a certain understanding of the way forms are described in the very passages whose description of sensibles I have been relying on. That description of sensibles—emphasizing that the display of features by the individuals in question is confused or impure—is meant to disqualify them from being objects of the highest cognitive state. The point of demonstrating that sensibles mix being and not being is to show that it's no good looking to them if one wants to answer the "What is it?" question. To have knowledge concerning any such matter, one has to grasp pure being. That is the domain of forms.

The reason the confused and impure displays of sensibles disqualify them from pure being is that displaying is all they can do. Problematic versions of the Theory of Forms result if we assimilate forms to sensible particulars, and assume that their repertoire is likewise limited to displaying—then we must suppose that for some mystical reason they are able to do it much better. This picture has well-known difficulties. Some forms (e.g., Fire, Animality, Triangularity) cannot make the eponymous display at all. And some will make the eponymous display but apparently in a manner just as confused as that of a sensible: surely Sameness should be not only the same (sc. as itself) but also different (sc. from everything else). How then can forms possibly do their jobs and provide the pure being we needed them for in the first place? Here the exercise required to understand the special in-relation-to qualifications pays off.

Developing an understanding of our dialogue's key innovation in the way I advocate involves coming to see that what is fundamental about a form is not a matter of any such mystically pure display, but is rather the internal structure of its nature that is expressed in tree truths. These will never roll around between being and not being: some nature is either part of another or it is not (exclusive "or"). So we now have a principled way of marking off the domain that knowledge is set over: the class of fundamental truths isn't marked off only by being about a special population (forms); it's a special kind of truths about them.[51]

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[50] As at 154c3-6 and 155b4-c4, featured in my 1991: Chapter 5. In that chapter, I develop an approach that I believe works for the section as a whole, and with which I rest content—unless someone shows, of some particular passage within the section, that it cannot be handled in this way.

[51] Cf. M. Frede 1967: B. III.5.

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Once we have this pure domain, and once we see that the unqualified nature of these accounts is unaffected by whatever pattern of displaying the forms may exhibit, we are free to accept—in the case of any given form—all (and only) the displays that are in fact desirable to acknowledge for it. Thus Plato, in generating the results of the second deduction, seems to me actually to revel in rolling around of a perfectly normal and indeed welcome sort for The One.

8. The Third Man

As we have been seeing, a key insight I find in our exercise is that *forms do not do their jobs by being perfect exemplars*, since the deepest and most fundamental truths are, to put it in the terms of our exercise, *pros heauto*, not *pros ta alla*. Given this, nothing prevents Plato from acknowledging that forms vary with respect to their display of their eponymous feature. He is as free as anyone to agree that Bravery and Hedgehoggery don't instantiate themselves, while Unity, Manyness, and Intelligibility do. None of this is relevant to how they perform their key functions.

Understanding that forms do not do their jobs by self-instantiation also enables us to deal with the threatened proliferation of forms in the regress argument that Plato does with the example of The Large, and associated since Aristotle with the name "the Third Man." First let's review how the regress was supposed to arise. (It was presented way back in the first part of the dialogue, at 132a1-b2.) The argument (really one of a family occurring in various authors) has been recognized since antiquity as relying on some version of claims called in the secondary literature "One Over Many," "Self-Predication," and "Non-Identity" or "Non-Self-Explanation."[52] In our text, the exact formulations these should receive is underdetermined[53] and the key moves flash by quickly at 132a1-b2.

Parmenides starts with the many large things Socrates sees, and suggests (trading on some version of One Over Many) that his interlocutor believes in one form (*idea*) that is over them all, The Large. He goes on to speak of "The Large and the other large things." (This relies on assuming both the Self-Predication "The Large is large" and that it licenses taking The Large as a large thing: the self-instantiation i.e., *pros ta alla* or ordinary-predication reading.) What Parmenides says explicitly about "The Large and the other large things" is that they now require *another* form (presumably because of One Over Many together with Non-Identity/Non-Self-Explanation) by which all of them will be large. Evidently there will be no end to the threatened regress: this new form will also be large, occasion recognition of a new group of large things, which require *yet another* form by which they are all large, and so on without end.

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52 See G. Fine, 1993: Chapters 15 and 16.

53 I hold that the sketchiness of the argument in our text is itself part of a compositional strategy on Plato's part (1991, 1992).

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It is very easy to see how simple application of the distinction we've been exploring blocks the regress in the (typical) case of forms like Man that do not exemplify themselves.[54] Let's go through the steps with this most famous case. We are invited to posit the one over many ordinary men, The Man. On our present understanding, this is a matter of positing some one nature conforming to which makes all the sensibles men. A one of this sort is just as able to unify them (i.e., be what they have in common) as any super-exemplifier could have done—though its way of doing that is of course not by simple resemblance. Rather we are now clear that the form is what the many sensibles have in common because the nature of man is the single structure conformity with which explains all the relevant displays: the account of that one nature ("rational animal" or whatever) is what they are all satisfying.

On to the next step: is The Man Itself (a) man? Of course as a tree predication this is guaranteed to be true: it is the trivial limit case. Realizing though that the tree truth is not about the form's displaying frees us to reject the claim that the form is a member of our species. We do not have to countenance a new group of men (the original ordinary men plus the form that explains them) that requires further explanation. There is no question of a Third Man.

But of course there are cases in which "The F is F" does also hold as an ordinary predication, cases in which there is indeed an additional entity making a relevant display and so a new group of individuals whose displays need to be accounted for.[55] Does the fact that simple application of my distinction does not block the regress for these cases tell against my reading of the dialogue?[56] Not at all. The gestalt shift we have been exploring concerning how forms do their jobs enables us to face the issue now in view with success.

Let's take the example of Beauty. We start off as per usual with the base group of ordinary beauties; to account for what they have in common we introduce the form, The Beautiful Itself. Again, there is no problem if we wish to suppose that there is some one nature conforming to which makes all

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54 I now realize that people differ in their intuitions about whether The Large exemplifies itself.

55 My publications in 1991 and 1992 did not spell out explicitly the details of how to handle the threatened regress in the special case of forms that are self-exemplifying. (I would have rejected the claims (2'a) and (2"a) B. Frances 1996 attributes to me, and agree that he is right to reject them).

56 As S. Rickless thinks (2007: 106 n.8). Rickless cites B. Frances 1996 against me, obscuring the important, large-scale point that the work of Frances actually tends to vindicate my understanding of the exercise: Frances applies my interpretation to deal with all the cases he dreams up of the Third Man Problem. As he sums up, "there is ... ample reason to think that if Meinwald's exposition [of the second part of the dialogue] is accurate, then Plato did solve the problem of the Third Man in the *Parmenides*..." (64).

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the sensibles into beauties and whose structure we use in explaining the relevant displays. Again, self-predication concerning our form's pure being is guaranteed as the tree truth: The Beautiful is beautiful. And again, this is not about displaying and so creates no new group. Thus we still take care of the fundamental grounding work without trading on any self-instantiation on the part of the form. That is, while in our present case, the form does in fact instantiate itself, *that is not how it performs its explanatory function.* Now let's move on to consider the fact that Beauty (like all forms) is a beautiful thing; the ordinary predication "Beauty is beautiful" does hold. Will we need an unwelcome Third Beauty to explain that and so on forever?

Of course not. For notice that in the scheme as we have developed it, what is explanatory is a special sort of facts, those about the structures of the natures in question, about what those natures really amount to. (This is true throughout the gymnastic dialectic as well as in our recent case of sensible men and in the base step of the present case, of sensible beauties.) And this is of immense importance when it comes to considering the expanded group. For *nothing prevents the same nature that explains the base group from explaining the new group formed by recognizing that Beauty—incidentally—is a beautiful thing*. What is explanatory and metaphysically grounding of all the displays in question is the articulation of the nature: what it is to be beautiful. We appeal to an explanatory *fact* distinct from those about the displays that it explains, but in order to do so we do not have to import a *form* distinct from the original one.[57] Since there is something about the form that is more fundamental than its displaying, we can explain even its own display by reference to that.[58]

9. Comparison with Gill and Summing Up

Let's now conclude by comparing my picture of how the exercise helps us to think about forms with that offered by Mary Louise Gill. One can lose track of how they differ, since she distinguishes what holds of a thing or things

[57] To put this solution in terms of the jargon, I believe that the gestalt shift I have been exploring is not restricted to a more nuanced understanding of Self-Predication—this leads on to a better understanding of Non-Identity/Non-Self-Explanation as well. I spell out more fully the intuitions I find relevant to the Third Man Argument in my Routledge *Plato* Chapter 9 (now in draft).

[58] I have always been in considerable sympathy with the sort of approach articulated in B. Frances 1996. While my 1991 and 1992 publications had assumed that my view about this type of special case would be obvious to readers when it has turned out not to be, Frances himself in exempting forms from NSE is so brief that he seems to assume what he needs to show. (His discussion: "If the One is one because it displays some feature that corresponds to its own nature, and it makes sense to ask 'In virtue of what Form is the One one?,' the only reasonable answer on Meinwald's interpretation is 'the One'", 1996: 61).

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"in virtue of itself/themselves" from other truths about those same things, and this can sound rather similar to my scheme.[59] But we must keep in mind that she, unlike me, is using these phrases to talk about two kinds of reasons for which the thing in question displays features.

While I don't think she makes her view (or how she gets it from our text) completely clear, it *is* clear that Gill is relying on some commitment to natures and prospects for analyzing them: she talks about what is "inside the nature," what something is "in virtue of its own nature," what a thing is "by nature, in virtue of itself," and things being "responsible for their own natures."[60] Since a commitment to natures and the prospect of analyzing them is already enough (in a different scheme, like mine) to allow forms to "do their jobs," I don't see why anyone would want to accept in addition that the form *displays* the eponymous feature as its way of manifesting this special self-predication.

For me, "The Animal is mortal in relation to itself" would be a safe claim with the force that being mortal is involved in being an animal. For Gill by contrast, assuming of course that Mortality must be inside the nature of Animality, it seems that "The Animal is mortal" must hold "in virtue of itself"—where the first bit reports that the form actually displays this feature and the latter indicates the special kind of reason for that. Thus while we both appeal to natures and some unpacking or analysis of them, Gill makes the additional commitment to instantiations that follow—many of which were known to be problematic at least as early as the time when Aristotle wrote the *Topics*.[61]

In addition to the "bottom-line" difference in the metaphysical picture we find here, there is also a tremendous difference in how we get it from the text of the *Parmenides*. In Gill's reading, the crucial and promising development has nothing

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59 M.L. Gill 1996: 86, 108; 2012: 55, 64, 65-67; paper in the present volume. In fact, the formulations of my suggestion that Gill has given (including in 2012: 51 in terms of "essential features ... mentioned in [a subject's] definition" vs. "non-essential features [the subject] ... displays") are not perspicuous: her characterizations do nothing to discourage (and may even suggest) an understanding on which "A is B *pros heauto*" still involves A's displaying the (special) feature associated with B. Moreover, contrary to what this suggests, I never try to explicate my notion by appealing to what is "essential"—I believe this would be anachronistic as well as relying on a notion whose understanding is not agreed upon. In her paper in the present volume M.L. Gill has adjusted her characterization of my view.

60 M.L. Gill uses slightly varying formulations along these lines. See e.g., 2012: 55, 64-66, 152, 240; Chania presentation; paper in the present volume.

61 Some of the difficulties were popularized anew in the 20th century by G.E.L. Owen's discussion of "Two-Level Problems" (Owen 1968). See also D. Keyt's discussion (Keyt 1992) of J. Malcolm's appeal (in *Plato on the Self-Predication of Forms: Early and Middle Dialogues*) to the distinction between attributes a form possesses *qua* form from those it possesses *qua* the particular form it is.

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to do with the in-relation-to qualifications and indeed, is not heralded in the methodological remarks at all; rather it emerges briefly in the third deduction in less than a single OCT page (158b-e)[62] before being undermined in the fourth.[63]

The lessons I draw from the second part of the dialogue, by contrast, are grounded in the entirety of Plato's text. He sets us our "homework" by the way he composes the methodological discussion, the summaries, and the literary elements. In particular, the in-relation-to qualifications, while indeed barely *named* during the arguments of the second part of the dialogue, *govern* everything that is done in those arguments. The (implicit) fact that the arguments' conclusions are systematically *pros heauto* or *pros ta alla* vindicates the cogency of the reasoning we get in the exercise. While I initially arrived at my interpretative hypothesis concerning the force of each key qualification based on just a few passages, I test it in my book against the evidence that the entire 30 page stretch of argument constitutes. (I do not tax the attention of readers by narrating my interpretation of every line; nevertheless I believe I take up enough passages to indicate how I understand the rest.) Every single argument in this tremendous 30 page stretch is relevant to confirming or disconfirming my interpretation.

Construing the arguments as I propose has in fact yielded the only interpretation of this text that I know of to respect Plato's indications that we should both embrace all of its results and keep the hypothesis (and analogously its denial) unchanged through its four sections of use. This work leads to a Platonism that is a plausible realization of the motivations of the middle dialogues—and one untouched by the famous problems to which naïve concretizations of the theory fall prey. So, far from being "unsupported,"[64] this reading still seems to me to enjoy the fullest support an interpretation of a philosopher can have: it takes account of his entire text, and maximizes his argumentative success. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it.

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62 M.L. Gill 2012: 55, 67 but heralded from 65.

63 M.L. Gill 2012: 51.

64 The verdict of S. Rickless 2007, announced 102 n.6.

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