

The Sight-Lovers of *Republic* V and Plato's Critique of their Ontology

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I. Introduction:

At the end of *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13), Plato initiates a discussion which is intended to ultimately ‘define’ (διορίσασθαι) who the ‘philosophers’ (φιλόσοφοι) are that Socrates has just suggested in 473c11–e4 that must rule the city.¹ Briefly, the argument in this stretch of text is the following.² Socrates begins with the claim that the philosopher is the ‘lover of learning’ (φιλομαθής). He is a person who has an insatiable appetite for every kind of learning. Glaucon counters that if this proposal is accepted, then the definition seems to encompass many ‘strange people’ (ἄτοποι). It will, for instance, include the ‘sight-lovers’ (φιλοθεάμονες) as they take pleasure in ‘learning’ (καταμανθάνειν)

¹ I agree with Nehamas (2024) that it would be a mistake to assume that in R. V 474b3–480a13 Plato offers a complete picture of the philosopher. Rather, in this stretch of text he launches the project of explaining who the philosopher is, and he goes on to complete it in books VI and VII.

² What follows is only a rough outline of the overall argument in R. 474b3–480a13. For some detailed treatments of it, see e.g., Annas 1981: ch. 8; Baltzly 1997; Fine 1978; Gosling 1968. In more recent literature the focus is usually on R. 477c1–478b2 which contains Plato's ‘powers argument.’ On this argument, see e.g., Moss 2021: ch. 2, esp. pp. 52–61; Smith 2019: ch. 3.

things.³ The rest of the ensuing argument, in 475e2 ff, leads up gradually to a particular final conclusion: ‘knowledge’ (γνῶσις) is directed towards ‘what is’ (τὸ ὅντι); on the other hand, ‘opinion’ (δόξα) is directed towards that which lies between ‘what purely is’ (τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος) and ‘what in every way is not’ (τοῦ πάντως μὴ ὄντος);⁴ some thinkers, such as the sight-lovers, deny the existence of Forms, e.g., that of the ‘Beautiful itself’ (αὐτὸ καλόν), where these are understood to remain always the same in every respect;⁵ the Forms, then, are the things which purely are; hence, the object of knowledge are the unchanging Forms; people like the sight-lovers admit only the existence of sensible objects such as the ‘many beautiful things’ (τὰ πολλὰ καλά); but, these things, unlike the Form of Beauty, ‘appear’ (φανῆναι) to be beautiful ‘in a way’ (πως) and also to be ugly in a way; these things are to be placed between ‘being’ (οὐσίας) and ‘not being’ (μὴ εἶναι); it follows that those who contemplate these objects, as, for instance, the sight-lovers do, are only lovers of opinion; philosophers contemplate those things which are always the same in every respect, the Forms; therefore, it is the philosophers who are the true lovers of knowledge.⁶

The argument sketched out above gives rise to a number of familiar and closely related puzzles, e.g., ‘What does Plato have in mind when he asserts that ‘ignorance’ (ἄγνοια)

³ As we will see in part II, some clarifications are required about who Plato considers to be the potential claimants to the title of the philosopher. For the time being though, it suffices to note that the subsequent discussion, see esp. *R. 478e7–479e8*, seems to focus on the sight-lover’s claim.

⁴ There is an ongoing debate over whether Plato’s epistemological concerns in the middle dialogues, e.g., in the *Republic*, are the same as ours; see, for instance, Moss 2021; Fine 2004. I am sympathetic to Moss’ (2021: esp. 234–242) view that in these works ἐπιστήμη/γνῶσις is not the same as knowledge as this is understood by contemporary epistemology, and δόξα is different from our opinion/belief. However, I cannot broach this thorny issue here. For the sake of convenience, I adopt the standard translations of ‘ἐπιστήμη’/‘γνῶσις’ and ‘δόξα’ as ‘knowledge’ and ‘opinion’, respectively, but without making any assumptions about their epistemological significations. I also steer clear of questions regarding Plato’s use of some related terms, such as ‘μανθάνω’ and ‘γνωνότω’.

⁵ I follow the convention of capitalizing the term ‘Form’, and I refer to a particular Form, e.g., that of beauty, as ‘the Form of Beauty’ or ‘Beauty itself’/‘The Beautiful itself’.

⁶ In the analysis above, I assume, along with other interpreters, e.g., Annas 1981: 195; Cross, Woozley 1966: 140 ff; Smith 2012: 68, that in *Republic* V (*R. 474b3–480a13*) Plato uses expressions such as ‘what (purely) is’ and ‘X itself’ to refer to Forms. As is well known, however, other interpreters, e.g., Fine 1978, Nehamas 2024, take it that to make such an assumption is to saddle Plato with a blatant mistake. If he does appeal to the Forms in our passage, then he clearly begs the question against his opponents, the sight-lovers. A discussion of this interpretive conundrum would be a project in itself; it cannot be undertaken here. Nonetheless, it is only fair that I sketch out my argument against the opposing view, that in book V Plato does not appeal to the Forms. This argument is based on three points. First, there is evidence in *Republic* V 474b3–480a13, see esp. *R. 476b9–d3*, which strongly suggests that the Forms do feature in it. Second, it is certainly true that in our passage Plato does not assume that his audience is familiar with the full-blown theory of the Forms; he presents elements of this version of the theory later on, in books VI and VII. And third, the charge that if he does refer to the theory of Forms then he begs the question against his adversaries may be readily deflected. We need to acknowledge that Plato’s goal in *Republic* V 474b3–480a13 is not to present a decisive argument against the sight-lovers. He is only trying to make the first steps towards specifying who the philosophers are. Thus, he simply assumes that there is a distinction to be made between those who admit the existence of Forms, the philosophers, and those who deny their existence, e.g., the sight-lovers (*R. 476a10–d3*). And, on the basis of this distinction, the foundations of which the sight-lover would naturally want to challenge, he proceeds to argue that thinkers like the sight-lovers have no knowledge but only opinion. Yet, as we will see in the main body of the paper, there is no point in *Republic* V (*R. 474b3–480a13*) where Plato engages in a direct and systematic attempt to determinately discredit the sight-lovers’ (ontological) position. This is something that he does in book VII, or so I argue in part IV.

is directed towards 'what is not' (μὴ ὄν)?', and 'How exactly are we to parse the claim that knowledge is directed towards what is?'⁷ The objective of this paper, however, is to address a different set of questions: 'Who are the sight-lovers of *Republic V*?'; 'Do they maintain some kind of coherent ontological position?'; and, 'If they do, then what exactly is its content, and how does Plato attempt to discredit it?'.

To anticipate briefly, in what follows I intend to do four things. First, it will be argued that, despite some indications to the contrary, *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) shows that the sight-lovers cannot be straightforwardly identified with some group of non-philosophers or laypersons who refuse to accept the theory of Forms. They advocate a position which is quite sophisticated. Specifically, they maintain that the objects of our everyday experience are clusters or bundles of things such as sounds, colors, shapes, and sizes. Second, we have just seen that in *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato supposes that the sight-lovers reject the existence of Forms, and they accept that the things which do exist are the objects of our ordinary experience. As has been noted, such an object may appear to be in a way big and in a way small, or in a way beautiful and in a way ugly. It will be shown that Plato presents his own approach to this issue, that of how a sensible thing may admit 'opposites' (ἐναντία), in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3). Third, we will see that this discussion in the *Phaedo* may facilitate our effort to (a) place the sight-lovers' theory in its proper setting, and (b) parse its finer details. Plato assumes that his adversaries uphold a view about the nature of sensible objects that is very different from the one he develops in the *Phaedo*. In particular, the sight-lovers adopt a view which merges (1) a naïve understanding of reality, whereby there are no abstract entities and the objects of our perceptual experience are clusters of mere things, with (2) the Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites, or so it will be argued here. Furthermore, the collective textual evidence suggests that this is a thesis that Plato himself builds up, and ascribes to a certain group of people he tags as the 'sight-lovers', so that he may scrutinize it and eventually rebut it. Finally, it will be shown that his actual critique of the sight-lovers' ontology comes in an unexpected place. He spells out the main problem facing this kind of position in *Republic VII* (R. 523a5–524d4), in the context of explicating his thesis on how the consideration of 'summoners' (τὰ παρακαλοῦντα) compels the 'soul' (ψυχή) to appeal to 'understanding' (νόησις) and thus draws it to 'reality' (οὐσία), the realm of the Forms.

II. A First Look at the Sight-Lovers' Ontology:

As was pointed out above, in *Republic V* Plato asserts that the sight-lovers refuse to accept the existence of Forms, and they maintain that the things that do exist are the objects of our ordinary perceptual experience. One may suppose that this is not a thesis

⁷ On these questions, see, for instance, Moss 2021: esp. ch. 3; Smith 2019: e.g., pp. 47–52.

held by some organized school of thought in philosophy. That is to say, one may take it that the sight-lovers' view, as this is described in our text, is just a statement of the layperson's reaction to the theory of Forms. I intend to show that: (a) Some of the evidence in *Republic* 474b3–480a13 indicates that this could be a plausible conjecture about the identity of the sight-lovers; but (b) The very same text suggests that regardless of who the sight-lovers are, the fact is that they advocate a position that is an ontological theory in its own right.

Before we proceed with our discussion we need to clarify one important preliminary point. In *Republic* 475d1–e1 Glaucon points out that if we accept Socrates' initial proposal, that the philosopher is the lover of learning, then we will be forced to count among the ranks of philosophers all sorts of people. We will have to admit that the sight-lovers, the "sound-lovers" (φιλήκοοι) and all "those who learn similar things or petty crafts are philosophers" (R. 475d8–e1). Yet, as the effort to specify who the real philosophers are progresses (see e.g. R. 476b4–7) Plato focusses his attention on just the sight-lovers and the sound-lovers. What is also worth noting is that in 478e7–479e8, which contains the main thrust of his argument against the false pretenders to the title of the philosopher, even the sound-lovers drop out of the picture. Immediately afterwards, in 479e9–480a8, Plato states that the preceding discussion, in 478e7–479e8, has shown that those who love sounds and colors "and other such things" (καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα) are not philosophers. Nevertheless, the argument of 478e7–479e8 itself seems to be directed only against the sight-lovers. It is fair then to make two assumptions. First, Plato supposes that the main pretenders to the title of the philosopher are the sight-lovers, the sound-lovers, and all the other lovers of perceptions, where these are the people who maintain that knowledge/learning is to be derived from the evidence of the senses, e.g., from things seen and heard. And second, in 478e7–479e8 he takes it that to undermine the claim to the title of the philosopher made by the lovers of perceptions it suffices to argue against the sight-lovers' claim. In light of the above, it should be understood that throughout this paper the label 'sight-lovers' is intended to cover all lovers of perceptions, i.e., all those who hold that perception is the source of knowledge/learning.^{8,9}

What is Plato's quarrel with the sight-lovers? In *Republic* 478e7–479e8 he sketches out his objection to their claim to the title of the philosopher. The sight-lover does not admit the existence of Forms, e.g., those of Beauty and Justice, and he "would not allow anyone to say that the Beautiful itself is one or that the Just is one or any of the rest" (οὐδαμῆ ἀνεχόμενος ἀν τις ἐν τὸ καλὸν φῆ εἶναι καὶ δίκαιον καὶ τἄλλα οὔτως – R. 479a3–5). He

⁸ As has already been noted, I assume that in *Republic* 478e7 ff Plato's intention is not to offer a definitive argument against the sight-lovers' view. His argument is based on a number of assumptions, e.g., that the Forms do exist and that they are the object of 'knowledge' (γνῶσις), which the sight-lover may, at this stage of the discussion, readily challenge. Rather, Plato's primary aim in our text is to begin his account of who the (real) philosophers are. In part IV, we will see that his critique of thinkers such as the sight-lovers is presented in *Republic* VII (R. 523a–524d4).

⁹ For an alternative approach to the same issue, the relation between the sight-lovers and the other pretenders to the title of the philosopher in *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13), see Nehamas 2024.

takes it that there are only the many beautiful and just things of our perceptual experience (*R.* 479a3).¹⁰ But, Plato points out, the sight-lover acknowledges that there is not even one of these many sensible beautiful objects which does not, in a way, also appear to be ugly (*R.* 479a5–b1). Such an object is thus ‘ambiguous’ (ἐπαμφοτερίζει). It is not possible for one to ‘understand’ (νοῆσαι) it to be ‘fixedly’ (παγίως) beautiful, or fixedly ugly, or (fixedly) both or neither of these things (*R.* 479b10–c5). Hence, Plato tells us, it transpires that “the many conventions of the many (τῶν πολλῶν) about beauty (...) are rolling around (κυλινδεῖται) as intermediates between what is not and what purely is” (*R.* 479d2–4).¹¹ Moreover, in the next few lines, in 479d6–e4, he asserts that those who study the many beautiful things, where these are presumably the sight-lovers, are not really concerned with the ‘knowable’ (γνωστόν), the object of philosophy, but just with the ‘opinable’ (δοξαστόν).

In *Republic* 479d2–e4 Plato does in effect identify the sight-lovers with ‘the many’ (οἱ πολλοί), where these may be assumed to be the aggregate of the thinking non-philosophers who refuse to accept the theory of Forms. It should also be noted that the fact that he is in open debate with these people would not in itself justify the claim that they are associated with any particular school of thought in philosophy. Having stated this much, we ought to carefully consider *Republic* 476b4–7:

The lovers of sights and sounds like (ἀσπάζονται) beautiful sounds (φωνάς), colors (χρόας), shapes (σχήματα), and everything constructed/fashioned out of them (καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργούμενα), but their thought (διάνοια) is unable to see and embrace the nature (φύσιν) of the Beautiful itself.

In these lines Plato records his familiar point of disagreement with the sight-lovers, that they deny the existence of Forms. Nevertheless, what is important to notice is the first part of the statement above. Plato asserts that his adversaries like sounds, colors, shapes and all the things that are constructed out of them. Given this claim, I would like to submit that he ascribes to them a particular kind of theory. In *Republic* 476b4–5 Plato states that his opponents admit the existence of things such as (beautiful) sounds, colors and shapes. These are some of the various attributes we associate with the concrete particulars or the objects of our everyday experience.¹² Furthermore, it is clear that the assumption made is that all of these attributes are accessible to us via our senses. Most notably, however, the sight-lover seems to be making a philosophically significant claim

¹⁰ For the sake of convenience, in what follows I confine the discussion to Plato's usual example, that of Beauty itself and the many beautiful sensible things.

¹¹ The obvious and interesting question which we cannot, and need not, address here is that regarding the sense or the senses of the Greek verb ‘to be’ Plato employs in *Republic* 474b3–480a13. On this issue, see the discussion and the references provided in Moss 2021: 94.

¹² In what follows I use the terms ‘object’ and ‘concrete particular’ interchangeably. I assume that they refer to the things we encounter in ordinary life, e.g., individual statues, human beings and houses. Furthermore, I assume that these are the sensible things towards which, Plato tells us, opinion is directed.

about the nature of concrete particulars. He holds that there is a distinction to be made between such items and the attributes they have or possess. Concrete particulars and the attributes associated with them belong to distinct ontological categories. As we are told in 476b5–6, the sight-lover takes it that an object has some kind of structure or complexity. It is an item that has been constructed out of other more fundamental or more fine-grained entities. To be more specific, we are told that the sight-lover maintains that sounds, colors and shapes are the things out of which other entities are ‘constructed/fashioned’ (δημιουργούμενα), where, it is only plausible to assume, these are the objects of our sensory experience.¹³ Hence, I would like to suggest that our text warrants the claim that in the sight-lovers’ ontology the objects of our everyday experience are collections or clusters of attributes, namely, things such as sounds and shapes. To give an example, in this kind of ontology Helen of Troy is the cluster of, let us say, paleness, tallness and facial symmetry.¹⁴

The thesis Plato attributes to the sight-lovers is reminiscent of a certain type of approach to a well-known and persistent puzzle in metaphysics. The issue in question is that of providing a credible ontological analysis of familiar concrete particulars, e.g., entities such as Helen of Troy or the desk right in front of me. Most philosophers suppose that an object is a whole made up of more basic or fundamental constituents.¹⁵ Thus, some of them, the ‘substratum theorists’, take it that such a whole has two kinds of constituents. These are the various attributes which are associated with the specific concrete particular, along with a bare substratum which serves as the bearer of these attributes.¹⁶ On the other hand, we have the ‘bundle theorists’ who suppose that an object is nothing more than a bundle, or a cluster, or a collection of attributes. Thus, according to this view, a particular ball is nothing more than a bundle of attributes such as the color blue, the spherical

¹³ I take it that Plato’s choice of phraseology at *Republic* 476b5–6, “... χρόας καὶ σχήματα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργούμενα”, instead of a construction such as “... χρόας καὶ σχήματα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔχοντα αὐτά”, is deliberate. As is proposed above, it is intended to show that things such as shapes and sounds are the ontological building blocks out of which concrete particulars are constructed.

¹⁴ To anticipate a possible objection, one could protest that this is not a fair reading of *Republic* 476b4–7, and that the view Plato ascribes to the sight-lovers is not, so to speak, ontologically loaded. That is to say, one could assume that the claim in our passage is something along the following lines. The sight-lover likes, let us say, certain beautiful colored paints as well as the items a skilled ‘craftsman’ (δημιουργός), a painter, may fashion out of them, e.g., a beautifully painted statue of Zeus. Yet, the sight-lover is utterly incapable of engaging in a philosophically meaningful discussion that may help him grasp the nature of Beauty itself. There are several difficulties with this suggestion. I will outline what I think is the most obvious one. This reading of the text could accommodate some cases of artefacts. Nonetheless, it is evident from the overall discussion at the end of *Republic* V, see esp. 478e7–479a8, that the sight-lover’s view encompasses both artefacts and persons. In light of this, it is hard to see how one could understand the assertion that a person is ‘constructed’ (δημιουργούμενο) out of things such as colors and shapes, as well as things such as tallness, justice and piety, in an ontologically innocuous manner. Therefore, I assume that the interpretation suggested above, whereby the sight-lover upholds the particular ontological theory, is the one that best fits all of these cases. For further (indirect) support of the claim that this is indeed the sight-lovers’ position, see the discussion in part III.

¹⁵ One exception to this view is austere nominalism which assumes that concrete particulars are completely unstructured wholes; see e.g., Quine 1954.

¹⁶ Versions of this position have been suggested by J. Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and in the last century by B. Russell (1956), and G. Bergmann (1967).

shape, and the weight of 40 kilograms.¹⁷ And, the suggestion made here is that the sight-lovers of *Republic V* adopt a thesis which is akin to what a contemporary metaphysician would label as a ‘bundle theory’.¹⁸

Bundle theorists are notoriously divided over the issue about the nature of the constituents of a concrete particular. Some of them (e.g. Russell 1940), assume that the objects of our experience are bundles of universals. Some others (e.g. Williams 1967), take it that they are bundles of tropes. The question that is of interest here though, is that concerning the nature of the constituents of an object in the sight-lovers’ ontology. What kind of entities are they? And, why do they give rise to objects which are, as Plato tells us, ambiguous? The textual evidence in *Republic V* appears too slim to allow any judgment on these issues. At the same time, I believe that it is still possible to shed some light on them.

III. The Finer Details of the Sight-Lovers’ Ontology:

In *Republic V* (R. 478e7–479e8), Plato suggests that there is a difficulty with the sight-lovers’ view. They reject the theory of Forms and they accept the existence of the objects of our perceptual experience, e.g., the many sensible beautiful things. Yet, Plato points out, the sight-lover admits that an individual beautiful thing is also in a way ugly. It is “not any more” ($\mu\eta\tau\ i\mu\lambda\lambda\lambda\eta\eta$) what we say it is, beautiful, than its “opposite” ($\acute{e}\nu\alpha\eta\tau\eta\eta$), ugly (R. 479b5–6). It seems to “participate in both” ($\acute{a}\mu\phi\tau\eta\eta\eta\eta\eta\acute{e}\xi\eta\eta\eta$) opposites (R. 479b7). Furthermore, Plato tells us, such an object in the sight-lovers’ ontology is ambiguous. We cannot understand it to be fixedly beautiful, or fixedly ugly, or (fixedly) both or neither of these things (R. 479c3–5). It rolls around between being beautiful and being ugly (R. 479d3–4). Is Plato’s complaint here simply that the sight-lovers deny the existence of Forms and accept only the existence of concrete particulars, where the latter are assumed to admit opposites and thus cannot be the object of knowledge? To properly address this question, we need to begin by taking a look at how Plato himself deals with the same issue, the fact that a sensible object x may admit opposite attributes.

In *Republic V* 476c6–d3 Plato makes an important admission. The philosopher is somebody who believes in the existence of the Form of Beauty, but he can ‘see’ ($\kappa\alpha\theta\eta\eta\eta\eta$) both the Form and the various objects which ‘participate’ ($\mu\eta\tau\eta\eta\eta\eta$) in it, and he does not confuse the two. In other words, the philosopher accepts the existence of Forms, the objects of knowledge, as well as the existence of the sensible concrete particulars, the objects of opinion. Moreover, we are told, since the philosopher acknowledges that both kinds of entities exist he does not live in a dream but in reality (R. 476d2–3).

¹⁷ Versions of the bundle theory have been advocated by e.g., D. Hume, in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, B. Russell (1940), and D.C. Williams (1953).

¹⁸ For further details on both kinds of theories, substratum and bundle theories, and their diverse variants, see the discussions in Loux, Crisp 2017: ch. 3 and Koslicki 2018: 12–19.

In *Phaedo* 100c9–e3 Plato asserts that what makes a sensible object beautiful is the fact that it bears some kind of relation to the Form of Beauty. He concedes that he is not confident about what the nature of this relation is.¹⁹ Nonetheless, he states, he is certain that “it is through Beauty that beautiful things are made beautiful” (τῷ καλῷ τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται καλά – *Phd.* 100e2–3). Following a discussion in *Phaedo* 100e8–102a10 which is aimed at providing further support for this last claim, Plato proceeds to tackle the issue of how an object may be said to admit opposite attributes.²⁰

Phaedo 102b4–d4 makes a series of related points. Socrates invites his interlocutors to consider the example of Simmias, Phaedo and himself, where Simmias is taller than he is but is shorter than Phaedo. In this case, we are told, it would seem that “there is both tallness and shortness in Simmias” (εἶναι ἐν τῷ Σιμμίᾳ ἀμφότερα, καὶ μέγεθος καὶ σμικρότητα – *Phd.* 102b5–6). Furthermore, Socrates adds, one may suppose that:

1. Simmias is not taller than Socrates because he is Simmias. That is to say, “it is not the nature” (οὐ πεφυκέναι) of Simmias to be taller than Socrates (*Phd.* 102c1–2). Nor is he taller than Socrates because this is the nature of Socrates, namely, to be shorter than Simmias. Rather, Simmias is taller than Socrates “because of the tallness he happens to have” (τῷ μεγέθει ὁ τυγχάνει ἔχων), and “because Socrates has shortness compared with the tallness of the other [i.e., of Simmias]” (ὅτι σμικρότητα ἔχει ὁ Σωκράτης πρὸς τὸ ἔκεινου μέγεθος – *Phd.* 102b8–c4).
2. Likewise, it is not the nature of Simmias to be shorter than Phaedo. He is shorter than Phaedo “because Phaedo has tallness compared with the shortness of Simmias” (ὅτι μέγεθος ἔχει ὁ Φαίδων πρὸς τὴν Σιμμίου σμικρότητα – *Phd.* 102c7–9).
3. Simmias “is called both short and tall” (έπωνυμίαν ἔχει σμικρός τε καὶ μέγας – *Phd.* 102c11–12). He “is [situated] between” (εἶναι ἐν μέσῳ) Socrates and Phaedo, “presenting his shortness to be overcome by the tallness of one, and his tallness to overcome the shortness of the other” (τοῦ μὲν τῷ μεγέθει ὑπερέχειν τὴν σμικρότητα ὑπέχων, τῷ δὲ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς σμικρότητος παρέχων ὑπερέχον – *Phd.* 102c12–d2).

The claim Plato is striving to establish here is that there is a coherent way in which Simmias may be said to be both tall and short. In *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2 Plato goes on to complete this task by elaborating on some key aspects of the points recorded above. He asserts that the Form of Tallness, being tall, cannot be short. It cannot ever be tall and short “at the same time” (ἄμα) (*Phd.* 102d6–7; e5–6). In a similar manner, he continues, “the tallness in us” (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος) will never “admit” (προσδέχεσθαι) the short or “be overcome” (ὑπερέχεσθαι) by it (*Phd.* 102d6–9). The tallness an individual man has, by

¹⁹ In *Phaedo* 100d4–6 he notes that he is prepared to entertain at least two possibilities: what makes a particular sensible object beautiful may be the ‘presence’ (παρουσία) of the Form of Beauty in it, or its ‘sharing’ (κοινωνία) in this Form.

²⁰ He proposes to do so, to deal with the issue of opposites, as part of his effort to show that the soul is immortal.

being in some kind of relation to Tallness itself, is “not willing to endure and admit shortness and be other than it was” (ύπομένον δὲ καὶ δεξάμενον τὴν σμικρότητα οὐκ ἐθέλειν εἶναι ἔτερον ἢ ὅπερ ἦν – *Phd.* 102e2–3). As is further noted in 102e6–103a1, the tallness in us cannot ever “become” (γίγνεσθαι) or “be” (εἶναι) its opposite “while still being what it was” (ἔτι ὃν ὅπερ ἦν). In cases such as that of comparing Simmias to Phaedo, after we have first compared him to Socrates, what does happen is that the tallness in the particular individual “either flees and retreats when its opposite, the short, approaches, or it is destroyed by its approach” (ἢ φεύγειν καὶ ύπεκχωρεῖν ὅταν αὐτῷ προσήη τὸ ἐναντίον, τὸ σμικρόν, ἢ προσελθόντος ἐκείνου ἀπολωλέναι – *Phd.* 102d9–e2; 103a1–2). Finally, and most importantly, Plato has Socrates make the following assertion: evidently, the tallness in an individual cannot admit shortness; yet, “... I admit and endure shortness and still remain the same person and am this short man” (έγὼ δεξάμενος καὶ ύπομείνας τὴν σμικρότητα, καὶ ἔτι ὃν ὅπερ εἰμί, οὗτος ὁ αὐτὸς σμικρός εἰμι – *Phd.* 102e3–5).

The overall thesis Plato argues for in *Phaedo* 102a11–103a2 seems to be the following. His fundamental underlying assumption is that a sensible object x has an attribute Φ because it bears some type of relation to Φ -ness itself, the Form of Φ . As we are told in 102a11–d4, the puzzle of explaining how an object may admit opposite attributes arises in contexts where we have to compare it to other things, e.g., cases such as that of Simmias, Socrates and Phaedo. Plato rejects the idea that Simmias is taller than Socrates and shorter than Phaedo due to the natures of the individuals involved.²¹ He maintains that: Simmias is taller than Socrates because of the tallness he happens to have compared to the shortness Socrates has; and, Simmias is shorter than Phaedo because of the shortness he happens to have compared to the tallness Phaedo has.

The metaphysical toolkit for explaining how a sensible object may unproblematically admit opposites is actually presented in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2. Plato, we have just seen, holds that the Form of Tallness cannot admit its opposite. Likewise, he tells us, the tallness in a particular person cannot ever admit its opposite. It cannot become or be its opposite. To illustrate the intended point, let us consider the case of Simmias. Simmias is said to be taller than Socrates because he has the attribute of tallness when he is compared to Socrates who, in the particular context, has the attribute of shortness. But, what happens when we then compare Simmias to Phaedo, where Phaedo is taller than Simmias? Plato's claim is that the attribute of tallness Simmias has when he is compared to Socrates does not change or transform into shortness when he is compared to Phaedo. The attribute of shortness does not come out of tallness, and, for that matter, neither does tallness come out shortness. As we are told, when Simmias is compared to Phaedo, his attribute of tallness either goes away or is destroyed upon the arrival of its opposite, shortness, which replaces it.

²¹ I believe that the assertion here is that Simmias is neither essentially taller than Socrates nor essentially shorter than Phaedo. However, I will not attempt to defend this reading of the text on this occasion.

The crucial claim Plato makes is the one in *Phaedo* 102e3–5. He reiterates the point that an attribute such as tallness does not change/transform into its opposite, shortness. Subsequently, he suggests that the concrete particular which is Socrates is a persistent subject which undergoes change in the attributes it ‘happens’ (*τυγχάνει*) to have, namely, its accidental attributes. Socrates, who, let us say, is taller than Xanthippe, exchanges his attribute of being tall with its opposite, that of being short, when he is compared to Simmias. To spell things out a bit, it seems that Plato’s thesis is this. Suppose that Socrates is standing between Xanthippe and Simmias. Socrates is an underlying and persistent subject which may admit a number of different accidental attributes or properties.²² Thus, he admits the property of tallness when he is compared to Xanthippe. Specifically, he is taller than Xanthippe. When Socrates is then compared to Simmias, however, he loses the property of tallness which is replaced by that of shortness. In the particular context he is shorter than Simmias. It is an integral element of this view that it is not tallness which changes or transforms into shortness. Attributes do not come out of or do not change into their opposites.²³ Rather, it is the underlying and persistent subject, e.g., a human being, which undergoes change by exchanging one of its accidental properties with its opposite.²⁴

The issue we need to address next is that of how *Phaedo* 102a11–103e2 may shed light on the finer details of the sight-lover’s position. As we have seen, in *Republic* V (esp. *R.* 478e7–480a13), Plato does not make the effort to thoroughly parse his adversaries’ view. Yet, he does tell us, that a concrete particular *x* in their ontology is somehow both Φ and not- Φ , and it is thus ambiguous (e.g. *R.* 479b7 and b10).²⁵ *Republic* V 479b10–c5 is intended to clarify this claim. An object *x* in the sight-lovers’ ontology is such that: it is not fixedly Φ or fixedly not- Φ ; it is not possible to assert that *x* is clearly/determinately Φ , or that *x* is clearly/determinately not- Φ ; moreover, it cannot be said to be fixedly both Φ and not- Φ , e.g., in the sense that one part of it is determinately Φ whereas another part of it is determinately not- Φ ; nor can it be said to be (fixedly) neither of these two things; *x* is both Φ and not- Φ in a manner similar to that in which, for instance, a eunuch may be said to be both a man and not a man.²⁶ Finally, in *Republic* V 479c6–d5 we are effectively told that since *x* participates in both opposites, or, to use the terminology of *Phaedo* 102b5–6, since both of these opposites are present in it, *x* rolls around between (being) Φ and (being) not- Φ . And putatively, this is the reason *x* cannot be said to be determinately Φ or determinately not- Φ .²⁷

²² In what follows I use the terms ‘attribute’, ‘quality’ and ‘property’ interchangeably.

²³ Plato reiterates the same point in *Phaedo* 103a11–c4.

²⁴ It is worth noting that there are some obvious similarities between the thesis of *Phaedo* 102a11–103a2 and Aristotle’s views on qualified or non-substantial coming to be in *Physics* I (7–9) and *De Generatione et Corruptione* I (1–5).

²⁵ I use ‘ Φ ’ and ‘not- Φ ’ to refer to a pair of opposite attributes.

²⁶ I take it that this is the overall point of the riddle in *Republic* 479b10–c5.

²⁷ The material in *Republic* 479b7–d5 does not quite specify what the sight-lover’s position is, or what the fault Plato detects in it is. It only shows that a particular object *x* in the sight-lovers’ ontology is somehow both Φ

Given the material in *Phaedo* 102a11–103e2, we may assume that Plato has a way to overcome the kind of difficulty facing the sight-lovers' thesis, as this is sketched out in *Republic* 479b7–d5. If one accepts that there is an underlying and persistent subject, e.g., a human being, which admits an accidental attribute at one time or in one context, but then, at a different time or in a different context, loses it and admits its opposite, then one would not have to concede that such an entity is ambiguous. One would not have to concede that an object x is somehow both Φ and not- Φ , or that it cannot be said to be either determinately Φ or determinately not- Φ . Specifically, Plato may assert that x is determinately Φ at one time or in one context, and x is determinately not- Φ at another time or in a different context.

Let us now place these two views on concrete particulars, the Platonic one and that of the sight-lovers, in their proper setting. In *Republic* VII (R. 514a1–521c4) Plato presents his well-known allegory of the cave. Very briefly, he tells us that the philosopher is a certain kind of person: he was once enchainied in the cave where all he could see were the shadows cast on the cave's wall; he was then released from his chains and made his way out of the cave and into the light of the Sun; thus, he acquired knowledge of the Forms; and now he is asked to return to the cave; he is required to give up philosophical activity, the contemplation of the Forms, in order to rule the city. To spell things out a bit, the philosopher is the type of person described in *Republic* V 476c6–d3. He admits the existence of the items in the cave, where these are the objects of our ordinary experience, the objects of opinion, as well as the existence of Forms, the unchanging objects of knowledge which occupy a realm distinct from that of the senses. He is asked to rule the city because he has a grasp of the whole of reality, the realm of the sensibles as well as the realm of the Forms (R. 476d2). Apparently, his knowledge of the entities in the latter domain allows him to do a number of things. For instance, in *Republic* VII 520c3–5 we are told that he can use the Forms as standards by which to properly understand and assess the true nature of their 'images' (εἰδώλα), where these are the concrete particulars of our perceptual experience. We may then assume that in *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3 Plato in effect presents what he takes to be the ontologically sound view about the nature of sensible objects. Evidently, this is the philosopher's position regarding such items. On the other hand, the sight-lover of *Republic* V, who refuses to accept the existence of Forms, is bound to have a defective or distorted grasp of the nature of these objects.²⁸ What remains to be specified is the difference between these two views on concrete particulars.

The collective textual evidence suggests that there is a sharp difference of approach between Plato and the sight-lovers when it comes to the structure of sensible objects.

and not- Φ , and thus it cannot be said to be fixedly or determinately either one of these two things. The remainder of this part of the paper attempts to further clarify the content of the sight-lovers' thesis, and in part IV it is argued that in *Republic* VII (R. 523a1–524d4) Plato gives us a far more lucid statement of the issue facing their ontology.

²⁸ Although the sight-lovers do not feature in the allegory of the cave, the fact is that in *Republic* VII (R. 520c3–d5) Plato does state that the philosopher-ruler, the person who admits the existence of both the sensible objects of our everyday experience and the Forms, has a distinct advantage over all cave-dwellers, where, it is plausible to assume, these include the sight-lovers. Unlike those who are unaware of the existence of the Forms,

To put the matter in contemporary philosophical parlance, Plato adopts some kind of substratum theory which is informed by his underlying theory of the Forms, whereas, as we have seen, the sight-lover adopts some type of bundle theory. For Plato there is a coherent way in which x may be said to be both Φ and not- Φ . In particular, x is an underlying and persistent subject which is qualified or modified by various accidental properties at different times and/or in different contexts by means of being related to the appropriate Forms. Hence, in *Phaedo* 102b4–103a2 we are told that: x is said to be (determinately) Φ in the sense that it has the property Φ in the context of being compared to y ; and, x is said to be (determinately) not- Φ in the sense that it has the property not- Φ in a different context, that of being compared to z .²⁹ But, why is it that the sight-lover, in contrast to Plato's philosopher, is assumed to have difficulties in coping with the issue of opposites within the confines of his preferred theory? A contemporary bundle theorist would be prepared to admit that a particular object, where this is nothing more than a bundle of attributes, may exchange one of these attributes for its opposite. To return to the *Phaedo* example, it would seem that on the basis of such a (modern) theory one could assert that a bundle of attributes such as Simmias encompasses tallness when he is compared to Socrates, but he loses tallness and acquires shortness when he is compared to Phaedo.³⁰ What is it about the sight-lovers' ontology which, according to Plato, renders its objects ambiguous?

Given the limited evidence in *Republic* V (474b3–480a13) it is difficult to see what the answer to this question could be. I would like to submit, however, that we have a plausible conjecture available to us which is in line with the reconstructions of *Republic* 476b4–7 and 478e7–480a13 suggested earlier on. A. Mourelatos (1973; 2008) has argued that Heraclitus' work is the first important reaction to a view commonly held by early Greek thinkers which he tags as the 'NMT = Naïve Metaphysics of Things'.³¹ This interpretive thesis assumes that many early Presocratic figures subscribed to an ontology in which there are "no abstract or dependent entities – no qualities, or attributes, or kinds, or modes of reality" (Mourelatos 2008: 300). According to the NMT, there are only items that satisfy the following postulates or requirements:

or who simply refuse to accept their existence, the philosopher-ruler is in a position to clearly grasp the nature of the objects in the cave, i.e., the concrete particulars. For an interesting discussion which directly relates to this theme, the philosopher's capacity to understand the true nature of concrete particulars by virtue of having knowledge of the Forms, see Moss 2021: 122–131.

²⁹ In light of this, I take it to be evident that Plato supposes that concrete particulars are subject to some type of tempered flux. I come back to the issue of flux, albeit briefly, in what follows.

³⁰ This is not to suggest that an object changing its properties does not give rise to problems for a modern bundle theory. On this matter, see the discussion in Loux, Crisp 2017: 90–94.

³¹ Mourelatos' article was first published in 1973. I will here refer to its 2008 revised version. Mourelatos actually argues that the philosophies of both Heraclitus and Parmenides are best understood as reactions to the NMT. For our purposes though, we need only consider the case of Heraclitus. It should also be noted that a similar interpretive thesis, for a Presocratic naïve metaphysics of things, was first suggested by W.A. Heidel (1906).

1. The *thinghood* requirement. A thing is that which presents itself “in physical (or perceptual) space” (Mourelatos 2008: 300).
2. The *equality of status and independence* requirement. Each thing is ontologically independent. It does not have any ontological dependency relations to anything else. Moreover, it is as real as every other thing in the world.
3. The *affinity and polarity* requirement. Some pairs of things cannot occupy the same region; they tend to exclude one another. On the other hand, some other things tend to go together.³²

Mourelatos (2008: 314–316) supposes that there are at least two clear examples of the NMT in the works of Presocratic figures. The first one is from Hesiod's *Theogony* and the second one is in Anaximander's fragment. Let us briefly consider the first one. In *Theogony* 748–754 Hesiod describes Day and Night as two distinct persons who share the same house. Moreover, he holds that they are never both present in the house at the same time. While Night is out of the house faring around the world, Day remains in it awaiting for the time of her own journey. When Night returns to the house, to wait for the time of her new journey, Day departs for her journey in the world. Mourelatos (2008: 314–315) supposes that Hesiod's Day and Night satisfy the requirements of the NMT. They are two separate persons who are presented in physical space. Hence, they satisfy requirement (1). They are independent of each other and have the same status. That is to say, they are two distinct persons who have equal access to the house and the earth. Hence, they satisfy requirement (2). Hesiod also acknowledges the polarity of Night and Day. They are never both present in the house at the same time. Hence, they satisfy requirement (3).

There are two more things we ought to point out. First, Mourelatos acknowledges that the NMT should also take into account that some entities are quite complex. Thus, he suggests that under this worldview an entity such a man is made up of a great number of component things or “character powers”, e.g., “color, gait, warmth, courage, fears, passions, and many others” (Mourelatos 2008: 301).³³ And second, Mourelatos (2008: 317) argues that Heraclitus' reaction to the NMT consists in rejecting the requirement of thinghood, and preserving the requirement of polarity. In DK 22 B 57 Heraclitus responds to Hesiod's treatment of Day and Night as follows:

³² For more details on (1)–(3), see Mourelatos 2008: 300–306.

³³ Mourelatos (2008: e.g., 304–305) argues, I think effectively, that there is some linguistic evidence in support of such a claim; e.g., even today we make statements such as ‘There is courage in the man’.

Most men's teacher is Hesiod. They are sure he knew most things – a man who could not recognize day and night; for they are one (McKirahan's (1994: 123) translation).

Apparently, his criticism of Hesiod is that Night and Day are not two distinct things or persons who cannot occupy the same house at the same time. Rather, they are “complementary moments, aspects, or phases of a single phenomenon” (Mourelatos 2008: 318).

Putatively, Heraclitus was the first thinker to realize that opposites such as Hesiod's Day and Night are not two distinct things, as per the requirements of the NMT. They are one in the sense that they “are internally or conceptually related by being opposed determinations within a single field” (Mourelatos 2008: 318). Thus, Mourelatos (2008: 317–324) takes it that Heraclitus made a break from the NMT and he advanced the discussion in the critical direction of recognizing the existence of abstract or dependent entities. It is not my intention, however, to scrutinize Mourelatos' reading of Heraclitus or his conviction that the Presocratic philosopher in effect sowed the seeds for a revolution in Greek metaphysics. For our present purposes we need only note that there is credible textual evidence in support of two claims. First, there was a commonly held view among early Greek thinkers that this is a world merely of things. Early Greeks adopted the NMT whereby there are no abstract or dependent entities. Every item in the world is a thing presented in physical space. Moreover, complex entities are collections/clusters of such things or character-powers. And second, Heraclitus recorded his reaction to this kind of view by arguing that opposites are not two distinct things which exclude each other. They are in fact one. Specifically, he supposes that opposites are somehow compresent, e.g., in the way that (Hesiod's) Day and Night are compresent in the entity which is a 24-hour day.

What is also worth noticing at this juncture is a claim Plato makes in the *Theaetetus*, which is again related to Heraclitus. In this dialogue Plato examines, among other things, flux, where this is a theory customarily associated with Heraclitus.³⁴ Roughly speaking, this is a thesis to the effect that everything is always in motion, or that everything is constantly undergoing change. In *Theaetetus* 179d6–8 Plato ascribes a flux thesis not to Heraclitus himself, but to a group of thinkers he labels as 'Heraclitus' companions' (Ἡρακλείτου ἔταίροι). Furthermore, in the same dialogue (see *Thet.* 180c5–6), he states that given the unwillingness of these thinkers to engage in any kind of philosophical discussion, he is prepared to consider the view in question as a 'problem' (πρόβλημα). As M. Colvin (2007: 765–766) argues, Plato's proposal is to consider (this kind of) flux not as a thesis advocated by any particular figure or school of thought, but as a position of philosophical interest he will flesh out and then scrutinize on his own.

³⁴ It is often supposed, see e.g., Kirk 1962 and Kahn 1979: 147–153, that Heraclitus' adoption of (some form or another of) the theory of flux is substantiated by the evidence in DK 22 B 12: “Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow” (McKirahan's [1994: 122] translation).

Once more, my intention here is not to address the host of important puzzles that the *Theaetetus* gives rise to as far as flux is concerned.³⁵ As we have seen, in *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato does not identify the sight-lovers' view with any specific figure or philosophical school. Thus, I would like to submit, we may suppose that he considers it to be just another 'problem' (πρόβλημα). That is to say, it is not necessarily a thesis held by any actual person or school of thought. Yet, it is a philosophical position which, for Plato, merits attention.³⁶

We may now return to our initial questions. What is the nature of the constituents of a concrete particular in the sight-lovers' ontology, and why do they give rise to entities which are ambiguous? The proposal I would like to make is that Plato supposes that the sight-lovers uphold a view which combines elements of the NMT with the Heraclitean thesis for the compresence of opposites.

As we have seen, in *Republic* 476b5–6 Plato claims that the sight-lover supposes that sensible objects, let us say, statuetes and balls, are constructed out of other items, e.g., sounds, weights, and shapes. If this much is accepted, then it is only natural to assume that Plato's adversaries maintain that attributes such as tallness, piety and justice are some of the items out of which a person is constructed. Hence, their view looks very much like that ascribed to the naïve metaphysicians by Mourelatos, whereby a complex entity, a concrete particular, is the cluster of other things or character-powers.

Isn't it possible that the items that make up a sensible object are abstract entities, as has been argued by (some of) the sight-lover's modern counterparts? There are at least two factors which seem to tell against such a construal of the sight-lover's position. If the proposed reading of *Republic* 476b4–7 is correct, then we can make a couple of related assumptions. The sight-lovers admit the existence of distinct items such as particular colors, shapes and sounds where these are accessible through our senses. Moreover, we are told explicitly that these are the foundational entities in their ontology. They are the ontological building blocks out of which other (complex) things are compounded. Thus, one may assume that they are ontologically independent of or ontologically prior to any complex entity they come to compose. These things can exist without the particular complex entity they constitute existing, whereas the converse does not hold true.³⁷ In sum, it seems that for the sight-lover things like particular colors, shapes and sounds are such that: they are foundational entities; they are distinct from each other, and they are presented to us in perceptual space; and, they are ontologically independent of the

³⁵ Some of the relevant puzzles would be: 'What is the content of Heraclitus' own theory of flux?'; 'Is this the same as the theory of flux Plato discusses in the *Theaetetus*?'; 'Does Plato ever give us a historically accurate account of Heraclitean flux?'. For two interesting discussions of these and other related issues, see Irwin 1977; Colvin 2007.

³⁶ Although it may be possible to argue that the sight-lover's position is akin to the ontological theory held by some actual Greek thinker or thinkers, I believe that such a suggestion should be approached with due caution. As is indicated above, I take it that it is exegetically prudent to assume that this is a theory that Plato considers to be, in the terminology of the *Theaetetus*, a 'problem'.

³⁷ For the notion of ontological priority in Plato, see Peramatzis 2011: esp. 203–208; Panayides 1999.

complex entities they come to constitute. Therefore, it is fair to assert that the entities in question, e.g., particular colors, shapes and sounds, lack one of the characteristics of abstract entities. They don't seem to have any ontological dependency relations to any other things.

In addition to the above, Mourelatos has made a convincing case for the claim that the prevailing ontological position in the philosophical milieu of the time was that the world is one of mere things. Moreover, he has correctly pointed out that Plato was the first philosopher to argue for a world “pervaded by abstract entities” (Mourelatos 2008: 299). In fact, in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2 he makes the first clear statement in Greek philosophy for the existence of abstract or dependent entities, e.g., properties such as tallness or beauty, which characterize or modify an underlying subject. In other words, I suggest that there are good reasons to suppose that abstract entities are a Platonic discovery. Thus, we may plausibly suppose that Plato's adversary in *Republic* 474b3–480a13, the sight-lover, who supposes that concrete particulars are clusters of items such as particular colors, shapes and sounds, is a naïve metaphysician. The sensible objects of his ontology are clusters or bundles of things or character-powers.

Given the textual evidence in *Republic* V (esp. *R.* 478e7–479d4), we may also assume that the sight-lover combines his naïve approach to metaphysics with the apparently Heraclitean thesis for the compresence of opposites. Plato repeatedly states that according to the sight-lovers' view: (a) There is not a single beautiful perceptible object which does not also appear to be ugly (*R.* 479a5–6); (b) Such an object is not any more beautiful than it is ugly (*R.* 479b5–6); (c) A sensible object rolls around between being beautiful and being ugly (*R.* 479d2–4); and (d) A sensible object partakes of both opposites, e.g., the beautiful and the ugly (*R.* 479b7). All of the above seem to suggest that the sight-lover holds that opposites, where these are understood to be things or character powers, are literally compresent in concrete particulars.

One could, of course, protest that the sight-lover's view is not that such opposites are compresent in an object. Rather, the opposites an object may have or possess succeed one another over time and/or in different contexts. That is to say, it might just be the case that the sight-lover maintains that the world is in some kind of flux or change.³⁸ To adopt this claim, however, is to make the following assumption. The sight-lover admits some elements of the NMT, namely, the thesis that a concrete particular *x* is a cluster of character-powers or things, and he also supposes that *x* may exchange one of its constituents for its opposite. It seems to me that this suggestion is exegetically untenable. If this is indeed the nature of a concrete particular in the sight-lover's ontology, then it could not be said to be ambiguous. To get back to the *Phaedo* example, Plato could not object that the sight-lover maintains a position whereby Simmias is an ambiguous entity because he is neither determinately tall nor determinately short, or because he is no more what we say

³⁸ This would be a mild or non-Cratylan form of flux which is tempered by the parameters of time and/or context.

he is, i.e., tall, than its opposite. Rather, Simmias would be determinately tall in a certain context/at a certain time, and he would be determinately short in a different context/at a different time. The specific charge, of the ambiguity of a concrete particular, is available to Plato only if the sight-lovers subscribe to the view that opposites are compresent, e.g., that Simmias somehow has both tallness and shortness in him.

To sum up, the interpretation suggested so far is the following. The sight-lovers of *Republic V* advocate a sophisticated ontology in which concrete particulars are clusters of things such as colors and shapes. Yet, they are not identified with any particular school of thought. The reason might be that they are not actually members of any such school. It is plausible to assume that they are just a vehicle for Plato to consider a thesis or a 'problem' ($\pi\tau\circ\beta\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$) which, he believes, is of some significance. This is the kind of thesis which could be adopted by a sophisticated cave-dweller, a thinker who believes only in the existence of the realm of the sensibles. Furthermore, it has been argued that the overall textual evidence indicates that the sight-lovers uphold a position which combines two theories that were current at the time. In particular, it merges elements of the NMT, namely, the thesis that concrete particulars are clusters of things or character powers, with the Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites. In *Republic V* (R. 478e7 ff) Plato complains that under this approach to the nature of concrete particulars, unlike the one he presents in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3), which is the philosopher's view on the matter, these entities turn out to be ambiguous. Such an object cannot, for instance, be said to be determinately beautiful or determinately ugly. It is both beautiful and ugly in the sense that the two opposites are compresent in it. It is clear, then, that his objection to the sight-lovers' view does not have to do with the mere fact that they assume that concrete particulars admit opposites. As we have seen, he is prepared to concede this much: that there is a (coherent) way in which the objects of our perceptual experience may be said to admit opposite attributes. I take it to be also evident that in *Republic V* 478e7–479e8 Plato supposes that the sight-lover's account of the nature of concrete particulars, which is putatively the consequence of his failure to acknowledge the existence of Forms, is plainly problematic.³⁹ He suggests that there is a certain difficulty with the sight-lover's thesis whereby concrete particulars are rendered ambiguous. Yet, in our text (R. V 474b3–480a13), he never spells out what he believes the problem is with this position. In the next part of the paper I intend to argue that his actual critique of the sight-lovers' ontology is presented in a different place, in *Republic VII* 523a1–524d4.

³⁹ As was indicated earlier on, Plato's assumption in both *Republic V* and VII is that the sight-lovers' problematic view of concrete particulars is the outcome of their failure to grasp the Forms. The issue of how, according to Plato, knowledge of the Forms ensures a correct understanding of the nature of sensible objects will not be dealt with on this occasion. As has already been noted, such a discussion would take us too far afield.

IV. Plato's Summoners and the Sight-Lovers:

In *Republic* VII (R. 521c1 ff) Plato considers the following question: 'What studies should we include in the curriculum of the (prospective) philosopher-rulers?'. He assumes that philosopher-rulers must undergo the kind of studies which can "draw the soul" (ψυχῆς ὀλκόν) from the realm "of becoming" (τοῦ γενομένου), the world of the mutable objects of perception, to the realm of "what is" (τὸ ὁν), the world of the unchanging Forms (R. 521d4–5). The first candidate topic is that of number and calculation (R. 522c6–7). Plato supposes that this is one of those subjects of study that may naturally lead to 'understanding' (νόησις) and thus can draw the soul towards the Forms. Yet, he notes, it seems that nobody uses it correctly, namely, as a subject of study that may draw one towards 'being' (οὐσίαν) (R. 523a1–3). Thus, in *Republic* 523a5–524d5 he proceeds to explain how we may distinguish the things that do in fact lead to understanding, the things he labels as 'the summoners' (τὰ παρακαλοῦντα), from those that fail to do so. His ultimate aim in doing so is to show how the study of number and calculation may be used correctly.⁴⁰ In what follows I begin with an analysis of *Republic* 523a5–524d5, and I then proceed to explain how its content is related to the sight-lovers' view.

In our text Socrates asserts that there are some sense perceptions that 'do not summon' (οὐ παρακαλοῦντα) understanding to look into them because in these cases the judgement of sense perception is itself sufficient. On the other hand, there are some other sense perceptions that do call upon understanding to consider them because in these cases sense perception itself cannot yield a sound result (R. 523a10–b4). Subsequently, in 523b9–524d4, Plato goes on to analyze these claims. Utilizing language which is reminiscent of the discussion in *Republic* V 478e7–479a8, he states that the objects that 'summon' (παρακαλοῦντα) understanding to consider them are those which sense perception cannot declare to be "one thing any more than its opposite" (μᾶλλον τοῦτο ἢ τὸ ἐναντίον) (R. 523c1–3). What is even more interesting, however, is the statement Plato has Socrates make in 523b9–c1. Socrates asserts that the objects that do not summon understanding to consider them are the ones that do not give rise to opposing perceptions 'at the same time' (ἄμα). Thus, it transpires that the objects that do summon understanding are the ones that, according to the senses, have opposite attributes at the same time.⁴¹

In 523c3–524b2 Plato further clarifies the thesis outlined above by appealing to an example which, in its turn, is reminiscent of the one appealed to in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a2). In 523c3–5 Socrates invites his interlocutors to consider the case of (a hand's) three fingers, the little finger, the ring finger, and the middle finger. As he points out, the soul of 'the many' (τῶν πολλῶν) is not in any way compelled to summon understanding to determine what a finger is. It is clear to such a soul what a finger is since

⁴⁰ Plato does this in *Republic* 524d6–526c6.

⁴¹ Plato makes the same point, but in a much clearer fashion, in *Republic* 524d1–4, where he summarizes his discussion of the summoners.

sense perception does not indicate to it that a finger is at the 'same time' (άμα) the opposite of a finger (*R.* 523c10–d6). Yet, this is not the case when this soul turns its attention to the attributes of the fingers. Socrates states that when it comes to the 'bigness' (μέγεθος) and/or the 'smallness' (σμικρότητα) of a finger the relevant sense, sight, reports that it is both big and small.⁴² In more detail, the claim in 523e1–524a9 seems to be the following. Sight declares to the soul that the ring finger is big when it is compared to the small finger. But, when it is compared to the middle finger, which is also right next to it, it is small. Hence, sense perception indicates to the soul that 'the same thing' (τὸ αὐτό), the ring finger in our example, is both big and small (524a3). In fact, *Republic* 524d2–3, where Plato summarizes his discussion of the summoners, shows that the intended claim here is that sight indicates to the soul that the ring finger is both big and small 'at the same time' (άμα). As a result, in 524b1–2 Glaucon concurs with Socrates' observation at 524a5–9 that this is a case in which the soul is 'puzzled' (ἀπορεῖν) by the 'reports' (ἐρμηνεῖαι) provided by perception, whereby the same thing is both big and small at the same time, and realizes that it needs to summon understanding to look into them.

In 524b3–d4 Plato completes the discussion of the objects of perception he tags as 'summoners'. Since the soul is puzzled by cases such as that of the three fingers, it summons understanding to help it resolve the 'difficulty'/'puzzle' (ἀπορία). With the aid of understanding, the soul tries to determine whether the things presented to it by sight, e.g., the bigness and the smallness of the ring finger, are one or two. If they are two, then the soul will be in a position to grasp them as things which are 'separate' (κεχωρισμένα) from each other. If they are one and 'inseparable' (ἀχώριστα) from each other, however, then the soul will not be able to do so (*R.* 524b3–c2). The fact of the matter is that sight declares that bigness and smallness are not separate from each other but are 'mixed up together' (συγκεχυμένα) (*R.* 524c3–4). Thus, Plato tells us, to resolve the puzzle at hand the soul is compelled to see the two opposites not as mixed up together, as sight declares to it, but as two separate things (*R.* 524c6–8). To spell things out a bit, his thesis here seems to be the following. Sight indicates to the soul that bigness and smallness are all mixed up together in the ring finger. This is a source of puzzlement for the soul: 'How can one thing be both big and small at the very same time?'. Thus, it calls upon understanding which manages to grasp or conceive bigness and smallness as two separate things. Moreover, Plato goes on to assert that it is from cases of summoners such as the fingers, namely, sensible objects which the senses indicate that they have opposite attributes at the same time, that it occurs to us to ask what, for instance, the big (itself) is and what the small (itself) is (*R.* 524c10–d4).

To sum up, in *Republic* 523a5–524d5 Plato supposes that some sensible objects are summoners in the sense that they call upon understanding to consider them. To be more specific, he takes it that when we have to compare things to each other, as in the case of

⁴² In our passage (*R.* 523e1–524a9), Plato shifts the discussion from the bigness and the smallness of a finger to other examples, e.g., the softness and the hardness of a certain object. For the sake of continuity I here focus on his initial example.

the three fingers, the relevant sense, sight, indicates to the soul of the many that one and the same thing, the ring finger, is both big and small at the very same time. This is a case where the soul summons understanding as it is faced with a difficulty. Sight declares to it that bigness and smallness are all mixed up together in the ring finger. With the aid of understanding, the soul comes to realize that bigness and smallness are not, as perception dictates, mixed up. The soul is in a position to grasp them in separation from each other. Hence, it may go on to inquire what bigness and smallness are, and thus it may eventually be drawn from the realm of the perceptibles to that of the intelligibles, i.e., the realm of the Forms.⁴³

As has already been indicated, the summoners passage in *Republic* VII seems to be closely connected to the discussions in *Republic* V 474b3–480a13 and *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3. The first thing we need to observe is that in *Republic* VII 523a5–524d5 Plato is trying to establish a particular thesis: through the study of certain subjects within a world as this is understood by ‘the many’ (οἱ πολλοί), one’s soul may yet be drawn to the realm of the Forms. What is imperative to highlight here is that Plato assumes that the ascent of the soul to the realm of the Forms is to be achieved by overcoming the limitations of the worldview espoused by the many. But, what exactly is this worldview? I take it that Plato is clear on this issue. The soul of the many may find the reports of sight in, let us say, the case of the fingers to be puzzling. It may even go as far as realizing that bigness may be grasped to be separate from its opposite, smallness. Nonetheless, the many still hold that the ring finger gives rise to opposing perceptions. They adopt the evidence (putatively) provided by sight: that the ring finger is both small and big at the same time. It is only a few people, namely, the philosopher-rulers, who will pursue questions such as ‘what is the big?’ and ‘what is the small?’ to what Plato assumes to be their natural conclusion: that the Forms do exist, and that a sensible persistent subject x is (determinately) big at one time or in one context by bearing some kind of relation to the Form of the Big, and it is (determinately) small at a different time or in another context by bearing some kind of relation to the Form of the Small.⁴⁴ In light of the above, it appears that the many of *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5) maintain a position which is very similar to that of the sight-lovers of *Republic* V. What is more, we should not ignore the similarities between these two views, the sight-lovers’ ontology and the worldview of the many, that Plato himself alludes to.

In *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5) Plato supposes that in the world as this is understood by the many a sense such as sight declares to the soul that an object x is ‘not any more’ (οὐ μᾶλλον) Φ than it is the opposite of Φ , not- Φ (R. 523c1–3). It is important to note that this is the very same way in which Plato describes the sight-lovers’ view of concrete

⁴³ I will not attempt a treatment of this issue, i.e., of how, according to Plato, the soul may make the actual move from the realm of the perceptibles to that of the Forms, on this occasion.

⁴⁴ As we have seen, this thesis is clearly spelled out in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 100c ff.).

particulars in *Republic* V (R. 479b5–6). Such an object, according to the sight-lover, is 'not any more' (οὐ μᾶλλον) what we say it is, e.g., beautiful, than its opposite, ugly.

We have also seen that in *Republic* V (R. 478e7–479d4) Plato tells us that the concrete particulars in the sight-lovers' ontology are ambiguous. For instance, a concrete particular x cannot be understood to be determinately beautiful or determinately ugly. It rolls around between being beautiful and being ugly. It is clear enough that Plato assumes that the sight-lovers of *Republic* V, like the many of *Republic* VII, maintain that x is somehow both ugly and beautiful. If we admit the suggestion made here, that the sight-lovers of *Republic* V hold a view which is very much akin if not identical to that of the many of *Republic* VII, then we can now better grasp the issue facing their view. It turns out that the sight-lover holds that any concrete particular x is, as we are told multiple times in *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5), both Φ and not- Φ 'at the same time' (ἄμφα).⁴⁵ Hence, it is because x is both Φ and not- Φ at the same time, i.e., the two opposites are compresent in it, that x is said to be ambiguous. Since the two opposites are compresent and all mixed up together in x , it is impossible to assert that x is determinately Φ or that it is determinately not- Φ ; x rolls around between being Φ and being not- Φ .

The last thing we need to notice is that in *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5) Plato in effect explains how one may come to adopt a view of reality where an object x is both Φ and not- Φ at the same time. Very much like in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2, he tells us that it is in the context of comparing things like the three fingers that one may admit such a claim. In *Phaedo* 102c11–d4, Plato tells us that Simmias, being between Phaedo and Socrates, is called both short and tall. As we have seen, in the *Phaedo* he explains how a concrete particular may coherently admit opposites. It seems, however, that the sight-lovers of *Republic* V as well as the many of *Republic* VII have no way to do so. To return to the example of 523c4–524a3, this kind of thinker takes it that the ring finger, which is between the small and the middle finger, appears to sight to be both big and small at the same time. The two opposites seem to be compresent in the ring finger.

There is, then, some textual evidence which suggests that the views held by the sight-lovers of *Republic* V and by the many of *Republic* VII are very similar. Erring on the side of caution, I will not venture the claim that they are the same thinkers. After all, at no point in *Republic* VII (523a5–524d5) does Plato explicitly identify these two groups. In fact, the sight-lovers are not mentioned at all in *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5). Nonetheless, the claim made here is that if we take into account both of these two texts, along with *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3, then we can gain a better understanding of the sight-lovers' position. These are people who maintain that the exclusive source of knowledge/learning are the senses. Thus, they assert that when we have to compare objects such as the fingers of *Republic* VII or the three men in the *Phaedo*, we putatively have no option but to admit that they are

⁴⁵ It is worth pointing out that there is also one place in *Republic* V, see R. 478d5–9, where Plato states that the objects in the domain of opinion may be shown "to be and not to be at the same time" (ἄμφα ὄν τε καὶ μὴ ὄν). Yet, I take it that the reconstruction of these lines, unlike that of *Republic* VII 523b9–c1 and 524d1–4, could be contentious.

ambiguous in the sense that they admit opposites at the very same time. In the terminology Plato uses in *Republic* VII, ϕ and not- ϕ are all mixed up together in an object x . If this much is accepted, then two issues seem to arise. First, what are the discernible differences, if there are any, between the sight-lovers' position and the worldview of the many in *Republic* VII? And second, what exactly is Plato's objection to this kind of ontology, beyond the fact that it rejects the existence of Forms?

In *Republic* V Plato indicates that he considers the sight-lovers' view on the nature of particulars to be problematic. Moreover, we have seen that in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2 he presents his own alternative to this kind of ontology. Nonetheless, in *Republic* V Plato does not spell out for us what he takes to be the great fault in the sight-lovers' understanding of the nature of sensible objects. What I would like to submit is that this is something that he does in *Republic* VII.

In *Republic* VII Plato assumes that in the worldview of the many a sense such as sight declares that a concrete particular x is ϕ and not- ϕ at the same time. Furthermore, we have seen that this causes 'puzzlement' (ἀπορία) for the soul of the many. Finally, as has already been noted, in *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5) Plato does not ever identify the many with the sight-lovers of *Republic* V. In light of the discussion in parts II and III, I believe that there is a discernible difference between the positions held by these two groups. The sight-lovers, very much like the many of *Republic* VII, hold that the evidence of the senses shows that x is ϕ and not- ϕ at the same time; the two opposites are compresent in x . Nonetheless, in *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13) there is no indication that this is the source of puzzlement for the sight-lover. What I would like to submit is that the sight-lovers of *Republic* V, unlike the many of *Republic* VII, are not puzzled because they are committed to a certain kind of underlying ontology. As we have seen, they are naïve metaphysicians. They maintain that a concrete particular x is a bundle of things or character powers such as colors, sounds and shapes. At the same time, they embrace the seemingly paradoxical Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites.⁴⁶ In other words, they maintain that a concrete particular such as Helen of Troy is a cluster of things or character powers, and that it encompasses at the same time both beauty and ugliness.

In *Republic* V Plato tells us that such a view gives rise to concrete particulars which are ambiguous. According to this position, Helen of Troy cannot be said to be determinately beautiful or determinately ugly. Yet, the actual critique of the sight-lovers' view seems to come in *Republic* VII. To be more specific, in *Republic* VII Plato asserts that to uncritically admit the evidence of the senses leads the soul to puzzlement. Evidently, the source of the puzzlement is the fact that the senses declare to the soul that opposites are all mixed up together in a certain concrete particular. For instance, Helen of Troy appears to be both beautiful and ugly at the very same time. To put the matter in Aristotelian terms, it would seem that to accept the evidence of the senses uncritically, which

⁴⁶ The Heraclitean view is indeed paradoxical, unless it is supplemented with the claim that there are abstract entities.

seems to be the main tenet of the sight-lovers' ontology, is to land oneself in puzzlement and in fact in contradiction. In *Republic VII*, however, Plato presses the epistemological issue that arises from such an ontology. If Φ and not- Φ are compresent and all mixed up together in x , then we can have no knowledge or clear understanding of what Φ -ness and its opposite are. Hence, we cannot possibly grasp what it is for something to be Φ or what it is for something to be not- Φ . It is only when the soul is forced to see the opposites as separate from each other that the first step may be taken towards recognizing the existence of Forms, e.g., entities such as Φ -ness itself. It is the ascent to the realm of the Forms that may provide one with an understanding of what Φ -ness is. And, in the *Phaedo* Plato explains how the theory of Forms may be utilized to explain how a concrete particular may unproblematically admit opposites. Briefly, we are told that there is an underlying subject x which is Φ by participating in Φ -ness itself at a particular time or in a particular context. Yet, the same subject, x , may lose this property at another time or context and acquire its opposite, not- Φ , by participating in the relevant Form.

To wrap up the discussion, the suggestion made in this part of the paper is the following. In *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato suggests that the sight-lover's view is problematic. They reject the theory of Forms and they accept only the existence of sensible objects. But, a sensible object x in their ontology is ambiguous as it cannot be said to be determinately Φ or determinately not- Φ . Apparently, they espouse such a position because they admit elements of the NMT along with the Heraclitean thesis for the compresence of opposites. The fact of the matter, however, is that in *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato never spells out what he considers to be the problem with the sight-lover's ontology. In *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3) he presents the ontologically sound or the philosopher's thesis about the structure of concrete particulars, where this presupposes the existence of Forms. As has been shown, in *Republic VII* (R. 523a5–524d4) Plato argues that the many suppose that sensible objects such as a hand's fingers have opposite attributes at the same time. For instance, the ring-finger appears to be both small and big at one and the same time. It has been argued that if we accept that the many of *Republic VII* and the sight-lovers of *Republic V* adopt similar (if not identical) ontologies, then we can specify the problem Plato detects in the sight-lovers' ontology. If one accepts, like the sight-lover does, that a concrete particular x is both Φ and not- Φ at one and the same time, then one is inevitably led to puzzlement. How can one and the same thing, x , be both Φ and not- Φ at the same time? As has been shown, however, Plato does not press the metaphysical aspect of the problem. He argues that if one accepts this view about the nature of concrete particulars, then one is puzzled. That is, one has no clear understanding of what things such as smallness and bigness are, as these seem to be all mixed up in concrete particulars. Yet, one may put the puzzlement that such a view causes to good use. One may inquire what, for instance, bigness itself is, and thus one may initiate the process that could lead one to the Forms, namely, entities such as the Form of the Big. Furthermore, the discovery of the Forms is what may guide one to the ontologically sound view about the structure of concrete particulars, which is the one presented in *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3.

Conclusion:

This paper claims to have done at least three things. First, it has been argued that the textual evidence in *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13) suggests that Plato's adversaries, the sight-lovers, uphold a particular kind of view. They are naïve metaphysicians. They maintain that concrete particulars are bundles of things or character powers such as sounds and shapes. Moreover, they combine this view with the Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites. Thus, they maintain that concrete particulars are ambiguous, i.e., they admit opposite attributes at the same time. Second, it has been shown that in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3) Plato presents what he takes to be the ontologically sound view of the nature of sensible objects. He argues that there is a coherent way in which a concrete particular may be said to admit opposites. And finally, it has been shown that in *Republic* VII (R. 523a1–524d4) Plato does a number of things. He in effect makes an effort to clarify the thesis held by thinkers such as the sight-lovers of *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13), where this is not necessarily a theory held by any actual Greek thinker or thinkers. Furthermore, he spells out the problem facing their ontology, in which objects are assumed to admit opposite attributes at the same time, and he sketches out the route which may lead one to an ontologically sound understanding of the structure of objects.⁴⁷

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The Sight-Lovers of *Republic* V and Plato's Critique of their Ontology

In *Republic* V 474b3–480a13, Plato initiates a discussion that is intended to define who the philosophers are that must rule the city. In the context of this discussion, we are told that the sight-lovers are among the pretenders to the title of the philosopher. This paper addresses the following questions about the sight-lovers: “Who are the sight-lovers of *Republic* V?”, “Do they maintain some kind of coherent ontological position?”, and, “If they do, then what is its content, and how does Plato attempt to rebut it?”. In particular, it is argued that: (1) The sight-lovers of *Republic* V maintain that the objects of our everyday experience are bundles of things such as colors and shapes; (2) Plato presents his own position about the nature of concrete particulars in the *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 102a11–103a3); (3) This discussion in the *Phaedo* may facilitate our effort to place the sight-lovers thesis in its proper setting and also parse its finer details; and (4) Plato spells out his critique of the sight-lovers’ position in *Republic* VII (*R.* 523a5–524d4) in the context of his treatment of the summoners.

KEY WORDS

Plato, Sight-Lovers, Forms, Bundle Theories, Compresence of Opposites, Heraclitus, A. Mourelatos, Summoners.