

John Palmer recently published a critical review of my book, *Plato's Forms in Transition*, in the *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (<http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=11784>). The review strikes me as uncharitable, and my aim here is to explain why this is so.

Plato's Forms in Transition offers a complete logical reconstruction of the arguments of the *Parmenides*, including the five well-known and much discussed arguments in the first part (the whole-part dilemma, the third man, the problem with forms as thoughts, the likeness regress, and the greatest difficulty) and the 180 (or so, depending on how you count them) arguments in the second part of the dialogue. The reconstruction of each argument is detailed and painstaking. Once all of the arguments are understood in detail, I claim, it is possible to read the first five as a rational criticism of the theory of forms sketched out by young Socrates in a speech early on in the dialogue, and it is also possible to read the last 180 (or so), taken together, as offering a rational way of protecting the central axioms of the theory by abandoning some of the theory's peripheral assumptions. All of this interpretive work occupies chapters 2-7. The purpose of chapter 1 is to offer a way of reading the scattered statements about forms offered by Socrates in the dialogues of Plato's middle period (principally, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*) as composing a systematic theory, with axioms, auxiliary hypotheses, and theorems. In the book's conclusion, I explain how my reading of the *Parmenides* helps us understand important and otherwise puzzling aspects of some of Plato's later dialogues, including the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, and the *Statesman*.

Palmer's review focuses almost exclusively on chapter 1, touching only slightly on matters that are central to the book. Palmer gives two reasons for not engaging in any significant way with chapters 2-7. The first is that I have already provided a summary of "Parmenides' criticisms of Socrates' theory and of the response to them [in the second part of the dialogue]" in my Stanford Encyclopedia entry on the *Parmenides* (see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-parmenides/>). This may be the first time in the history of book reviewing that a reviewer's admitted reason for not discussing the book he is supposed to be reviewing is that the author has already provided a summary of the book elsewhere. The second is that "how one understands what Plato has to say about forms in previous dialogues will obviously determine to a large degree how one is inclined to respond to Parmenides' criticisms of young Socrates' theory." Because this claim governs the entirety of Palmer's review, it is worth spending some time examining it.

The first thing to notice about the claim is Palmer's use of the term "obviously". It may be, as Palmer alleges, that interpretation of the middle dialogues will determine to a large degree one's response to Parmenides' criticisms of young Socrates' theory. But this is hardly *obvious*. Palmer himself thinks that there is evidence that Plato distinguishes between two types of predication in the middle dialogues, and that it is by helping himself to *this* distinction that Plato can answer Parmenides' criticisms (more on this below). But, again, this is hardly *obvious*, as any student of the voluminous secondary literature on the *Parmenides* can attest.

The real question, though, is whether one's response to Parmenides' criticisms should be determined by one's interpretation of the middle dialogues. Here it seems to me that one's response to Parmenides' criticisms should be determined *in the first place* by one's interpretation of those criticisms, and not by anything that Plato says in any other dialogue. Of course, if Plato had said in some middle dialogue that Parmenides' criticisms should be answered in the way that Palmer proposes, that would help Palmer's case. But Plato says no such thing. So if the proper response to Parmenides' criticisms is to be found in Plato's dialogues, we should look for it *in the first place* in the *Parmenides*, and not in the middle dialogues. It may be that *after* careful independent examination of the *Parmenides* and *after* careful independent examination of the middle dialogues we will find that the middle dialogues provide us with a way of answering Parmenides' criticisms. But this is not something that we can say *before* such a careful examination. As I argue in the book, the answer to Parmenides' criticisms (as Parmenides himself tells us at 134e9-137c3) is to be found in the second part of the dialogue, not in the *Phaedo* or in the *Republic*. Palmer's claim that there is really no need to engage with chapters 2-7 of my book (the chapters that discuss the *Parmenides*) because the middle dialogues (discussed in chapter 1) provide an answer to Parmenides' criticisms presupposes that my interpretation of the dialogue is mistaken even before it has been considered. This kind of claim is ungenerous, especially in the context of a book review.

Now to the substance of Palmer's criticisms of chapter 1. Palmer claims that, on my view, "the middle-period dialogues contain a fully-developed theory of forms." According to Palmer, this is a mistake, for "the existence of certain imperceptible forms in which sensible particulars participate is typically presented as no more than Socrates' favored hypothesis... Rather than a fully developed theory of forms, [the middle period dialogues give] us a theory under construction."

Palmer is right that Socrates presents the proposition that there are forms in which sensible particulars participate as a "hypothesis". But it does not follow from this that Socrates' statements about forms, sensible particulars, causation, and knowledge in the middle dialogues do not compose at least a well-developed theory (with axioms, auxiliary hypotheses, and theorems), that these statements are *no more than* hypotheses, that they compose *a theory under construction*. The fact that a set of statements is a set of hypotheses does not entail that the statements compose something less than a well-developed theory. In the sciences, *every* well-developed theory consists of nothing more than a set of hypotheses. Saying that Plato's statements about forms do not make up a well-developed theory because they are hypotheses is like saying that the various axioms and theorems of Newtonian mechanics do not make up a well-developed theory because they are hypotheses. This is absurd.

In defense of his claim that the middle dialogues do not contain even a well-developed theory of forms, Palmer claims that Socrates' statement that there are forms in which sensible particulars participate is "presumed without further argument" in the recollection and affinity arguments in the *Phaedo*, that "the existence of forms [is] an unargued [sic] and as yet unsecured hypothesis" at *Phaedo* 76d7-e7, and that Socrates "makes it

perfectly clear [at *Phaedo* 100a3-b9] that the forms' existence has merely the status of a hypothesis." A cursory inspection of the relevant passages shows that they do not establish what Palmer thinks they do. Consider the first. It is true, as Palmer notes, that Socrates treats the existence of forms as a premise in the recollection and affinity arguments. It is also true that Socrates does not there provide any argument for this premise. But it does not follow from this that Socrates treats the premise as a *mere* (i.e., incomplete, ungrounded, or unconfirmed) hypothesis. As I point out in a section of chapter 1 to which Palmer does not refer (see pp. 11-15), in the *Phaedo* Socrates describes his method as involving the confirmation of hypotheses that have mutually consistent consequences and the disconfirmation of hypotheses that entail inconsistencies. Hypotheses that are confirmed and not disconfirmed are provisionally acceptable. Hypotheses that are disconfirmed are to be rejected. When Socrates describes the statement that forms explain the properties of sensible particulars as a hypothesis, and when he insists that he prefers this hypothesis to the competing hypotheses of Anaxagoras, he is telling us that his own hypothesis has, while Anaxagoras's hypothesis has not, survived attempts to disconfirm it. So, although Socrates grants that he has no valid deductive argument establishing the truth of his hypothesis, it does not follow that he thinks of his hypothesis as incomplete, ungrounded, or unconfirmed. Similar remarks apply to the passages at *Phaedo* 76d7-e7 and 100a3-b9. Although it is true that the claim that forms exist is there treated as a hypothesis for which there is as yet no deductive proof, it does not follow that the claim is "unargued [sic] and unsecured". Nor does it follow that the claim has *merely* the status of a hypothesis. If, as it is reasonable to suppose, Socrates thinks that the hypothesis that forms exist is confirmed by the fact that it has not yet been possible to derive an inconsistency from it, then it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates thinks of the hypothesis as (at least provisionally) secure. The passages Palmer cites therefore give us no reason to think that my book's claim that Plato's middle period statements about forms compose a well-developed theory is mistaken.

It does not follow from the fact that middle period Plato provides us with a well-developed theory that he provides a precise characterization of every theoretical relation in his articulated set of hypotheses. As I emphasize in the book (see pp. 30-32), middle period Plato does not commit to any particular account of the relation of participation. (This is quite clear at *Phaedo* 100d4-8, where Socrates says that he "will not insist on the precise nature of the relationship.") There is no incompatibility here. Just as a well-developed and fruitful Mendelian theory of inheritance need not provide a precise account of the nature of genes, so a well-developed and fruitful Platonic theory of forms need not provide a precise account of the nature of participation. Plato himself compares his method of hypothesis to the method of geometers. In determining whether Plato's statements about forms and other matters compose a well-developed theory, the important question is whether these statements form the kind of logically articulated whole that one might find in geometry. And, as I argue in the book, the remarkable thing is that they do. Plato's statements about forms really do compose a theory.

Palmer might reply that in saying that middle period Plato's statements about forms are *mere* hypotheses he means to suggest no more than that these statements do not compose

a *fully* developed theory, i.e., a theory that provides a precise characterization of *every* theoretical entity and *every* theoretical relation. If this is Palmer's point, then I fully agree. Middle period Plato does not tell us what forms *are*, nor does he tell us what it is for a sensible particular (or form) to *participate in* a form. But my book does not suggest otherwise. Nowhere in the book do I say that Plato's statements about forms compose a *fully* developed theory in the relevant sense. The main point of chapter 1 is to argue that these statements compose a theory, i.e., a logically articulated set of explanatory hypotheses, and that is all.

Palmer claims that my failure to notice that the "theory" of forms is presented as a mere hypothesis in the middle dialogues "makes it more difficult than necessary to understand what to make of Parmenides' criticisms." Palmer argues that "these criticisms promote an adequate formulation of the hypothesis by pointing out the disastrous consequences of, most notably, conceiving of the participation relation in too crudely physical a manner and conceiving of the forms themselves as perfect instances or exemplars of the properties to which they correspond." Palmer here gestures at two of the five arguments that Parmenides unleashes in the first part of the *Parmenides*, namely the whole-part dilemma (130e4-131c11) and the likeness regress (132d1-133a7), claiming that the point of the first is to attack a crude physical account of the participation relation, and that the point of the second is to attack the suggestion that forms are perfect exemplars. Palmer's reading is standard, but it is also completely undefended. Part of the *point* of chapter 2 of my book is to provide a detailed defense of a non-standard reading of both arguments (see pp. 56-64 and 80-85), according to which the point of both is to generate an inconsistency at the heart of the theory of forms sketched by young Socrates earlier in the dialogue. It is shocking, I think, that Palmer is content to imply that my interpretation of these arguments is mistaken *without providing so much as a shred of an argument against it*. If there is something wrong with my reconstruction of these arguments, potential readers have the right to know what it is. But Palmer doesn't say. His statement that I have misread the two arguments is, as lawyers might put it, conclusory.

Having decided to take the standard interpretation of the whole-part dilemma and the likeness regress for granted, Palmer then argues that there is evidence from the middle dialogues to suggest that Plato was aware, even then, that the crude physical account of the participation relation and the conception of forms as perfect exemplars are both inherently problematic. Let us take a closer look at this evidence. Palmer points to a passage (74c1) in which Socrates refers to the form of equality as "the equals themselves." Palmer thinks that although the plural here suggests that "the form of equality is a pair of equal things," presumably a pair of equal *sensible particulars*, Socrates understands full well that the form of equality cannot be identified with such a pair. The reason Palmer gives is that, in a later passage (100c4-d2), Socrates insists that what makes things beautiful is not their having a bright color or a certain shape, but rather their participation in the beautiful itself (i.e., the form of beauty). As Palmer reads the passage, Socrates is pointing up the fact that "the form of beauty is supposed to be that property instantiation of which is both a necessary and sufficient condition of a thing's being beautiful." But if the form of beauty is a *property*, then it cannot be a *pair of beautiful sensible particulars*, and by parity of reasoning the form of equality cannot

be a pair of equal sensible particulars. Moreover, if Plato conceives of forms as *properties*, then he must conceive of “participation as property instantiation” and he cannot consistently conceive of forms as “individual and perfect instances of a property.”

But this is weak evidence indeed for the claim that middle period Plato finds problematic the claim that forms are perfect exemplars and the claim that participation is a physical relation. The main problem is that there is scant evidence that middle period Plato thinks of forms as properties or thinks of participation as property instantiation. Palmer’s point is that Plato’s denial that color or shape makes things beautiful presupposes that what makes things beautiful is a property. As Palmer sees it, Plato is trying to contrast two kinds of properties: color and shape on the one hand, and the form of beauty on the other. But this interpretation of Plato’s denial that the form of beauty can be identified with color or shape is tendentious. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates denies that addition is what makes two things two, and also denies that what makes equal things equal is an equal stick or stone. In the *Hippias Major*, he denies that a beautiful girl is what makes beautiful things beautiful. If contrasting the form of beauty with color and shape is supposed to point up the fact that beauty is a property, then, by parity of reasoning, contrasting the form of beauty with a beautiful girl is supposed to point up the fact that beauty is a human being that is not a girl, contrasting the form of two with addition is supposed to point up the fact that the form of two is a process that is not addition, and contrasting the form of equality with a stick is supposed to point up the fact that equality is some sort of inanimate sensible object that is not a stick. But this is absurd. It is plainly illegitimate to conclude from the fact that Plato contrasts the form of beauty with color and shape that the form of beauty is a property. It may be that middle period Plato thinks of forms as properties, but the hypothesis that he does is radically underdetermined by the relevant texts. If Plato flirts with any particular conception of forms and their relation to their participants, it is with the view that forms are perfect exemplars. The idea that sensible things imitate or resemble the forms in which they participate can be found in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. And, as Parmenides presents it in the *Parmenides*, the claim that sensibles imitate the forms goes hand in hand with the conception of forms as perfect exemplars. On balance, then, the textual evidence does not suggest that Plato is already aware in the *Phaedo* that there are serious problems with the conception of forms as perfect exemplars and with the conception of participation as resemblance or imitation. As I point out in chapter 1, if the textual evidence suggests anything, it is exactly the opposite.

If Plato thought in the *Phaedo* that the problem with the crude physical conception of participation and the problem with conceiving forms as perfect exemplars derived from the fact that forms are *properties*, we would expect him to say so, or at least suggest so, in the *Parmenides* in passages (such as the whole-part dilemma and the likeness regress) that deal explicitly with the crude physical conception of participation and with the conception of forms as perfect exemplars. But when Plato criticizes these conceptions, he does not so much as gesture at a conception of forms according to which they are *properties*. This hurts Palmer’s case, and confirms that Plato’s worries about these conceptions derive from some other source.

Palmer claims that there is a passage in the *Phaedo* that “suggests that there is a fundamental difference between the way the form of beauty is beautiful and the way other things are beautiful.” If he is right about this, then middle period Plato already has the means to stop the largeness regress that is part of the third man argument in the *Parmenides*. The third man argument begins with the assumption of One-over-Many that if many things are F then there is a form of F-ness in which they participate. So, given the existence of many large sensible particulars, it follows that there is a form of largeness in which they participate. In the course of the argument, Parmenides assumes that this form of largeness is itself large, and consequently that there must be a form of largeness in which it participates. Assuming that no form can participate in itself, it follows that there must be two forms of largeness, and the infamous regress of forms of largeness is born. One standard way of stopping this regress is to deny that the form of largeness is large in the same way that sensible particulars are large, and this is the response to the third man argument that Palmer favors. In this he is not alone. As I point out in my book, Constance Meinwald’s well known and deservedly influential way out of the third man regress trades on just this sort of suggestion. But Palmer goes further in claiming that Plato already possesses the solution to the third man in the *Phaedo*.

Is this interpretation of the *Phaedo* accurate? No. The relevant passage (at 100c4-6), in Palmer’s rendition, reads: “If anything else is beautiful besides the beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it participates in that beautiful.” From this passage, Palmer extracts the claim that the beautiful and sensible beautiful things are beautiful in different ways. But this is not what the passage says. All that can be extracted from the passage is that beautiful things that are not identical to the beautiful itself are beautiful because (and only because) they participate in the beautiful. In other words, the claim is that what makes things other than the form of beauty beautiful is their participation in the form of beauty. If the passage presupposes anything about the form of beauty, it is that what makes *it* beautiful is *not* participation in itself. (We may suppose that the reason for this, as Parmenides assumes in the third man argument, is that no form participates in itself.) At no point in the *Phaedo* does Socrates say or imply that the form of beauty and beautiful sensible particulars are beautiful in different ways. Palmer claims that I am inattentive “to the indications in dialogues prior to the *Parmenides* that Plato already envisaged a way to conceive of the forms that would not founder upon Parmenides’ criticisms.” But the “indications” that Palmer claims I’ve overlooked are simply not there to be found. And if they aren’t there, then the charge of “inattentiveness” just won’t stick.

Perhaps the most oft-repeated criticism of Palmer’s review is that I have “dumbed down” Plato’s views on forms and related matters. As part of my reconstruction of the middle period theory of forms, I claim that Plato accepts the *Impurity of the Sensibles* principle, according to which “for any property F that admits a contrary (con-F), all sensible F things are con-F.” My evidence for this is that numerous instances of this principle appear in the dialogues of the middle and early-middle period (see pp. 23-24). Palmer mentions only one relevant passage, *Republic* 479a-b, in which, as I claim, Socrates says that the many beautiful things (*kala pragmata*) also appear ugly. Palmer claims that my interpretation of this passage is far less sophisticated than the one provided by Terence

Irwin, and that I do not “properly engage” with Irwin’s interpretation. On this view, the many beautiful things to which Socrates refers at 479a-b are *properties* (or types), such as the “sounds, colors, shapes” mentioned at 476b4-6. And the “sophisticated” interpretation of the claim that a property (or type) is both F and con-F is that some instances of the property (or some tokens of the type) are F, while other instances of the property (or other tokens of the type) are con-F. On the “sophisticated” interpretation, no sensible particular is both F and con-F. This is certainly one way to understand the claim that the many F things also appear con-F, but there are *other* texts (texts Palmer does not mention) that suggest the interpretation I favor. In the *Greater Hippias*, for example, Socrates claims that the most beautiful monkey is also ugly (as compared to humans) (289a3-4), that the most beautiful pot is also ugly (when compared to a beautiful girl) (289a4-5), and that the most beautiful girl is also ugly (as compared to the gods) (289b6-7). In these passages, Socrates does not speak of *properties* or *types* as having contrary properties: the items he characterizes as being both beautiful and ugly are monkeys, pots, and human beings. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates claims that equal sticks and stones appear to be (in the sense of actually being) unequal (74b7-9) and that Simmias is both tall and short (102b ff.). So even if the *Republic* is concerned most especially with *properties* (or types), there are other early-middle and middle period dialogues in which Socrates insists that sensible particulars have contrary properties. These are passages that the “sophisticated” interpretation of Plato’s remarks in the *Republic* must somehow explain away. I submit that it makes much more sense to read Socrates’ claims at *Republic* 479a-b about “the many beautiful things” having contrary properties as of a piece with Socrates’ claims about monkeys, pots, girls, sticks, and Simmias in the *Greater Hippias* and in the *Phaedo*. There is no need to avoid foisting on middle period Plato the view that the same sensible *particular* possesses contrary properties, for this is a view he clearly embraces.

And what, after all, is wrong with this view? As I explain in my book, Plato thinks it sufficient for a particular’s being F that it be F *in some way* (see p. 61, n. 4 and p. 112). But it often happens (as Socrates emphasizes in the *Phaedo*) that the same sensible particular is F in one way but con-F in another: Simmias, for example, is tall by comparison with Socrates but short by comparison with Phaedo. It follows that Simmias is both tall and short. There is nothing problematic about this claim, as long as there is no presupposition to the effect that Simmias is both tall and short in the same way (i.e., by comparison with the same thing at the same time and in the same respect). So there is no need to look for a “sophisticated” reading of the claim that the many beautiful things are also ugly that avoids the conclusion that the same sensible particular can have contrary properties.

Palmer claims that it is my “flat-footed understanding of the problem of the compresence of opposites” that “drives [me] to embrace a [presumably wrongheaded] conception of forms as free from...impurity,” i.e., a conception of forms according to which the F cannot be con-F. Palmer here suggests, though he does not explicitly say, that a “sophisticated” conception of the compresence of opposites would enable us to avoid foisting onto Plato the view that forms are pure in the relevant sense. But, as I point out in the book (see p. 37), instances of the claim that forms are pure may be found in the

dialogues of the middle period. Thus, Socrates claims that the beautiful is not ugly (*Greater Hippias* 291d1-3), that the tall cannot be short (*Phaedo* 102e5-6), and in general that the opposite itself cannot become opposite to itself (*Phaedo* 103b4-5). In fact, it is precisely the fact that equality is not unequal whereas equal sticks and stones are also unequal that leads Socrates to conclude at *Phaedo* 74 that equality is not identical to any equal stick or stone. Moreover, if my reconstruction of the arguments of the *Parmenides* is accurate (an important issue that Palmer fails to consider), then it follows that one of the main messages of the *Parmenides* is that forms are as impure as sensible particulars. If Plato had never even been *attracted* to the claim that forms are pure, why would he have bothered expending such energy to *defeat* the claim in the *Parmenides*? It isn't just that reading Plato as holding the view that forms are pure makes sense of Socrates' remarks about forms in the *middle* dialogues; the same reading explains why Plato wrote the *Parmenides* at all!

In one of his very few comments about my interpretation of the *Parmenides* itself, Palmer claims that I misread the third man argument because I fail "to explore how the form of F-ness' being F *kath' hauto* is for it to be F in a specific manner, distinct from that in which sensible particulars are F." Palmer chides me for refusing to stop the regress of forms of largeness by insisting that the form of F-ness and particular F's are F in different ways. Calling this a "startling move," Palmer tut-tuts that "few will want to go along with Rickless here, particularly when there are available ways of forestalling the regress." That's as may be. It is certainly true that all standard responses to the third man argument on Plato's behalf attempt to avoid the relevant regress. But, as I argue in the book, one of the messages of the second part of the dialogue is that no form of F-ness is unique, indeed that there are infinitely many forms of F-ness. Thus, Parmenides argues in the Second Deduction (see pp. 140-142) that if the one is, then there are infinitely many forms of oneness. He then argues in the Sixth Deduction that the one is (see pp. 226-228). By modus ponens, then, it follows that there are infinitely many forms of oneness. Given that this result can be generalized, it follows that, for any property F, there are infinitely many forms of F-ness. Palmer fails to take note of the fact that the standard ways of avoiding the third man regress must somehow come to terms with these passages. If Plato thinks that the best way to respond to the third man argument is to forestall the regress, why does he embrace the conclusion that there are infinitely many forms of F-ness in the second part of the dialogue?

In the book, I explain that the main purpose of the third man argument is to emphasize that a theory of forms that contains the principle that no form can have contrary properties is driven into inconsistency. The great problem raised by the third man regress is not the existence of infinitely many forms of largeness, but, as Parmenides emphasizes in the last sentence of the relevant passage (at 132b1-2), the fact that each form (of largeness) will no longer be one. The reason that each form will no longer be one is that (i) each form will be many insofar as it participates in many forms and (ii) no form can have contrary properties (such as being one and being many). As I argue, *this* problem can be solved by abandoning claim (ii), i.e., by embracing the view that forms, like sensible particulars, *can* have contrary properties. (For relevant details, see pp. 64-75.)

Palmer claims that “one of the book’s major shortcomings is that it is so little interested in Plato’s distinction between different types of predicate that is so critical to understanding the *Parmenides*.” As evidence for this, Palmer claims that I am “largely dismissive of Constance Meinwald’s argument...that the key distinction for resolving the apparent contradictions of the dialectical exercise is that between what she terms *pros ta alla* and *pros heauto* predication.” To be dismissive of an argument is to judge it barely worth serious consideration. In this sense, although I disagree with Meinwald’s interpretation, I am hardly dismissive of it. I discuss Meinwald’s proposal at some length in chapter 3 (see pp. 102-106), pointing out exactly why the textual evidence in favor of her reading is weak and making the point (following Bryan Frances) that her own favored way of forestalling the third man regress fails. Palmer claims that “even if one does not agree with [Meinwald’s] development of this distinction, the fact remains that there is some distinction along the lines of the one signaled at *Sophist* 255c12-13, where the Eleatic Visitor indicates that some things are said *kath’ hauta* while others are always said *pros alla*.” But this is assertion, not argument. For one thing, there are other interpretations of the passage at *Sophist* 255c12-13 that do not tie it so readily to the *pros heauto/pros ta alla* distinction in the *Parmenides* (see, for example, p. 242, n. 1). Moreover, if, as Palmer appears to admit, Meinwald’s development of the distinction fails, why is he so *sure* that the distinction represents the key that is meant to unlock the mystery of the second part of the *Parmenides*? And if Meinwald is right, how exactly does Palmer propose to answer my criticisms of Meinwald’s interpretation?

Palmer concludes his review by claiming that “there remain...good reasons to resist the claim that the dialectical exercise shows the One to be involved in the type of complexity and contradiction that would involve revision of the hypothesis of forms as radical as Rickless proposes.” If this judgment is based on the view that there are better interpretations of the dialectical exercise than mine, it would be nice to know exactly what these interpretations are and, more importantly, why they are better than mine. This would require some significant discussion of my own interpretation, coupled with some significant discussion of my criticisms of alternative interpretations. We do not find such discussions in Palmer’s review, however. All we find is undefended assertions to the effect that others are right and that I am wrong. And this is a pity, because I for one would have welcomed serious criticism of my work.

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