

Patrick X. Monaghan
Property Possession as Identity
An Essay in Metaphysics

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For Jackie

After the philosophies named came the system of Plato, which followed these philosophies in many respects but also had its own peculiarities distinguishing it from the philosophy of the Italians. For, having in his youth become familiar first with Cratylus and the Heraclitean doctrine (that all sensible things are always in a state of flux and that no science of them exists), he continued to believe these even in his later years. Now Socrates was engaged in the study of ethical matters, but not at all in the study of nature as a whole. Yet in ethical matters he sought the universal and was the first to fix his thought on definitions. Plato, on the other hand, taking into account the thought of Socrates, came to the belief that, because sensible things are always in a state of flux, such inquiries were concerned with other things and not with the sensible; for there can be no common definition of sensible things when these are always changing. He called things of this other sort “Ideas” and believed that sensible things exist apart from Ideas and are named according to Ideas. For the many sensible which have the same name exist by participating in the corresponding Forms. The only change he made was to use the name “participation”; for the Pythagoreans say that things exist by imitating numbers, but Plato, changing the name, says that things exist by participating in the Forms. As to what this imitation of or participation in the Forms might be, they left this an open question.

-Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 987a30-987b15

To say that the forms are patterns and the other things participate in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors.

-Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 991a20

[T]he unpacking by literal speech, within the limits of the humanly possible, of all metaphors, anthropomorphic, spatial, or otherwise, is nowhere more urgent, just as it is nowhere more difficult, than in ontology.

-Gustav Bergmann, *New Foundations of Ontology*.