

The Third Man Argument

Aristotle's Response to Plato

1. If a number of things, a , b , c , all have property P , there must be a single universal F in virtue of which a , b , c are all P . ✓
2. F is not identical to any of a , b , c . ✓
3. F has property P . ✗
4. Therefore, a , b , c , and F are all P . ✗

Variations of Realism

Both Plato and Aristotle are realists. They both also agree that universals are needed to explain similarity and differences. But they differ on the details:

- Plato: universals (I) exist outside of space and time, (II) they are perfections - the universal F also *has* F, and (III) known through intellect alone.
- Aristotle: universals (I) exist in space and time, (II) they are not perfections, and (III) known by observation.