

PLATO'S TRIPARTITE ONTOLOGY: THE IMMANENT CHARACTER

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THE
IMMANENT CHARACTER

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ABSTRACT

The Platonic ontology and the participation scheme have been 'dissected' and reformulated by many scholars. The specific elements and dynamics of 'participation' have been continuing subjects of controversy in Platonic studies. This project is not intended to ratify Plato's doctrine of participation in order that it be 'corrected'. Rather, the thesis focuses on the examination of the details of the ontology which Plato provides in the dialogues themselves. As he was developing the Theory of Forms and the relationships between the primary ontological entities, he recognized certain inconsistencies that spurred him on to readjust the theory. It is in the spirit of discovering the true elements of the reformed participation story that this thesis was developed.

In a study of two dissenting interpretations of Plato's ontology (the bipartite and tripartite interpretations), the tripartite ontology offers solutions to some of the more significant problems arising from the bipartite interpretation. The tripartite incorporation of an immanent character, along with the textual evidence supporting this interpretation, are integral to the proper elucidation of Plato's ratified participation story. Beyond

unfolding Plato's immanent character it is important to understand the nature of this distinct (though not separate) entity, and the role it performs in the later ontology. It is with the desire to present the textual support for, and details of, the immanent character that this thesis diverges from traditional Plato scholarship.

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INTRODUCTION

There is an interpretation of the Platonic ontology that diverges from the standard bipartite interpretation. Mohan Matthen, among others¹, has developed an interpretation that advocates the incorporation of a third entity into traditional bipartite ontology. It is well accepted according to Plato's Theory of Forms (as presented in the early and middle dialogues) that there are sensible particulars as well as ontologically superior forms². However, Matthen contends that it is also fairly well-established that "...in addition to the bearers of properties and forms, Plato admitted into his ontology a third sort of thing, *immanent characters*" ([11]:281). According to this view there exist the particulars of a sensible realm, the ontologically superior forms in which the sensible particulars are said to participate and thirdly, the characters that dwell within the sensible particulars. The real Platonic position following the general tripartite interpretation appears as follows:

...the form of F is the property that would make something a paradigm F....An immanent character would then be an F if it approximated to the form of F. And an individual thing would be F if it contains an F. (Cf. *Timaeus* 50c6ff.; immanent

characters in the receptacle are the copies of the Form, not the receptacle itself.) ([11]:294)

For example, a painting becomes beautiful if it contains a character 'beauty'. At the same time, the beauty that is found in the painting is recognized as such by virtue of its approximation to and participation in³ the form Beauty. In formulating a tripartite version of Plato's ontology Matthen believes that it will provide a more philosophically coherent interpretation of Plato's treatment of relational statements⁴. It subsequently offers a 'textually appealing' interpretation of the problematic argument at *Phaedo* 74b7-c6 regarding the ambiguity of *αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα* (the-equals-themselves).

In support of the tripartite ontology I will outline the elements of the general tripartite position regarding the nature of 'participation'. I will then present the ontological status of the immanent character and its role in 'participation'. The second chapter presents the bipartite ontology and its difficulties, and clarifies the advantages of the tripartite ontology. Chapter three will focus on the necessity of incorporating the immanent character into the ontology and Plato's own recognition of this need. Textual support for the distinctness of the immanent character will be provided. Finally, the characteristics of the immanent character will be determined.

NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

1. For example, see Bluck [3], McPherran [16] and Michael Wedin [22]. These commentators argue along with Matthen that Plato is in fact discussing the immanent character 'equality' at *Phaedo* 74 and is discussing neither the form Equality nor equal stones. I have chosen Matthen's article as a base for extracting the general tripartite interpretation of the Platonic ontology. I do not assume, nor will I elucidate, his theory of relationality.

2. Ontological superiority includes such things as atemporality, immutability, complete intelligibility, uniformity, and indestructibility.

3. The nature of the relationship between forms and immanent characters will be discussed at length in the third section of this chapter. For now, the basic understanding is that the immanent character not only participates in the form (as the sensible particulars are said to) but it also resembles the form in as much as it is said to be like the form.

4. Matthen is concerned with relational statements of the variety that involve the problems of terms such as 'equal' and 'tall' [*Ph.* 74 and 102]. However, his description of a tripartite ontology extends to all varieties of properties, and not merely those of the *Phaedo*. See Gallop's commentary regarding the extensive dimensions of participation in the Theory of Forms ([6]:96).

CHAPTER I: EXTENDING PLATO'S ONTOLOGY

1. Primary Elements in the Tripartite Ontology

In Matthen's elucidation of the Platonic ontology he assents to the standard view that there are sensible particulars that inhabit the phenomenal realm. Matthen suggests that these sensible particulars are the kind of entity that are composed of different immanent characters. The sensible subjects are further understood to be entities that physically represent the forms of the higher level of reality. That is, a sensible particular is the subject of ordinary predication as a result of the simple act of participation ([11]:281).

In Matthen's discussion of relationality he approaches the constitution of a sensible particular. He claims that sensible particular subjects contain properties which stand together in relation to forms and other particulars¹. To illustrate this basic tripartite claim, Matthen uses the Aristotelian concept of predicative complexes [*Metaphysics* Z 12] to indicate that Plato's particulars share a relation with forms through the possession of properties. A predicative complex refers to

"an entity that is formed from a universal and a particular when that particular instantiates that universal" ([12]:125).

Matthen's extensive work on predicative complexes diverges from the discussion of the primary elements of the ontology. However, his views on the effect of 'attributive transformation' ([12]:126) and predicative complexes demonstrate that the particular is a recipient of properties. The complex itself actually points to a part of a sentence which refers to some individual 'substance'. This particular carries along with it some property or other. It is this conception of a particular that helps make clear the phenomenon of the creation of particulars. Briefly, as particulars fall in and out of relations with other particulars (or other evaluative features²) the particular subject changes. The individual particular remains 'what it is'; however certain predicative complexes cease to exist in relation to other evaluative measures. The continuing particular subject is thereby known as an ever-changing yet continuing entity. For example, at *Phaedo* 74 a stone which participates in equality remains a particular stone even when it loses the relative equality. In relation to other surrounding stones, the equal stone does not exhibit equality; it ceases to be an equal stone. Simply, the equal stone exists in relation to other equal

stones but does not exist in relation to another unequal stone. Matthen's position:

...entails that sensible objects such as 'sticks and stones' (i.e. sensible *substances*) are composites of predicative complexes and that at least some of these components exist only relatively to other objects. ([14]:311)

From this evaluation, particular subjects are the kinds of entities that are constituted from their properties. They are not autonomous substances. According to this analysis, the sensible particulars are capable of exhibiting various properties relatively ([14]:310). As in the above example, a stone may be equal to one stone but not to another. The exemplification of the property equality in a stone is relative to the surrounding stones. In this respect the sensible particular subject has a type of 'contradictory' nature. This nature explains why the same stone is called both equal and unequal. Not only can sensible participants exist in relation to other sensible particulars, but in virtue of having composite and contrary natures, they are known to have certain characteristics in certain relations³. This is the general tripartite view of the nature of particular subjects.

Aside from the realm of sensible particulars there is the higher realm of being which contains entities that are 'entirely real'⁴. They are often described as non-sensible entities known through the intellect alone:

Then would that be achieved [knowledge of forms] most purely by the man who approached each object with his intellect alone as far as possible, neither adducing sight in his thinking, nor dragging in any other sense to accompany his reasoning; rather, using his intellect alone by itself and unsullied, he would undertake the hunt for each of the things that are, each alone by itself and unsullied.... [Ph. 65e6-66a5]

The form, fortified against change and destruction, is an entity which is participated in by the phenomenal items. It is then physically instantiated in the tangible realm. It is the formidable property that is manifested less perfectly in the world of sensible objects [Ph. 74d-e].

The notion that forms 'have their own nature' has brought forth a problem in discovering whether forms contain their own property (as the phenomenal items contain properties), or whether the phrase merely asserts that the form is unique and is therefore an identity statement. Many commentators have argued that 'having their own nature' refers to the fact that the forms are self-predicated; that they are objects that possess the property which they are. Matthen clearly argues, contra Geach [9], that forms are not self-predicated but are properties in addition to being paradigms. Geach contends that forms are self-predicated paradigms which are replicated in the phenomenal realm as physical likenesses. In opposition, Matthen argues that the notion of predication that is predominant in the early

Theory of Forms does not work well within Geach's paradigm interpretation. For example, Geach concludes that the form *F* is the bearer of *F par excellence*. That is, the form Equality would itself be two perfectly equal things. However, according to Matthen, participation is at times described as a recipient-relationship where participants receive something from the forms in which they participate. The paradigm relationship would ask that the *F*-thing accurately resembles the *F*-paradigm. Yet the predication relation between an *F*-thing and a paradigm of *F* is *not* that the imperfect *F*-thing satisfies the prescribed *F*-paradigm; rather it participates in and receives the form *F* (*Parm.* 131a, 132c). If only the paradigm relationship existed between form and sensible, then *F*-things would become copies of a paradigm and would not receive a property from the forms which is a notion that comes along with simple predication.

Matthen's interpretation of the participation relationship allows him to accept "Geach's notion of forms as paradigms without denying that they are properties or relations" ([11]:294). For example, not only is the form Beauty a paradigm which is copied by the properties that are present in the sensible beauty-thing, but it is a property that would make its possessor a paradigm of a beautiful object. The form Beauty is a beauty in as much as it is a

property that can be manifested in the sensible world by way of the participation of a sensible in the form.

To be clear about the general tripartite interpretation of the nature of the form, Matthen states that understanding the form as a property does not involve Plato's axiom of self-predication ([11]:294). To assume that the form Beauty is the bearer of beauty par excellence is to imply that the form Beauty would be a beautiful-thing; that it would exemplify the character beauty. In the same way, we are led to the conclusion that Geach reached; the form Equality is a pair of paradigmatically equal things. In this formulation, the form Equality is equal; it possesses the property it names.

Many problems arise from this interpretation of the nature of forms, not the least of which is expressed in the third man argument at *Parmenides* 132. Matthen has argued that it is much less problematic to accept the position that the Equal itself is not self-predicated. First, the forms are generally accepted to be unified. That is, as members of the highest level of being, they are single in nature "each of them being always one and the same and subject neither to generation or destruction" [*Phil.* 15b]. It does not make sense to say that the unified form Equality is equal if 'equal' characterizes a pair of things. The single relation of equality found between two items is not itself

equal, otherwise it would become two things and hence dual in nature. Matthen describes the property-nature of equality by claiming that Equality is an equal--that is, it is an equality (the property). Further Matthen argues:

...that relations are equalities if they resemble the-equal-itself. The-equal-itself does resemble the-equal-itself, and so it is an equality....So though my interpretation does not support 'Equality is equal' as it is usually taken, it does support a form of those words [i.e. Equality is an equal]. And it is possible to speculate that at least in the case of monadic forms this form of words, 'Justice is (a) just' for example, might have been confused for self-predication proper. ([11]:294)

Beauty itself is a beauty; the property that is manifested in the physical world. As a property, the form Beauty is not predicated of itself. The form Beauty is not beautiful, nor is the form Equality equal according to Matthen's account. Thus, referring to a form as a property in the manner Matthen has suggested is to make a type-claim (Equality is an equality) and not a descriptive claim (Equality is equal). It is a property that is used as a paradigm to be copied into the phenomenal realm. It is not the kind of thing which has a property.

Patterson has further argued that the forms need not succumb to the problems of self-predication (enumerated at *Parm.* 132) having reconsidered the meaning behind the notion that forms 'have their own nature'. Accordingly:

[t]he implication of these observations [for the distinction between forms and sensibles] is that each Form really is something, and is something distinct from every other Form, so that it does in that sense have its *own* nature. But each Form does not have itself or other Forms as attributes after the manner of sensibles. ([19]:68-69)

I take this notion of paradigmatism to be similar to the version expressed by Matthen. Though the form F is said to be an F (in virtue of being itself) it is not an F-*thing* as are the sensible F-things. The tripartite account stresses that an F-thing has in it a character F which is a less perfect resemblance of the paradigm form F. To say that the form F is an F does not imply that F contains the property it is. Matthen suggests instead that the form is an F by way of being itself--a single unified property that is itself unqualifiedly. That is, the form of Equality is an equal regardless of its relation to any other form or any phenomenal item.

Matthen posited the beginnings of his tripartite interpretation of Plato's relational statements in an earlier article [13]. There he establishes that although the objects which contain F may (sometimes) only do so in virtue of another object containing G, the forms F and G are never what they are in respect of anything else. Thus:

...sensible things always stand in qualified participation relations to at least some forms; and in this they are less intelligible than the forms, which stand in unqualified participation relations to forms. ([11]:95)

Because forms are self-identical and unique, they do not require relations with other forms to bring to them or invoke from them their natures. As forms are never anything other than what is expressed by their name (nature), they are never contradictory. "By contrast [to the contradictory nature of sensibles] forms do not have this 'contradictory' nature" ([14]:311). Where Simmias overtops Socrates and is also shorter than Phaedo, Simmias appears to have two contradictory natures: shortness and tallness. However in examining the corresponding forms, Shortness and Tallness, Shortness is found to be the property shortness regardless of its relation to the form Tallness. Matthen claims that since forms do not need qualifiers attached to them, they therefore have unqualified being. For this reason the "being of forms is more pure, more real (because unqualified) than that of sensible things" ([11]:95). Thus the forms of the tripartite Platonic ontology are properties which become manifested in worldly participants through participation. At the same time, these primary entities in the ontology are paradigms for imitation in the sensible realm.

2. Completing the Tripartite Ontology

In order to come to an understanding of Plato's participation relation between forms and sensible

particulars Matthen claims that there is a need to uncover the third element of the tripartite ontology. In his examination of two problematic passages, *Phaedo* 74 and 102, Matthen avers that a distinct immanent character is implicit in the relational participation scheme. It is his contention that unfolding a clear notion of the immanent character can answer some of the difficulties that arise from accepting what he refers to as the standard interpretation⁵. The advocates of the standard interpretation maintain that the passage at *Phaedo* 74 does not explicitly introduce or incorporate an ontologically distinct immanent character 'equality'⁶. Briefly, the standard interpretation finds that the entities that are involved in the discussion of 'equality' are the forms and the sensible equal sticks and stones discussed prior to the actual argument at 74. What is a participant in a form is a sensible particular. Thus the things which have equality or are equal are sensible objects. These sensible equal things which participate in the equal-itself are set against one another. However Matthen contends that *αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα* at 74b does not refer to either the form Equality or the equal sticks and stones. Rather he claims that it refers to the immanent character equality within the equal sticks and stones which is also different from the form.

The tripartite identification of an immanent character as a 'participant' in the forms provides a coherent explanation of the primary participation of particular subjects in forms. Also, the incorporation of the third distinct immanent character purportedly supports the Platonic doctrine of recollection.

Much scholarly research has led many commentators to argue along with Matthen that Plato's ontology is three-fold. Castañeda also argues in support of a three tier ontology incorporating a third distinct entity into the first of a series of postulates⁷ designed to demonstrate a theory of relations at *Phaedo* 74⁸. In this first postulate he asserts that there are three distinct ontological items: forms, forms-in-particulars [known here as immanent characters], and sensible particulars. This postulate is an accepted axiom of all varieties of the tripartite interpretation of Plato's ontology.

Traditionally, it has not been accepted that Plato ever advocated the separate existence of an immanent character at *Phaedo* 74⁹. According to the standard view the immanent character is not a true Platonic entity which is capable of participating in forms. Nor is it obvious that Plato postulated a theory of relations that held the immanent character as the key connection between forms and sensibles. The traditional bipartite ontology, including

forms and sensible particulars, describes a line of predication which links the sensible particulars to the forms directly, with no mediating entity. For example, a beautiful flower is a beautiful thing because it participates in the form Beautiful. In virtue of its participation in a form a particular subject is named after that form. However, the traditional interpretation of Plato's ontology does not find that a distinct immanent character is responsible for bringing the name of the form to the sensible particular.

In Matthen's attempt to uncover a specific theory of relations underlying the arguments at *Phaedo* 74, he finds that Plato admitted an immanent character and regarded it as an entity which has a participation-relationship with the forms. In support of his own interpretation, Matthen argues that "...there is room in Plato's theory for a relationship between characters and forms strongly analogous to that between bearer and form" ([11]:281). Alongside the two primary ontological entities discussed in the preceding section, forms and sensibles, Matthen finds that there are ontologically distinct immanent characters. These immanent characters dwell in the sensible particulars and rely on their participation relation with the form for their nature. Though immanent characters dwell in the sensible particular, they have a distinct existence derived from their

participation in the forms and also play an important role in the form-particular participation scheme.

Other commentators have also argued that Plato intended to incorporate a separate immanent character in his regiment of ontological entities. Mark McPherran claims that there is an intermediary entity between forms and sensibles that is the connecting element of the complete participation relationship:

My point (b), that participation is really not a relation between particulars and Forms, is more crucial. Participation, on my reductionist account, consists of two elements: (1) a relation between an *immanent character* and the Form it resembles, and (2), the possession of that immanent character by a particular.... ([16]:164)

I have turned to McPherran because he clearly outlines what can be conceded as the centre of a general tripartite participation scheme. Regardless of whether or not one 'relational' property requires the presence of another in order to be exhibited (i.e. when a thing participates in Tallness another must participate in Smallness) the underlying nature of the possession of the property is the same. The general scheme of tripartite participation requires the two relations in the quotation cited above.

In cashing out a more general theory of relations in the Platonic metaphysic (one that is not restricted to the relations between sensible objects only), tripartite ontologists find that an immanent character must have a

relationship with the form that is similar to the relationship between forms and particulars. Matthen admits that his view of the relational theory in the *Phaedo* is advanced only on the condition that immanent characters are seen as participants in forms. The passage at 74, regarding Equality, is a description of the dichotomy between forms and participants (things which share the name of the form). If the immanent character is found to be a participant in the forms then there is no reason to exclude this item from the dichotomy of forms and participants¹⁰. In this way the difference is not of the variety of entities; rather it is a dichotomy of the categories of entities. It is a distinction between the category of participants (both particular subjects and characters) as opposed to forms. Following Matthen's tripartite analysis, this dichotomy does not preclude the third distinct entity as a participant in forms.

Secondly, Matthen believes that incorporating the immanent character into the ontology is completely possible because of Plato's own formulation of the 'approximation' variety of participation. In many dialogues Plato characterizes the notion of participation as imitation, resemblance, or approximation, and the participant is called a copy or image of the form¹¹. Plato does clearly regard participation sometimes as 'resemblance'. Thus, not only do

the sensible particulars participate in the forms but according to Matthen's interpretation, the immanent characters also participate in the forms as likenesses.

The participation story then has two varieties of participation. First, the sensible particular participates in forms¹². This relation is recognized as simple participation; x bears the relation of participation to the form. Secondly, the immanent character participates in the form as an approximation such that the form is a paradigm which is copied by that immanent character; y bears the relation of resemblance-participation to the form¹³.

Given these two different kinds of participation the complete relationship between the three distinct entities needs to be clarified. Aside from the two varieties of participation outlined above, there is another relationship that must be explained before we complete the participation story. There is a further distinction between the participation of a sensible in a form and the containment of an immanent character in a sensible particular. If the immanent character copies the form F (such that it becomes a property F that is 'like' the form F), and the particular participates in the form F , the particular then 'contains' the character F . If the immanent character participates in the form F , then for a sensible particular to be an F -thing it must contain an immanent character F . It is not because

the particular participates in the form F that it becomes an F-thing. Rather, the sensible particular becomes an F-thing because it contains a character which resembles F.

We can here distinguish three different relations in Matthen's description of the ontology. First is the basic relation called participation where a particular subject participates in the form. The second relationship that Matthen describes is the participation relation of resemblance wherein characters approximate forms. Completing the tripartite participation scheme, the sensible particular that partakes in the form contains an immanent character. Following this breakdown of the complete participation story any subject is an F-thing only because it receives an image F when it participates in a form. The containment feature of the participation story is what completes the apparently simple participation of a sensible in a form.

It would appear from Matthen's account that when a particular has a certain property, they together exhibit a containment relation. The sensible item does not generate the immanent character that it contains. Rather, the immanent character found in the particular gains its nature from its resemblance-participation to the form F in addition to the containment relationship with the sensible particular. Regarding the sticks of 74b, these particular

subjects have a certain equality that is a result of the containment of the character equality. This containment is compounded by the stick's participation in the form Equality. Even more simply, a painting is a beautiful-thing because when it participates in the form Beauty it contains a character beauty which also participates in the form Beauty.

Following the above formulation, since the form Equality is an equality, and since the immanent character resembles the form Equality, the immanent character too must be an equality. However, the sensible particular that participates in the form, although it is said to be equal, is not an equality. By containing the immanent character equality, the sensible particular becomes an equal-thing. It would appear, according to Matthen's interpretation, that all three varieties of relations, subjects participating in form, characters approximating forms, and subjects possessing characters are required to clarify the entire participation scheme. These three factors of the participation story are quite complex and the order of these relations will be discussed later in Chapter IV.

That the immanent character is considered a participant in forms may, at first, appear to be an 'unnecessary wrinkle' in the participation story ([11]:281). Can Plato not simply argue that the beauty in the Aphrodite

is a beauty because the Aphrodite participates in the form Beauty? It would seem that those opposed to Matthen's extended view of participation would agree that properties of sensible particulars are what they are because that in which they dwell participates in the form. However, according to Matthen, this proposal is wrong-headed. It creates a problem of confusing all properties contained in the sensible particular. For example, it is generally accepted that there are many characters in the statue Aphrodite; its whiteness and heaviness are two. It is also accepted that these characters are different from its beauty. That is, immanent beauty is one property and immanent whiteness another. Now, according to Matthen's answer to the traditional question of the nature of an immanent character, the statue has a beauty and the character is a beauty not because the statue participates in the form beauty, but because the immanent beauty participates in the form Beauty. If the property beauty were a beauty because the statue participates in the form Beauty, then all qualities in the statue would be beauties. Obviously a 'whiteness' is not a 'beauty'. Beauty is a beauty only because the immanent character beauty participates in the form Beauty, which is a beauty itself. The containment of a character in a sensible particular that participates in the form Beauty does not make the character

a beauty. Only the resemblance type of participation makes the immanent character beauty 'a beauty'.

There are many characteristics in the Aphrodite aside from beauty--its whiteness, heaviness etc.--and none of these are its beauty. Thus it would be false to say that a character is a beauty if the thing in which it is participates in beauty.
([11]:281)

In asserting that the Aphrodite is beautiful, and the beauty in the statue is a beauty, the immanent character is recognized as a distinct entity having its nature from a direct participation in the form. Because each character is different, according to the tripartite scheme, there is no recourse but to agree that the individual characters in a sensible particular are directly related to their corresponding forms and participate directly in these forms.

Thus the main features of the general tripartite ontology are clear. There are three entities, all with differing functions in Plato's grand participation scheme. It is important next to determine what has led some commentators to redefine Plato's ontology from the previous bipartite interpretation.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. In Chapter IV I will inquire into the nature of the existential relation between sensible particulars and immanent characters.

2. Matthen does not single out other sensible particulars as the only measure by which other things appear to have certain characters. Rather angles, times, distances and other such measures may factor into the relative predication of a certain character of a particular.

3. How these relations are cashed out is a matter of the varying views on the particular dynamics of the participation scheme.

4. At *Republic* 477a παντελῶς ὄν is translated by Paul Shorey as 'entirely is', where 'is' denotes true reality.

5. The standard interpretation will be more closely examined in the following chapter along with what Matthen believes to be the problems that become evident from accepting this view.

6. The reasons which support the standard interpretation will be presented in Chapter II.

7. See Castañeda ([6]:471) for the principles involved in his interpretation of this vexed text. The same issue is discussed in a later article [7].

8. Though Matthen and Castañeda agree that the immanent character is part of the regiment of entities in the Platonic metaphysic, they do not agree on the specifics of the relationships between the sensibles, characters and forms.

9. Some representatives of the traditional bipartite view which do not include the incorporation of an immanent character are: Geach [9]; Rist, "Equals and Intermediates in Plato", *Phronesis* 9 (1964):27-37; Vlastos [21] to name a few.

10. Traditional views have equated 'participant' with only sensible particulars and not immanent characters.

11. At *Cratylus* 389 Plato describes quite clearly what he means by crafting copies of an εἶδος. And again at *Parmenides* 132 Plato introduces 'image' and 'model' terminology.

12. The organization of the participation relations will not be investigated until the final chapter of the thesis and I do not intend to attach to the analysis any temporal order. For now I am simply enumerating the participation relations that are part of the tripartite interpretation of Plato's ontology.

13. There is a deeper and more complex issue underlying this division of participation. Recall that Matthen is elucidating a theory of relationality between different sensible particulars. Aside from the fact that the participation of a sensible in a form is complicated by an intermediary entity, Matthen is also claiming that there are two fundamentally different kinds of relations with the forms. One is found in x 's participation in F with respect to y ; another is described as participation without modified participation. Although this is an important move in uncovering a theory of relations, it is not a concern for the thesis. Rather, understand my focus to be on the status of an immanent character F versus the sensible F -thing and their respective relations with a form F .

CHAPTER II: TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

1. Recalling the Standard Interpretation

The passage at *Phaedo* 74b7-c6 has posed an indissoluble road-block to understanding the original formulation of the form-participant relationship¹. The ambiguity of the terms therein has eluded many commentators. There are consequently many different attempts to unfold the mystery of Plato's use of the plural *αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα*. Despite the varying views of the specific nature of *αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα*, there has been one widely accepted standard interpretation of the vexed text at 74b7-c6. In this chapter, I will elucidate the common element contained in this generally accepted version of the argument as well as some of the reasons for holding the standard bipartite view. Following this brief exegesis, I will present the arguments against the viability of the standard interpretation. I will then present what appear to be the advantages of reading into the text a third distinct ontological entity that is offered through a tripartite ontology.

I have yet to present the argument at *Phaedo* 74b7-c6. It appears as follows²:

Premise 1 Look at it this way: don't equal stones and logs, the very same ones, sometimes seem

equal to one (τῷ μὲν), but not to another (τῷ δ' οὐ)?

Premise 2(a) But now, did the equals themselves (αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα) ever seem to you unequal (ἀνισά), or
2(b) equality (ἢ ἰσότης) inequality (ἀνισότης)?

Conclusion 3 Then those equals (ταῦτα...τὰ ἴσα) and the equal itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον), are not the same.

This is one of the few passages where Plato provides an explicit argument for the separate existence of non-sensible entities. Within the scope of the larger argument for epistemic recall, the traditional view maintains that the perception of a particular object leads one to remember a truly intelligible entity. When one has firmly grasped the form, one reaches the heights of epistemic ability being able to distinguish between what is mere appearance (the visible) and what is true reality (the invisible).

According to the standard interpretation, there are three references to the form Equality in this passage. The first appears at 74b10 as the infamous *αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα*; the second, *ἢ ἰσότης*, at 74c1; and the third at 74c3, *αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον*. The standard view treats all three of these references to equality as form-indicators³. This general equivalence of terms is the one common factor among the variations of the standard interpretation.

The first premise asks whether or not it is true that the sensible equals do not sometimes appear unequal [to some]⁴ [74b8-9]; i.e., do they not appear [to some] to

exhibit the property inequality? Taken in one sense, while appearing equal to one person and unequal to another, it may be argued that a stone is able to exhibit opposing properties simultaneously. The premise could also establish that a stone may hold at one time one property (equality) and its opposite (inequality) at another time. Regardless of the speculations of the use of the dative τῷ μὲν...τῷ δ' οὖ, the same equal stone is still capable of appearing unequal.

The second premise is divided into 2a and 2b. The particle ἢ implies this division in the premise. The Greek particle ἢ, on the standard reading, performs an explicative role as opposed to a logically divisive role⁵. The particle ἢ in the explicative sense indicates that an alternative explanation of the first clause is given in the second clause. For example, I may say that I will be arriving in Toronto next Friday. If my intentions are not made clear enough to the person with whom I am communicating, I could clarify my arrival date by restating that it will be Friday the thirteenth. Such a statement would be formulated thus: 'I will be arriving in Toronto next Friday, Friday the thirteenth (to be exact).' In this instance, I am not contrasting the Friday of the first half of the premise with the Friday of the second. Rather, I am

complementing the former by being more precise about the specific date.

If the first part of premise 2 is issued for the first time, the interlocutors may have been confused by the use of the plural ἴσα. 2b then serves to draw their attention to the intended subject of the premise; the-equal-itself, and not something new or different is being examined⁶. Considering the explicative force of ἦ, the argumentative version of premise 2 would appear as follows: 'the-equals-themselves never seem [to some] unequal, and (to be more precise) equality has never appeared to be inequality'. The second half refocuses the attention of the interlocutors on the immediate subject, the-equal-itself. Following premises 1 and 2, the conclusion ties ταῦτα...ταῖς ἴσας to the sensible equals and presents the distinctness of the-equal-itself.

The bipartite interpretation of the Platonic ontology assesses the bifurcation theory of reality conservatively. The two levels of reality (characterized by their differences in intelligibility, visibility, and composition) encompass two kinds of entities. The lower realm consists of sensible particulars identifiable through sense-perception, whereas the items such as Beauty, Goodness and Justice are known through the intellect alone and inhabit the higher realm of being⁷. The two types of being

are clear: the visible (ὄρατόν) and the intelligible (νοητόν) [Rep. 509d6]. In contrast to the tripartite ontology⁸, the traditional bipartite view of the ontology does not affirm the addition of a third distinct entity. The traditional view considers seriously Plato's bifurcation of reality into two distinct entities: sensible objects and non-sensible forms.

There are three specific arguments that support the traditional bipartite view. First, the standard interpretation bases its conservative analysis of the argument at 74 on much of the early indication of a simple bifurcated reality. Early in the *Phaedo*, Socrates impresses upon his interlocutors the initial notion of two different realms of being through the discussion of the separation of the soul and body upon death. Plato begins to unfold the bifurcated reality by indicating the division between the Just, Beautiful and Good [Ph. 65d], and those things that we recognize with our senses. The new class of items (Beauty, Justice, etc.) are neither seen with the eyes nor grasped with any other bodily sense-perception. At *Phaedo* 70, Socrates endeavours to help Simmias recall the arguments that support the doctrine of recollection. With respect to the pertinent passage at 74, the bipartite ontologists continue to claim that Plato is issuing a dichotomy of forms and sensible objects, belonging to their respective regions.

The prelude [*Ph.* 64-72] to the argument at 74 is centred on the distinction between visible objects and those things that are non-sensible (i.e. souls and forms). These are the presumed objects for discussion later at 74.

Second, those traditionalists that assert a strict dichotomy of forms and sensible objects also ground their claims on the content of the preamble [73d-74b6] along with the subjects of the first premise of the argument at 74b7-c6. Socrates has two different things in mind: "something equal--I don't mean a log to a log,...but some further thing beyond all those, the equal itself..." [*Ph.* 74a]. There is an assertion of two different objects: the sensible equal stones (and logs), and the-equal-itself. In addition to the prelude prior to 73, these assertions are also a strong indication of the intended subjects of the forthcoming argument.

According to the standard interpretation, the mainstay of the argument at 74 is presented at 74a1. Socrates asserts that the sensible thing can be dissimilar, as well as similar to that of which we are reminded⁹. Yet he clarifies that one thing will always (in some way) be deficient in its similarity to the thing which is recalled. Socrates says "...musn't one think whether or not the thing is lacking at all, in its similarity, in relation to what one is reminded of?" [*Ph.* 74a6-8]. Because one thing lacks

something that another has, the two items compared must be distinct. That is, one has a property that the other does not. The two different items may be distinguished through the identification of such a property. The preamble at 73d-74b defines the basis for the argument at 74b-c; it defines the factor (the reason for the lack of similarity) which would contribute to the distinctness of items. The interlocutors would expect to be led not only to the two distinct entities, but also to that factor which defines their difference. The preamble provides the subjects for distinction, and premise 1 presents the key property that defines their distinction: reception of opposed properties.

Finally, the standard interpretation also finds support from the discussion following the argument at 74. At *Phaedo* 79a, Socrates draws an obvious two-fold distinction of beings:

Now these things you could actually touch and see and sense with the other senses, couldn't you, whereas those that are constant you could lay hold of only by reasoning of the intellect; aren't such things, rather, invisible and not seen?...Then would you [Cebes] like us to posit two kinds of beings (δύο εἶδη τῶν ὄντων), the one kind seen (τὸ μὲν ὄρατόν), the other invisible (τὸ δὲ ἀειδέες)? [*Ph.* 79a1-7]

The continued confusion about the distinction between forms and sensibles discovered much later in the dialogue points to a strict dichotomy of forms and sensibles earlier at 74¹⁰. Apolloni contributes an interesting point in support

of the standard interpretation ([2]:128-9). If Plato is demonstrating the more difficult trichotomy of sensibles, forms and immanent forms, then why are the listeners still confused about the previous, more easily understood dichotomy? If Plato were discussing immanent characters and not sticks and stones, there should be no confusion regarding the distinction between the two primary entities. The problems at 103, therefore, should not have arisen. As it stands, Plato's early ontology, and in particular the argument at 74b-c, offers support for the primary distinction between forms and sensibles and nothing more¹¹.

2. Proposed Difficulties for the Standard View

A primary problem with the standard interpretation follows from the assumed paradigmatic nature of the-equal-itself¹². The-equal-itself consists of two perfectly equal parts. If there is one $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\iota}\sigma\omicron\nu$ there must be a second $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\iota}\sigma\omicron\nu$ to which it is equal. Together they form the plural $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \acute{\iota}\sigma\alpha$. Such a view evidently involves the notion of self-predication where the form possesses the property which it names¹³.

Self-predication of the-equal-itself may be viewed in two ways, both of which appear to undermine the standard interpretation.

First, if the-equal-itself is equal, it is equal to everything. But, if the-equal-itself is internally equal (its parts being equal to one another) it is not necessarily the case that the-equal-itself exemplifies only equality. Take something that has been divided into two equal parts. The whole may be said to be the sum of its parts, yet no part can be said to be equal to the whole of which it is a part. One *αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον* cannot be equal to the whole by virtue of being a part of the whole. However, if it is the nature of *αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον* to be equal, then if it is equal to anything it would be equal to the-equal-itself. The-equal-itself (as the combination of parts) could then be considered unequal to each of the parts taken individually. The-equal-itself would then exemplify inequality in relation to its different but equal parts. Thus, it is not always the case that the-equal-itself exemplifies only equality. Again, if the-equal-itself is equal to everything, then it is equal to all sensible things. If all sensible things are equal they must possess the property of equality through participation. Thus every sensible equal thing, being equal to the same equal-itself, would become equal to all other sensible equal things. However, the implication of universal equality among all sensible things would contradict the first premise indicating that all sensible equals sometimes appear unequal¹⁴. Not only does this

interpretation contradict premise one, it brings forth an absurdity; all things are equal to each other. We are therefore able to reject this first alternative.

The second option would suggest that the-equal-itself is equal, but not to anything. Here, the-equal-itself is equal regardless of any and all other relations; it is equal unqualifiedly. If this is the reason for using the plural form of ἴσα then the contrast between the-equal-itself and the sensible equals requires that sensible equals are qualifiedly equal while the-equal-itself is unqualifiedly equal. However, the point of the passage is that sensibles sometimes are unequal and that the-equal-itself differs from sensibles in that it never is unequal.

The crucial point of this interpretation, that the-equal-itself is unqualifiedly equal, is not made in 2. The second premise only mentions the non-inequality of the-equal-itself. If Plato intended to show that the-equal-itself is unqualifiedly equal, then this point should have been made in 2 to preserve this interpretation. Thus this second alternative of the conception of self-predication falters as an appropriate interpretation of the use of ἀντὶ τὰ ἴσα.

A second, more significant problem with the standard interpretation follows from the insistence that the second clause of premise 2 echoes the claim of 2a. In considering

the case of whether there is 'something equal' aside from equal things, the distinctness of the-equal-itself is clarified by indicating in what way it is dissimilar to the sensible equals [*Ph.* 73a]. In the larger question of where we get knowledge of the-equal-itself Socrates must demonstrate that the-equal-itself is different from the things just mentioned [*Ph.* 74b5]. To make a non-identity statement (x is not identical with y) one must indicate a property that y lacks and x has ([11]:283). Presumably the standard interpretation will look to premises 1 and 2 for the property in question.

Premise 1 (in strict argumentative form as opposed to inquisitive textual form) asserts that sensible equal sticks and stones sometimes seem equal and sometimes seem unequal. Sensible objects have the ability to appear [to some] to possess opposing properties. Thus premise 2 should indicate that the-equal-itself never appears unequal; i.e. it never possesses opposing properties. If 2b is supposed to be a restatement of 2a then we should find the same essential information.

2a coheres with premise 1. It proposes that, in opposition to the sensible equals of premise 1, the-equals-themselves never appear to exhibit inequality. That is, the-equal-itself never possesses opposing properties. If we substitute the elements of 2a into 2b, then 2b should claim

that equality never appears to be unequal; it does not have the property of inequality. 2b does not state this. Instead the clause indicates that equality is never inequality.

In the first half of the second premise **ἀνισος** is used to describe how **ἀνὰ τὰ ἴσα** never appear unequal. By never possessing the property of inequality, the-equals-themselves cannot appear unequal. The second clause uses **ἀνισότης** to describe what **τὸ ἴσον** is not--it is not identical to inequality. These two uses of the different forms of **ἀνισος** provide different information; the first is adjectival indicating the lack of a property, while the second provides us with some ontological information; equality is not inequality¹⁵. If the standard interpretation is correct and 2b is supposed to echo the claim of 2a, then the second clause should show that equality (the form) never appears **ἀνιση**.

With the above examination of premise 2, 2b does not reiterate the information of 2a; equality in 2b is contrasted with **ἀνισότης** (the form?) instead of never appearing **ἀνισά**. To say that something is not identical with inequality is not to deny that it is unequal. For example, the form Beauty is not identical with inequality and yet it is unequal to many things. If the-equal-itself is contrasted with inequality it does not necessarily follow

that equality is also not unequal. 2b should state that equality is not unequal (does not have the property of inequality). Therefore, 2b does not appear to be a restatement of 2a and thus the standard interpretation cannot adequately justify the repetition of the references to the form Equality in premise 2.

These are two specific difficulties that follow from the standard interpretation. They provide us with enough reason to look more closely at Plato's early ontology in order to find a more plausible rendering of the participation relationship and the argument at *Phaedo* 74. The general version of a tripartite ontology may be viewed as a possible solution to these difficulties.

3. Advantages of the Tripartite Ontology

There are three significant advantages of the tripartite ontology outlined in Chapter I¹⁶.

First, the tripartite ontology accommodates the participation relationship and the paradigmatic nature of the forms while circumventing the problems of self-predication. By introducing an item that is neither a form nor a worldly particular into the participation scheme, tripartite ontologists aver that Plato's theory does not succumb to Parmenides' objections at *Parmenides* 131-134.

The tripartite ontology avoids the participation problems of the day and sail analogies by redefining the subjects of participation. At *Parmenides* 131a-e Parmenides asks Socrates whether the event of participation provides the whole form to the thing that partakes in it or whether the thing receives a part of the form. If each thing which partakes in a unique form receives the form as a whole then it "...will be at the same time, as a whole, in a number of things which are separate, and consequently will be separate from itself" [*Parm.* 131a]. The unique form would then be set apart from itself which contradicts the nature of the form. But Socrates suggests that if the form were like 'a day' then it would not be difficult to imagine the same unique thing covering all, and being "in many places at the same time but not separate from itself" [*Parm.* 131b]. However, Parmenides objects that if the form were to cover all things like 'a sail' then each thing would receive as its share a part of the form. Thus, the form would have to be divided in order to accommodate all things partaking in it. Yet the forms are uniform and indivisible. They would not therefore be capable of such divisibility. With the tripartite incorporation of the immanent character as the 'element' which is received by each thing partaking in a form ([11]:289), both of these difficulties are overcome. From the analysis in Chapter I, the containment relation

indicates that the immanent character (and not the form) is possessed by the sensible bearer. In the scheme of participation there is no actual part of the form given to a sensible object. Rather, a form-image is received by the sensible object when the sensible participates in the form. The form-image is non-identical to the form. It is, however, a likeness of the form because of its approximation relation with the form¹⁷. The character brings to the sensible object a property that is the copied form. The tripartite ontology denies that the form-itself is brought into the sensible realm.

With the incorporation of the immanent character and its role in participation, the form does not suffer from Parmenides' above objections. The form is not divisible nor subject to contradictory states of multiplicity and uniqueness. In addition, since the forms are not present in both realms of being they do not take on opposing positions of transcendence (World of Being) and immanence (World of Becoming). The forms remain strictly in the realm of Being and act as paradigms for immanent characters. The forms continue to be transcendent entities while a copy of them is manifested in the visible realm.

The transcendent nature of the form which is preserved in the tripartite view does not involve the axiom of self-predication. Recall that the bipartite

interpretation of the nature of the form finds that the form is a bearer of the property that it names. However, as a paradigm, Matthen declares that the form is a perfect property that is not instantiated with a character but is a character. What is instantiated in the sensible things is a copy of the paradigm form. If the immanent character is a copy of a form and is also a property (possessed by particular subjects) the model which is copied must also be a property. Matthen uses equality to explain this point of view ([11]:294). A sensible equal stone possesses an equality. This equality is not equal; the stone is equal. But it is an equal, i.e. an equality. Being 'equal' and 'an equal' are two different claims. The first is adjectival and does not tell us anything essential about the object. The second makes an ontological claim offering more than mere description. The latter is required to evade the problems of self-predication. It indicates that the form, as a property, is 'an equality', as opposed to possessing equality and thereby becoming 'equal'. Since eternal forms are properties and are not 'entities that have properties', they are not susceptible to the regress problem that is presented at *Parmenides* 132a. The tripartite version of Plato's ontology also avoids the difficulties that face the standard interpretation. The forms remain transcendent properties that function as paradigms for sensible instances

which are possessed by worldly objects. Traditional confusion regarding the participation relation is alleviated by the tripartite acceptance of a third distinct immanent character.

Second, the tripartite ontology resolves the problem of the apparent redundancy of the argument at *Phaedo* 74. On the standard interpretation, the argument at 74 is valid but redundant. It does not add anything helpful or interesting to the immediate discussion. The argument is an otiose demonstration of the same point made at 74a9-b4. On the tripartite interpretation, however, the argument does not put forth the already belaboured non-identity of forms and sensibles. Rather, it brings the interlocutors closer to the forecasted difference between forms and immanent-forms¹⁸.

The non-identity of forms and immanent-forms brought forth in the tripartite version has a third advantage relevant to the larger argument for the doctrine of recollection. The argument at 74 gives a more reasonable explanation for the role of sensation in recollection and for the notion that original knowledge is not procured through sense perception. Unlike the standard interpretation, the tripartite version concludes that the recollection procedure does not involve the sensible perception of a form. Upon examining a sensible object one

senses the property (sensible immanent character) and not the form itself. The argument at 74 presents the sensible form-image which is distinct from yet reminiscent of the paradigm form. Recall that the standard view finds that our knowledge of the forms comes from our sense experience of the worldly objects. Accordingly, what actually prompts learning is the perception of the form in the sensible. But we know from the many prescriptions provided throughout the dialogues that forms are non-sensible. Since the form cannot be sensed at all there must be something that is like the form which is sensed in the object. The argument at 74 presents the immanent character as the item which prompts remembrance of the forms. The tripartite interpretation therefore provides a more compelling rendering of the larger scheme for the doctrine of recollection.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

1. This early formulation of the participation relationship is contrasted to the later reflection doctrine that is elicited from the arguments in the *Timaeus*. If **αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα** is found to refer to the immanent character, the participation relationship takes on an added element that is not accepted by the standard interpretation.

2. This particular translation is taken from David Gallop ([8]:21) as are all quotations from *Phaedo*.

3. The question of why Socrates bothers to use the plural **αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα** is answered in different ways. For example see Geach ([9]:76), Owen ([18]:103-111) and Vlastos ([21]:287-291).

4. For a thorough discussion of the different ways of interpreting **φαίνεται** and **ἐνίοτε** see Gallop ([8]:122). Regardless of the manner in which the first premise is understood it still remains that for some reason, sensible equals apparently are able to seem unequal, at some time. The notion that they are able to appear unequal at all is all that need be established in order to distinguish the non-sensible equal from the sensible equals. The non-sensible equal can never, according to the standard interpretation, appear unequal (to anything, in any respect) since it is true equality. My references to premise one will render the dative in a general manner.

5. I have consulted Herbert Weir Smyth's Greek Grammar, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984 reprint of the 1920 edition, p. 649 (2860) in order to attempt to define how the standard interpretation defines the use of 'or' in this particular passage.

6. In support of the fact that Plato has used **ἢ** in this sense prior to the *Phaedo*, see *Apology* 26a. Meletus has accused Socrates and brought him to court and Socrates is very well aware of the charges laid against him. Nevertheless, Socrates asks "...how do you say that I corrupt the youth? Or is it evident...that it is by teaching them not to believe in the gods that the state believes in..." [26a]. How Socrates corrupts the young is not really a question since Socrates himself clarifies in what the corruption charge consists. The 'or' of this passage acts as a marker for precision; it says precisely what the first half of the question did not convey to us.

7. Plato offers a clear description of the divided nature of reality at *Republic* 509d ff.

8. See Chapter I, pp 16-17 for the liberal tripartite treatment of the term 'participant' which includes the immanent character.

9. For example, a picture of Simmias will remind Cebes of his friend. But as well, something belonging to Simmias (that does not look like Simmias) could equally remind Cebes of Simmias.

10. See *Phaedo* 103a-b where the coming to be of sensibles is still confused with the being of forms in relation to their opposites.

11. Since even later in the dialogue Plato admits that his subject under scrutiny has continually been the form [76d and 100b], it would be incredibly difficult to conceive that he is discussing anything more complex than the forms themselves. Socrates admits that he has been 'harping' on the forms, and it would not be reasonable to assume that he would expect his interlocutors to come to an understanding of the notion of an immanent character let alone the more worthy (according to Socrates) topic of forms.

12. The problem here referred to is a result of the kind of interpretation held by Geach ([9]:269-270). For a more thorough examination of the problems that follow from the standard interpretation see Matthen ([11]:282ff).

13. By this token, the form Equality possesses its own property, and is composed of at least two parts, each perfectly equal to the other. The standard interpretation also maintains that the dual nature of the form Equality does not sacrifice its unity since the-equal-itself is consistently equal to itself and exemplifies nothing but equality.

14. If sensibles are always unqualifiedly equal (aside from human epistemic error), they would never appear unequal in relation to any thing, or in any respect.

15. If the equality of premise 2b ('equality never seems to be inequality') is taken to refer to the form, then it is being ontologically contrasted with inequality (the form). But whether or not Plato ever posited forms of the negative variety is a subject of continuing dispute. The

important point is that equality is only ever equality and nothing else, especially inequality. The use of inequality in 2b does not assume that there is a form of inequality. Rather, under all circumstances equality is in no way identical with inequality.

16. In recounting these advantages I have not yet investigated whether or not there is any textually supported immanent character involved in Plato's ontology. My purpose is rather to bring out the advantages of incorporating an immanent character into Plato's ontology.

17. See Matthen ([11]:282). He says that the relationship between forms and their images is strongly analogous to the relationship displayed between forms and sensible objects.

18. The tripartite ontology claims that *ἀνά τὰ ἴσα* is a prediction for the upcoming discussion of the immanent forms at 102ff.

CHAPTER III: PLATONIC FORM-IMAGES

1. The Need for Evidence

In the elucidation of the tripartite ontology and the assessment of its advantages textual evidence has not been presented. Until now, the logical distinctness of the immanent character has been assumed. An investigation of the texts is therefore necessary in order to determine the veracity of the tripartite view. For it is not yet clear whether the immanent character is a textually supported entity, or merely a tool devised to solve the problems of the traditional bipartite interpretation.

In his attempt to elucidate the nature of reality Plato has offered much information detailing the transcendent entities. Throughout the development of the Theory of Forms Plato provides a myriad of facts about the nature and role of the forms¹. In addition to Plato's 'favourite topic' Plato presents the phenomenal objects which comprise the sensible world². Some commentators have held that Plato does not offer enough details to make any significant claims about sensible objects. In comparison to Aristotle's reputation for providing detailed analyses of particulars³, Plato's analysis is sparse. Until later in

the *Timaeus* [53cff.], with the introduction of the Receptacle and the geometrical composition of sensible particulars, there is not a thorough analysis of the particulars. However, Plato has offered as much detail about the sensible objects as his theory permits. We learn in the *Republic* that it is impossible to have knowledge about fluctuating, partially intelligible entities. Not being able to provide specific details about sensible objects coincides with what Plato has to say about the entities of which we can have knowledge⁴.

Though the discussion of sensibles is limited and often set aside in order to pursue the more intellectually challenging forms, there are enough clues provided to distinguish the sensible objects as different kinds of entities from the forms. Because Plato offered some details about the unintelligible phenomenal objects (even if minimally) we would expect to find some description of any other type of entities present in his ontology. If immanent characters are true Platonic items, there too must be some textual evidence to support this tripartite claim. The tripartite ontology presents a very appealing interpretation of the participation relation by sorting out some of the larger problems involved in the bipartite view. If there were no clue pointing to an immanent character, then while such a three-tiered ontology may be appealing to some later

Platonists, it would not be an accurate account of the texts themselves. In order to find such a clear resolution of the difficulties of the bipartite interpretation there must be some evidence of an immanent character.

Plato's shift from immanent properties to transcendent forms led him to reconsider his ontology. In this chapter I will turn to Plato's dialogues first in order to establish the early conception of the properties in sensible objects. Second, I will briefly show how the early dialogues which insist on the immanence of forms in sensibles conflict with the later conception of transcendent forms. Though it is possible that Plato was not immediately aware of the inconsistency, the necessity of a new entity becomes increasingly apparent. Finally, when Plato becomes aware of the impending inconsistency he begins to reconsider the elements and dynamics of his ontology through the adoption of an immanent character.

2. The Early εἶδος and Immanence

Plato's early dialogues⁵ do not present a Theory of Forms as it is formulated in the later dialogues (e.g. *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Timaeus*). However, although there is no explicit doctrine, Plato may have been formulating some of the initial 'germs' of the theory. In fact, it has been widely accepted that the forms are latent in the early

dialogues as the properties of objects, people or actions. The introduction of these properties in Plato's early dialogues is derived from the use of a certain method of inquiry and a specialized use of the term εἶδος.

The word εἶδος appears to be a derivative of εἶδω; the present active form of the verb 'to see'⁶. Tied to the realm of the visible, εἶδος has most often referred to the 'look' of sensible things. Traditionally it has been used to refer to the shape, figure or general physical appearance of an object⁷. Plato has casually used εἶδος in this manner to refer to many sensible objects in his dialogues⁸. Yet there is a second, more refined meaning of εἶδος found specifically in Plato's corpus that provides the starting point for the Theory of Forms.

This specifically Platonic use of εἶδος resulted from the influence of the Socratic method of inquiry on Plato's thought. Often, Socrates abruptly poses a question in the form 'what is x?'. The investigation into such things as beauty, piety, temperance and courage (though the objects of inquiry are not limited to aesthetic and ethical universals⁹) is derived from Socrates' genuine concern for the well-being of his fellow citizens. But Socrates also recognizes that it is impossible to gain access to any one of these important features without knowledge of the nature of these qualities. Thus an investigation uncovering what

each property is would help in the acquisition of such a characteristic ([20]:11-12).

In addition to Socrates' practical concern for understanding what justice etc., is, the inquiry was also born of intellectual curiosity. This intellectual curiosity is also aroused by the fact that many different things are alike in being instances of the same thing. For example, Socrates' question 'what is piety?' demands a single εἶδος by virtue of which pious things are called pious. The answer to 'what is piety?' and other similarly formulated questions will not be a list of actions or qualities that would make something pious. Since Socrates rejects a list of pious actions as an answer to the question, it is obvious that a multiplicity of pious things did not provide the information detailing what piety is¹⁰. Also, when Socrates puts the question to Euthyphro he makes it clear that an adequate response to 'what is piety?' will be singular. The appropriate answer will provide one common character (εἶδος)¹¹ which is found in each of the many sensibles. At *Laches* 190e-191e, Socrates asks 'what is courage?'. Laches offers, as an answer, a specific example of what is called courage but does not specify what courage is. Socrates continues to provide other examples of soldiers that are called courageous [191a-191d] and who each have a share in the 'common quality' courage. In the same manner, those

actions that are called 'quick' share in the same single εἶδος quickness [192a]. In these discussions, where the specific characteristic by which many similarly named things is sought, a single εἶδος is requested. The single characteristic found in the manifold of same-named objects is understood to be the 'form' of Plato's later theory.

The common, single εἶδος shared by the many things is found in each sensible object. The courage of the many different soldiers belongs to the soldiers such that they may properly be called courageous. In the same manner, those things that are called quick have quickness in them [*Lach.* 192a]. The sensible object is called 'F' after the 'F' which it has¹². As the theory develops, the possession of an εἶδος is delivered to the sensible object through a participation relation. Socrates proclaims "...that if anything is beautiful...it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes of absolute beauty..." [*Ph.* 100c5-7]¹³. Those common characteristics that are brought to the many different particulars are the result of some kind of 'communion' of the εἶδος beauty with the sensible particular beauties [100d6].

In the dialogues that provide the germ for the Theory of Forms, the immanence of forms is well-established. However, as the Theory of Forms progressed, and the immanence of the properties remained part of the later

dialogues¹⁴, an inconsistency evolved that serves as the reason for requiring a third distinct entity: the immanent character.

3. Bifurcation and the Necessity of the Immanent Character

A more intensive Theory of Forms makes its way into the middle dialogues beginning at the *Phaedo*. The εἶδος of the early dialogues becomes the focal point of Plato's inquiry. The Socratically oriented questions like 'what is beauty?' have behind them apparent ontological assumptions of which Plato had become aware. Consequently, his interest turned from finding specific definitions of certain terms to uncovering 'what there is'. The ontological assumptions that underlie the expected answer to the question 'what is x?' reach further than mere appearance. The quest into discovering 'what there is' is initiated from the notion that our senses are unable to grasp all that there is. It is not so much the mistrust of the senses that leads Plato to arrive at the forms. Rather our senses prompt us to recognize that there is something beyond what we perceive [*Ph.* 75a5-b2].

As Plato attempts to uncover the ontological assumptions behind his method of inquiry, the εἶδος of the early dialogues takes on a different and more significant dimension. Plato postulates that the forms are indeed

separate from their possessors¹⁵. They are no longer considered merely as the properties of sensible things. Instead, they are entities which exist 'by themselves' beyond their connection to the phenomenal realm.

The separation of the εἶδος from the rest of the tangible world has its roots as early as the *Cratylus*. The carpenter who crafts a shuttle 'looks to' an εἶδος in order to arrange the material in an appropriate way such that it becomes a shuttle. This 'form' to which the carpenter looks is 'naturally fitted to act as a shuttle' [*Crat.* 389a7]. What this means exactly is not clear. But it is established that the form of shuttle is something other than the material shuttle. The design of the crafted shuttle is not the result of looking to previously constructed shuttles since they may not be good enough examples [389b2]. Instead, Socrates suggests that the one form which will be 'looked to' in the construction of a shuttle will be the true ideal shuttle (αὐτό ὃ ἔστιν κερκις) [389b5]. At the same time as separating the εἶδος from the material shuttle, Plato still holds that the form is in the crafted shuttle [389b9-10]. The immanent εἶδος remains in the material shuttle that is crafted by an adequately skilled carpenter. If the crafted shuttle is fashioned on the model of the 'natural form' [389c3-6] then it must have in it the ideal shuttle. Plato has not yet recognized that there is an

inconsistency in asserting the separateness of the εἶδος and the simultaneous possession of the form by the particular. However, given that the doctrine of forms was still in its infancy, it would not be reasonable to expect that Plato was aware of the difficulties of his not-yet-established theory.

The transcendence of the εἶδος and subsequent bifurcation of reality are also suggested in the early dialogues through the use of the term αὐτό in reference to an εἶδος. The αὐτό construction indicates that Plato was becoming increasingly aware that the common form is something 'itself'. This distinctness implies that the form is different from the same-named sensibles. One of the earliest instances of the use of αὐτό occurs at *Hippias Major* 286d8 as αὐτό τὸ κάλον, the beautiful itself¹⁶. However, at this early stage of the development of Plato's thoughts the εἶδος was considered a universal and not a model. In addition, the immanence of the εἶδος was still prevalent. Since the later 'paradigm' terminology is not attached to the form, it would seem that Plato is not yet aware of the implications of separating the immanent εἶδος from the sensible objects.

The progression of Plato's thought, incited by the ontological assumptions underlying the εἶδος and its separation from the sensible realm, comes to the fore in the *Phaedo*. Here Plato finally sets the seal of reality upon

the forms [75d2]. They are called 'Being' [76d7], never admit change [78d5-7], and exist as something by themselves [100b4-7]. Though Plato may not have recognized his earlier suggestions of transcendence there is reason to believe that he became aware of the inconsistency resulting from maintaining the immanence of τὸ εἶδος in his early postulations.

The argument at *Phaedo* 74 is a strong indication that Plato had discovered the inconsistency in his previous formulations. The problem discovered at 74 follows from the earlier notion that a sensible can be a perfect example of the form. For the difference between the equal itself and the sensible equals hinges on the imperfection of the sensible equals. We learn that whereas the sensible equals are sometimes unequal, the equal itself is never inequality. This is the first time where Plato admits to the separation of the forms from the sensibles. The separation is due to the fact that the sensibles do not perfectly exemplify the εἶδος. The equal itself is very much different from the sensible equals because what is Equal is never its opposite. Given that αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον is always itself, it is the perfect paradigm that remains superior to, and separate from, the sensible equals which are also 'unequal'. The discussion of the difference between perfection and the imperfection here

presented is the point at which Plato begins to incorporate the solution to the previous inconsistency.

Diotima's speech at *Symposium* 210e-211b also affirms Plato's postulation of the transcendent forms. Though the passage is not in the words of Socrates, and does not appear as a philosophic argument, it does cohere with the transcendence of the forms presented in the later dialogues. The passage itself begins with 'the beauties of the body' and other worldly manifestations of beauty that are the subjects of study of the lover of beauty. Diotima relates the progression of the study as follows: the bodily beauties lead the lover to entertain the beauties of the soul [210b10]; the beauties of the soul lead the lover to turn her attention to the beauty of the laws and institutions [210c4]; and when all of these beauties are found to be akin to one another, the lover's attention is directed toward the sciences [210c8] so that she may know the beauty of 'every kind of knowledge'. Having viewed all of the preceding 'aspects of the beautiful' the lover of beauty comes to a final revelation. The true beauty is:

...an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that way....Nor will [the lover's] vision of the beautiful take the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that is of the flesh....but [it] subsist[s] of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it in such sort that, however much

the parts may wax and wane, it will be neither more nor less, but still the same inviolable whole.
[*Symp.* 211a1-b4]

This eternal loveliness is reminiscent of the ideal Beauty. Diotima arrives at the transcendent beauty by disassociating it from its worldly manifestations and opposing its constancy and perfection to the instability and imperfection of the sensible beauties. The transcendence of the ideas is therefore affirmed in Diotima's characterization of the quest for the universal beauty [211c]. The immanence of the ideal beauty, however, is not discussed in this particular passage given that the speech is not an argument supporting Plato's ontological system. Thus it is difficult to conclude whether or not Plato recognized the inconsistency of holding transcendence of forms at the same time as their immanence. Because the reformulated transcendent idea has been added to the ontology, the εἶδος of the early dialogues has matured and is no longer able to act as both the immanent property of a sensible object and the model for the sensible copies.

4. Immanent Characters in the Texts

Aware of the impending inconsistency of holding both the immanence and transcendence of the forms, Plato found it necessary to alter his ontology. There are several related reasons to believe that Plato's solution to the

inconsistency involved the incorporation of a third new entity in the ontology. Each of these reasons is part of a large movement; together they present a coherent participation scheme.

The first indication that Plato was beginning to alter his Theory of Forms is shown by the imperfection of the sensibles discussed above [p. 56]. Socrates argues that the sensible equals do not exemplify perfect equality. They are said to 'fall short of it' in so far as they only approximate the *αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον* [*Ph.* 74d6]. The equal itself is different from the sensible equals by virtue of the fact that it is 'what it is' itself (*αὐτὸ δ' ἔστιν ἴσον*). The sensibles on the other hand are sometimes unequal. Not being able to exhibit perfect equality places the sensibles in a realm lower than true equality. The imperfection of the sensible equals provides a source of difference that promotes the distinctness of the equal itself. Though the inequality of the sensibles is what establishes distinctness of the equal-itself, the unequal sensibles are nonetheless referred to as equals¹⁷.

The immediately puzzling part of calling sensibles by the name of the form (which they fall short of) is that the possession of the form still seems to be the reason behind calling sensibles equal and not unequal. Some have understood the persistence of naming the sensible after the

form to indicate that Plato was unwilling to depart from the immanence of the forms. But there is another viable explanation at hand. Plato did indeed want to keep the possession of properties as part of his analysis of participation. However, the possession of properties by sensibles is not carried out by the immanence of the form. Rather an approximate form, one that is like the form but not identical to it, is found in the sensible. Herein lies another reason to believe that Plato distinguished forms from immanent characters. Plato is now aware of the distinction between the transcendent εἶδος and the approximate form. Early in the *Cratylus* Plato (perhaps unknowingly) arrives at this distinction in a lighter reference to models and non-identical copies.

Do you not perceive how far images are from possessing the same qualities as the originals which they imitate...Surely, Cratylus, the effect produced by the names upon the things of which they are the names would be ridiculous, if they were to be like them in every respect. For everything would be duplicated, and no one could tell in any case which was the real thing and which they name [432d].

If we follow Socrates' preceding description, the approximation is said to imitate the originals. But in its imitation it cannot be identical to that which it resembles. If it had all of the same characteristics as the original the duplicate would be indistinguishable from the real thing. The sensible approximation is therefore a different

kind of entity from the form because of its inability to be a perfect copy.

The original of the *Cratylus*, which is copied later, takes on the role of paradigm to be imitated in the sensible realm¹⁸. The 'approximate forms' of the *Phaedo* are these images (εἰκονας) of a paradigm εἶδος. This is the first time where a new relation of imitation (μιμησις) of the form by the image is presented. Here it has been suggested that the imitation-relation is a form of participation¹⁹.

Though the immanent character which is the image of the form must share some relation with the form in order to be 'what it is', it is not clear that it is the same participation as particular subjects bear to forms. At *Timaeus* 50c, a vague relationship is established; the likenesses of the eternal realities are modeled after their patterns 'in a wonderful and mysterious manner'. What this manner is is not immediately clear. Yet there must be some form of connection between an image and its model. Regardless of the specific nature of the relation, the image is something that is different from the form.

The approximation of the transcendent form is further distinguished as a new entity because of Plato's overt distinction between the F-itself and the F-in-us. The location of the 'form-image' provides us with the third phase in Plato's advancement of a three-tier ontology. The

possession of a form-image continues the distinction between the form and its copy but also differentiates the possessor from the image possessed. A prominent example of the three-fold distinction is presented at *Phaedo* 102d:

Now it seems to me that not only is
largeness itself never willing to be large
 and small at the same time, but also that
 the *largeness in us* never admits the small.

Largeness itself (αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος) and the largeness-in-us (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος) are two different things that do not admit the small. The distinction also involves the division between the F-instance and the possessor of the instance: "...whether it be the opposite in us or the opposite in nature" [*Ph.* 103b6]. Thus, not only the forms are distinguished from the immanent characters. But by virtue of the fact that there is something in the sensible, the immanent character is also a different kind of thing from the object that possesses it. Again at *Phaedrus* 250b the "earthly likenesses of justice and temperance and all other prized possessions" are linked to the tangible world by virtue of their immanence. The distinction between forms and their images is also carried through to the *Timaeus* where a 'pattern intelligible and always the same' is distinguished from 'the imitation of the pattern' [48e]. The images are again contrasted with their eternal models.

Keeping in mind that the form-images cannot exist alongside the forms, the new ontological scheme also demands that the approximated character be located in the sensible object where previously (in the early dialogues) the εἶδος was located. The image, according to the bipartite interpretation, is the sensible object. However, there is an approximation defined by Plato's use of the process of imitation (μίμησις) that is not the worldly object. The approximation is a different kind of entity not only from the form but also from the object. Since the approximation is said to be in the sensible object then it is clear that the image of the form is the immanent character possessed by the sensible object.

A final difference that distinguishes the form from the immanent character lies in Plato's characterization of the manifold of images. Consider *Phaedo* 102-103. There Socrates states that Socrates is small because of the smallness that he has in relation to Simmias' largeness [*Ph.* 102c]²⁰. At the same time Simmias has smallness in relation to Phaedo's largeness. Previously, when the εἶδος was possessed by a multiplicity of sensible objects it was one feature shared by many objects²¹. However the smallness that is possessed by Simmias is not the same smallness that is possessed by Socrates. Nor is Simmias' largeness the same as Phaedo's largeness. For at the same

time, in different relations, the same property is exhibited in different subjects. The single immanent εἶδος of the early dialogues has been replaced by a multiplicity of immanent characters.

The completion of the entire participation scheme culminates in the derivation of names. The images of forms are no longer identified with the objects of the phenomenal realm, and are also different from their forms. In order to be a likeness of the form, Plato must have assumed that the image is directly related to the form. For to be an image entails that the paradigm form stand in relation to the images which approximate it. At the same time, the image is also possessed by an object. The lineage of 'naming' follows this order of relations: the images are named after the forms, and objects which possess the images are named after the images which they possess:

...those forms which are what they are with reference to one another have their being in such references among themselves, not with reference to those likenesses, or whatever we are to call them, in our world, which we possess and so come to be called by their several names.
[Parm. 133c7-d2]

Having replaced the early immanent form with the many immanent characters, Plato has preserved both immanence and transcendence in his Theory of Forms. The addition of the immanent character to the ontology clarifies the relation of the form to the phenomenal realm and its role as

a paradigm for the likenesses that are possessed. That Plato has admitted a distinction between forms and immanent characters demonstrates the plausibility of the tripartite position. What now remains to be established are the details of the immanent character that are not immediately obvious. For it is not clear what characteristics belong to the immanent character nor in what way it fits into Plato's bifurcated reality.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

1. Though there are facts provided about the nature of the forms and they are the subjects with which Plato is greatly concerned he rarely provides an explicit proof for their existence. Regardless of the discussions that are belaboured in certain dialogues (see *Phaedo* 76d and 100b) he generally hypothesizes their existence.

2. See my Chapter I on the description of the primary entities.

3. Recall Aristotle's descriptions of the bronze statue, brick houses, snub-nosed Socrates and musical Coriscus that serve as analysands for his theory regarding the nature of particular subjects.

4. See Plato's discussion of knowledge at *Republic* 476a-519a. Also recall the implications of the theory of recollection in the *Phaedo* where particulars are sensed as opposed to the forms which are known.

5. Such dialogues include *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Cratylus* and *Hippias Major*.

6. Liddell and Scott note that εἶδω may not have existed since there are no occurrences of it in the existing Greek literature. However, they speculate that since there are several other occurrences of εἶδω translated into Sanskrit, Latin and German there must have been a present, active, first person, singular version of the verb in use as well. See ([10]:428).

7. See Liddell and Scott [10]:427 where εἶδος is used in the 'physical' sense as early as Homer.

8. For example see *Charmides* 154d6, *Lysis* 204e5 and 222a3.

9. See *Laches* 192a where quickness is investigated in the same manner as courage.

10. See *Euthyphro* 5e-6d and 11a-b.

11. At *Euthyphro* 5d1 Plato uses the word ἰδέα. In the quest to identify the characteristic that is common to all pious actions, one characteristic quality is sought. At 6d9-e1 Plato also uses εἶδος when referring to the same

common aspect by which pious actions are pious. It is conceivable that Plato is using these two different terms interchangeably, each denoting a 'common class' or 'nature'. For a further example, see *Meno* 72c-d where Socrates asks for a single thing which is found to be the common feature among those things called 'virtues'.

12. See *Charmides* 158a-158e where Socrates questions Charmides whether or not he has the right to be called temperate. Such a right would entail that Charmides be 'sufficiently provided with temperance' [158c5], i.e. that he possess temperance [158d10].

13. Also see *Gorgias* 467e7 and *Republic* 476d1-2 for examples of a not yet finely-tuned participation relation.

14. See *Phaedo* 100c-d, 101c, 102b; *Republic* 402c5, 434d-435c, 476a,d; *Parmenides* 149e5, 150a, 158b-c, 160a for a few examples of the later immanence of properties.

15. True separation and the bifurcation of reality does not really occur until the *Phaedo* and is most pronounced in both the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*.

16. The same construction can also be found at 288a9, 289c3, and 292c9.

17. See *Phaedo* 74c5,7,d5,e7, 75a1 and b6.

18. See *Republic* 500e3, *Parmenides* 132d2, and *Timaeus* 28a7 for example.

19. Matthen suggests that the immanent characters have a relation to the forms strongly analogous to the relation exhibited by sensible bearers and forms ([11]:281). The correlation of 'imitation' and 'participation' is presented at *Parmenides* 132d-132a.

20. Also see *Parmenides* 158a9-b4.

21. See my page 48 above.

CHAPTER IV: CHARACTERIZING THE IMMANENT CHARACTER

1. The Placement of the Immanent Character

Plato's incorporation of a third distinct entity into the ontology has not yet been fully investigated. For though it has been identified as an integral part of the participation scheme, the nature of the immanent character is quite unclear. An investigation into the nature of the immanent character includes defining what characteristics properly belong to the class of immanent characters, and uncovering the relation they have with particular subjects. Plato has provided certain details about both forms and particular objects¹. It should also be possible to discover what Plato is committed to regarding the nature of the immanent character. Where Plato has divided reality into two different realms, it will be shown that the intermediate immanent character has characteristics which are akin to the World of Becoming and other characteristics that link it to the World of Being.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates attempts to uncover the nature of a soul. He puts forth two different lists of characteristics belonging to things divine (World of Being) and things mortal (World of Becoming):

...soul is most similar to what is divine,
immortal, intelligible, uniform,
indissoluble, unvarying, and constant in

relation to itself; whereas body, in its turn, is most similar to what is human, mortal, multi-form, non-intelligible, dissoluble and never constant in relation to itself. [*Ph.* 80b1-5]

Exactly which of these 'ideal' characteristics are to be attributed to the immanent character is not clear from the mere statement that it is an image of a form possessed by a particular subject. Other 'proper' characteristics that belong to each specific immanent character are provided through the approximation relation. The image-model relation dictates that a character will have something in common with the form of which it is a copy. An image, in so far as it is a likeness of a form, must be like the form which it approximates [*Parm.* 132d5-7]. However, the similarity of the image to the form is limited to the fact that the image becomes a property that is like the paradigm property it copies. Both the immanent character and the form are properties of a certain nature. A specific immanent character is a property that falls short of being exactly like its model [*Ph.* 74e-75a]. For example, redness itself, as a paradigm property, is copied by the immanent character which is thereby also 'a red'. This is the characteristic, provided through the resemblance relation, which will distinguish this particular immanent red from other characters that approximate other forms.

Though every character owes its proper characteristics to its approximation of a form, this relation does not explicate the characteristics that define the *kind* of entity that immanent characters are. The ideal characteristics define the properties that belong to the entire class of immanent characters. Some of these ideal characteristics can be extracted from the dialogues. Because Plato does not offer a full description of immanent images, it is difficult to clarify what characteristics belong to immanent characters and in what way they fit into the bifurcated reality. However, since immanent characters are distinct entities different from the forms and their worldly possessors, they must have characteristics of their own.

2. Sorting Out the Characteristics

One of the distinguishing features that can be attributed to the class of immanent characters is multiplicity. Compared to the uniqueness of the form and its single nature, immanent characters are not necessarily unique. They are capable of existing plurally, all being resemblances of a single unique form. In Chapter III [pp 62-63], I presented the manifold of same-named images as part of Plato's movement to incorporate a distinct immanent character into his ontology. Behind this argument lies the

multi-form capacity of immanent characters. Plato's determination of the F-in-us logically commits him to the multiplicity of same-named immanent characters which imitate the same unique form. That Simmias and Socrates both exhibit smallness at the same time (in relation to Phaedo) demonstrates that similar (though not identical) images can exist in a variety of subjects simultaneously. Since Simmias and Socrates are two different subjects participating in the same unique form Smallness, they must each have their own characteristic smallness. The smallness in Socrates becomes manifest when Simmias approaches. In the same way, Simmias' smallness becomes manifest when Phaedo approaches. Each subject's participation in the form Smallness is responsible for each subject having their own immanent smallness. Because the same name applies to both Socrates and Simmias (as well as numerous others) at the same time, the relational immanent characters are capable of multiple manifestations.

There are other types of non-relational immanent characters such as redness, beauty and justice that may not at first appear to follow the nature of multiplicity. For beauty or justice may appear to be single immanent characters that are not manifested in relation to other particulars. Some may argue that justice is the same in every instance. However, the non-relational immanent red of

an apple can be different from the immanent red of a flower. It does not imply that these two immanent reds are visibly distinguishable. On the contrary, the reds may be so alike as to depict the same red in the same manner. But what specifically differentiates the red in the flower from the red in the apple is the spatial location of each immanent red; they have different possessors. The red in the flower is in the flower only because the flower participates in Red itself. Similarly, the apple has a red only by virtue of its participation relation to Redness. The two different participation relations of the particular subjects in the form Red imply two different containment relations. Two spatially separated immanent reds are possessed by two different particular subjects.

The virtues such as justice, courage and temperance are also capable of being multiple. Socrates' justice is not identical to Simmias' justice but may identically approximate the form Justice. However, these justices arise from two different participation relations. At Laches 190d-191e Socrates enumerates many different kinds of soldiers, all of whom exhibit instances of courage. For instance, there are soldiers that exhibit courage in war, others who exhibit courage in sea battles, in disease, in poverty, in politics, in pain and fear, in desires and pleasures [*Lach.* 191d]. Socrates says that all of these 'styles' of soldiers

are courageous [191e4]. That is, there are many different instances of courage exhibited in many different soldiers. Because every different soldier exhibits an image of the form courage, there must be different copies of the form Courage in each of the different soldiers that participate in the form Courage. Non-relational immanent characters like courage and justice can also be multiple because they can be manifested in different particulars. Each subject's own participation in the form defines its own possession of a particular immanent character. This does not imply that the same-named immanent characters cannot be similar in their degree of approximation. Rather, different particulars may exhibit a same-named immanent character and may be perceived to be the same. However, the single character that is possessed by each particular is not the shared with other particulars.

Given the numerical difference between non-relational characters, one may wonder how two apparently identical characters could be separately identifiable. To ask what distinguishes one non-relational character from another implies that the characters can be abstracted from their possessors. Yet abstracting an immanent character from its possessor discontinues the manifest character. Thus there are not characters outside of their possessors that need to be separately identified. The possession and

consequent location of the immanent characters distinguish them from one another. To ask how they are distinguishable outside of their location in a possessor (and thereby exhibiting at least numerical difference), assumes they would have a separate existence of their own. This separate evaluation of immanent characters is not possible since they are dependent on the approximation relation as well as possession for their existence². Plato is not committed to any separately existing entity other than the forms. There is not one shared immanent character for every particular (relational or not) participating in the same form.

Immanent characters are also the kind of entity that 'come into' and withdraw from' particulars. I will outline both of these characteristics separately. At *Phaedo* 102-107a Plato establishes that immanent characters, at the very least, 'come into', their possessors. Immanent characters 'advance' toward their opposites in particulars [*Ph.* 102e]. Socrates argues that "I [Socrates], having admitted and abided smallness, am still what I am, this same individual, only small" [*Ph.* 102e4-5]. When Socrates admits smallness it is argued that the character smallness comes to Socrates. The advancement of the immanent character toward a particular indicates some kind of 'coming to be'. Earlier in the *Phaedo* [100c9-e3 and 101c1-5], the particular is said to be an F-thing only because of its participation relation

to a Form. In this relation the immanent character is made manifest as an F in the F-thing. The 'creation' of an immanent character can be inferred from this relation. For it is quite absurd to expect that an immanent character exists prior, and external, to the primary participation of a particular in a form. The participation of a particular in a form is the point at which immanent characters come into their possessors. For only when beautiful things participate in Beauty do they become beautiful (i.e. have a beauty). Prior to the primary participation of a particular in a form an immanent character does not exist in some other, unexplainable state. That is, an immanent character becomes a possessed entity. It is inconceivable to have an immanent character that is not possessed by a subject, but exists elsewhere. In the same way, it is inconceivable to have a phenomenal object which does not also have immanent characters³.

This 'createdness' of the immanent character is carried through to the *Timaeus* where the 'third thing' between the form and the Receptacle is likened to the offspring brought about by their union [*Tim.* 50d]. Plato clarifies that the previous ontological exposition described two kinds of entities [48e6]⁴. The first unchangeable sort of being is 'a pattern intelligible and always the same' [48e7] (παράδειγματος εἶδος). Second is the model's copy

kind of entity (μίμημα...παραδείγματος) [49a1]⁵. The latter are said to 'come into existence' [28c3] and are 'generated' (εἶναι γενέσθαι) [28c4]. Thus objects that are 'generated' (γένεσις), those things that come into existence "...are the likenesses of eternal realities modeled after their patterns..." [50c]. The fixed forms which do not advance and are not themselves manifested in a possessor are contrasted with the immanent characters which become what they are in the phenomenal realm.

As an entity that is brought into a possessor it is also the kind of entity that relinquishes its claim on a sensible particular. When a contrary character advances toward a particular already possessing a specific immanent character, Socrates explains that one of two things must happen: "...either it must retreat and get out of the way, when its opposite...advances toward it; or else,...it must perish" [*Ph.* 102d9-e2]. When a subject is confronted with a contrary character that is not yet possessed by a particular subject, the previously manifest immanent character is not willing to 'abide' and 'admit' its opposite "...thus be[ing] other than what it was" [*Ph.* 102e3-4]. Simmias' largeness does not admit the small [102d6]. By its nature as a particular likeness of one form, an immanent character cannot change to become the likeness of another form⁶. It must withdraw its claim on a particular when another

contrary character approaches. Thus, Simmias' largeness is not manifest when approached by Phaedo.

Whether or not the immanent largeness perishes in Simmias when he is confronted by Phaedo is not certain. But it is clear that immanent characters cannot persist when their possessor perishes. For they are the kind of entity that requires containment in a particular in order to be what they are.

For an image, since the reality after which it is modeled does not belong to it, and it exists ever as the fleeting shadow of some other, *must be inferred to be in another...* grasping at existence in some way or other, or it could not be at all. [Tim. 52c]⁷

The immanent image does not properly belong to the model⁸. Therefore, a third entity is required to possess the image. When a particular ceases its participation in one form and takes on a contrary character, the former immanent character is no longer the predominant property of that particular. It appears to 'vanish out of place' [52a7]. Since it does not retreat to the model [52c], it is no longer a manifest property.

There is another characteristic that follows from the preceding analysis. The immanent character perishes because it will not 'stand by' and 'abide' its opposite. The immanent character that is advanced upon by a contrary character will not change to become its opposite. When it exists, it does not change its proper characteristics that

make it the image of one form and not another⁹. The immanent smallness of Socrates will not compromise its nature as an image of the form Small and will not change to become largeness [*Ph.* 102e7]. Upon the advance of the large, the character of smallness will withdraw from its possessor but will not change to become its opposite. As long as an image continues to exist (i.e. is possessed by a particular) it remains unchanged and its proper characteristics remain unvaried.

Were the immanent character to allow itself to abide the advance of a contrary character the primacy of the participation relation of particulars in forms would be undermined. The character must yield to the incoming opposing character or the subject would appear to be in a state of internal opposition. An immanent character that remains manifest in a particular along with a contrary image (in the same relation) creates an internal inconsistency in the particular. However, Plato has eliminated this possibility [*Ph.* 102d5-103a1]. Since the immanent character does not change, it loses its prominence as a property in its possessor [*Ph.* 104c1-3]. Also, being the image of a unified form, a character is not a complex item that may be broken apart. Where the form cannot be dissolved into parts because it is uniform and indissoluble, the immanent character, as an image of a 'simple' form, consequently

brings only one character to its possessor. Therefore, in addition to its invariability, an immanent character must be indissoluble.

A final aspect which clarifies the nature of the immanent character image involves the ability to bring 'sensibility' to the phenomenal realm. It has regularly been stated that particular subjects are the object of opinion and sense. Yet the immanent characters are responsible for providing the sensible element to the particular subject. There are two kinds of images that can be possessed by particular subjects: imperceptible images like justice, temperance and courage, and perceptible images like red, tall and hot¹⁰. These attributive non-sortal types of immanent characters are divided respectively into the morally or ethically oriented and the immediately perceptible attributive characters¹¹.

Plato provides a direct reference to the sensibility of immanent images at *Timaeus* 52a:

And there is another nature of the same name with it, and like to it, *perceived by sense*, created, always in motion, becoming in place and again vanishing out of place, which is *apprehended by opinion jointly with sense*.

This 'other nature' which Plato has place between the form and the Receptacle is the immanent character image [*Tim.* 48e and 50d1-2]¹². At *Phaedrus* 250b3-4 Socrates argues that earthly copies of justice and temperance and other 'ideas

which are precious to the soul' are approached by the organs of sense. Though the 'organs' by which these immanent ideas are approached are 'dull', they nevertheless sense the images. However, the moral or ethical attributive characters are not perceivable in the same manner. Immanent justice cannot be seen in a person in the same way that tallness may be sensibly perceived in an individual. Those characters like justice and courage, which are possessed by the soul, are demonstrated through actions which are called just or courageous. These acts are in turn witnessed or perceived by others that call the individual just or courageous. Though immanent justice may not be directly sensible, justice and the like are demonstrated in actions that are recognized through sensible perception. For we must watch the actions of those that are just in order to determine that they are just. As Simmias' tallness is recognized in relation to Socrates, Socrates is recognized as possessing justice if he demonstrates this quality in his actions. His just actions are perceived by others who consequently call him 'just'. The fact that images are sensed by the bodily organs (directly or indirectly) demonstrates that the particular is dependent upon the immanent characters for its sensibility. Regardless of whether the attributive character is directly sensible, it can be said that particular subjects are sensible only in so

far as the particular subject contains some character that is perceivable.

To sum up, the images are capable of being multi-form, coming into existence, and withdrawing from their possessors. They also provide the sensible element to particular sensible subjects. There are two characteristics that place the immanent character closer to the World of Being--invariability and indissolubility. Having all of the above different characteristics places the immanent character between the forms and particular subjects. It becomes an intermediary entity that has part of its existence in the World of Becoming and part in the World of Being.

3. Alternative Relations Between Images and Particulars

The relation between form-images and particular subjects has so far been described as a containment relation wherein particulars possess characters. The logical order of their existence has yet to be determined and the role the immanent character image plays in the existence of a subject must yet be clarified. In this section I will examine two basic alternative interpretations of the nature of the particular subject with special appeal to the role that the immanent character plays in the determination of the particular subject. After this analysis a modified version

of the bare particular theory will be warranted. Following the difficulties in both the relational entity theory and the bare particular theory it will be seen that neither of these interpretations suit the tripartite ontology.

The 'relational entity' theory of particular subjects involves an essential relation between particulars and immanent characters. A particular subject is the result of the conglomeration of a set of immanent characters meeting in the same 'space'. These characters arise in virtue of their approximation of the form. The relation they have with their characters shows that subjects are existentially dependent on the possession of immanent characters and consequently on the secondary relation of characters approximating forms. Because the particular subject is existentially defined by the containment of immanent characters, it is nothing aside from these relations. Where the immanent character is made manifest as a result of its being possessed, and the particular is a conglomeration of characters coordinated by the containment relation, the relational entity is composed of accidental properties. Not one essential characteristic belongs to a purely relational entity. Because the approximation relation and the containment relation are required to provide all properties to the particular, there is no essential particular that first participates in a form and

then exists without possessing properties. It is the mere result of the accidental 'coming together' of certain images.

This analysis of particulars has also been referred to as the 'bundle theory'¹³. The fleeting and shadowy particulars have no essential substance to their existence. Since the images are the cornerstone for the existence of particulars, the particulars owe their entire existence to the forms and their images. Such individuals, lacking essential properties, lose the priority and independence that are usually ascribed to them.

If we accept the relational entity analysis of particulars, the participation scheme outlined by the tripartite ontology is undermined by the necessary role the immanent character plays in the particular¹⁴. For it is quite evident that if an image is responsible for the entire existence of a particular, the existence of the images that together construct the particular must logically precede the particular that they produce¹⁵. This kind of essential relational account misrepresents the tripartite participation scheme as the particulars would owe their entire existence to the images and forms. Such individuals that lack essential properties lose the sort of priority and independence we are inclined to ascribe to particulars. In other words, the particular logically depends on the

relation between images and forms as well as the containment relation. The particular which is supposed to participate in a form is first succeeded by the images' participation in forms (since the particular does not have any essential status on its own in order to participate in any form). The production of an immanent character and its conglomeration with other images is what a particular is. There is no particular subject per se, but only a defined region of space characterized by different properties¹⁶. The tripartite ontology asserts that there are three different entities that all have different ontological status. However the relational account of particulars places them in exactly the same category as immanent characters. In fact, there are no particulars but only many immanent characters side by side. This analysis does not support the tripartite claim that a particular is a different *kind* of entity from immanent characters. On the relational entity account there is no apparent distinction between things that possess immanent characters and the opposites that are in those things [*Ph.* 103a11-c2].

A second alternative in interpreting the existential relation between an immanent character and the particular subject is the 'bare particular' theory. Bare particulars are particular subjects that possess no immanent characters prior to their relation to forms. Along with the absence of

immanent characters, a bare particular possesses no essential characteristics. It is the kind of entity which exists prior to any participation relation. Though they possess no essential properties, they are capable of primary existence. In this formulation, bare particulars are 'empty containers' that have no primitive dimension or definition. To imagine this odd kind of entity Aristotle suggests that we picture an object stripped of every one of its properties¹⁷. This brand of particular is by its very nature difficult to conceive. Having no essential characteristics of its own, it is resistant to being properly described or coherently conceived. This inability to discuss or entertain a particular subject coincides with what Plato has to say about particulars in general¹⁸. As objects of opinion, sensible particulars escape rational thought and precise description.

In opposition to the relational entity that is logically derived from immanent characters and the approximation relation, the bare particular better complies with the arrangement of the tripartite participation scheme. First, because there is a particular (as elusive as it is) which precedes the inherence of immanent characters, the priority of the particular is not undermined. There is no existential need for an instantiated character to give rise to the particular as there is for the shadowy existence of

the relational entity. That is, because there is a container existing prior to any relation with a form, the primary participation is not set behind the relation between images and forms, and the manifestation of the immanent character. The subject, though defined by the containment of immanent characters, is not generated. The bare particular theory of subjects reflects the inability of immanent characters to logically precede, and consequently existentially determine, a primary particular subject.

Though this interpretation of particulars and their existential status is much closer to the tripartite ontology outlined in the previous chapters, there are still some difficulties. The largest difficulty rests in claiming that the subject is something in itself without having any relation to any forms or having any essential properties. Bare or empty containers, in order to be what they are, must have some sort of essential nature. If a particular is supposed to participate in a form and be 'what it is' independent of any relation to the forms, then how can it be 'what it is' if 'what it is' essentially consists in bearing a relation to some essential attributive form? Because the relations of bare particulars provide accidental properties, its essential properties that make it a bare particular must not rely on any relations to the forms. Consequently these essentials that belong to the container do not come from the

instantiation of immanent character images. The immanent characters are mere accidental properties that are defined through the primary participation of particulars in forms. In order for immanent characters to come together in a common container, there must be an existent particular that is provided for the manifestation of images and the participation of a particular in a form. However, the theory describes an entity that is free of the primary participation relation. A bare particular with essential existence cannot be nothing and still be something which accepts the intrusion of form-images. Because of the primacy of the participation of a particular in a form, a bare particular must have some essential relation to a form in order to be what it is.

With this difficulty in mind, the bare particulars are not truly representative of Plato's tripartite ontology. Because Plato places so much emphasis on the particular subjects' participation in forms in the early and middle dialogues, the bare particular cannot be the kind of entity that Plato is committed to. Though the immanent character has been shown as an integral part of Plato's middle and later ontology, the relation between particulars and immanent characters requires much more attention than has here been provided. Specifically, it needs to be established whether or not Plato advocated that there are

essential properties in the particulars, and whether these essential characteristics are derived from the properties that inhere in them or whether they are native to a particular free from any containment of immanent characters. The question of what the relation between Platonic particulars and their immanent characters is requires much attention to the texts. Such a re-evaluation of the particular subject and the immanent character is an extensive project that would require more time and space to be fully elucidated in a future work.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

1. These details have been discussed and referenced elsewhere. See Chapter II page 27 and Chapter III page 44.

2. See p. 77 for clarification of the dependent nature of immanent characters.

3. Such a particular could be like Aristotle's particulars, but there is no direct evidence that Plato admitted this kind of entity into his ontology.

4. Earlier at *Timaeus* 27d Plato sets apart 'that which always is and has no becoming' and 'that which is always becoming and never is'. These entities are the forms and the images of forms.

5. Recall that imitations have already been shown to be different from the particulars that possess them.

6. Whether the immanent character remains dormant in a particular when that particular ceases to participate in a form, or ceases to exist itself in the particular is not clear. Plato gives us these two options and does not really expand on which of these options suit the immanent character. However, it is clear that when the particular ceases to exist entirely the immanent characters must too perish. For example, when snow, which has the character cold in it, is approached by fire which has heat in it the snow will not admit the hot and remain what it is. Snow must cease to exist when approached by fire. The cold in the snow does not actually 'move out' of the snow when the snow no longer exists. When the snow ceases, it is not clear that the immanent cold persists. It does not seem reasonable to expect that when snow no longer exists that any of its characters continue to exist. For F-things are so in virtue of their relation to F (100c-d). When the participation relation ceases, so too must the particular subject and consequently its properties.

7. This brings up the problem of whether Plato's metaphysics outlined in the dialogue requires that there is any bare particular or whether he is committed merely to temporary concrescences of immanent characters that inhabit

the same region of space. Although I will briefly discuss these two alternatives, it is a problem that will be left for a future investigation.

8. At *Timaeus* 52a1-3 the form never receives anything. The immanent characters cannot be taken in by their models when a particular ceases to exist. The form, as a paradigm property, does not possess a property. It does however exemplify a property; it is what the form is. See Chapter II, pp 38-39.

9. I do not consider that this 'constancy in relation to itself' implies eternal existence. It indicates the lack of the ability to change.

10. I am not here concerned with the difference between the sortal variety of immanent characters such as 'human-hood' or 'cat-hood' and the non-sortal attributives like 'tallness' or 'whiteness'. Rather, I am more concerned with the sensibility of certain perceivable immanent characters as opposed to the indirectly perceivable moral or ethical variety of characters.

11. The immediately perceivable immanent characters are those that are detected by the sense organs.

12. Also see my page 75 and *Timaeus* 28a3 for the evidence that the other nature is the image of the form.

13. The 'bundle theory' of particulars has been advocated by such commentators as J. Burnet, Greek Philosophy, (London 1914): 134; A. E. Taylor, Plato, the Man and His Work (London, 1929): 27-29; and H. N. Casteñeda, "Leibniz and Plato's *Phaedo* Theory of Relations and Predication," in M. Hooker (ed.), Leibniz; Critical and Interpretive Essays (Minneapolis, 1982): 131-134.

14. Recall that the relation between forms and particulars is an integral part of the participation scheme. In the early and middle dialogues Plato places strong emphasis on the continuing participation of the particular in the form even though he incorporates a third distinct entity into the ontology. See Chapter III, section 3.

15. In discussing the logical order of relations between forms, particulars and immanent characters there is no implied temporal order or efficient causation. It is not clear that Plato ever defined the forms as being causes of

particulars or images since they do not move or have a creative power.

16. For a more in depth criticism of the 'relational entity' theory of particulars see G. B. Matthews and S. Marc Cohen, "The One and the Many," Review of Metaphysics 21 (1968): esp. 632-636.

17. See Aristotle's 'stripping argument' at *Metaphysics* Z 3.

18. See my Chapter III, pp 44-45.

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