

PLATO ON PARTICIPATION:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATION  
BETWEEN  
FORMS AND PARTICULARS

By



BRUCE THOMAS LIDSTEN, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree  
Master of Arts

McMaster University

October 1979

PLATO ON PARTICIPATION

2

MASTER OF ARTS (1979)  
(Philosophy)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Plato On Participation: An Examination Of The Relation  
Between Forms And Particulars

AUTHOR: Bruce Thomas Lidsten, B.A. (Brock University)


SUPERVISOR: Dr. D.L. Hitchcock

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 88



ABSTRACT

The undertaking of this thesis is an examination of Plato's notion of "participation", the relation between particulars and Forms. It is, in the main, a close scrutiny of the Platonic idea of metaphysical first principles as causes, as an attempt to find a possible explanation concerning how they relate to the perceptible realm. I have attempted to demonstrate, through this analysis, that Plato's initial view with regard to the connection between Being and Becoming, does not remain the same throughout his works. Rather, upon examining his initial position Plato recognized its shortcomings and consequently altered his claims about metaphysical causality. This alteration manifests itself in the replacing of the concept of "participation" with a different account of how particulars and Forms relate.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of individuals whose aid and encouragement have made it possible to complete this work. I am indebted to both my first and second readers, Dr. D.L. Hitchcock and Dr. S. Panagiotou, for their time and comments which greatly contributed to this final version. To my friends Wayne and Mark I owe too much to be said.

Finally, to my former instructors, Dr. M. Husain and Dr. A.D. Booth, I dedicate this thesis. It was their enthusiasm that sparked my own.

ἀνευ γὰρ φίλων οὐδεὶς ἔλοιε  
ἀνὴρ σὴν ἔχων εἰς λοιπὰ ἀγαθὰ  
πάντα - Aristotle

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One	- Introduction .....	1
Chapter Two	- The Initial Position .....	4
	<u>Phaedo</u> .....	4
	<u>Republic</u> .....	26
Chapter Three	- Transition .....	35
	<u>Phaedrus</u> .....	36
	<u>Parmenides</u> .....	40
	<u>Sophist</u> .....	53
Chapter Four	- A Solution Proposed .....	68
	<u>Philebus</u> .....	68
	<u>Timæus</u> .....	80
Bibliography	.....	86

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Any attempt to understand Plato's writings invariably leads to a myriad of difficulties. We find throughout the Platonic dialogues a series of problems, some of which arise from Plato's neglect to offer an explicit account of what he means. Perhaps the most serious of these is "participation", or the relation between Being and Becoming. Plato's decision to postulate an ontological bifurcation, such as is exhibited in his severance of Being and Becoming, leaves one in a quandary with respect to understanding the nature of the relationship between these two realms. Since he is so insistent upon informing us that there is a definite connection between Forms and particulars but, at the same time, will not state what the nature of this relation is, we may well ask whether or not he was aware of what "participation" meant. Although certain passages in the dialogues reveal Plato's ideas about the function of this relation and its effects, it is not at all clear that he had a precise conception of the essential nature of the connection between Being and Becoming. Indeed, the lack of an explanation of "participation" within the Platonic corpus appears to indicate that this is so. However, we should not be premature in making this claim until all the evidence is in.

The relation between Being and Becoming, as will subsequently be

shown, is causal. Now, this must not be construed as denoting an empirical type of causality similar to the relationship of cause and effect in the perceptible world. We are here presented with a causal connection between the physical and the metaphysical, particulars and Forms, or Becoming and Being. This affinity between particulars and the *εἶδη* is what Plato has labelled "participation". It is a causal relation in the sense that the Forms are the *αἰτία* of particulars, they account for why perceptible entities are a certain way. In other words, the Forms are responsible for particulars being what they are. Herein lies the problem of "participation" to which this thesis addresses itself. How can metaphysical entities such as the *εἶδη* account for perceptible objects being what they are? This is to say that what comprises the core of this discussion is an attempt to uncover whether or not "participation" can be explained.

My main proposal is that there is no explanation of "participation" within Plato's dialogues because he recognized that he could not provide an adequate account of it. However, rather than setting this matter aside, it is my belief that Plato offered a different explanation of how Forms and particulars are related.

In light of the fact that "participation" comprises Plato's notion of causality, we must direct ourselves to those dialogues which present his most pronounced views on causality. Through this analysis we shall, I believe, notice a severe alteration in how Plato understands the relation between Forms and particulars. And this change in his thought I shall set forth as substantiating my final suggestions.

The discussion which follows is presented in three stages which,



In my view, reflect Plato's initial position regarding "participation", his subsequent examination of this stance, and finally, an alteration in his ideas. I have used seven dialogues which provide the clearest statements of his understanding of causality, and these have been divided and arranged in accordance with the threefold division of the thesis.

Obviously, the thesis I present rests to a certain degree upon the assumption that the dialogues which have been used represent the order in which Plato composed them. The fact that I have so arranged his works suggests that this is the case. In regard to this let it be sufficient to remark that the manner in which I have arranged the dialogues, although indicative of my belief, is not necessarily meant to represent the "real" order that Plato would have endorsed. Indeed, he may not have meant his writings to be placed in any particular arrangement. Yet, I submit that the concepts and complexities of the dialogues I have used do suggest a progression similar to that put forward in this discussion. Unfortunately the scope of this work does not allow for a detailed examination upon which to base this assertion. I can only suggest that this presents a possible method of approaching the Platonic corpus.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Initial Position

#### Phaedo:

Although primarily an inquiry into the question of the soul and its immortality, the Phaedo offers considerable discussion of causality. After presenting arguments to the effect that the soul is immortal and thereby departs from the body and continues to exist after the destruction of its earthly embodiment, Socrates faces the objections of two of his listeners. The first, aired by Simmias, is quickly circumvented. The second, however, launches Socrates into a lengthy examination of the "cause of generation and destruction" (Ph. 95E9).<sup>1</sup>

Since our discussion is concerned with this explanation of Socrates we need not examine Cebes' objection. All that is necessary is that we note the reason for Socrates offering such an account. He does this in order to demonstrate that Cebes' materialist and mechanical view of the soul (as a cause) is mistaken, and to account for the immortality of the soul, or, as Klein suggests, "why the soul can never die".<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>For the sake of convenience, both that of the reader and myself, all references to Plato's writings will be incorporated into the body of the text. They will occur in the standard abbreviated form including the dialogue name, paragraph number and, where necessary, the line number.

<sup>2</sup>Jacob Klein, Plato's Phaedo. Cited from the text of a lecture given at St. John's College, Annapolis, Md., on May 3, 1974. p. 6.

Socrates proceeds with a recounting of his own search for "the causes of everything, why each thing comes into being and why it perishes and why it exists;" (Ph. 96A9). He speaks of the perplexity that plagued him after investigating the various accounts of causality put forth by those involved in the "Investigation of nature" (Ph. 96A8). Even the teachings of Anaxagoras did not, to Socrates, express an adequate doctrine of causality. Socrates anticipated that Anaxagoras' teachings would provide him with an explanation as to why things are what they are, since he was alleged to have posited mind as the cause of all things. What Socrates had expected was that Anaxagoras would begin with the information that a particular item was a certain way, e.g., that the earth was flat or round, and then proceed "...to explain the cause and the necessity of it, and would tell [him] the nature of the best and why it is best for the earth to be as it is" (Ph. 97E1). However, as Socrates searched the writings of Anaxagoras for an explanation of this sort, he found not mind as the cause and arranger of all things, but air, ether, water and other entities (Ph. 98B-C). The passage continues and a crucial distinction is made.

Socrates remarks to his audience that Anaxagoras' position is similar to the notion that the cause of Socrates sitting in prison is the make-up of his body rather than the real cause, viz., the Athenians' decision to imprison him, and his electing to abide by their ruling. The point in question concerns the confusion of Anaxagoras and the "natural scientists" between a condition for the possibility of causality, the sine qua non, and the cause itself.

Whoever talks in that way is unable to make a distinction and to see that in reality a cause is one thing, and the thing without which the

cause could never be a cause is quite another thing (Ph. 99B3).

It is true that if it were not for the flexibility of Socrates' body, because of its composition of bones, sinews and flesh, he could not sit in his cell. But this is not the cause or reason for his being so situated.<sup>3</sup> The why of the situation is precisely Socrates' belief that it is best that he remain in jail.

Two items must be taken note of here. First, that whatever Socrates will offer by way of a causal theory will not be in terms of physical causes. Second, and most important, Socrates is searching for reasons why things are a certain way and it is only this type of causal explanation which he believes to be informative. Whether the theory which follows will be both teleological and informative, as Socrates believes it should be, remains to be seen. But it is at least clear what type of explanation is sought.

Before proceeding it is important to emphasize that although I have utilized the term "cause" it is not to be construed in the modern sense. In other words, the word does not refer to empirical causality. I have adopted the term for convenience and the reader is cautioned against misunderstanding its usage. In addition, we must not be misled into believing that "reasons", as used here, cannot be causes. We shall see that, for Plato, "reasons" in this case are in fact metaphysical causes.

Having been so discontented with the causality offered by others, Socrates strikes out to investigate these matters for himself. He fears

---

<sup>3</sup>We must remember that the term *αἰτία* means "what is responsible for". (See Introduction.)

that "blindness" may ensue if he directs his attention toward the sensible world and thus decides to study the physical world as it is reflected in *λογος* - accounts or statements (Ph. 99E). This "second voyage in quest of the cause" (Ph. 99D2) is an attempt to sidestep the possible "blindness" which will strike his soul if he pursues his search in the corporeal realm. It appears that this is the affliction from which his predecessors suffered.

Of primary importance here is the shift from the empirical level to a conceptual one. Rather than beginning with empirical observations, Socrates states that he started with an *ἐπιπέτασμα* - principle, hypothesis, that appeared to be beyond reproach, both with regard to causality and anything else. Whatever agreed with this postulate he assumed to be true, and that which he found to disagree, false (Ph. 100A). From this it would appear that Socrates should formulate some type of proof for his hypothesis. This, however, is not the case. What Socrates would have us and his audience accept as the irreproachable first principles, are the Forms, the *εἶδη*. He is convinced that "there are such things as absolute beauty and good and greatness and the like" (Ph. 100B7), and suggests these entities as the *αἰεταὶ*; that which makes things what they are (Ph. 100B-E). Yet the proof which Socrates should produce does not follow, nor does there appear to be any need for it given the reaction of the people in attendance. All agree and there are no objections raised against this doctrine.

A proposal by Burnet seems in order provided we pay close attention to the reaction, or lack of it, of Socrates' audience. Burnet believes that the strength of the hypothesis in question rests on the

agreement of those in attendance.<sup>4</sup> Since there is complete acceptance of the proposed postulate, there is no need for further proof. I would not hesitate to agree with Burnet's remark. This is indeed the course that Socrates follows. However, agreement alone is not sufficient to remove the hypothetical status that the Forms, at this point, possess. We must admit that as far as the Phaedo is concerned the Forms are, in this sense, still hypothetical. We are not, however, to be coerced into believing the Forms to be mere hypotheses for, as Hackforth assures us,<sup>5</sup> there is no doubt for either Socrates or Plato that they do exist.

It is clearly discernible from Socrates' statements that, as far as he is concerned, these Forms exist and they cause the things of the perceptible realm to be what they are. This split between the sensible and the conceptual, coupled with the notion of the one causing the other to be what it is, indicates that there must be some relation obtaining between the two. This relation is described as "participation".

I think that if anything is beautiful besides absolute beauty it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes of absolute beauty; and this applies to everything (Ph. 100C).

The conversation proceeds with Socrates exclaiming that he does not understand "those other ingenious causes" (Ph. 100C8). With reference to beauty and its cause, Socrates remarks that to say that colour or shape cause the beauty of something confuses him. No doubt his confusion arises due to the postulating of different causes resulting in

<sup>4</sup> John Burnet, Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato (London: Macmillan, 1968), first edition 1914, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> R. Hackforth, Plato's Phaedo (New York; Liberal Arts Press) first published 1952 by the Cambridge University Press, p. 142-143.

the same effect, i.e., beauty. As Taylor points out, Socrates is seeking a single cause or reason which accounts for the presence of beauty in all particulars so named.<sup>6</sup> To explain the occurrence of an effect by asserting a number of causes would not, for Socrates or Plato, provide an adequate answer. We might also find that in one instance a cause, e.g., the colour of an object, is alleged to bring about the beauty of that object, while with a different object the same colour may cause it to be ugly.<sup>7</sup> This is the type of confusion Socrates wants to avoid:

- (I) that A and B could, in different instances, be the cause of C;
- (II) that A could cause C in one object and its contrary in another.

There are two significant comments made in this section (Ph. 100D). One deals with "participation" and the other with the theory already expounded. The first is as follows:

"...[N]othing else makes it [a beautiful object] beautiful but the presence or communion (call it what you please) of absolute beauty, however it may have been gained; about the way in which it happens, I make no positive statement as yet, but I do insist that beautiful things are made beautiful by beauty (Ph. 100D).

This passage reflects both Socrates' conviction concerning the causal function of the Forms and his uncertainty as to what this relationship between the Forms and particulars consists of. The terms *παρουσία* (presence) and *κοινωνία* (communion or sharing) are used to indicate how "absolute beauty" brings about the beauty of a particular entity. Posterior to this is the phrase "call it what you please". If Socrates

<sup>6</sup>A.E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1926) p. 202.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. W.K.C. Guthrie, "Plato: The Man And His Dialogues-Earlier Period" in A History of Greek Philosophy Vol. IV. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 334.

is aware of what this causal relationship is he certainly does not articulate it here nor in any other part of the dialogue. The idea of "participation" is not explained. In fact, the tone of the passage suggests that our speaker is not at all certain how the Forms "make" particulars what they are, only that they do so. Further, the words invoked to express this relation connote different, even contrary, meanings.

The term *παρουσία* implies that the Form is present in the particular, *κοινωνία* that the Form is external to it. The use of the latter need not, of course, strictly imply the transcendence of the Forms. Socrates could be utilizing both words to express their immanence. The first term obviously implicates this "presence", but the second does not carry such a clear meaning.

One can substitute the following English equivalents for *κοινωνία*: sharing, communion or intercourse.<sup>8</sup> We might legitimately use any of these terms to describe the presence of one thing to another, e.g., "Jones has his share of health". In this case, "health" is something present to, or in, Jones. It would probably not be said, in the common course of everyday language, that "Jones communes with health", or that "Jones has intercourse with health". Nevertheless it is apparent that *κοινωνία* could be used to mean a "presence" or immanence. But the usual usage of such a term is to denote a relation which obtains between two separate and distinct entities, one apart from the other as in, "Jones shares a heavy load with his pack-horse". Here, the "heavy load" is quite distinct

---

<sup>8</sup> See Liddell and Scott.



from both Jones and his horse, and they each carry a portion of it.

The upshot of all this is that the term *κατανωσία*, although capable of being used in a similar context to *παρυποσία*, is, at 100D, used to show the separateness and thus, the transcendence of the Forms. It is possible that Plato chose these two expressions arbitrarily and we should therefore not attach to them any significance at all. Indeed, these terms may serve as an additional proof of his indecisiveness about the relation in question. Nevertheless, even if the use of the term *κατανωσία* is by itself not sufficient evidence to warrant the belief that the Forms are here meant to be transcendent, we should not consider this tenet in isolation. If it is considered in conjunction with the implications of the dialogue, there can be no reason for not agreeing with Ross and others on this matter. Ross asserts that although the separateness of the Forms is never explicitly stated, the suggestions concerning our apprehension of them - the doctrine of anamnesis - force us to this conclusion; that the Forms are transcendent entities.<sup>9</sup> Thus, at once we are presented with both an immanent and a transcendent cause.

It seems odd that what has been concluded here is a twofold understanding of causality. Plato, rather than adhering to either a transcendent cause or an immanent cause, has adopted the two in conjunction. To adhere to a Formal causality, if I may borrow the Aristotelian label, usually suggests that one of two stances is taken. In this case we would assume that Plato should either assert that the Forms are in particulars, or that they are apart from them, not both at once. However,

---

<sup>9</sup>Ross, p. 35.

it appears that this is exactly what Plato has endorsed. Forms are transcendent entities and as such are accessible to the soul via "recollection", yet they must be somehow present to particulars in order to account for particulars being the way they are.

The second remark that Socrates makes at 100D follows the passage cited previously:

For I think this is the safest answer I can give to myself or to others, and if I cleave fast to this, I think I shall never be overthrown, and I believe it is safe for me or anyone else to give this answer, that beautiful things are beautiful through beauty (Ph. 100D).

This may be the safest answer, but it is not the only one that Socrates gives us. So far we have been presented with a metaphysical account or explanation of why things in the empirical realm are a certain way. But this "safe answer" seems rather uninformative. Let us consider what is said.

Socrates advances with additional examples to clarify his understanding of causality. All of these are similar in content to his statement about beautiful particulars and their cause. In each case cited, greatness, smallness, duality and unity (Ph. 101A-101D), the discussion involves a universal which is the reason for these attributes becoming manifest in the world. But these examples, although adding clarity to Plato's beliefs about causality, actually appear to impart little information to the reader. To espouse the view that "every greater thing is greater than another by nothing else than greatness, and that it is greater by reason of greatness" is tantamount to spouting

a tautology.<sup>10</sup> Herein lies part of the safety of the answer. The remainder of its safety rests on the hypothesis that these Forms exist.<sup>11</sup> (It should also be taken into account that this type of causal explanation does not run the risks pointed out at 101A and 101C; two contrary effects having one and the same cause, or two distinct causes resulting in the same effect).

Clearly this first answer is "safe", yet it is not totally uninformative. Socrates' assertions have led us to something very definite; a glimpse, albeit brief, of Plato's understanding of the world. In this sense we have been supplied with crucial information as to what he means by "cause" and the type of explanation we are to expect. The text yields a summation of this in a statement to Cebes which is meant to serve as a reply to any question involving causality.

You would exclaim loudly that you know no other way by which anything can come into existence than by participating in the proper essence of each thing in which it participates, ... (Ph. 101C).

Before progressing to Socrates' second and "more refined answer" (Ph. 105C2), we must digress for a moment and consider all that has been said regarding the Forms and their causal function. Thus far the text has revealed the Forms to be immutable (Ph. 78D, 79D), pure, eternal (Ph. 79D), divine (Ph. 84A), incorporeal, grasped only by reason (Ph. 79A), and that they are "true being" (Ph. 78D5). Aside from these characteristics, the εἶδη are the fundamental cause and sustaining force of all sensible beings. It is not, however, the mere existence of each Form

<sup>10</sup> Cf. G.M.A. Grube, Plato's Thought (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968) first printed 1935 by Methuen & Co., Ltd., p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Klein, p. 7.

which accounts for something being what it is,<sup>12</sup> although this is certainly a prerequisite. Only in virtue of "participating" in a specific Form does a particular object come to be what it is. This is clear from the above quotation. We must, however, proceed with caution.

Burnet reminds us that Socrates' inquiry deals with the cause of generation and destruction.<sup>13</sup> This is indeed true. Burnet assumes that this quest ends with the discovery of the Forms and offers Aristotle in support of this. Again, this is indubitable. Yet what is meant here is too easily misconstrued to not merit further attention.

Aristotle says that,

Socrates in the Phaedo first blames everybody else for having given no explanation; and then lays it down that 'some things are Forms, others Participants in the Forms', and that 'while a thing is said to "be" in virtue of the Form, it is said to "come-to-be" qua "sharing in", to "pass-away" qua "losing", the Form'. Hence he thinks that 'assuming the truth of these theses, the Forms must be causes both of coming-to-be and of passing-away'. (Aristotle, Gen. Corr. Bk. IX, 335B10).

Burnet explains it this way:

...[N]o particular thing can become anything except by partaking in, or being occupied by, the Form of what it becomes, nor cease to be anything except by ceasing to partake in the Form.<sup>14</sup>

Burnet, although apparently having caught the full force of Aristotle's statement, fails to elaborate sufficiently. What is noticeable in his restatement of Aristotle's remark is the rider "anything". He says, "...no particular thing can become anything ... nor cease to be

<sup>12</sup>Cf. G. Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo", Plato I (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1971) p. 148.

<sup>13</sup>Burnet, p. 135.

<sup>14</sup>ibid. p. 135.

anything". It is evident that what Burnet has seen is that the Forms, through "participation", cause particulars to be what they are, not merely to be. The distinction is between existence and what might be deemed "existence as", meaning that we are given an account of how objects come to be qualified in a certain way, not how they come into existence. What Plato is intent upon supplying us with is a response to the question concerning how objects have come to be what they are. The answer tells us about the determination and characterization of matter, not how it has come to be. From this we can draw the conclusion that the causes that are discussed are not Efficient but Formal. They are presented to explain why things have a certain character, not why they exist.

The manner in which the causal theory of Phaedo is described provides, I believe, sufficient grounds to claim that the Forms are not Efficient causes. They are never represented as creative forces but as real, universal predicates or characters which, by "participation", explain why material objects are what they are (Ph. 100D). But this is precisely because they are Formal, not Efficient, causes. The εἶδος or essence of something "makes" it what it is. This view parallels a comment made by Hackforth:

Beauty itself is not the cause of a beautiful thing,  
but of a thing's being beautiful.<sup>15</sup>

An attack has been launched by Vlastos against this interpretation. He conjectures that this understanding still commits one to the position that the Forms are Efficient causes, although of the qualities of things

---

<sup>15</sup>Hackforth, p. 144.

rather than the things themselves.<sup>16</sup> If Vlastos is correct in his reading of this statement then this is quite true, and his own view is an attempt to circumvent this problem. Before we consider Vlastos' argument, let us differentiate between Formal and Efficient causes.

It is the function of a Formal cause to account for something being a certain way and thus it "makes" it what it is. With Efficient causality the "makes" refers to the alteration or change of one thing into another, or of its movement from one place to a different place. A Formal cause, however, does not alter it makes an entity what it is. The distinguishing mark is the efficacy of Efficient causes as opposed to the inability of a Formal cause to produce anything in this sense. A Formal cause and its effect are not separable. In the case of Forms and particulars, the qualifying attributes become manifest in the particular because of its participation in a certain Form. There is no causal efficacy at all and hence no producing of qualities. The Form, as has been shown, is "present in" the particular. Consequently, the quality or qualities in particulars are nothing more than the manifestation of Forms in particular objects. There is nothing efficacious here, nor is there activity on the part of the Forms for they are clearly ascribed immutability (Ph. 78D. 79D). If there is any sort of activity at all it is from the empirical side; objects "participate" in Forms, not vice versa, although I must admit that I am quite dubious as to what this would mean.

Vlastos' way of dealing with the problem is very astute, yet it appears to leave us where we began. He submits that the Forms are the

---

<sup>16</sup>Vlastos, p. 145.

logical-metaphysical *αἰτιῶν*; <sup>17</sup> logical in the sense that they provide the conditions which must be met in order for a thing to be a certain way, and metaphysical because logical statements presuppose metaphysical ones. He adds that particulars come to meet these requirements when they "participate" in specific Forms. <sup>18</sup>

But what exactly does Vlastos' last statement mean? If he is suggesting that particulars take on attributes by means of their association with a Form, and that these attributes are distinct from the Form, then we are again faced with the original problem, that particulars take on certain attributes through their participation in Forms. In other words, Vlastos takes us no farther in our attempt to understand "participation". Although I would endorse his main points, especially those against Hackforth, we are still left without an explanation of "participation".

Far from being clear of all difficulties, my interpretation, although dispensing with any notion that the Forms are Efficient causes, still leads to further problems. Perhaps the most obvious is the seemingly blatant difference between Forms and their appearance in the world. Certainly no one would claim that qualities and Forms are identical, and I am not about to. The imperfection of these qualities as displayed in the sensible realm is because of the nature of the matter in which they appear. Herein lies the fundamental distinction between Forms and qualities. The most serious problems which arise from this interpretation I must leave until later.

---

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p. 147-148.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* p. 147-148.

Returning to the dialogue we see that the question of the cause of generation and destruction has been given an answer. Objects come to be what they are through "participating" in a specific Form; they cease to be so qualified when they no longer participate in that Form.

It will be remembered that Socrates also sought a teleological explanation which he had hoped could be found in the teachings of Anaxagoras. This was not discovered and Socrates set off on his own. The possibility of construing the Forms as Final causes is legitimate both in respect of the Phaedo and the Philebus. The suggestions of the Phaedo at 74D and those of the Philebus at 53D through 54D make it abundantly clear that "becoming" is always for the sake of "being". In other words, empirical objects by their very nature being incomplete, are always striving toward their completion; the Form in which they participate. With this as our grounding it could be argued that the Forms are the  $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  of the material world. As interesting and substantial as this conclusion is, it is rather narrow.

The teleology that Socrates expected Anaxagoras to expound is quite different from that just proposed. Equally as dissimilar is his own answer to why he was sitting in prison. In both instances it is "the powerful agency of a mind"<sup>19</sup> which provides the teleological account. On the basis of this difference it would appear rather implausible to assume that Plato meant the Forms to serve as Final causes. They certainly do not fill the role required to end Socrates' search, nor, as we shall see, are they supposed to.

Prior to expressing his second and final answer, Socrates provides

---

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* p. 144.



us with additional information to pave the way for his concluding remarks. He proceeds with further clarification, via examples, of the type of causality that has already been adopted. The examples given demonstrate both that particulars can share in more than one Form at the same time, and also that they may partake of opposite Forms.

...[D]o you not, when you say that Simmias is greater than Socrates, and smaller than Phaedo, say that there is in Simmias greatness and smallness? (Ph. 102B)

Aside from the fact that a single particular may share in opposite Forms, we are also reminded that these Forms are in some way immanent (Cf. pp. 9-12. This does not, however, mean that the Forms are wholly immanent.). What happens now sets the stage for Socrates' concluding argument for the immortality of the soul and sheds further light on the doctrine of causality.

The thrust of this section is that the Forms themselves can never admit their opposite, and Forms as concretized "in us" (Ph. 102D5) react in a similar fashion. Upon the advance of an opposite Form, Socrates explains, the original as it is found in us either "flees or withdraws" (Ph. 102D9). An objection is raised at this time by one of the listeners. He is perplexed by the present tenet and its seemingly contrary position to what was advanced earlier; that opposites are generated from opposites (Ph. 70E-72A). Socrates listens attentively and then retorts that what is being spoken of now are Forms, but earlier he had been referring to "concrete things" (Ph. 103B3). The difference is this: a body or object may become cold after it has been warm, but the "coldness" or "warmness" itself does not vary, only the particular which shares in these absolutes is subject to change. These preliminary statements bring us to the last phase of Socrates' proof of the soul's immortality.

It is now explained that there exist certain items which, although not themselves Forms, behave like Forms when approached by their opposite. The entities under discussion are those which are characterized by a certain Form as long as they exist - snow-cold, fire-heat, three-odd, where the latter in the series is the Form (Ph. 103D-104B). What we are to note here is the peculiar constitution of the items in question. The examples presented, although entities tied to the corporeal world, necessarily entail a certain Form, and though not themselves opposites, will not and cannot, at the risk of annihilation, admit the opposite of the Form necessarily present to them.

The significance of this new complexity in the causal theory is illuminated in Socrates' assertion that,

[I]f you ask me what causes anything in which it is to be hot, I will not give you that safe but stupid answer and say that it is heat, but I can now give a more refined answer, that it is fire; (Ph. 105B-C)

Using the same line of reasoning Socrates tells us that the cause of a body being ill will not be "illness" but "Fever"; the cause of the oddness of a number, not "Oddness"; but "Unity".

There are certain difficulties in interpreting this passage which have led to considerable debate. At 103E where the discussion refers to fire and snow, heat and cold it seems quite evident that the latter are absolutes. As the text advances to the "more refined answer" it is not as easily ascertained as to where Plato refers to Forms and where he meant particulars.

If we accept the view that fire, fever, unity and the soul (which is also among these) are not Forms, we could claim compatibility with the statement at 103E. Yet this seems highly suspect in light of the

fact that Socrates informs us that these entities "take possession of" particulars (Ph. 104D2). This prohibits the possibility that these items are particulars and lends further credibility to the belief that they are Forms. But if we adhere to this idea, we must then admit that the soul is a Form. This would be incompatible with the previously expressed position that the soul is "akin" to the Forms (Ph. 78C-80B). It was never explicitly stated nor implied that the soul is a Form, only that it is like the Forms. We should also remember, as does Guthrie,<sup>20</sup> that the soul knows, the Forms are known and do not know.

Whatever these new entities may be, it is indubitable that they have a close affinity to a Form which is other than their own nature. But, at the same time, their sole being is not attributed to that Form with which they are so closely allied. If this was the case, they would then bear the name of that Form; e.g., fire, the sensible entity, would not be called "fire" but "heat" (see Ph. 104B-C). Thus each article we are considering is something unto itself yet essentially characterized by a certain Form. In the case of fire it is "Heat", fever - "illness", unity - "oddness"<sup>21</sup> and finally soul - "Life".

If we unpack the schema that is laid out, we face something like this: there exists something A which carries with it the Form  $\Phi$ , and when A is present to an object it causes this object to have  $\Phi$ -ness. To put it another way, when "fire", which is essentially characterized by the Form "Heat", is present to a body, this presence causes that body

---

<sup>20</sup>Guthrie, p. 360.

<sup>21</sup>Unity, although constitutive of each number, is here juxtaposed to Duality. The former is characterized by "oddness", the latter by "Evenness".

to be hot.

On the strength of this interpretation alone we are no further ahead in solving our dilemma. We cannot be assured as to exactly what Plato meant these new entities to be. That they are not particulars seems certain but whether or not they are Forms is open for debate. In the face of this we must go to the heart of the matter to decide if Plato's earlier understanding of causality has drastically altered.

By carefully weighing the content of Socrates' second answer we can see that although these entities are ascribed the status of "causes", what they bring about is merely that quality which essentially characterizes them. In fact, it is solely because fire is essentially characterized by, and always bears the Form "Heat" that it can cause a body to be hot. These entities are thus only mediators between Forms and particulars. Understood in this way, the Forms are still the sole ~~causes~~ <sup>causal</sup>. Plato's causation was therefore not essentially altered.

The final remark to be made at this point deals with the cleverness of the explanation. The introduction of Socrates' second answer has added a new complexity to Plato's causal theory, but without significantly changing it. What gives rise to the appellation "more refined" (Ph. 105C2) is the additional specificity which accompanies the answer. If a better explanation is required, then it is necessary that an answer be provided which is more specific, that adds more information. This is exactly what Plato has accomplished. What this new complexity is, however, is not clear.

We may want to agree with Ross who believes these new entities to be Forms and the specificity of the answer to be none other than the

genus-species distinction.<sup>22</sup> This view, albeit interesting, is unfortunately rather deficient. The difficulties with Ross' first assumption have already been shown. The second suggestion, aside from its being parasitic upon the first, holds only in part; that is, all the examples Socrates mentions do not fit the genus-species separation.

The problems involved in ascertaining what Plato has discovered in this second response are too numerous and not important enough for this thesis to merit further investigation. Let it be sufficient here to remark that his view of causality is essentially as it was earlier in the dialogue. The Forms and "participation" still play the same role and thus the second answer is in this way a continuation of the first. Plato has remained faithful to his original position that the Forms are the sole *αἰτιαι*.

The dialogue continues with further discussion concerning the soul's immortality and a myth is presented to describe its journey after death. However, no new light is shed upon the theory of causality.

In order that we may gain a perspective for what is to follow, a few brief remarks should be made concerning what has already been said. We have seen that the Forms are pure, eternal, immutable and constitute "true being". They are also said to be the *αἰτιαι* of the sensible world. But this does not mean that they are "causes" in the strict sense. They are certainly not active agents, and to say that the Forms act in a causal fashion would be totally misleading. These metaphysical items are, in a sense, reasons; they are what is responsible for the objects of the sensible realm being a certain way. What "causes" or accounts for

---

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Ross, p. 33.

an object being what it is is not the Form alone, but the "participating" of that object in the Form.

To grasp that this is what Plato meant is not difficult and, I believe, has been sufficiently demonstrated (see p. 13-14). To make sense of this conception and lay it bare is, however, quite a different matter.


I have argued that the Forms are both immanent and transcendent. What this means in terms of the present problem is that a Form is, by itself, a transcendent entity. It is only by virtue of "participation" that it can come to be immanent. Hence, to say that an object is a certain way, is to express the fact that the Form which explains this item being the way it is and not otherwise is present to it or in it. Further, it is "participation" in the Form which "causes" particulars to be the way they are. The existence of Forms may provide an account of the world being the way it is, but it is the sharing in these Forms which actually necessitates that the world is this way. Provided that a specific Form, through "participation", manifests itself in a particular, then this particular cannot be other than what it is.

The main implication of this immanence-transcendence theory in terms of "participation" is the problem of the distribution of a non-spatial, non-temporal unity over a number of corporeal entities. If "participation" means that a transcendent incorporeal item somehow presents itself in a concrete particular, then it must be separate from itself and cannot be a unity. Not only will this occur in one particular, but in all particulars of the same type. This difficulty is one among many attended to in Parmenides and so will be left until we reach that

dialogue. First, however, we must direct our inquiry to the Republic and Phaedrus to see if any additional information can be gained.

Beside what has already been said regarding "participation" there is, with respect to what was previously mentioned, one more point which needs further attention. I attempted earlier to explain the framework within which Plato answered the question of the cause of generation and destruction. The reader will recall that the answer was expressed in terms of the characterization of objects, not their existence. An object is, and is what it is because it "participates" in a certain Form. Plato does not inform us as to how things come to be, only how they come to be what they are. This is mainly because he lacks a doctrine, or account of matter. Clearly we can see that Plato does understand that qualities inhere in something, but what this is he does not explain. Generation and destruction, by his account, is to be understood in the sense of participation in certain Forms and ceasing to participate in these Forms. Hence, the generation and destruction of a specific thing is with respect to qualitative change. Objects as particular substances do not come to be nor cease to be, they only alter their qualities.

The modern reader might regard Plato's answer as one which neglects the fundamental aspect of the question, or answers only part of it. When we speak of generation and destruction it usually conveys the idea of existence and non-existence, not what Plato has described. But, for him, there is no distinction between the two - at least not here. What a thing is and that it is are merely two phrases which express the same notion. If Plato says that something is, he means that it is something. Consequently, the answer which accounts for generation and



destruction by the participation of objects in Forms is perfectly sound in respect of how he understands the question. Thus, the characterization of an entity and its "being" are not separated.

It is apparent then, that there is no distinction made between qualitative change and coming-to-be and passing away. For a particular to exist it must participate in certain Forms. It ceases to be what it is, and thus ceases to exist, when it no longer partakes of these Forms.

By means of extrapolation we have been able to provide a few sketchy remarks concerning the role of "participation". The complete exposition of this "relation" is, however, still wanting. Plato has not chosen here to offer a complete account and it remains to be seen if he will indeed do so. As it stands, we are still shrouded in darkness as to the nature of "participation".

#### Republic:

The Republic supplies us with a more complex ontological schema than we met with in the Phaedo. Along with this expanded explanation of the world we also encounter a few new additions to the idea of "participation". Although the theory of Forms re-emerges in the fifth book of the Republic and appears in various places after this, the focus of this discussion will be on those passages which show peculiar relevance to our topic.

At 476A we are confronted with a section which adds more complexity to our task.

And in respect of the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, and all the ideas or forms, the same statement holds, that in itself each is one, but that by virtue of their communion with actions and bodies and with one



another they present themselves everywhere, each as a multiplicity of aspects (Rep. 476A).

This section appears troublesome because of the introduction of a new thought not reminiscent of the Phaedo. If we can invoke spatial metaphors to aid in clarification, we could then interpret these lines to reveal a vertical relation between Forms and particulars, and a horizontal one among Forms themselves. This added dimension to the notion of "participation" gives rise to an additional enigma. Not only do particulars share in Forms, but Forms also share in other Forms. Obviously we cannot ascribe the same meaning to these two relations. On the one hand there is "participation" between two different ontological levels. (Plato assures us of this difference between Forms and particulars in the Cave allegory and the simile of the Divided Line. Rep. 509D-520A) In this case, the Forms, via participation, account for particulars being what they are. This certainly cannot be what is meant by Forms sharing in Forms. Here we have a relation between entities of the same ontological type. Since Forms are completions of their own natures and first principles, they could not be said to derive their being from other Forms. We must therefore not only explain "participation" as it applies to particulars, but also in its application to the world of Forms. We will see more of this interweaving of the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$  when we reach the Sophist.

At the risk of digressing it is important to offer a few more comments concerning the independent being of each Form. The Sophist, as we shall see, provides information to the effect that the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$  are interrelated. This may suggest that the Forms derive their being from other Forms, or that they are not ontologically independent of each other.

Be that as it may, we must ask this question. If each Form is not ontologically independent of other Forms are we then forced to assume a hierarchy of Forms? Also, this interpretation suggests that certain Forms, could not be first principles, they are dependent on other Forms. I suggest that Forms may interrelate with respect to their specific natures being dependent upon their relationship to other Forms, but that they are still ontologically independent of each other. This will become clearer in my discussion of the Sophist.

Following this re-introduction of the Forms we encounter a three-fold division: that which is, that which is not, and what lies between these extremes. The three divisions are here utilized to distinguish between the philosopher and the non-philosopher in respect of the objects which engage them. Socrates concludes that the philosopher, by directing himself to "that which entirely is" (Rep. 477A2), knows. The non-philosopher, by virtue of his occupation with the items that "lie between that which absolutely and unqualifiedly is and that which in no way is" (Rep. 477A5), only opines.

This distinction between the objects of knowledge and the objects of opinion deals the final blow in Plato's ontological and epistemological severance between Being and Becoming. We do not know particulars nor do they have the same ontological status as the Forms. Of this we can be quite sure, but it must also be realized that, although different, the two realms are not entirely distinct<sup>23</sup> and cannot be so. The reason for this is not far to seek. Since the εἶδη are the αἰτιᾶν of the corporeal world it must be affiliated with them, and this affiliation is, of course, "participation".

---

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Burnet, p. 134.

Socrates has put forth the view that the constituents of the world of Becoming are midway between being and not-being. It has been argued that the very possibility that these items can be the objects of opinion entails that they must be even if only partially. This disparaged being of particulars we can attribute to "participation".

To account for the being of particulars by "participation" in Forms is to assert the dependence of one on the other. This dependence, Guthrie tells us, is the reason for the "lesser reality" of sensible objects. Guthrie contends that since the Forms are the necessary prerequisite for the being of the empirical world, then particulars bear a secondary existence to them.<sup>24</sup> Particulars are thus not ontologically bankrupt but they do have a secondary existence to the Forms. Most assuredly this is a portion of what Plato has in mind, but we must ask if this is all that is meant.

Each particular is a combination of certain Forms, which constitute the what of a thing, and matter which is subject to change. In other words, corporeal objects are not "pure being" but a mixture of Form and matter. This is not, however, to suggest that Plato has a particular doctrine of matter. Indeed, he does not speak in this way in any of his works. However, it is quite clear that objects are a combination of Forms and something in which qualities can inhere. Thus, provided that particulars are such composites and considering that Plato ascribes pure being and reality to the Forms alone, then what else could we conclude but that particulars are "less real". It is not merely that particulars have a "secondary existence" to the Forms

---

<sup>24</sup>Guthrie, Vol. IV, p. 497.

nor that their dependence upon the  $\epsilon\lambda\omicron\eta$  is the origin of their disparaged being. The nature of a concrete object as a combination of Forms and that within which they inhere, is sufficient in itself to reveal that particulars, understood as Plato envisages reality, must be less real.

The explication of Plato's ontological structure of the world is most propounded in his similes of the Divided Line and the Cave. We can, however, with one exception, set these analogies and the remainder of the Republic aside as not exhibiting any new information for our discussion. The exception is Plato's idea of the Good which by its presence adds a new dimension to the notion of "participation".

The difficulties surrounding the articulation of what Plato means by the Good are numerous. One such enigma is the absence of this particular characterization of it in any other dialogue. In view of this one might be well advised to consider later allusions to the idea (especially Philebus 64E-65A) and attempt to reconcile the differing passages.

A different problem, and more important to our task, is Plato's failure to tell us what he means. Fortunately, his insertion of analogies does provide considerable aid in ascertaining the role of the Good, even though its precise nature is not expressed. Perhaps the use of analogical language should serve as a warning that either Plato does not know exactly what this principle is, or that ordinary language is inadequate to expound what it is. Indeed, this latter remark is substantiated by Plato's remarks in the Seventh Letter concerning the limitations of the written word (Ep. VII 342E5-343A5). In any event we must disregard this for the present time and gather what information

we can from the statements made.

Socrates begins ~~at 506E~~ to draw a parallel between the sun and the Good. The sun, he says, is the "offspring of the good and most nearly made in its likeness ..." (Rep. 506E7). The sun, being the source of light, is that which allows for the visibility and thus for the possibility of distinguishing between empirical objects. Similarly, it is the "light" of the Good which permits the intellect to apprehend and to know the Forms. As the sun is the cause of vision in the percipient, so the Good gives the "power of knowing to the knower" (Rep. 508E2). Not only does the Good illumine the realm of the ~~Eiōn~~<sup>ἰδῶν</sup>, but, Socrates remarks,

...the objects of knowledge not only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it, though the good itself is not essence but still surpasses it in dignity and surpassing power (Rep. 509B).

We can conclude from this passage that first, the Good transcends the Forms and second, that the Forms derive their being from it. Certain comments extracted from the Cave analogy substantiate this further.

Socrates says,

...in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of the good, and that when seen it must needs point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and the author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, ... (Rep. 517B8-C4).

In conjunction with this statement ~~we~~ can also invoke Socrates' earlier remark which is easily recognized as a reference to the Good. Here he adds to his description of the Good with the assertion that it is "...that which requires no assumption and is the starting point of all"

(Rep. 511B8). Clearly these three excerpts implicate the Good as the first cause ( $\alpha\lambda\tau\alpha$ ) of "all things" and as something which is more fundamental than the Forms.<sup>25</sup>

If we recall the discussion of causality up to now it seems reasonable to suppose that "participation" also has a part to play here. Given that the Good is the "cause" of the Forms and all else, then the Forms must participate in the Good. This presents the culmination of the Platonic metaphysics: a single first principle which is the source of all Being yet is itself somehow "beyond being". Consequently, the Forms are and are known because of the Good.

Plato never actually says that the relationship between the Forms and the Good is one of "participation". Yet, if we proceed on the premise that his causal view has not changed radically from the Phaedo, and there is no evidence to suggest that it has, I think we are safe in our assumption. Particulars participate in Forms and Forms participate in the Good. The Forms sustain the empirical world and, in turn, the Good sustains the Forms. Indirectly, each particular, because it shares in a Form, will also have its portion of the Good. Unfortunately, even if this is as I have outlined we are still no closer to uncovering the precise nature of "participation". In fact, aside from the earlier allusions to the blending of Forms and the additional complication of the issue, the Republic adds virtually nothing to what was said in the Phaedo concerning "participation". But my reason for including these

---

<sup>25</sup>The statement at 511B cited above informs us that the Good is no mere hypothesis but something very definitely present. Assuming this to be the case, the Forms, since they are derived from a non-hypothetical first principle, have lost whatever hypothetical status they had in the Phaedo.

comments on the Republic was not that it would initially yield further insight into the nature of "participation". Rather, it is the positing of a single  $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\alpha$  which I believe to be the most significant advance of the Republic.

It seems that we now have two first principles, the Forms and the Good. Let me qualify this. The Forms, through "participation", account for particulars being what they are. This means that each Form has a specific nature and this characteristic becomes manifest in the sensible world via "participation". In this way the Forms remain first principles of the empirical realm. The Good, on the other hand, is also a first principle, but it accounts for something far more fundamental.

The ontological hierarchy of the Republic presents a unification of both the many particulars of the corporeal world and the many Forms. The former find their source of unity in the Form in which they participate, the latter in the Good. The significance of this structure in relation to causality is this: the Forms are the first principles of the empirical realm and the Good is the source of all reality. The fundamental distinction is that the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$  are responsible for things being the way they are, and the Good is the reason for there being anything at all.<sup>26</sup> We therefore see why the Good, the source of all reality, transcends all being "in dignity and surpassing power".

Although the Forms have retained the role ascribed to them in the Phaedo, the postulation of a single and primary  $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\alpha$  is indeed significant.

---

<sup>26</sup> Whether this remark leads to the conclusion that being and essence are here separated will not become clear until the concluding chapter. Even though this appears to be the consequence, I believe it best to consider what is said here in conjunction with the later dialogues in order that we may uncover the answer.

What the Forms lacked by not supplying a single, unifying, ordering and sustaining principle of all, Plato has found in the Good.

The insertion of the Good into Plato's metaphysical scheme has not, in actuality, altered his causal explanation of the world, although it has certainly added to it. The main component of this explanation is still "participation". Thus, it may well be that there is no reason whatsoever for believing this addition of the Republic to affect our discussion. I submit, however, that the introduction of this single and primary  $\alpha\tau\tau\acute{\alpha}$ , aside from revealing a marked advance in Plato's metaphysical explanation, indicates that there may occur further alterations in his causal views. Certainly the positing of a highest first principle and the consequent reduction of the status of the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$  suggests the possibility of additional changes in the other dialogues. If this is the case, then surely it is plausible to assume that the notion of "participation" may also alter or perhaps disappear! We must proceed with our investigation and be watchful for these possibilities. To uncover the nature of "participation" we must first ascertain its final place in the Platonic metaphysics.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### Transition

The second chapter provides a framework from within which we can scrutinize "participation" and its function. We have seen that it is through "participation" that empirical objects come to be what they are. In addition to this, we must also recognize a second role of "participation". If we return to the Phaedo for a moment this second function can be elucidated.

Socrates begins to espouse the theory of Recollection at Phaedo 74A. The primary objective of his discussion is to explain how we come to have knowledge of absolutes or Forms. He concludes that we are "reminded" of them when we perceive sensible objects which bear qualities resembling the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$ . Although it is not explicitly stated here, it is clear that these qualities manifest themselves in the perceptible world via "participation". Consequently, we "recollect" the Forms because there is this relation between Forms and particulars. The second role of "participation" is epistemological.

Provided that both the ontological and the epistemological functions of "participation" remain as they are at this stage, we must then concentrate on explaining what this idea could possibly mean without falling prey to the logical absurdities it seems to suggest. If, however, we discover that it does not continue to operate in the same capacities laid out in the Phaedo and Republic, it will then be necessary to show why

this change occurs and what significance it holds for discovering the nature of this "relation".

Phaedrus:

The complexity of Plato's understanding of the Forms continues to grow in the Phaedrus. The dialogue is ostensibly about ἔρως and contains a long narrative which examines the tripartite nature of the soul and its journey through the heavens after death. The ascent of the soul through this realm culminates in its final viewing of "the things outside of heaven" (Phaed. 247C2). It is here, "in the region above the heaven" (Phaed. 247C3), that the Forms dwell.

For the colourless, formless, and intangible truly existing essence, with which all true knowledge is concerned, holds this region and is visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul (Phaed. 247C).

The εἶδη are considered here in a somewhat different manner than before. There is no mention of the relation between the metaphysical and the empirical, but there are explicit remarks revealing the interweaving of Forms.

Socrates describes two procedures to Phaedrus in order to demonstrate the art of the dialectician. The first is this:

That of perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, that one may make clear by definition the particular thing which he wishes to explain; just as now, in speaking of Love, we said what he is and defined it, whether well or ill. Certainly by this means the discourse acquired clearness and consistency (Phaed. 265D).

The second,

[t]hat of dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are, and not trying to break any part, after the manner of a bad carver. As our two discourses

just now assumed one common principle, unreason, and then, just as the body which is one, is naturally divisible into two, right and left, with parts called by the same name, so our two discourses conceived of madness as naturally one principle within us, and one discourse, cutting off the left-hand part, continued to divide this until it found among its parts a sort of left-handed love, which it very justly reviled, but the other discourse, leading us to the right-hand part of madness, found a love having the same name as the first, but divine, which it held up to view and praised as the author of our greatest blessings (Phaed. 265E-266B).

In the first procedure the stress is placed upon the recognition of a single Form suggested by similarities obtaining between particulars. Considering the case Socrates has just spoken of, we recognize various types of madness (Phaed. 265A), and we apprehend that they are items which share a common element - madness. The accomplishing of this is the bringing together of "scattered particulars" within "one idea". Once this first task is completed we begin the second procedure and take this single idea and divide it where the divisions occur naturally.

These two processes of collection and division, which comprise the art of dialectic, are, first, the recognition that a number of items are of the same genus and, second, the ability to divide this genus into species. In other words, Socrates is advocating the need for order in discourse. If we are to discuss love ( $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ ) we must first "collect" it within its genus (madness). From here we "divide" the genus until we can articulate how many kinds of madness there are and what type love is, eventually isolating it as one particular species of this genus.

But aside from this demonstration of the order which Socrates believes to be requisite for clear and consistent discourse, what is

implied is the ordering of the Forms. What is emphasized is the "seeing" of a single universal in order to give a definition (Phaed. 265D5) and then being able to sub-divide this universal. This can only refer to the εἶδη. Perhaps Ross says it best when he describes the Phaedrus as "...standing at a transition point of Plato's thought, in which he is passing from the assertion of the existence of Ideas to study the structure of the hierarchy which they form."<sup>1</sup>

What we learn from the Phaedrus is precisely this: there is a hierarchy of Forms related as genus and species, and this brings into focus the "blending" of Forms that Plato had alluded to in the Republic (see p. 26-28).<sup>2</sup> What can be said about this "relation" is, at this stage, minimal. This is certainly not a blending or mixing that can be understood in the same sense as, for example, the blending of scotch and water. Forms are by no means entities of the same sort as these. They cannot stand in relation to one another as extended things can; they are non-spatial. Thus, if they blend, it must be a type of internal relatedness as opposed to the external spatial relations exhibited in the world of the manifold. We could describe this, in the case of genus and species, as an essential binding between principles which is necessary for the Form of a certain species to be what it is.

<sup>1</sup>W.D. Ross, Plato's Theory of Ideas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Plato has not actually utilized the term συνταγή (blending) to illustrate this relationship among Forms. At Republic 476A the word κοινωνία (communion) denotes this relation and in the Phaedrus this notion is only implicitly present. But it is indubitable that the statements made both here in the Phaedrus and in the Republic are the forerunners of Plato's συνταγή εἶδη found in the Sophist. It is because of this that I have used the term "blending".

The above indicates that, by virtue of their differences in type, Forms do not and cannot "relate" in the manner of particulars. Additionally, it should be noted that the "participation" of Becoming in Being is not identical with either the connections between Forms or those among particulars (see p. 27). Obviously we could not construe "participation" as implying a similar sort of relation as that which exists between corporeal objects. Indeed, we should not call it a relation at all. Consider the following from C.P. Bigger:

There are not two sorts of things, forms and instances, and a relation, participation, between them. Forms are not things. They constitute things, in the sense of providing Becoming with a definite pattern of activity, with a determinate character. There are no instances of Becoming unless there are forms. This relation between the form and its instance does not, like "greater than" or "above", hold between two existing things; rather it is a real relation which constitutes the instancing relatum as such.<sup>3</sup>

Bigger wants us to eliminate any misunderstanding that "participation" is a kind of relation which exists between two entities which are already present. Objects do not come to be until they "participate" in a certain Form and so this cannot be a relation of the type mentioned. Bigger calls it a "real relation" and says that it is "one whereby at least one relatum is through the other".<sup>4</sup> We can accept this tenet without doubt and proceed with the understanding that we are dealing with something which exists between Forms and particulars, but which bears no resemblance to the relations among particulars and little similarity to those between Forms. This last allegation will be attended to in the latter portion of

---

<sup>3</sup>C.P. Bigger, Participation: A Platonic Inquiry (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p. 74.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

this chapter.

We now reach a dialogue where Plato appears to subject his own philosophic views to such severe scrutiny and criticism that we would be well advised to question his motives. I am referring of course to the Parmenides.

Parmenides:

The dialogue can be divided into two parts. The first deals with a series of criticisms levelled against the theory of Forms and their affiliation with the corporeal world. The second begins at 137C and is labelled by Cornford a "dialectical exercise".<sup>5</sup> The controversy surrounding the interpretation of this second part, coupled with the intricacies of what is stated, force me to abandon any thoughts of including it in the discussion. I shall leave this then and turn my attention to the first section, which, upon examination, removes any uncertainty with regard to its importance to the problem of "participation".

Early in the dialogue, Socrates is portrayed as a young man in contrast to the older Parmenides (Parm.127B-C). Taking into account the critical nature of the dialogue, one could advance the notion that Plato's portrayal of Socrates as young is significant. The significance may be that Plato is alluding to the immaturity of Socrates' philosophic beliefs and is thus planning to abandon them. However, this suggests that the theory of Forms discussed in the Parmenides is Socratic in origin. Although this may be the case, it is highly doubtful since there is no concrete evidence with which to support this tenet. Rather,

---

<sup>5</sup>F.M. Cornford, Plato and Parmenides (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., reprint - no date), p. 109.

it appears far more plausible that the theory of Forms discussed in this dialogue is Plato's first formulation of this idea, and the youth of Socrates is thus a reference to Plato's first attempt to provide justification for the Socratic search for definitions. But before offering a final assessment of the meaning of the dialogue, let us take a close look at what is said in the first part.<sup>6</sup>

Socrates introduces the Forms at 129A to serve as an answer to Zeno's position against pluralism. There is no difficulty, says Socrates, in the assertion that corporeal objects are many and must be both like and unlike. Provided that there are Forms of likeness and unlikeness and particulars participate in these Forms, then there are no grounds for Zeno's assumption that absurd consequences follow from the assertion that things are many. Socrates continues with the comment that what he would find amazing is not what Zeno had postulated but "if anyone showed that the absolute like becomes unlike, or the unlike like,..." (Parm. 129B 1-3). Parmenides has listened attentively to Socrates' remarks and now begins his questions.

The first query directed at Socrates concerns the scope of the theory. Parmenides first asks whether Socrates believes that there are Forms of likeness, unity and plurality. Socrates agrees that there are. Next, he asks about the Forms of the beautiful, the just and the good. Socrates also assents to these. The third group of Forms Socrates expresses doubt about, and these are man, fire and water. Finally,

---

<sup>6</sup>This is not to suggest that the second portion of this dialogue is unimportant. Its importance, I believe, we can assert with ease. I am, however, concerned only with the criticisms of the first section, and these in themselves reveal a great deal about the dialogue and its overall significance.

Parmenides asks if there are Forms of hair, mud and dirt. To this Socrates exclaims, "[b]y no means" (Parm. 130D3), but then asserts that he has at times been rather dubious as to the existence of such Forms. Parmenides attributes Socrates' unwillingness to accept these last two groups to his youth and then proceeds to his next question.

Two items are noteworthy here: first, the apparent separation of Forms into different kinds; second, the mention of Forms for all classes of particulars and Socrates' reluctance to accept this. Even though the questions Parmenides asks are directed to different examples of Forms, it is evident that there are three distinct kinds of Forms discussed. The first group reflects a different type of Form than either specific attributes or natural kinds exhibited in the second and third examples respectively.<sup>7</sup>

The distinguishing of Forms into kinds again indicates the further complexity of the realm of the εἶδη. The important suggestion, however, is the possible equivocity of "participation". Bigger acknowledges three different groups of Forms in the opening pages of the Parmenides and labels them Transcendental, Regulative and Constitutive respectively.<sup>8</sup> He then concludes his discussion of these kinds of Forms with the lines:

[w]hatever else it is, participation is not univocal  
It differs with respect to the kind of idea  
(transcendental, constitutive, or regulative) which  
may be in question.<sup>9</sup>

The presence of these three groups of Forms is unquestionable. However, we need further clarification of Bigger's point if this is to aid in our inquiry.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ross, p. 84.

<sup>8</sup> Bigger, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 96.



Briefly, a description of the types of Forms can be offered by way of example. Transcendental Forms are exemplified by likeness, unity and plurality. Regulative Forms are of the type suggested by the just, the beautiful and the good. The final group are the Constitutive Forms of man, fire and water. We can see by these examples that Constitutive Forms are those which constitute the particulars which partake of them.<sup>10</sup> The Transcendentals comprise "the fundamental principles of philosophic logic"<sup>11</sup> and the Regulative Forms stand as paradigms or exemplars which are never fully realized in the empirical world.<sup>12</sup>

This apparent separation of Forms into kinds is perhaps, but not necessarily, sufficient to substantiate Bigger's remark that "participation is not univocal". But, whether or not this leads us closer to a solution, as Bigger believes, remains to be seen. However, I would conjecture at this point that if "participation" carries these three different senses then it appears to complicate our task. We must not only explain it, but explain it in its various uses.

In regard to Socrates' reluctance to accept Forms for all classes of particulars we can assent to Ross' observation that

[t]he effect of Parmenides remarks at the end of the passage is to express Plato's conviction that such doubts should be discarded and the principle stated in the Republic maintained.<sup>13</sup>

The section of the Republic that Ross refers to is at 596A.

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-96.

<sup>13</sup> Ross, p. 85.

We are in the habit, I take it of positing a single idea or form in the case of the various multiplicities to which we give the same name (Rep. 596A).

In other words, Parmenides' statement, citing Socrates' youth as an explanation of his hesitation, is meant to express Plato's own coming of age and his recognition that to offer an account of the world must entail each class of particulars. This also suggests that Plato has noticed certain inadequacies in his theory and thus may proceed in a different manner in an attempt to overcome these shortcomings. Let us see if this is so.

The second question is levelled directly at "participation" and its meaning. Parmenides asks whether particulars "partake of the whole idea, or of a part of it" (Parm. 131A7). Socrates sees no difficulty in saying that objects partake of the whole Form. To this Parmenides comments that the Form would be in many different things and would therefore be separate from itself. The unity of the Form would be lost; it could not be one and the same Form but a multiplicity of Forms of the same type. Socrates quickly proposes that perhaps the Form is like day, one and the same, in many different places at once, yet not separate from itself. Parmenides counters that this is similar to laying a sail over a number of men and assuming it to be one sail over many. The problem, however, is that only a part of the sail would be over each individual, not the whole sail. This leads Parmenides to conclude that the Form must be divisible. Again, this is unacceptable since absurd consequences will result from this stand.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> See Parm. 131D-E.

The startling results of Parmenides' arguments culminate in the disclosure of the impossibility of "participation" being explained in either of the two ways offered. In both cases the unity of the Form is sacrificed. Either there are many Forms of the same type, or each Form is divided into many parts. The former destroys the uniqueness of the Form and the latter the indivisibility of it.<sup>15</sup>

It is possible that Parmenides has failed to see that Forms are not particulars and that the truth of his accusations rest on this confusion.<sup>16</sup> But, even if this is so and we assume that Parmenides' objections rest on misleading analogies, we can be assured that "participation" cannot be explained in this manner. This is not to say that there could not be another explanation, but rather that what has been offered is not an adequate account. But I suggest that Plato believed these two possibilities to represent legitimate attempts to explain "participation", both of which fail. Herein lies the importance of the arguments. We are to gather from what has been said that Forms cannot be "present to" or "in" particulars in the manner described. We should also recall that Socrates conceded that there could be no other kind of participation than the two alternatives put forth (Parm. 131A5-8).

Parmenides deals the final blow against the idea that Forms are "present to" particulars by asserting that an additional Form will be necessary to effect "greatness" in both the Form and particulars which are great. This argument stands on the fact that the particular and the

---

<sup>15</sup>Cf. S. Panagiotou, Plato's Parmenides (Ph.D. Thesis, University of St. Andrews, 1977), Ch. 6, pp. 118-121.

<sup>16</sup>Ross, p. 86.

Form share a common feature. For this to obtain a third Form must be present and similarly a fourth and so on ad infinitum.

Socrates, not willing to be so easily devastated, proposes another solution; perhaps the εἶδη are thoughts. Parmenides then claims that if this is so we are committed to assuming that either "everything is made of thoughts, and all things think, or that, being thoughts, they are without thought" (Parm. 132C). Thus, if the Forms are thoughts, particulars must be constituted by these thoughts. We would then be faced with holding that all things think or that there are thoughts which do not think. Socrates admits the unreasonableness of this thesis.

It appears as if Parmenides has shattered any possible view that Forms could be "present to" particulars. As has been remarked, it may be discovered upon examination that there are difficulties with Parmenides' objections. To show that these problems are present would, of course, prove fatal to the arguments and indicate that one should not be hasty in dismissing the notions of the young Socrates. But, regardless of the validity of Parmenides' arguments, I will say again that their purpose is to serve as sufficient demonstration of the incorrectness of interpreting "participation" in this way. We now confront another possible explanation.

The final effort to explain the relation between Forms and particulars sets the εἶδη apart as patterns or exemplars. The relation is said to be one of resemblance or imitation (Parm. 132D3). Parmenides again counters that this will generate an infinite regression. If we embrace the idea that "participation" is a resembling or imitating of

the Form by the particular; then, Parmenides argues, we must accept that this resemblance is symmetrical; that is, the Form will also resemble the particular. Consequently, we must invoke an additional Form to explain the resemblance of the first Form and the particular.

Parmenides concludes:

[t]hen it is not by likeness that other things partake of ideas; we must seek some other method of participation (Parm. 133A).

The criticisms of Parmenides have been directed not to the theory of Forms, but to the proposed relations between Forms and particulars. Each of the foregoing discussions is an attempt to uncover the possible meaning of "participation" or, perhaps more precisely, how it can be explained. What is striking about the arguments is their apparently demolishing effect on both the immanence or "present to" thesis and the notion that Forms are transcendent. Either possibility appears to fall prey to absurd consequences. The severity of this attack, together with the results it generates and the fact that there are no resolutions offered, leaves us with a perplexing question: what is Plato trying to tell us?

Bigger claims that the arguments of the first part of the Parmenides "represent possible ways of misunderstanding participation, perhaps at times shared by Plato himself, and point to a revision of the theory...".<sup>17</sup> The first point we have already noted. The second awaits a completion of our entire analysis for final evaluation. Yet, even though Bigger presents a reasonable possibility, one cannot help but wonder whether

---

<sup>17</sup>Bigger, p. 97.

this is the actual thrust of the dialogue. The mere fact that Plato lets the criticisms of Parmenides remain unresolved informs us that he believes them to be at least troublesome, or perhaps irresolvable. If we presume the latter, then it is not a "revision of the theory" that is needed, but a different way of explaining what "participation" has been put forth to account for. Bigger already assumes that the notion can be explained. However, the presentation of the problems of the first part of the dialogue seems to be an exhaustive attempt to demonstrate that "participation" cannot be explained, and that any effort to do so concludes with the type of difficulties shown. Moreover, the implications of the text are that Plato has recognized that "participation" is a metaphor and as such is incapable of being explained. This is abundantly clear from the unsuccessful endeavors to effect a description of it. If he could have said what it was, why did he not take advantage of such an opportune moment to do so?

We could, at this point, simply adopt this fact of inexplicability and claim that Plato saw that he could not provide more than a metaphoric representation of the relationship between particulars and Forms. However tenable this may be, doubt is cast upon it by a suggestion within the text itself. This comment, cited above, emanates from Parmenides.

we must seek some other method of participation  
(Parm. 133A5).

Had Plato meant to abandon the Idea altogether or to concede that it must be left without further elucidation, I doubt that he would have chosen to insert this line into the dialogue. The significance of what is stated appears to be that Plato will provide a different method of "participation". In other words, we should look for another attempt to

explain this relation. However, if we do not find this additional account in other dialogues, I suggest that we be watchful for another mode of explanation. Indeed, we shall see that it is not "participation" qua itself which will be expounded, but a different way of accounting for how Forms and particulars can be inter-related.

Before offering Plato's motives for the criticisms he presents against his own philosophic position, we must consider the final argument of Parmenides. It is the last one raised and the "greatest" (Parm. 133B3) to be contended with.

The present difficulty arises from the seeming impossibility of mortals knowing the Forms. If there are such entities, Parmenides says, they cannot be known by us. Since the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$  do not exist in this world, then their natures will be relative to their own world, not to the empirical realm. Similarly, things in the corporeal world will be relative to items in that same realm. Consequently our knowledge is restricted to the perceptible world of which we are a part. Absolute knowledge, which is of the Forms, is available only to a being of that sphere, and this is God. Further, any being or beings which belong to the world of the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$  are by this fact alone removed from any intercourse with, or knowledge of, our sphere of existence (Parm. 133B-135A).

The ontological bifurcation which Socrates has posited by his division of Forms and particulars leaves us with this difficulty. Parmenides, however, does not appear to believe that this problem is insoluble. Consider what he says at the end of this criticism.

Only a man of very great natural gifts will be able to understand that everything has a class and absolute essence, and only a still more wonderful man can find

out all these facts and teach anyone else to analyse them properly and understand them (Parm. 135A7-B3).

Socrates agrees wholeheartedly. It may take an extraordinary individual but a method by which to deal with this enigma can be found.

Following this passage we encounter another of equal importance. Parmenides recounts to Socrates the worry involved with denying the existence of the Forms.

[I]f anyone, with his mind fixed on all these objections and others like them, denies the existence of ideas and such things, and does not assume an idea under which each individual thing is classed, he will be quite at a loss, since he denies that the idea of each thing is always the same, and in this way he will utterly destroy the power of carrying on discussions (Parm. 135B5-C2).

The upshot of these two sections is first, that the denial of the existence of Forms puts an end to all discourse; second, a solution to the problem of knowing the Forms can be uncovered if the individual has the right aptitude. If we add to this the earlier remark concerning the need for another way of explaining "participation" which, I believe, this last quotation lends support to, Plato's motives for writing the dialogue are easily seen.

The Parmenides is a transitional work. It depicts Socrates as young in order to reflect the immaturity of Plato's earliest philosophic formations. This is not to say that his beliefs are ludicrous, but rather that he failed to see the difficulties with the relationship of "participation".<sup>18</sup> Whether Plato discovered these inherent problems

---

<sup>18</sup> Obviously one cannot assert with any degree of definiteness that "participation" belongs to the Socratic tenets. Whether Plato introduced this idea himself or retained it from his master's teachings is dubious. But we can be assured that, if "participation" is not Socratic in origin, Plato at least believed it to be a consequence of Socrates' position.



through his own examinations of the notion, or via his peers or students, is of little importance. What is important is the presentation of these criticisms in the corpus of his writings. This explicit mention advises us of his concern with the objections and, in light of what has just been said, of the need for a new way of explaining the relation between Forms and particulars. Clearly Plato is not abandoning all his earliest beliefs. He is only pointing to the difficulties of "participation". The transition is therefore from his beginning method of accounting for the relationship of Forms and particulars to a later one. (It should also be mentioned that what we have seen by way of the complexity of the relations between Forms and particulars may also have contributed to Plato's discovery.)

As it stands, we are presuming, because of the implications of the Parmenides, that a different characterization of how particulars come to be what they are will be given. But, even if this can be successfully argued, the original worries still remain. The new account must effectively explain how the Forms can be the *arché* of the empirical world. Since there has been no suggestion up to now that Plato relinquished the theory of Forms, we must assume that the earlier position remains in essence the same.

The acknowledgement was made earlier (see p. 17) that the suggestion of either the transcendence or the immanence of Forms leads to serious complications. The Parmenides elucidates these difficulties and utilizes them to demonstrate that "participation" cannot be accorded a literal interpretation. Indeed, the arguments of the dialogue wreak havoc with both the notion of transcendence and that of immanence. Be

that as it may, we are in greater difficulty if we accept these arguments as final. They are definitive with respect to "participation" and its possible explanation in either of these ways. Yet without further information, which is so far absent, we should not presume that Plato has abandoned either stand. The immanence or "present to" theory is still a fundamental constituent of Plato's epistemology. When one has knowledge, what is known is the Form, not the particular. However, to arrive at this knowledge one must be "reminded" of or led to the ~~idea~~, and this can only occur if the Forms are somehow "present" to particulars. To deny this is to affirm Parmenides' last objection that the Forms cannot be known by us (Parm. 133B3), which leaves the individual limited to opinion only. Plato would not assent to this. Thus, for the sake of knowledge, the Forms must in some way be present to the empirical world. All that can be ascertained from the arguments of this dialogue is that they cannot be immanent in the manner described, viz., that of a part of a Form in a particular.<sup>19</sup>

The notion of transcendence also hinges on this doctrine of anamnesis. If the soul is to "recollect" the Forms, the knowledge it

---

<sup>19</sup>R.G. Collingwood (The Idea of Nature, London: Oxford Univ. Press, reprint, 1976, pp. 62-68) presents a brief commentary about the immanence and transcendence of Forms in relation to Plato's Parmenides. His suggestions parallel my own in regard to the arguments of Parmenides being directed to either the transcendence theory or the immanence theory. However, Collingwood argues that the two theories imply one another and that this is what emerges from the dialogue. His primary claim is that Plato has recognized the interdependency of these two strands. Unfortunately the implications of this "discovery" are not elucidated by Collingwood and he never explains what this immanence/transcendence theory means. This lack of explanation greatly diminishes the credibility of Collingwood's contention. Although his suggestion is interesting, without further commentary it leads us to another dead end.

once had prior to birth, and at this pre-natal time was "outside" the world of Becoming, then the Forms too must be "outside" the empirical realm.<sup>20</sup>

Although it might be contended that Plato at this point in his writings, no longer endorsed the theory of Recollection, I find no evidence to support this. The mere lack of textual reference to it is not enough to support the claim that the theory has disappeared. But there will be more to say of this later. The main focal point of our discussion is not these two stances of immanence and transcendence. Rather, it is the difficulty of how to effect the relationship between Being and Becoming if it is true that Plato has left "participation" behind. If it is not participation in the Forms which accounts for the world being the way it is, and also allows for the "recollection" and, thus, the knowledge of the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$ , then what is it? In other words, we seek an alteration in Plato's conception of causality, the metaphysical account of Becoming.

At the risk of digressing, it is, I believe, pertinent to the task at hand to include a few remarks concerning the Sophist. The dialogue does not direct itself to the bridging of the gap between Forms and particulars, yet it does deal with both Being and Becoming in a manner hitherto not espoused.

#### Sophist:

The Sophist is one of the later works of Plato wherein we find Socrates playing little or no part. The significance of utilizing other

---

<sup>20</sup> By "outside" I mean not wholly contained within the sensible sphere. This does not refer to a spatial-temporal relation.

individuals as the main character of a dialogue is many-sided but has one obvious component: the views expressed are those of Plato himself. This is not to suggest that Plato has forgotten his Socratic roots, only that the ideas that are expressed have gone beyond the original Socratic tenets. Plato would have the audience of his day to contend with, and the older members would undoubtedly be aware of what the historical Socrates had put forth. Although this does not restrict Plato to having the Socrates of his dialogues profess claims which we can attribute to the historical Socrates, it does suggest that where Socrates is the main speaker the subject of the dialogue is probably something with which the historical Socrates had been concerned. Hence, I maintain that what is expressed in the later dialogues are Plato's views, even though the germ of these ideas are probably Socratic in origin.

The only exception to this view is the Philebus. Here Plato's master again assumes the dominant role in the dialogue. However, as I have attempted to show, this exception is attributable to the subject-matter of the work with which Socrates spent his entire life in concern - the good life for man. The Sophist, on the other hand, is paradigmatic of Plato's later dialogues and uses Socrates only in the opening stages. What is primarily said comes out of the mouth of a stranger from Elea, a man of great philosophical acumen (Soph. 216A1-6).

The discussion commences with an agreement to hunt down the Sophist, "not the easiest thing in the world to catch and define" (Soph. 218C6). The Stranger suggests that they practice first with "some lesser thing and try to use it as a pattern for the greater"

(Soph. 218D9). The choice is the angler (*ἀσπιδιεύτης*).

The main dilemma which faces the Stranger in his search for a definition of the Sophist arises from the Parmenidean understanding of not-Being. By giving an account of the Sophist as a speaker of falsehoods we are thereby immersed in contradiction. The Stranger explains to Theaetetus that to call the Sophist a semblance maker implicates him as one who states what appears to be the case but actually is not. Thus, these statements ~~say~~ what is not, they refer to not-Being. The Stranger explains further that

[t]his statement involves the bold assumption that not-being exists, for otherwise falsehood could not come into existence (Soph. 237A3).

Herein lies the difficulty. In accordance with the dictum of Parmenides we cannot assert that not-Being is, for this would leave us with the conclusion that what is not, is.

The investigation continues and culminates in this proposal from the Stranger:

In defending myself I shall have to test the theory of my father Parmenides, and contend forcibly ~~that~~ after a fashion not-being is and on the other hand in a sense being is not (Soph. 241D5-8).

What follows then will be an attempt to show that all things that are, are not in some way, and the opposite, that things that are not, are. By this method the Stranger can circumvent the Parmenidean conclusion that if the Sophist speaks falsehoods he actually says nothing, for a falsehood refers to what is not.

The dialogue proceeds with a recounting of various descriptions of the "number and nature of realities" (Soph. 242C6) and arguments to render these inadequate. As we have seen, the Stranger must uncover

the nature of both Being and not-Being if he is to snare the Sophist. Hence, the reason for the investigation of these earlier positions. However, we need not delve into these suggestions nor the arguments to counter them, as their inclusion is for the sole purpose of demonstrating their deficiencies. The Stranger must now strike out on his own. But first he passes to "those whose doctrines are less precise" (Soph. 245E9).

What happens now is a brief examination of the Materialists and those who attribute Being only to the ~~εἶδη~~<sup>ἴδη</sup>. The intention here is to close the gap between these two extremes or, as Guthrie phrases it,

...to bring the materialists and idealists together: the former must admit an element of the non-material into their world and the latter give up their rigid insistence on the immobility and immutability of the completely real.<sup>21</sup>

The Stranger begins a new series of questions. He asks Theaetetus whether the Materialists would admit the existence of immaterial entities such as soul, justice and injustice, wisdom and foolishness (Soph. 247A-C). The question is greeted in the affirmative. The Stranger then suggests that these additions might lead the Materialists to accepting a different description of Being.

I suggest that everything which possesses any power of any kind, either to produce a change in anything of any nature or to be affected even in the least degree by the slightest cause, though it be only on one occasion, has real existence (Soph. 247E).

This answer stands for the moment and the discussion now moves to the "friends of ideas" (Soph. 248A3). Their tenet is, of course, the opposite of the Materialists, viz., that Being consists of the intelligible only. This belief is scrutinized first from the perspective of the definition of Being quoted above.

---

<sup>21</sup> W.K.C. Guthrie, "The Later Plato and the Academy" In A History of Greek Philosophy vol. V. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 140-141.

It is stated that the "friends of ideas" separate Being and Becoming and that the body relates to the latter, thought to the former. With respect to Becoming the Idealists would allow the criterion of Being already supplied. However, they will not concede this in connection with Being. In other words, the power to affect or be affected relates to the body and its association with corporeal entities, but not to thought and Being (Soph. 248C6-9). The Stranger continues with another query as to whether or not the Idealists would claim that the soul and Being are related as knower to known. Theaetetus remarks that this is so. We now reach a crucial point which questions the immutability of Being.

The man from Elea notes three alternatives.

Well then, do you say that knowing or being known is an active or passive condition, or both? Or that one is passive and the other active? Or that neither has any share at all in either of the two? (Soph. 248D)

The last possibility, it is agreed, is that which the Idealists would endorse lest they immerse themselves in contradiction. The problem which would be encountered arises from the assertion that, if knowing is an activity, then what is known is acted upon. Hence, if Being is known it is affected and thus moved or changed. Yet this cannot be the case if Being "is in a state of rest" (Soph. 248E4) or remains unchanged. The Idealists cannot accept the Stranger's criterion of Being and retain the thesis that Being is immutable. Nothing more is said concerning the notion that Being consists in the possession of the power to affect or be affected.

We might choose to concur with those who believe Plato to have altered his opinion about the immutability of the Forms. This, I believe, would be a mistake. Apart from Ross' proclamation that later dialogues

expressly assert Plato's retention of the belief in the immutability of Forms (Phil. 59C2-5, Tim. 28A, 51E-52D),<sup>22</sup> the statements of the Sophist do not lead to the conclusion that the εἶδη are mutable. The remarks of the man from Elea are directed toward the admission that motion, life, soul and mind also possess Being, not that Being moves. Consider the following:

But for heaven's sake, shall we let ourselves easily be persuaded that motion and life and soul and mind are really not present to absolute being, that it neither lives nor thinks, but awful and holy, devoid of mind, is fixed and immovable? (Soph. 249A)

Theaetetus replies that this would be a shocking thing to admit.

Briefly, the Stranger argues that if mind exists then so does life. Since life necessitates the existence of soul and this is a principle of motion, he concludes that motion too has being. In consequence of the interconnectedness of these four items, the final assertion is that if motion does not exist then neither does mind. The Stranger now looks to the extremity of this view and denies the Heraclitean belief that everything is in motion. This theory, he contends, would disallow the possibility of knowledge, and mind (νοῦς) would have no object in such a world. The opposite view, that everything is at rest, is similarly disastrous. The claim above informs us that without motion or change νοῦς cannot be. Not only could it not engage in the activity of knowing, but also the stronger claim is implied that mind is by nature an active entity. Thus, since activity implies change, without motion mind could not exist. The Stranger has reached his

<sup>22</sup>Ross, p. 110.



conclusion: Being includes both motion and rest. (Soph. 249C8-D5).

The conclusion here is not indicative of the mutability of the Forms. We are told that Being includes both motion and rest. But this assertion refers to those entities in motion and those at rest. The latter, considering the prior comments concerning knowledge, must be the Forms. The former are all moving entities. Plato has proposed a synthesis of the Materialist and Idealist conceptions of Being. Being extends over both the εἶδη and the tangible elements as well.<sup>23</sup> But the importance of all that has been said is carried in a distinction which arises from the Stranger's concluding remark. This distinction, noted and expressed by Paul Seligman, is between the intension of Being, its own nature, and the extension of Being, what it comprises.<sup>24</sup> Although the intension of Being has not as yet been ascertained, it is clear that there is a separation between Being and the Forms. The εἶδη are, of course, a part of or are within Being. But Being now appears as something unto itself and thus apart from the Forms; that is, it may still be a Form but is apart from them in the sense that its extension includes more than the Forms. Hence, Seligman says:

The conceptual symbiosis of eide and being has been dissolved, and being can no longer be defined in terms of the forms. They have ceased to be its exclusive vehicle.<sup>25</sup>

The comments above concerning what Being includes, in conjunction with the implications of this for the association between Being and the

---

<sup>23</sup> Paul Seligman, Being and Not-Being: An Introduction to Plato's Sophist (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> ibid., p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> ibid., p. 37.

Forms, suggest further complications for "participation". Yet we must leave these for the moment as the dialogue presents further information pertinent to our discussion.

The Stranger quickly discards the thought that a definition of Being has been given. He explains to Theaetetus that Being is neither rest nor motion but "has emerged outside of both these classes" (Soph. 250D3). We must, however, not forget that Being extends over both rest and motion.

The core of the dialogue and the crucial statements for our purposes have been reached. Plato must now show how a weaving of Forms (*συμπλοκή αἰδῶν*) comes about. This is required as a means by which to circumvent another difficulty introduced by the Stranger. He says to Theaetetus that there are those who hold that we can only predicate one name of one thing. These men claim that we cannot say that a man is good, only that good is good or man is man (Soph. 251B9-C1). The basis for this tenet is the belief that one cannot be many and the reverse. However, the passage quickly moves from this discussion of particulars to speaking about Forms. The Stranger is interested in the mingling of Forms, not how particulars come to be called by many names.<sup>26</sup>

After a short session Theaetetus and the Stranger conclude that, of Being, Rest and Motion, some pairs will blend with one another and others will not (Soph. 251D3-252E8). An analogy is then drawn between the relationship among these Forms and the relations among letters of the alphabet. With the latter we also find some sets that fit together

<sup>26</sup> See F.M. Cornford, Plato's Theory of Knowledge (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1957), p. 293.

and others which do not. The analogy is then extended.

And the vowels, to a greater degree than the others, run through them all as a bond, so that without one of the vowels the other letters cannot be joined to one another (Soph. 253A4-6).

Plato here offers a hint of what is to follow; some of the Forms will make it possible for others to combine.<sup>27</sup> As it is the art of the grammarian to know which letters can join with others, so it is the art of the dialectician to know which Forms combine and which do not.

There is more talk of the dialectician and his art and the Stranger declares that only the philosopher can possess this art. But both the Sophist and the philosopher are equally difficult to find. The latter is obscured by the light of Being, as this is the region which concerns him. The former hides in the "darkness of not-being" (Soph. 254A3).

These statements remind us of the task at hand - the snaring of the Sophist. As we have seen, such an undertaking requires that Plato demonstrate how Being and Not-Being can in some way embrace each other. We are about to see that this is to be found in the combining of Forms. This relation, albeit different than the particular/ Form relation, seems to share similar characteristics. It is to these similarities and, I might add, differences which we must now turn. The reader will recall that we are seeking the nature of "participation", if it be there to be found, or a different attempt to explain this bond between the physical and the metaphysical. We must therefore look to all items which have bearing on this idea.

In order to secure Being and Not-Being with greater clarity the Stranger suggests that they proceed to scrutinize the mingling

---

<sup>27</sup>Seligman, p. 52.

of the εἶδη. However, only the "most important" (Soph. 254C4) of these are to be focused upon. Agreement concerning Being, Rest and Motion as most important is secured. The man from Elea then points out that each of these Forms is the same as itself yet different from the remaining two. From this comment emerge two additional Forms, Same and Other (Difference). An argument ensues in which the Stranger demonstrates that each of the five is entirely distinct from the others, or that none of these Forms will collapse into another. This being so, the project shifts to the relationship between these five

Μεγιστα γινῃ. The conclusions are these:

- (i) They must each share in Being in order to be.
- (ii) Each of the five must share in Sameness so as to be the same as themselves.
- (iii) All will share in the Other so as to be other or different than the rest.
- (iv) Motion will share in Being, Sameness and Other but not in Rest as these two are incompatible.
- (v) Rest will also share in Being, Sameness and Other but not in Motion.
- (vi) Each Form by virtue of its sharing in the Other will be other than Being and so will share in Not-Being (Soph. 255E-256E).

From these conclusions we can see a number of additional points: Being, Sameness and Other have a reciprocal sharing; that is, each Form will share in the other two. Further, they all must partake of themselves. Plato is committed to self-participation. The remaining

Forms of Motion and Rest hold an inferior position to these three although they still command a place among the five - everything that is must partake of Motion or Rest. Finally, every one of these Forms shares in some of the others, and because of this combining they take on additional predicates. Our interest lies here.

The terms which Plato uses to describe this combining of the εἶδη are identical to those found in the Phaedo and elsewhere describing the relation between particulars and Forms. Although Plato is here concerned with formal or meta-Forms, those which pervade the entire community of εἶδη, it is a short step from here to the realization that other Forms will also combine. Indeed, Plato directs his attention to this later in the dialogue. (At 259E the discourse shifts to the necessity of Forms combining in order for discourse to be possible. From here the Stranger shows that the truth or falsity of statements depends on whether or not certain Forms combine.) In both cases we discover that κοινωνία (communion) and μετέχω (participate) as well as other similar terms are utilized to denote the relationship between Forms. At once we are aware that these words are used metaphorically. That this is the case emerges in two ways. First we notice that logical difficulties arise upon a literal understanding of the terms. (See the earlier section dealing with the Parmenides.) Second, the fact that Plato speaks of two categorically different relations with identical and similar terms immediately discloses their metaphoric status. Surely we cannot assume Plato to have meant the "partaking" of one Form in another to mean the same as particulars "partaking" of Forms. But we must ask whether there is a similarity here. If this is so, "participation"

may come further into view. If not, we may find substantial reasons for its disappearance from later dialogues.

Cornford has this to say about the difference between the combining of Forms and the combining of particulars and Forms.

The relation between Forms that combine is also called 'participation'; but it must not be assumed that this relation is the same that subsists between an individual thing (e.g., a man) and the Form (Man) that he 'partakes of'. Plato nowhere implies that the Form Motion partakes of the Form Existence, or the Form Man partakes of the Form Animal, in the same way as this man partakes of the Form Man. He uses the same word with his usual disregard for precise terminology, and he nowhere gives any explicit account of either relation. It seems obvious, however, that he cannot have regarded the two relations as the same. The word *κοινωνεῖν*, as well as *μετεχειν*, is used of individuals which 'share in' a common Form but he would not describe a man as 'blended with' the Form Man.<sup>28</sup>

Cornford's comments appear true enough yet he does not tell us why there must be a substantial difference between these two relations.

I would also argue that Plato is not guilty of disregarding precise terminology. In this case one wonders what could possibly stand as "precise terminology" and also whether such a relation as described lends itself to a better characterization than has been offered.

Indeed, this may be the essential problem.

If we look to Seligman's description of these two relations we find, with one notable exception, nothing which goes beyond Cornford. This exception depicts the difference in kind which separates particulars and Forms.

Platonic forms, according to their own nature, are not classes of particulars, and consequently

---

<sup>28</sup> Cornford, p. 256.

f/f [Form-Form] relations are not reducible to relations involving particulars.<sup>29</sup>

This, at least, is clear enough in light of what we have already seen regarding Forms and particulars. The two are definitely different kinds of entities and this, as Seligman saw, is enough to ensure that the relations described are different. We must now try to surpass these comments if we are to uncover the nature of this difference and any similarity between the two relations.

Let us begin with the participation of particulars in Forms. Until we reach the Sophist the account that Plato offers of the bond between particulars and Forms remains basically the same. That is to say that particulars come to be and come to be what they are via their participation in Forms. Being and the specific nature of entities are conveyed through participation. An item is and is beautiful because it shares in the Form of Beauty. Also, it has been noted (see p. 25) that a thing is in virtue of its specific nature. That a thing is and what it is are not separated. What this amounts to is that a particular comes to have certain attributes and thus a specific nature because it participates in certain Forms. Because of this specific nature it is said to be. Consequently, we understand that the  $\epsilon\iota\delta\eta$  are the  $\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\iota$ , the reasons for or "causes" of particulars things. Something is gained by a particular because it participates in a certain Form. More precisely, it gains its specific nature and its being.

The Sophist offers an alteration of this schema which we found in the middle dialogues. Seligman remarked that the Sophist indicates that the Forms have ceased to be the exclusive vehicle of Being.

---

<sup>29</sup>Seligman, p. 46.

Considering that Being is now something distinct and "outside" the other Forms, it must be partaken of for an item to be. A particular must now participate both in Being and specific Forms. There appears to be a split between the being of something and its specific nature.

In light of the enterprise of the Sophist we see that Plato must isolate Being and Not-Being as far as possible in order to track down the Sophist. A definition of Being, however, is not given. Other than the claim that Being is a meta-Form of which all things that are must partake, we understand Being only in respect of the items that share in it. Surely Plato can only have meant this severance of Being and the specific nature of a thing to be purely formal. The two cannot be understood independently of one another. But even though this shows no substantial alteration in the earlier understanding of the interdependence of Being and the specific nature of a thing, it does depict a "causal" relation between Forms. If a particular must participate both in Forms and in Being, then a Form is incapable of conveying Being to that particular. Similarly, the being of that Form has been gained by its affiliation with Being itself. Also, Sameness and Difference are shared in by each Form. This leads us to suspect that the relationships among Forms and those between particulars and Forms have an essential similarity. In both cases something is gained by the participant. Of course the two notions of "blend[ing]" and "participation" are not identical. Forms are not brought into being, they are eternal. And the essential nature of each Form arises from itself, not from any external source. Nevertheless, a Form takes on something which it does not display of its own nature because it shares in some other Form. In this way the latter Form becomes "responsible



for" the former acquiring something new."

What can we glean from this? Aside from the additional complexities arising from the similarity between "blending" and "participation", nothing is imparted which explains either of these relations. But perhaps this is significant in itself. Even "participation", if we recall the Parmenides, seems to be too difficult to explain. Now we have further problems with the "blending" of Forms and the similarity between this and "participation". It is as if Plato has immersed himself in such a web of complexities that none of these can be accounted for satisfactorily. Could this be the reason for the disappearance of "participation" from the later dialogues?

The Sophist has shown us a small, but I believe, noteworthy change in Plato's conception of causality. Being has emerged as something "outside" of all else and as a meta-Form which pervades all things. Being must be shared in by both Forms and particulars. But the role of "participation", although slightly altered, is still basically the same. There has been no hint of its disappearance in the Philebus and Timaeus. We must now attempt to reconcile the radical shift in Plato's metaphysics, which we find in these two works, with the fundamental compatibility of the Sophist with the earlier dialogues. It is my contention that these two dialogues provide the answers that we seek.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A Solution Proposed

#### Philebus:

Plato's Philebus presents an enigma to those who seek a unifying thread in the Platonic corpus. Not only is it unusual because it lacks an actual beginning or end, it also depicts a startling change in Plato's metaphysical views. It is these alterations which are most important for our purposes.

At the outset of the dialogue the interlocutors agree to proceed with an investigation which has presumably been in progress for some time. The object of this quest is the good life for man. But although this is the main focus of the work, the dialogue takes an early turn toward the ultimate principles of explanation. At 23C the discussion shifts to a classification of all existents. Socrates begins this classification with a threefold division: the Unlimited ( $\tau\acute{o}$  ἀπέριστον), the Limit, ( $\tau\acute{o}$  μέτρον), and that which is produced from a mixture of these two. Having made these three divisions Socrates decides that he needs a fourth, the cause of the mixture. Protarchus then interjects that a fifth division may be necessary which has the "power of separation"

---

I am assuming that the views expressed in this dialogue are representative of those held by Plato. Although they are voiced by Socrates, there is no substantial evidence to suppose that Plato's master held such elaborate metaphysical ideas. Without this evidence it is most probable that the Philebus represents the thought of Plato himself.

(Phil. 23D9). Socrates, however, dismisses this fifth division as unnecessary.

The first class, or "tribe" as Klein calls it,<sup>2</sup> is the Unlimited. Socrates offers the examples hotter and colder to illustrate what he means.

In the first place, take hotter and colder and see if you can conceive any limit of them, or whether the more and less which dwell in their very nature do not, so long as they continue to dwell therein, preclude the possibility of any end; for if there were any end of them, the more and less would themselves be ended (Phil. 24A).

Socrates' intention is to demonstrate that hotter and colder are those types of things which are indeterminate, without definite quantity. He concludes that

...these two have no end; and being endless, they are of course infinite (Phil. 24B7).

Note that the example is an instance of that which is unlimited, not a description of the Unlimited itself.

The second tribe, the Limit, is characterized in the following:

And the things which do not admit of more and less and the like, but do admit of all that is opposed to them - first equality and the equal, then the double, and anything which is a definite number or measure in relation to such a number or measure... (Phil. 25A6-10).

We must be careful here not to confuse that which is determined by the members of this tribe with that which determines. The members of the class of the Limit are those things which determine, equal, double and the like. These items comprise the class of the Limit and

---

<sup>2</sup>Jacob Klein, "About Plato's Philebus", Interpretation, 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1972), p. 165.

provide determinacy to that which is indeterminate. We should also note that determinacy arises through the introduction of number.

The third class, although not explicitly described, is revealed in a comment from Socrates which is directed to a further clarification of the class of the Limit. In this excerpt we see that the Mixed tribe displays the components of the class of the Limit. The third class exhibits

equal and double and everything which puts an end to the differences between opposites and makes them commensurable and harmonious by the introduction of number (Phil. 25E1-4).

Albeit true that what is described here is in fact certain members of the Limit, it is the Mixed class wherein we find these items displayed. This is clear upon consideration of Protarchus' remark which immediately follows this passage.

By mixing in these you mean apparently, that we find various products arising as they are respectively mixed (Phil. 25E5).

Socrates offers as examples of this tribe health, the art of music, fair weather and "all the beauties of our world" (Phil. 26B1). The members of this Mixed class are brought into being by the "measures created by the co-operation of the finite" (Phil. 26D8).

The fourth and final division to be considered is the cause of the mixing of Limit and Unlimited. Socrates characterizes this cause as a maker (*δημιουργόν*), a productive agent which fashions these things found in the Mixed class (Phil. 26E-27C). Let us now take a closer look at these four tribes.

The initial task of Greek philosophy is the presentation of an explanation of why things are what they are. Such an enterprise assumes that the world, to some degree at least, can be explained and thus must

be intelligible. Yet, what is it that characterizes intelligibility? If we say that something is intelligible we mean that it is capable of being understood or is determinable. In other words, to ascribe intelligibility to something is to say that it has a determinate character; that it is limited. We could therefore distinguish this particular item from other things. In this sense it is distinct, separable or limited. To deny intelligibility to something would imply that there were no boundaries, no distinctness and thus no determinate character attached to the item in question; it would be unlimited.

We can conclude from this discussion that those items which bear the mark of the Limit are intelligible. The Limit by its presence introduces intelligibility. On the other hand, the Unlimited denotes unintelligibility. Hence, the third or Mixed class, because of its share in both, will be neither precisely determinable nor capable of being entirely comprehended. Bearing this in mind, we are assured that Friedlander is correct when he claims that the "world of becoming belongs here".<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Socrates has already told us that the members of the third category come into being as a result of "the measures created by the co-operation of the finite" (Phil. 26D8).

Upon a close scrutiny of the text we find some confusion surrounding the description of the second division. Klein observes that Socrates uses the phrase "that which has limit" interchangeably with the Limit itself.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that both Limit and those things which have limit are the same. Klein explains that the reason

<sup>3</sup>Paul Friedlander, Plato vol. 3, transl. H. Meyerhoff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 325.

<sup>4</sup>Klein, pp. 165-166.

for this confusion is that the limited, that which has limit, lies in the Mixed class.

We understand now what confused Protarchus and us when Socrates substituted "that which has limit", the "Limited", for the "limit" itself. The "limited", the assemblage of ratios, is already a part of the mixture, or rather mixtures, of a special kind, mathematical partnerships that can give to parts of the world we live in a certain rightness, remove the excess and the indefiniteness, and produce balance and right measure.<sup>5</sup>

Let me clarify this. The reason why Socrates has used "that which has limit", the "limited", interchangeably with the "limit", is because Limit only appears in the Mixed class. We find Limit where it has been conjoined with the Unlimited, or in an item which is limited. Thus, the Limit becomes clear to us by association with those items that bear its mark. Herein lies the source of the confusion which Klein is referring to.

Although this difficulty has been solved, the question concerning what the Limit itself consists of is still unanswered. Hackforth believes that "πέρας is the class-name for all those ratios that act as determinants".<sup>6</sup> Hackforth, is, I believe, correct. His claim is clearly substantiated in the text. Socrates has remarked quite definitively that the things which admit of terms that express a ratio are those things which "might properly be assigned to the class of the Limit" (Phil. 25B2). The items which Socrates refers to are those which exhibit Limit, even though the things themselves belong to the Mixed

<sup>5</sup>Klein, p. 168.

<sup>6</sup>R. Hackforth, Plato's Examination of Pleasure (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc. - original publication in 1945 by Cambridge University Press), p. 43.

tribe. But, what these Mixed Items display, are in fact ratios. Consequently, we can endorse Hackforth's remarks as correct.

The division of the Unlimited has been described as containing those entities which have more and less within their nature. (Phil. 24E9). Socrates is explicitly referring to the pair Hotter and Colder which he cited earlier. There is no difficulty in ascertaining that Socrates wants us to see that this pair, and similar examples, can be conceptually extended to infinity. We are always able to conceive of something hotter or colder than that which is presented as displaying either quality. It is pairs of this sort that are representative of the tribe of the Unlimited. The Unlimited itself is therefore a duality or pair. In the words of Klein, "[t]he 'limitless' is an Indeterminate pair".<sup>7</sup>

It has already been stated that the fourth tribe or cause is a productive agent. In his explanation of this fourth class Socrates first points out that the three preceding classes constitute "the things which come into being and the things out of which they come into being" (Phil. 27A9). He then adds that the fourth tribe is obviously distinct from the other three and this is precisely because it "produces all these" (Phil. 27B1). Before we elaborate further on this distinction between the fourth class and the other three, there is a more pressing point which merits our attention.

The statement that the fourth class is responsible for the production of all the other classes is definitely perplexing. The line which precedes this claim indicates the basic problem. Socrates

---

<sup>7</sup>Klein, p. 166.

asks Protarchus whether the first three categories comprise both those things which come to be and that out of which they come to be. Here we are presented with a clear division between that which ~~is~~ and that which comes to be. Yet Socrates has said that there is a cause for all these items. How do we reconcile these apparently incompatible accounts? If we understand the initial line, which differentiates between Being and Becoming, to be paradigmatic of Plato's view, there is no difficulty. Limit ~~and~~ Unlimited take their place as ἀρχαί and the third tribe encompasses the perceptible world. This interpretation is substantiated further upon considering the entire tone of the discussion. The first two tribes have been set out as first principles. Certainly we cannot assume that there can be a cause of such things. Consequently, I believe we must embrace what the major portion of the dialogue intimates and assume that Plato means "all these" to refer to the members of the Mixed category.

Plato has used the term δημιουργοῦν to name this cause. We can translate this as denoting any of the following activities: making, fashioning, or producing. These activities are all varieties of a single type of action; they are creative activities. Thus, the difference which Socrates has spoken of is illuminated by his terminology. The cause is distinct from the other three tribes precisely because it is an active force, an artificer which produces the "mixed" entities or objects of Becoming. Socrates now makes a few additional comments about the nature and activity of this force.

The passages between 29A and 31A present Plato's contention that there exists a macrocosmic-microcosmic relationship between the



universe and man. Briefly, the argument is that the elements of man's body are minute fragments produced and sustained by their universal counterparts. Similar reasoning is employed concerning the soul of man and the world-soul; the soul of the universe is the cause of men's souls. Socrates follows these statements with the conclusion that, since our bodies arise from the universe, then that which brings about the ordering of our bodies is similar to that which provides the same function in the universe. The entity which provides us with "the art of physical exercise and medical treatment when the body is ill" (Phil. 30B2) is the same type of thing that "orders and arranges years, seasons and months" (Phil. 30C6). This cause, Socrates asserts, "may most justly be called wisdom and mind" (Phil. 30C6). Undoubtedly this cause is the cosmic  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . This divine  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  conjoins the Limit and the Unlimited and produces the items in the Mixed class.

Within the context of the dialogue the argument above has been put forth in order to ascertain where reason can be placed in this fourfold classification of all existents. It is easily seen that reason ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ) is to be included in the fourth tribe and that it is the cause of all things found in the world of Becoming. For our purposes it is important to note that Plato has now introduced an Efficient cause, the originating force of all Becoming.

At this point a number of questions need to be considered. First, we must ask where the Platonic Forms are to be located in these four classes. Second, how is "participation" to be understood in the light of what has been said in this dialogue? Finally, we must question why Plato has now chosen to introduce an efficient cause. For the

moment we shall set aside the latter two inquiries and proceed with an investigation concerning the placement of the εἶδη within one of the four categories.

A.E. Taylor argues that

the fourfold classification has been devised with a view to a problem where the forms are not specially relevant, and the true solution is thus that they find no place in this classification.

Taylor is not entirely incorrect with his remark that the Forms are not peculiarly relevant to the problem at hand. But this should not be taken as the last word on the subject. Taylor is correct only if we take the dialogue in isolation. In other words, the Forms do not seem to exert any influence on the major issue of the dialogue. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that what is said in the Philebus has no bearing on Plato's other works, and so we must ascertain where the Forms are to be slotted. It may also be mentioned against Taylor's contention that Plato is presenting a classification of all existents. This must be taken as applicable to all things that are, which necessarily includes the Forms. Further, it is evident that Plato still believes in the existence of the Forms since they make an appearance early in the dialogue (Phil. 15A-B). With this evidence as a grounding we cannot help but conclude that the fourfold classification does include the εἶδη. Our only difficulty is where to place them.

Since there is no clear statement to be found in the text, we must look again to each division to find the residence of the εἶδη. The Mixed class is quickly ruled out by reflection on its contents. Herein

---

<sup>8</sup> A.E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960). p. 417.

lie all particulars, items which have come to be out of the interplay between the Limit and the Unlimited. The class of the Unlimited eludes distinctness and thus intelligibility. The Forms could not be placed in this tribe because of their very nature. Throughout the dialogues we find the Forms, when spoken of, to be those entities which can only be grasped by reason and as such lay claim to intelligibility to the farthest degree. In the final analysis it is evident that we cannot place the Forms in either of these categories.

We are now left with two possible candidates for the classification of the <sup>MC</sup>Εἶδος; the cause of the Mixed class or the tribe of the Limit. The former appears prima facie to be our most likely choice. The reader will remember that the Forms had a certain type of causal function throughout the dialogues previously discussed. Yet it was shown earlier that the Forms do not and cannot serve as Efficient causes (see p. 16). But the fourth class is the producer of the Mixed tribe and so is an Efficient cause. If this is not enough to remove the possibility of placing the Forms in this category we need only remember that Socrates has identified the fourth tribe with  $\psi\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . The Forms, however, are grasped by the mind, they are not mind itself.

It appears that by eliminating the other three classes we are forced to claim that the Forms belong in the class of the Limit. But there is far greater reason to suggest this than the mere elimination of the other possibilities. We recall that the function of this class was explicitly outlined earlier. The Limit imposes order on the Unlimited and carries with it distinctness and intelligibility. This by itself dictates that the Forms lie in this class. A comment by Stuart MacClintock

provides additional support to this tenet.

...It would seem almost certain that the proper location for the Forms would be the class of the Limit. It may well be true that the special discussion of the Philebus does not make necessary any explicit statement of this, but insofar as Limit can be considered the ultimate source of structure and order in the created world, it ought to comprehend the Forms. And so efforts to locate them elsewhere, or to reject the problem, seem questionable.<sup>9</sup>

With respect to our question concerning "participation" and how it is to be understood within the context of the Philebus, there are two items to which our attention is drawn. First, there is no mention of "participation" within this dialogue. This is to say that the Forms are not discussed in any causal capacity. Plato offers no comment concerning the relation between particulars and Forms nor how the former came to have certain specific natures. Second, the introduction of a divine artificer has eliminated one of the initial functions of this relation. These two points in conjunction suggest a drastic change from the way Plato had previously depicted the relation between Forms and particulars. The fact that he has now added an Efficient cause of Becoming removes the ontological function of "participation". The objects of the perceptible realm are now brought into being not by their partaking of certain Forms, but by the activity of the divine  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . Consequently, we are now left with only two roles which "participation" plays. It will serve to account for the specific nature of a thing and to allow the soul to be "reminded" of the Forms. Hence, it appears that there is a definite

---

<sup>9</sup>Stuart MacClintock, "More on the Structure of the Philebus", Phronesis, 6 (1961), p. 49.

separation between the being of an object and its specific nature; the two arise from different sources. This, however, should not surprise us since the Sophist revealed such a separation.

The deleting of "participation" from the Philebus may be attributed to the subject-matter of the dialogue. The query of the work does not directly lend itself to a discussion of "participation". In other words, there might appear to be no need for such a discussion at the present time. However, one cannot help but wonder why "participation" does not play an active part in the extensive metaphysical scheme of the dialogue. Let us leave this problem until later.

The final question to be considered concerns Plato's introduction of a cause of Becoming. Since such an entity has not appeared before, we wonder what could have prompted such an alteration in Plato's thought. If we look to the final comments of the Parmenides I believe that an answer to this question can be provided. The Parmenides, as we saw earlier, offered a number of criticisms of "participation". At the end of the first part of the work, the young Socrates appears to be left in a quandary. However, rather than suggesting to Socrates that he totally abandon his views, Parmenides remarks that "participation" cannot be explained in the various ways they have tried. He then says that another way of explaining "participation" should be sought. This is why Plato has now posited an Efficient cause. He is beginning to provide another answer to the question of the relation between particulars and Forms. Granted, we are so far only confronted with a partial solution, and "participation" is still present. However, let us now look to the Timaeus to see if more of an account is presented.

Timaeus:

At the beginning of the dialogue Timaeus points out that the story he is about to expound is only probable. It is only a probable account, he says, because

I who am the speaker and you who are the judges are only mortal men (Tim. 29D2)

Even though this statement reveals a fundamental reason for the use of a mythological account, the idea that what is to be offered is only a probable story seems to indicate that the reader should not take it too seriously. We might even venture to claim that the Timaeus presents only a myth and should therefore be read for entertainment value alone. Although this is a possible reading of the dialogue, given the attitudes of the ancient world toward the various functions of mythology, it is doubtful that Plato had pure entertainment in mind when he composed the work. To adhere to such a view would be to ignore Plato's extensive use of myth throughout his works as an illustrative tool. Also, if the Timaeus is not to be taken seriously how does one account for the similarity between this dialogue and the Philebus? Are we to assume that both dialogues share ideas that were not meant to be taken seriously? In the face of such far reaching difficulties I suggest that the Timaeus be taken as a mythological representation of what Plato believed to be the case. As Socrates intimates in the Phaedrus, it is the best account that a mortal can provide (Phaed. 246A4).

The most important passage for our purposes occurs at Timaeus 28A. Timaeus, in his opening analysis of the creation of the universe, makes reference to the divine artificer which we encountered in the

Philebus. He also speaks of the distinction between Being and Becoming.

That which is apprehended by Intelligence and reason is always in the same state, but that which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason is always in a process of becoming and perishing and never really is. Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created. The work of the creator, whenever he looks to the unchangeable and fashions the form and nature of his work after an unchangeable pattern, must necessarily be made fair and perfect, but when he looks to the created only and uses a created pattern, it is not fair or perfect (Tim. 27D9-28B1).

If we unpack this lengthy passage a number of items become apparent. The split between Being and Becoming is definitely present and the reference to the εἶδη is unmistakable. But consider what is said about the creator and his activity. Timaeus contends that the craftsman looks to the Immutable and fashions the created world in the likeness of these entities. We should also reflect on a later comment which says that this creator brought order to that which was not ordered (Tim. 30A8). These additions to what was espoused in the Philebus brings us closer to the end of our quest.

From the Philebus we know that ὁ δημιουργός is responsible for the perceptible world by conjoining the Limit and the Unlimited. This force has instituted order where there was chaos. We have also seen that the Forms belong to the class of the Limit. The Timaeus adds to the Philebus that the creator looks to the Forms and fashions the world in their image. Again, "participation" is not present in this scheme.

The reason for the absence of "participation" in the Timaeus

and the Philebus is revealed in the passage just cited. There is no longer a need for such a relation. The Philebus maintained that objects come to be via the activity of the demiurge. The Timaeus proceeds further in its discussion of the creators' activity and indicates that the specific nature of created entities arises out of their being made in the image of the εἶδον. Hence the two primary functions of "participation", the accounting for the being and the specific nature of a thing, have been replaced by the activity of a rational force. There is one role of "participation" left to be dealt with.

Assuming that Plato, by this stage of his writing, still embraces the theory of Recollection, and we can look to the Timaeus for evidence (Tim. 42E-44e, 90A-D), we are in need of something which will allow the soul to be reminded of the Forms. Until now "participation" has served in this capacity. The soul can recollect the Forms through the perceptible world because they are somehow present to sensible objects. We must now demonstrate how this is possible without "participation", since it appears that this notion has disappeared from Plato's thought.

The characterization of the activity of the demiurge indicates a production of images representative of the εἶδον. The implication is clearly that perceptible entities bear some type of resemblance to the Forms. This resemblance can be likened to that of image to original. Since there is this similarity between particular and Form, the soul can be led back to the Forms by recognizing this resemblance.

The upshot of the entire discussion is that "participation", as a causal connection between particulars and Forms, is no longer present in Plato's thought. The introduction of the demiurge has



replaced "participation" in his metaphysics. The reason for such an alteration presented itself in the Parmenides. In this dialogue Plato reveals his dissatisfaction with his original idea. He realizes the impossibility of providing an explanation of "participation" and begins his search for another possible solution. The additional alterations which occur in his understanding of causality indicate his quest for a final explanation.

To return to the Timaeus for a moment, we must be careful not to give this account too literal a reading. It is quite clearly a mythological explanation and thus we should not assume that Plato has in mind some specific being such as the Judaic-Christian God. Nevertheless, we must recognize that the account is to be taken seriously and that Plato believed there to be an Efficient cause of Becoming. Caution is also advised with respect to the demiurge and its creative activity. We need not suppose that this causal activity is one which has a place in time. It is highly unlikely that Plato is speaking of a temporal beginning of the perceptible world. Rather, I submit that Cornford has the right idea when he says that "the cause of this becoming must be a perpetually sustaining cause".<sup>10</sup>

Further, the description of this cause as a being which makes the world is only a metaphoric characterization of a divine force. It is not to be understood in any other manner. The story offered in the Timaeus is to be taken as a hint to what Plato believed the creation of the universe to be like. Again, we can cite Cornford:

---

<sup>10</sup>F.M. Cornford, Plato's Cosmology (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1975) p. 26.

Plato, in fact does not pretend to have solved the mystery of the universe; had he done so he would not (as the Seventh Letter declares) have set down the solution in writing for all men to read and misunderstand.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout this discussion I have argued that the Forms stand as Formal causes, and this, I believe, Plato endorsed until the Philebus. But the implications of the Philebus and Timaeus are that the εἶδη have ceased to function in this capacity. We are now confronted with an Efficient cause which fashions the perceptible world in the image of the Forms. The information imparted from these two dialogues amounts to this: first, the source of Being is the demiurge; second, although no longer acting as Formal causes, the Forms still account for the specific nature of perceptible entities, in that the demiurge "looks" to them when it creates the world. All this amounts to the positing of a single cause which brings about both the specific characterization of an object and its being. In other words, The Forms, although still accounting for the specific nature of an entity, become manifest in the world via the demiurge. They have ceased to be Formal causes in the sense that they alone "make" things what they are. The εἶδη account for the specific natures of objects but through a medium other than themselves.

Whether or not the solution to the problem of "participation" which I have set down provides a more adequate account, I leave to the reader to decide. My aim has been solely to illustrate that Plato recognized the shortcomings of his original position and thus provided another explanation. Consequently, I suggest that we should

---

<sup>11</sup> Cornford, p. 26.

not look to explaining the nature of "participation", but to the possibility that Plato did indeed provide another account of the relationship between particulars and Forms. The absence of the type of relation which, I believe, "participation" denotes, implies that the original account has proved inexplicable and has been subsequently dismissed on these grounds.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### I Primary Sources

Plato: Parmenides trans. F.M. Cornford, in The Collected Dialogues of Plato. ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

\_\_\_\_\_. Phaedo. trans. H.N. Fowler, in The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. I. London: William Heineman Ltd., 1960.

\_\_\_\_\_. Phaedrus. trans. H.N. Fowler, in The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. I. London: William Heineman Ltd., 1960.

\_\_\_\_\_. Philebus. trans. H.N. Fowler, in The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. III. London: William Heineman Ltd., 1925.

\_\_\_\_\_. Republic. trans. Paul Shorey, in The Loeb Classical Library. 2 vols. London: William Heineman Ltd., 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. Seventh Letter. trans. L.A. Post, in The Collected Dialogues of Plato. ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

\_\_\_\_\_. Sophist. trans. H.N. Fowler, in The Loeb Classical Library. Vol. II. London: William Heineman Ltd., 1921.

\_\_\_\_\_. Timaeus. trans. Benjamin Jowett, in The Collected Dialogues of Plato. ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

### II Other Sources

Aristotle. On Generation and Corruption. trans. H.H. Joachim, in The Basic Works of Aristotle. ed. R. McKeon. New York: Random House,

### III Secondary Sources

#### Books:

Bigger, C.P. Participation: A Platonic Inquiry. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968.

Burnet, John. Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato. London: Macmillan, 1968 (first edition 1914).

Collingwood, R.G. The Idea of Nature. London: Oxford University Press, rpt. 1976.

Cornford, F.M. Plato's Cosmology. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. Plato and Parmenides. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., rpt. - no date.

\_\_\_\_\_. Plato's Theory of Knowledge. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1957.

Friedlander, Paul. Plato. Vol 3. trans. H. Myerhoff, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Grube, G.M.A. Plato's Thought. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968, first edition 1935 Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Guthrie, W.K.C. "Plato: The Man and His Dialogues - Earlier Period" In A History of Greek Philosophy. Vol. IV. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Later Plato and the Academy" In A History of Greek Philosophy. Vol. V. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Hackforth, R. Plato's Examination of Pleasure. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Co. Inc. - original publication 1945 Cambridge University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. Plato's Phaedo. New York: Liberal Arts Press - original publication 1952, Cambridge University Press.

Panagiotou, S. Plato's Parmenides. Ph.D. Thesis. University of St. Andrews, 1977.

Ross, W.D. Plato's Theory of Ideas. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.

Seligman, Paul. Being and Not-Being: An Introduction to Plato's Sophist. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.

Taylor, A.E. Plato: The Man and His Work. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1926.

#### Articles:

Klein, Jacob. "About Plato's Philebus". Interpretation, 2, No. 3, Spring 1972, pp. 157-182.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Plato's Phaedo". The text of a lecture given at St. John's College, Annapolis, Md., on May 3, 1974.

MacClintock, Stuart. "More on the Structure of the Philebus".  
Phronesis 6, 1961, pp. 46-52.

Vlastos, Gregory. "Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo". Plato J.  
Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1971, pp. 132-166.