PARTICIPATION AND PREDICATION IN PLATO'S MIDDLÉ DIALOGUES*

I PROPOSE in this paper to examine three closely related issues in the interpretation of Plato's middle dialogues: the nature of Forms, of participation, and of predication. The familiar problem of self-predication will serve as introduction to the inquiry.

I. Self-Predication

The significance—or lack of significance—of Plato's selfpredicative statements has recently become a crux of scholarship. Briefly, the problem is this: the dialogues often use language which suggests that the Form is a universal which has itself as an attribute and is thus a member of its own class, and, by implication, that it is the one perfect member of that class. The language suggests that the Form *has* what it *is:* it is self-referential, selfpredicable.

Now such a view is, to say the least, peculiar. Proper universals are not instantiations of themselves, perfect or otherwise. Oddness is not odd; Justice is not just; Equality is equal to nothing at all. No one can curl up for a nap in the Divine Bedsteadity; not even God can scratch Doghood behind the Ears.

The view is more than peculiar; it is absurd. As Plato knew, it implies an infinite regress, one which he doubtless regarded as vicious. Indeed, if a recent critic, Professor Gregory Vlastos, has analyzed the Third Man correctly,¹ it implies still more. We must suppose that Plato could swallow, without gagging, a

^{*} Sections I and II of this paper, in revised form, were read before the American Philosophical Association, Western Division, May 1, 1959, at Madison, Wisconsin.

¹ Gregory Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," Philosophical Review, LXIII (1954), 319-349. For further discussion, see: Wilfrid Sellars, Philosophical Review, LXIV (1955), 405-437; Vlastos, *ibid.*, 438-448; P. T. Geach, Philosophical Review, LXV (1956), 72-82; Vlastos, *ibid.*, 83-94; R. S. Bluck, Classical Quarterly, N. S. VI (1956), 29-37, and Phronesis, II (1957), 115-121.

flat self-contradiction;² that the reason for this, presumably, was that the author of the Third Man—one of the more brilliant of philosophical demonstrations—lacked the wit, or perhaps the diligence, to identify the premises of his argument; that the man who first explicitly distinguished between universals and particulars confused them; and, finally, that a central thesis of his ontology, the doctrine of degrees of being and reality, rests on this elementary mistake.

Such thorough confusion is not lightly to be imputed to any man, let alone to Plato. Common sense and the common law agree that a man is innocent until proved guilty; and common charity dictates that philosophers be not excepted. The amount of evidence required to convict Plato of so puerile a confusion must be immense indeed. I propose in this paper to show that it has not yet been produced, and in the very nature of the case cannot be produced.

Let us be quite clear on what is to be proved. Plato obviously accepts the following thesis: some (perhaps all) entities which may be designated by a phrase of the form "the F Itself," or any synonyms thereof, may be called F. So the Beautiful Itself will be beautiful, the Just Itself just, Equality equal.³ But this thesis does not, by itself, imply self-predication; for that, an auxiliary premise is required.

This premise is that a function of the type "... is F" may be applied univocally to F particulars and to the F Itself, so that when (for example) we say that a given act is just, and that Justice is just, we are asserting that both have identically the same character. But this premise would be false if the function were systematically equivocal, according as the subject of the sentence was a Form or a particular. In that case, to say that Justice is just and that any given act is just would be to say two quite different (though perhaps related) things, and the difficulties inherent in self-predication could not possibly arise. That is, the

² The guilty premises, in Vlastos' formulation of the argument, are (A3) Self-Predication and (A4) Non-Identity; these are so stated, however, that their incompatibility is not immediately apparent.

⁸ Cf. Prot., 330c, 331b; Phaedo, 74b, d, 100c; Hip., I, 289c, 291e, 292e, 294a-b; Lysis, 217a; Symp., 210e-211d.

character of Forms would not be assimilated to that of particulars.

I propose to show that functions involving the names of Forms exhibit just this kind of ambiguity. The evidence for this conclusion will be drawn from the theory of predication put forward in the *Phaedo* and from the ontology which underlies it.

II. Plato's Theory of Predication

Plato has no word for "predication." Rather he says that particulars are "called by the same name" ($\delta\mu\omega\nu\nu\mu\sigma\nu$) as their Form.⁴ But this is surely a loose way of describing the use of common terms; " $\delta\mu\omega\nu\nu\mu\sigma\nu$ " is Aristotle's usual term for "ambiguous"; things called by the same name may have nothing in common but their name. But later in the *Phaedo* this terminology is repeated and made more precise:⁵

Each of the Forms exists, and the other things which come to have a share in them are *named after* them.

The reason for naming particulars after Forms is that they have in them an immanent character defined by their Form:⁶

Not only is the Form itself always entitled to its own name, but also what is not the Form, but always has, when it exists, its immanent character $(\mu o \rho \phi \dot{\eta})$.

Significantly, Aristotle chose to emphasize precisely this feature in his first summary of the theory of Forms in the *Metaphysics*:⁷

Sensible things, [Plato] said, were all *named after* [Ideas], and in virtue of a relation to them; for the many existed by participation in the Ideas that *have the same name* as they.

These passages imply that "F" is a *name*, a name whose *prime* designate is a Form: "F" names *the* F. But this name is also applied, through what we may call derivative designation, to particulars, which are *named after* the Form in much the way that a boy may be named after his father. The reason for this, the justification for derivative designation, is that particulars have in

⁴ Phaedo, 78e 2; cf. Rep., X, 596a 7; Soph., 240a.

⁵ Phaedo, 102b 2; cf. Parm., 130e 5; italics here, as elsewhere, mine.

⁶ Phaedo, 103e; cf. 103b 7 ff.

⁷ A 987b 3 ff., trans. by Ross.

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them the immanent character defined by their Form; or, to put the matter in a slightly different way, they are named after the Form because of their peculiarly intimate relation to it—they depend upon it for their character and their existence.

We have, then, a theory of predication without predicates. What appear to be attributive statements are in fact *relational* or *identifying* statements, depending on the designation of their predicates. In derivative designation, to say of something that it is F is to say that it is causally dependent upon *the* F. Notice that "F" is here not strictly a univocal term, but a common name, applied in virtue of a relationship to an individual, the Form.

On the other hand, when "F" is used in primary designation, it is a synonym of "the F Itself" and "F-ness"; therefore, to say that F-ness is F is to state an identity. It follows that it is invalid to infer self-predication from Plato's apparently self-predicative language. In the first place, "F-ness is F" is not a predicative statement. Second, we cannot mean by it what we mean when we say that a particular is F. The function "... is F" is systematically ambiguous; its meaning depends upon the context in which it is used, the type of object to which it is applied.⁸

If this is true, it follows that Plato's self-predicative language is both intelligible and logically innocuous. Grammatical predicates are names which exhibit a systematic ambiguity according as they designate Forms or particulars; Forms themselves are proper nameables; what appear to be self-predicative statements are identity statements; and what appear to be attributive statements are relational statements.

⁸ Note that this view of the way words mean is consistent with a wellknown feature of Greek syntax. One may always, in Greek, form an abstract noun by using the article with the neuter singular adjective. " $\tau \delta$ *loov*," for example, is equivalent to the abstract " η *lootrys*"; both mean "equality." But this usage is quite ambiguous, since " $\tau \delta$ *loov*" may also mean "the equal thing" or "that which is equal"; in other words, it is normal usage, in Greek, to use "the F thing" to refer to F-ness, particular Fs, and even the class of F things. It has sometimes been supposed that this ambiguity was a source of confusion to Plato; I suggest that it rather confirmed a theory of the way words mean, which, in conformity with normal usage, preserved that ambiguity and rendered it intelligible. The use of " $a\vartheta \tau \delta$ " will always make it clear, should need arise, which type of F is in question. " $a\vartheta \tau \delta$ F" is an identifying phrase.

We have a reasonably close analogue to this in English: our own use of predicates where standards of weight and measure are involved. To say of something that it weighs a pound, or measures exactly one yard, is to say that it bears a specific relation —equality in weight or length—to an individual locked in a vault of the Bureau of Standards, an individual arbitrarily selected to define a unit of measurement. Like ". . . is F," in derivative designation, the function ". . weighs a pound" covertly mentions an individual of a type different from its argument.

The parallel may be made more exact. We may say of other things that they weigh a pound, but if we assert this of *the* pound, we cannot assert it in the same sense. We can measure other things against a standard; we cannot measure a standard against itself. The function ". . . weighs a pound" is capable of exhibiting just the kind of ambiguity that Plato's theory requires. It may be systematically ambiguous; on the one hand it mentions a relation; on the other it may be an identifying phrase, designating an individual.

There is no reason in principle why this analysis should not be extended to other types of statement. Why should we not, for example, read statements like "this desk is brown" or "that figure is triangular" as asserting that the desk or figure stands in the relation of color or shape resemblance to *the* brown and *the* triangle, individuals selected to define standards of color and shape? There is no internal reason why predicates should not be analyzed in this way. If they are, attributive statements will then one and all be translated into relation-to-standard statements.

The analogy of relation-to-standard statements to statements involving names of Forms was drawn advisedly;⁹ for Forms clearly function, in the early and middle dialogues, as standards and paradigms. Plato's theory of predication admirably supplements a fundamental thesis of his ontology.

⁹ It must be remembered that this is an analogy, not a basis for literal explication of the theory of Forms. Forms resemble standards in that they are of a different epistemic order from the class of things they define; but Forms are, as standards are not, also of a different ontological order. This leads to fundamental difficulties if the analogy is pressed; cf. "Forms and Standards," *Philosophical Quarterly*, VIII (1959), 164-167.

III. Imitation and Degrees of Reality

The theory of Forms involves two fundamental doctrines: (a) that the relation between particulars and Forms is that of imitation, of copy to original, and (b) that Forms and particulars differ in degree of reality. These theses, the proponents of selfpredication maintain, obscured in Plato's mind the distinction between characters and things characterized, a confusion which leads directly to the absurdities of self-predication; and the regress arguments of the *Parmenides*, resting as they do on this mistake, reflect not verbal confusion but a radical and deepseated incoherence in the theory of Forms.

It is clear that Plato's theory of predication does not entail this incoherence; but it is equally clear that it can do nothing, of itself, to prevent it. Indeed, the theory could have contributed indirectly to produce it, for it provides no clear way either to affirm or to deny that the F has F-ness. The very language in which the theory of Forms is expressed makes the issue of selfpredicability peculiarly difficult to isolate and analyze. This would account for the fact (if it is a fact) that Plato was unable to identify the premises of the Third Man and therefore could not mend the flaw in his theory.

But is it true that the degrees of reality and copy theories imply self-predication? In fact, they imply nothing of the sort.

(a) The Copy Theory. Plato characteristically describes particulars as copying or imitating Forms, and this seems to imply that particulars resemble Forms. The proponents of self-predication maintain that it implies still more: that if F particulars and the F Itself resemble each other, they must do so in virtue of being F.

This conclusion is one of almost breath-taking eccentricity. My hands resemble each other in being hands. Do they also resemble the Hand Itself in this respect? Clearly not. For the relation of hands to the Hand is analogous, on Plato's account, to the relation between pictures or reflections of hands and hands. Therefore, if "the logic of Plato's metaphor" implies that *the* Hand is *a* hand, it also implies that the picture of a hand is a hand; which is absurd.

Pictures of trees are not trees, though they may resemble trees

in color, shape, and so on. We must, then, distinguish between substantial resemblance (to use Aristotelian language) and accidental resemblance, between the resemblance of things of the same sort, and the resemblance of things which are merely similar in quality. And when this is done, the argument for self-predication from the copy theory is exposed for what it is: a muddle. The reason for that muddle is not far to seek. When the self-predicationists discuss imitation, they have a peculiar type in mind: one thing may be used as a model on which to fashion something else of the same kind—a shuttle, say, as a model for shuttles. But it is clear that this is not what Plato had in mind; in fact, he may well have denied that this type of imitation *is* imitation.¹⁰

But even if it is granted that the resemblance metaphor does not imply self-predication, it continues to generate familiar difficulties; for if we grant even so much as accidental resemblance between particulars and Forms, there will be a sense, though a weak one, in which the absurdity inherent in self-predication will recur.

Resemblance is an indirect relation, that is, a relation which holds only in virtue of some common term: if x and y resemble each other, they do so in respect of some common character C. But if the relation of any x to its C is one of resemblance—if particulars resemble Forms—two things follow immediately: there will be an infinite regress of Forms, or third terms in relations of resemblance;¹¹ and Forms (though, to be sure, not strictly self-predicable) will share classes with particulars and by so much be assimilated to their character.

But does Plato's metaphor commit him even to this? The answer, surely, is No. The objection turns on assuming that particulars resemble Forms, and this assumption is false.

Consider the reflection of a red scarf in a mirror—a good example of what Plato understands by an imitation. It is clearly

¹⁰ Cf. Cratylus, 389a ff.; Sophist, 239d ff.; Timaeus, 28b, appears to entertain this type of imitation as possible. But notice that the hypothesis that the creator could use a generated model in his work implies an infinite regress, though Plato does not explicitly mention this.

¹¹ This regress could terminate in a C which was self-predicable; but then we would only have laid the foundation of a new regress, resting on a different base.

false that the reflection is a scarf. Is it true that it is red? Or is it only the reflection of a red thing $?^{12}$

The reflection is not similar in *kind* to the original. Is it then similar in quality? If we say that it is, we face an evident embarrassment; for to say this is to say that we can predicate of reflections, which are essentially adjectival, in just the way we predicate of their originals, things which exist in their own right. Scarves can be bought and sold, lost or stolen, wrapped around the neck in winter; but I would gladly give you every image that has crossed the surface of my mirror, and count myself no poorer for the loss.¹³

The very being of a reflection is relational, wholly dependent upon what is other than itself: the original, and the reflecting medium.¹⁴ It is for this reason that, though you may call the reflection of a red scarf red if you so please, you cannot mean the *same* thing you mean when you call its original red. The function ". . . is red" is, in this case, systematically ambiguous. It follows that you cannot say that the reflection stands in the relation of color resemblance to its original, since this implies the univocal

 $^{^{12}}$ I do not maintain that the analysis of reflection which follows is the only, or perhaps even the correct, analysis. I do maintain that it is consistent and reasonable, and that, as a matter of historical fact, it is presupposed by the Theory of Forms.

¹³ This argument may be made more precise. We see reflections in the mirror, and we see the mirror in the room. But "in" here is ambiguous. Mirrors are physical objects which may be located relatively to other physical objects. But we can locate reflections only relatively to the reflecting medium; otherwise, we would be forced to claim that two things, the reflection and the surface of the medium, may be in the same place at the same time. But given this as a lemma, the following argument seems sound: whatever is red is extended; whatever is extended is locatable with respect to any other thing which is extended; mirror images are not so locatable; therefore, they are neither extended nor red. Rather, they are reflections of an extended red thing.

¹⁴ The mirror of the Forms is of course three-dimensional: the Receptacle. Notice that the fundamental distinction between the Aristotelian and Platonic views of space is explained by their differing evaluation of extended entities. For Aristotle the extended is substantial, real in its own right; and therefore it is for him feasible to adopt a relational view of space, with substances as relata. But for Plato extended entities are reflections, images; space, the medium of reflection, is a precondition of their existence, the receptacle in which Forms are mirrored. It is therefore absolute, not a consequence of the mirroring. Cf. *Timaeus*, 50d ff.

exemplification of a common quality, presupposed by an assertion of resemblance. The reflection does not *resemble* the original; rather, it is a *resemblance of* the original.¹⁵ This is its nature, and the whole of its nature. "Resemblances of" are quasi-substantial; relational entities, not relations.¹⁶ They stand to their originals as the dependent to the independent, as the less real to the more real. Plato's metaphor of imitation brilliantly expresses a community between different orders of objects, different levels of reality; it does not, as his recent critics have maintained, collapse that order.¹⁷ Their reading of the metaphor can be sustained only by assuming the very thing that must be proved—that Plato viewed imitation as they do.

(b) Degrees of Reality. Plato's metaphor of imitation expresses a fundamental thesis of his ontology, that particulars differ from Forms, as resemblances differ from originals, in degree of reality.¹⁸ For particulars "fall short" of their Forms, and are "deficient" with respect to them.¹⁹

In what sense can a particular be deficient with respect to a

¹⁷ It will be objected that Plato compares particulars with reflections and pictures indiscriminately; that pictures are not merely resemblances of, but stand in the relation of resemblance to, their originals; and that, therefore, the above interpretation cannot be attributed to Plato. But this objection overlooks the nature of his theory of art. The analogy is drawn, not to the picture as a picture, but to the art object—a "man-made dream for waking eyes." The picture does not differ in type or degree of reality from its original; it is an artifact, an object of $\pi i \sigma \tau s$; to apprehend it so is to apprehend it as a picture; and to be able to compare it, we cannot confuse it with that original. But the artist holds a mirror up to nature; it is essential to apprehending a picture as an art object that we may take it to be, not a resemblance, but the very thing it resembles, as we may mistake a reflection in a mirror for the thing reflected. Viewed as an art object, the picture no longer retains its independent character; it is assimilated to that of a reflection, which is to say that its full meaning is relational, dependent upon the nature of its original.

¹⁸ Cf. Sophist, 240a-c; images are not real, but really are images.

¹⁹ Phaedo, 74d 5-7, e 1-4, 75a 2-3, b 4-8.

¹⁵ The "is" here is, of course, that of identity.

¹⁶ This distinction between resemblance and resemblances, between relations and relational entities, will no doubt seem strange to those whose imaginations are set in the cast of *Principia Mathematica*; but it has a long and honorable history. It has been the root metaphor for most Western degrees-of-reality philosophies which reject the literal inconsistency of the lower orders of being; and medieval exemplarism is unintelligible without it.

Form? Only, the proponents of self-predication have urged, by possessing in merely approximate or comparative degree a character that the Form, which *is* the character, *has* fully. But this assimilates the Form categorially to the class of things it defines; it must possess in pre-eminent degree a character which particulars own only deficiently, and it is therefore itself a particular, albeit, no doubt, a perfect one.

If this interpretation is accepted, it is quite fatal. But it turns on construing the deficiency of particulars as one of quality, rather than of type; they are deficiently something else of the same sort, as a blind eye is deficiently an eye, or as one shuttle, modeled on another, may be a defective copy. Yet surely the force of the metaphor of imitation, and of the $\chi \omega \rho i \sigma \mu \delta s$, is to indicate that the deficiency in question is that of one type of thing with respect to something of another type: "deficiency" is here a category distinction, not a distinction within categories. Particulars are deficient not because they have the characters they have but because they are the kind of things they are-because they are qualified by opposites, because they change, because they are in some degree unintelligible, because they depend for their existence upon Forms and are themselves not Forms-because, in a word, they are images. The interpretation of the selfpredicationists, though it gains an initial plausibility by interpreting "deficiency" in the way most obvious to us, is impossible, for it assumes (and does nothing to prove) that Forms and particulars are of the same type.²⁰ But Plato does not say that they are; and he does say that they are not.²¹

²⁰ Note the further difficulty that certain Forms define characters which admit of no logical extreme. There is no largest, or smallest, *possible* thing, a fact which Plato, who was familiar with the Zenonian treatment of infinity, must surely have known. But if the self-predicationists are correct in their interpretation of "deficiency," Largeness must be the largest thing possible, Smallness smaller than any small thing; at this point, the imagination boggles.

²¹ It will doubtless be urged that the Good of the *Republic* (and analogously, the Beauty of the *Symposium*) is "the best," and better than any good thing. But the question is whether it is "better" in the *same* sense in which one good thing is better than another. Can we compare things of different ontological status in the way we compare things of the same ontological status? The answer implied to this question by Plato's theory of predication, the imitation metaphor, and the degrees of reality theory, is No; and that answer, as I shall show, is sustained and made intelligible by Plato's theory of participation.

If the foregoing analysis has been sound, the arguments offered to show that Forms are self-predicable beg the question: in each case the conclusion is proved only because, implicitly, it has been assumed.

IV. Forms and Universals

The case for self-predicability rests, in the final analysis, not on Plato's apparently self-predicative language, nor on the logic of his imitation metaphor, nor on supposed systematic presuppositions of the degrees of reality theory; it rests on a false assumption about the nature of Forms, imported bodily into his text by his interpreters. It is to the credit of the proponents of selfpredication that they have seen the implications of that assumption far more clearly than the majority of their critics.

It is generally agreed that Forms are universals, and in some sense that is surely true: "One over Many" is the nub of the argument for their existence. In *some* sense, then; but in *what* sense?

On this question, the verdict of recent scholarship has been almost unanimous. The Form is a *commutative* universal, a character or attribute, a nuclear identity capable of instantiation in diverse material contexts, a pure "what" which in some mysterious way inheres in and qualifies "thats." On this commonly accepted view, Platonism differs from other theories of the commutative universal only in that it is realistic and extreme; the universal exists "alone by itself," independent of any mind and any instantiation. No one need think of it; nothing need have it. Its existence is intrinsic to itself.

Now commutative universals or attributes clearly cannot be identified with standards and paradigms; for the latter are things characterized, not characters; and if there is confusion on this point, self-predication follows immediately. But Forms clearly function in Plato's ontology as standards and paradigms; therefore, if he also thought of them as common characters or attributes, the result is shipwreck.

But did he? I submit that he did not, that this is an assumption of Plato's critics, not of Plato. For consider its consequences.

To begin with, it wrecks dialectic. With the commutative universal, the relation of genus to species is always that of the more abstract to the more concrete: the genus is essentially poorer than its species, having less content, and this diminution continues as one proceeds upward in the abstractive hierarchy, so that the highest genera are most barren of all. But such a view as this clearly cannot provide a ground for the synoptic vision of all time and all existence, or account for the fact that dialectic ends in an unhypothetical first principle, or provide a basis for the deduction of lower from higher which the downward path of dialectic requires.

Second, this assumption destroys the main point of the $\chi \omega \rho i \sigma \mu \delta s$. It is of course trivially true that attributes and their instantiations are erepa ovra, different sorts of things. It may even be true, granted a few assumptions, that attributes are causes of their instantiations, since they are that by which things are what they are; and also true that attributes may exist "alone by themselves," independently of instantiation. But it is not true—though this is at the heart of the $\chi \omega \rho i \sigma \mu \delta s$ —that an attribute may be instantiated imperfectly or in deficient degree. A crooked line is not an imperfect instantiation of straight linearity; on the contrary, it is a full and complete instantiation of the kind of crooked line that it is, and the kind is repeatable, though the line itself is not. In general, things exhibit the characters they exhibit and none other; so far as commutative universals are concerned, to say that something is deficient with respect to one character is merely an awkward way of saying that it quite fully has another. But with paradigms and standards, the language of approximation and deficiency makes perfect sense.

This point is related to a further one. Particulars, unlike Forms, are qualified by opposites. We can form no stable conception of them, "either as being or as not being, or as both being and not being, or as neither."²² The plain meaning of this statement, in its context, is that particulars are both F and not-F, either F or not-F, and neither F nor not-F. If Plato understood F to be an attribute or commutative universal, then he must have believed that particulars are (quite literally) self-contradictory, and supported that absurdity by arguments which are a fortiori equally

²² Republic, V, 479c, trans. by F. M. Cornford.

absurd; whereas, I suggest (though I will not here attempt to prove), if we interpret the negation here involved as that of deficiency or privation, implied by approximation to an entity which stands on a different level of reality, it is possible to construe this discussion in a way that does not make Plato both a skeptic and a fool.

Instantiations do not pursue, or fall short of, or imitate, attributes; they simply have them or fail to have them. Nor are they of a lower degree of reality. On the contrary, the major objection to extreme realism is that it posits a domain of reality so drained of actuality that it is shadow-thin, a ghostly wraith hovering about the verges of existence, powerless even to gibber.

Forms are not commutative universals.²³ What, then, are they? A thorough attempt to answer that question would far outrun the limits of this paper. But Plato has provided us with an analogy, and that analogy is worthy of attention. Forms are like originals; particulars are like images or reflections. The comparison is significant.

To begin with, it places the One over the Many; there may be many reflections of a single thing, and those reflections gain their community of character from that thing. Second, the analogy expresses degrees of reality; reflections depend upon their original both for their character and their existence; it depends upon them for neither. Third, the analogy illustrates how particulars may approximate to Forms and yet be categorially distinct: reflections may differ in the degree to which they are true to their original, but no matter how faithful they are to it, they can never become it, for it is of a different order than they. Finally, the analogy helps to make clear in what sense Forms are standards and

²³ I have not troubled to criticize this view in greater detail simply because it has never, to my knowledge, received explicit defense. At times it is accepted on the basis of an undistributed middle: Forms are clearly universals; by a universal we commonly mean a commutative universal or attribute; therefore, Forms are commutative universals or attributes. But there are hints in the literature of another motive. It seems sometimes to be assumed that every philosophy must (ought to?) hold a theory of commutative universals; therefore Plato must have held such a theory. I find it odd, in the light of the past five hundred years of philosophy, and especially of the last fifty, that anyone should blithely assume the premise to be true. But true or false, the conclusion is a *non sequitur*.

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paradigms; in order to know that anything is a reflection, still more to know of what it is a reflection, one must know its original. But the original, then, is a standard or criterion, by which we judge of images and their degree of adequacy.

The metaphor of resemblance is not, of course, fully adequate. Most notably, it sheds no direct light (unlike the imitation metaphor) on the teleological side of Plato's thought, nor on the question of how the reflection of an unchanging object may be in flux. But it brilliantly conveys features essential to Plato's view of Forms and their relation to particulars; and by appealing to what is close at hand and familiar, it provides us with at least an intuitive grasp of how a Many can be unified by a One which is not a commutative universal. Finally, it suggests that Forms stand to particulars, not as attributes to instantiations, but as exemplars to exemplifications, and that participation, $\mu \epsilon \theta \epsilon \xi \iota s$, is not nearly so mysterious as it has sometimes seemed.

V. Participation

The objects of our changing world of sense, though each is different from every other, are in certain fundamental—though varying—respects, the same. In difference we find community of character; in diversity we find unity. How is this to be explained?

The theory of Forms is intended as an answer to this question, and the solution it offers is this. The particular objects of sense are unified by a One which stands on a different level of reality from theirs; their community of character is to be explained by the introduction of Forms. Unity and diversity are reconciled if we posit the existence of two domains, Being and Becoming, a world of particulars, of things unified, and a world of Forms, their unity. To understand the One and the Many, we must understand that the One is *over* the Many.

But if this solves one problem of community, it leads directly to another. In placing the One over the Many, we unify the Many; the next task, clearly, is to unify the Many and the One. The community of particulars is to be explained by the introduction of Forms; but how are we to explain the community of particulars and Forms? This is the problem of participation: given a diversity of domains, of worlds, to account for their community. It clearly cannot be met by positing a One over the original Many and their One; for this merely supplies us with another Many demanding unification, and with a vicious regress. Being and Becoming must either then be collapsed or infinitely fragmented; but in either case, the problem of community, to which this ontology had addressed itself, remains unsolved.

Paradoxically, we cannot assert that Forms and particulars are related or that they share any common character. For the relation between a Form and a particular must be either a Form or a particular or some third kind of thing. If it is either a Form or a particular, the original question is unanswered, since our problem is to account for the community between Forms and particulars. and that problem cannot be solved by multiplication. But if the putative relation is some other type of thing, a member of some third domain, we must ask what accounts for the community of three domains, not merely of two. Therefore, any attempt to relate Forms and particulars will lead, no matter how that relation is construed, to an infinite regress. It follows that Forms and particulars are not related. But in that case they cannot share common predicates; for if two things share a common predicate they are similar, and similarity is a relation. But here no relation is possible.

Being and Becoming must be distinct and yet together, and their nexus of connection can belong to neither, nor can it be anything distinct. We have here one of the fundamental problems of Plato's ontology. His solution is to be found in the doctrine of degrees of reality.

Particulars and Forms are not merely different types of things; they are types of things which differ in degree of reality, for the one is wholly dependent upon the other. Particulars have no independent ontological status; they are purely relational entities, entities which derive their *whole* character and existence from Forms. Because their being is relational, adjectival, dependent, relations to bind them to Forms are neither possible nor required. To understand the community of Being and Becoming, we need only understand the dependent nature of Becoming.

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But this leads to a further difficulty. We must say that particulars are, that they have a kind of existence, though in the same breath we must go on to affirm that they do not have existence in the way that Forms, things which are fully real, do. This is the problem of the $\ell i \delta \omega \lambda o \nu$: images are not real—yet they really are images. We talk about them, predicate of them, and act with respect to them, for they form the substance of our world. But they are wholly dependent upon their transcendent source, and of immensely less reality; and therefore, though we must say that they *are*, we must also say that they *are not*.

We cannot say that particulars and Forms exist in the *same* sense, for that is what the degrees of reality theory denies. Can we then assert their existence in a different sense? But if "existence" is simply ambiguous, if to say that a Form exists and that a particular exists is to say something wholly different about each, then the community which is fundamental to degrees of reality is abandoned, and we are left with a domain which in no proper sense exists at all. We are committed, not only to maintaining *degrees* of reality, but to maintaining degrees of *reality*.

The solution to this difficulty has already been hinted at in our examination of Plato's theory of predication. Particulars are named after Forms because Forms are their causes. To say of anything that it is F is to say that it depends for its existence upon the F, that in virtue of which F-things are F. But the F is not merely a cause; it is an exemplary cause. Particulars not only depend upon it; they are resemblances of it, as reflections are resemblances of their originals. Like reflections, they differ in type from their originals; they share no common attribute; and yet they exhibit a fundamental community of character. From this analysis it follows that the names of Forms cannot be applied univocally to Forms and particulars, exemplars and exemplifications; diversity of type implies a distinction between primary and derivative designation. But it also follows that the names of Forms are not simply ambiguous; community of character implies that the meaning of a term in derivative designation is defined in terms of its meaning in primary designation.²⁴

²⁴ There is an interesting type of ambiguity involved here, something intermediate between univocity and full equivocity. Aristotle calls it $\pi \rho \delta s \tilde{\epsilon} v$,

It also implies that statements such as "the F is F," though their form is that of a mere statement of identity or synonymy, play an important function in explicating the theory of Forms; in asserting that the F is F, we are asserting, not only that it is the cause of F-things, but also the peculiar manner in which it is the cause. It is an exemplary cause and, as such, exhibits a community of character with its exemplifications.

VI. The Third Man

It is easy to show that the regress arguments of the Parmenides are powerless against this position. The first (131c-132b) assumes that the Form and its particulars are called by the same name and that that name is applied univocally; the second (132c-133a) assumes that particulars resemble Forms. Both are fallacious. Let " F_1 " be substituted for "F" when "F" is used in primary designation, and " F_2 " in derivative designation. Then it is false to say that F-things and the F are called by the same name, equally false to say that they resemble each other either in

ambiguity, or equivocity by reference. (Cf. Meta. IV, 1003a 33 ff.; E.N., 1096b 27; Topics, 106a 9 ff.; W. D. Ross, Aristotle's Metaphysics, vol. i, p. 256; J. Owens, Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics, ch. iii et seq.) It is the peculiar merit of equivocity by reference that it expresses the community of different orders of things without assuming the diverse instantiation of a common universal. It requires no more than some Form of dependencerelation in order to be applicable. It is for this reason that this type of equivocity plays so important a role in Aristotle's Metaphysics. First Philosophy or Theology has as its object being qua being, and the characteristics which essentially pertain to it. But to speak of the being of a substance and of an accident is to speak of two very different things. To or Dégetal moddaxŵs; "being" is said in many ways. A substance "is" in the full sense; its being is its own. But the being of an accident is adjectival, attributive, in some sense borrowed from that of the substance to which it belongs. It holds its existence, not in its own right, but by virtue of its relation to what is self-existent; and its being is defined by that relation.

It is important to note what this denies: it denies that being is a genus, that is, a universal or common term. (Cf. Meta. IV, 1003a 33 ff; X, 1053b 22; VII, 1045b 6; E.N., 1096b 27. Being is not a genus because it can be predicated of everything, whereas a genus cannot be predicated of its differentiae. (See Meta. III, 998b 23; XI, 1059b 31; and Ross, op. cit., ad loc.) To say that substance and accident both exist is not to say that they share a common character, but that they stand in a certain relation: the one is dependent upon the other. "Being" is a $\pi\rho\deltas \ \epsilon\nu$ equivocal; so too are the names of Forms. respect of being F_1 or F_2 . These arguments, because they neglect the systematic ambiguity of the names of Forms, are, it would seem, the results of mere confusion—may be viewed, indeed, as *reductiones ad absurdum* of that confusion.²⁵

We may go further. The fundamental difficulty underlying the Third Man is ontological, not linguistic. Not only the regress arguments but all of the objections to participation in the *Parmenides* posit an identity of character between Forms and particulars; the Many and the One are to be unified, in effect, by a further One. These arguments demonstrate conclusively that this supposition is absurd.

Yet they point to a difficulty which is crucial in any exemplaristic ontology. For though there can be no identity between exemplars and exemplifications, there must be community of character; and how is this community to be explained? It can be explained by treating exemplifications not as substances in which qualities inhere but as relational entities, entities in which resemblance and dependence so combine as to destroy the possibility of substantiality. Plato's use of the metaphors of imitation and reflection, and his characterization of particulars and Forms, indirectly indicate that he accepted this solution.

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²⁵ It should be noted that the Third Man does not presuppose the distinction between commutative universals and instances. The argument rests on a categorial or type confusion; it can be generated by confusing exemplars with exemplifications, goals with the things which have them, or standards with the things they measure. This list is not exhaustive.