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The Third Man Argument and Its Role in Plato's Philosophy

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THE THIRD MAN ARGUMENT
AND
ITS ROLE IN PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY
BY
VIRGINIA E. REAVES

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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1973

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AND
ITS ROLE IN PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY

An Abstract

The Third Man Argument, which made its first recorded appearance in the philosophy of ancient Greece, has most often been thought of as an attack upon Plato's Theory of Forms. Plato's theory, of course, accommodated two types of 'man': the Form and the particular. The Form was that which two or more particular men were said to be like one another 'in virtue of.' Plato had sought to restore the notion of stability in a world of apparent flux. Forms were unchanging, perfect, and independent. Particulars were changing, imperfect, and dependent upon the Forms for their being. The Third Man Argument (actually there are three versions--two pointing out a 'third man' in addition to the Form and particular, and one yielding not only a 'third man,' but an indefinite number) attempts to show a flaw in Plato's Theory of Forms. What is indeed strange is the fact that Plato presents the argument himself in his dialogue the Parmenides and seemingly leaves it unanswered. This has led commentators to a host of interpretations, pronouncing the argument

either valid or invalid, finding its role in Plato's development either significant or insignificant.

It is the purpose of this study to analyze the various versions of the Third Man Argument, to examine commentaries on them, to judge the validity of the arguments and their significance to Plato's philosophy. It is my finding that Plato was certainly aware of the argument he was presenting--that he was actually using it to purge his followers of false notions of his theory arising, apparently, from taking his metaphorical language too literally. That he was aware of the difficulty of finding the right words, is seen, I think, in his dialogue Cratylus. It is my contention, however, that Plato knew the argument was valid (although not against his actual theory) and goes on in the Parmenides to set his followers straight--presenting a dialectical exercise (far from being a 'joke' as some have supposed) showing the necessity of certain combinations of Forms and indirectly implying that the Third Man Argument can be answered. Further it is possible that Plato had attempted to forestall a 'third man' as early as the Republic (with the now-famous Third Bed Argument). And with more technical terminology of recent times (via R. E. Allen), identifying Forms as 'exemplary causes' and particulars

as 'relational entities,' I think that Plato's theory can be understood in such a way to hinder the entrance of any 'third man.' But the role that the Third Man Argument plays in Plato's philosophy is not so much a step in his development as it is a step to forestall others from developing his theory into something it was never intended to be.

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I

APPROACH TO AND BACKGROUND OF THE THIRD MAN

The Approach

Getting to the crux of the so-called 'Third Man Argument' and its role in Plato's philosophy is similar to attempting to traverse Zeno of Elea's Line of Dichotomy, which for my own purposes I choose to map out in a stadium;¹ before one can even get to center-stage one must first cover half the distance, and before reaching the half, half of the half, and before half of the half, half of the half of the half, and so on into infinity without ever reaching one's destination. Despite many difficulties, it is the purpose of this paper to examine the Third Man Argument--its various versions (especially the one found in Plato's Parmenides), what it is aimed against, whether or not it is valid, whether or not Plato thought it was, whether or not Plato gives an answer, and, finally, the use Plato made of it.²

Much has been written on the subject yet controversy remains, and, will remain, no doubt, after my thesis. I am by no means presenting the definitive work on the Third Man. I am, however, bringing together a great bulk of the material already written and presenting a

possible interpretation of my own--hoping that the response that it brings will either reinforce it or completely demolish it. Too much has been said on the Third Man without sufficient explanation or rebuttal; I bring some of these views to light.

It is my contention that although the 'Third Man' attempts various ways of entering into Plato's Theory of Forms to disrupt it, all attempts fail. It is, nonetheless, important, I think, in that it serves as an example of what happens when one takes Plato's theory (as presented in the Republic and the Phaedo) too literally and adds to it ones own contamination with appearances. Language being but an imperfect copy together with man's inability to completely escape appearances is representative of the human predicament: bound in the cave of appearances, knowing, perhaps, that reality lies outside, but having little ability to find it--and even if one does, the inability to express it. Sheer ignorance or the fear of the unknown may lead some to postulate a 'third man,' hoping to make appearances safe as the only reality. The argument works, however, only as long as appearances creep in; Plato's theory of reality is not accurately presented in the argument and therefore the argument is not valid against what it proposes to be against. Plato's doctrine, far from

being simple, is complex; and the Third Man Argument, no matter what sect originated it, is used by Plato as a diuretic for his students--to purge them from an over-simplified view of his theory, to show them where problems of language and appearance might lead.

Background

The Third Man Argument made its first recorded appearance in ancient Greece and is most often thought of as an attack upon Plato's Theory of Forms. Plato's theory states that what we experience are only resemblances of what really is³--that particular men, for example, 'participate' in some Form Man,⁴ Form Man being that man, most real, which two or more men are like each other or said to be man 'in virtue of.'⁵ The world of Forms is the real world, the absolute; the world of our senses is only the world of shadows, the relative. The Forms are unchanging and perfect, serving as the causes of things and as the criteria for knowledge.⁶ We recognise particular things by recollecting the Forms and we are able to judge these particulars in light of the true Forms. As particular men we only approximate the real, unique Form Man; we are mere resemblances.

The Third Man Argument (or at least the main version of it) attacks this point of resemblance and the notion

of some 'unique' Form over a group of many particulars. Forms appear as being separate from particulars, yet it is what these particulars hold in common. But suppose you go a step further; do both the Form Man and the particular men have the characteristic 'man'? If the answer is affirmative, you are on the road to uniting the particular man (Man I) along with the Form Man (Man II) with some additional Form Man (Man III) coming over and above the other two. This road leads not only to some 'third man' but to an infinite number of men (Forms 'Man' which denies Plato's thesis that each Form is unique, that is, there is just one Form Man, one Form Bed, etc.⁷ If the Third Man Argument is in fact logically valid, if it is against what Plato actually held, and if Plato has not managed an escape route, it just might be possible that his metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics are in for serious trouble. What is surprising is this: Plato himself implies another version of this argument and directly presents the one given above in the Parmenides. One would think after becoming familiar with the wide range of commentaries on the Parmenides and the numerous different reasons for the 'third man' appearing therein, that Plato wrote his dialogues so that anything could be deduceable from his texts. Actually, I find, that Plato is not perfectly clear, and if one does not go beyond appearances, one might well conclude that his

philosophy is full of contradictions. Does Plato think that the 'third man' is an intruder to be dealt with and if so, for what reason? Is the argument valid and is Plato forced to revise or abolish his theory? Does the second part of the Parmenides actually bring an answer to the Third Man--or is that part of the dialogue only a joke? Does Plato still speak of the Forms in his later dialogues in the same way as in earlier ones? These questions and many more have been met with contrary answers by Plato scholars. But before taking on this 'third man' and his role in Plato's thought, it is important to note that there are at least two other versions of the Third Man Argument.

Varieties of the Third Man Argument

As if the problem of regress in the TMA isn't enough, there were two other Third Man Arguments going around about the time of the one mentioned--both desiring to add some 'third man' to man the particular and man the Form--but this time without any regress. Now, exactly what these arguments are and what they are against seems like something which needs considering, and to proceed in a secure and orderly path it might be well to give all three Third Man Arguments. Alexander of Aphrodisias recorded the three various arguments in his commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics (Met. a, 990b 15).⁸ The

third version is expressed in two parts and although Alexander presents the first part by way of introduction to his comments, I shall reserve it for after the second version of the argument.

One Third Man

This first Third Man is ascribed to the Megarian logicians (sophists) generally; Alexander states it:

If we say 'there is a man walking' we do not mean that Man, in the sense of the Form is walking--for the Form is unmoving--nor yet a determinate particular man--and how can we mean this if we do not recognise the man? We are aware that a man is walking, but not who the particular man is of whom we assert this; we are saying that another third man different from these is walking. Ergo, there is a third man of whom we have predicated that he is walking. To be sure, this argument is sophistical but an opening is made for it by those who postulate the Forms.⁹

This argument has been commonly interpreted as being based on the ambiguity resulting from lack of an indefinite article (there being none in Greek). Such commentators as A. E. Taylor and Francis M. Cornford¹⁰ hold this view, and simply by looking at the argument, their interpretation seems quite plausible.

I might say, for example, that a man is walking by the Philosophy Department door. Now, plainly I do not mean that the Form Man is walking by because, according to Plato, Forms do not move and are not capable of being snatched (this man is moving and I might very well snatch

him up and pull him into the office--a good catch if indeed he be the Form--philosophically rewarding!); surely, too, if the man keeps walking and escapes down the steps and out the door, I would not in tears cry out: "Oh, dear, there goes Humanity!" But still it remains that I do not know who the man is; he is no specific fellow that I know. So if he is not some specific particular or the unique Form, what or who is he? The answer seems to be: he is some unspecified particular. If I were to obtain names of every man well perserved enough to walk and place them all in a disjunctive proposition ("Either Chairman Freeman walked by or Dr. Young walked by or Dr. Martin walked by or Dr. Peterson walked by or"), then I mean that some one of this set has just walked by--but exactly which I do not know. The man, then, is a particular, partaking of the Form Man and surely not something over and above the Form. There is no infinite regress and if taken this way poses no threat to Plato's Theory of Forms. As Taylor concludes, ". . . it is merely a correct reflection on the ambiguity of the article such as would naturally occur to anyone interested in the formal development of logic."¹¹

If, however, one says simply "man walks" instead of "a man is walking" 'man' in this case without the article

as the Greek would allow, then something queer does happen. Harold Cherniss contends that this is how the argument is meant to be taken since why else would a Megarian group come up with it and why else would an indefinite subject be called a 'third man'? Cherniss supposes that the argument points to Plato's Theory of Forms and its inability to account for common predicates. He says that the subject is not some particular man but rather it is not any particular man. The man who walks by the Philosophy Department door is not a Form and not a particular; he is just a man. To say that man walks suggests a common predicate 'man'--certainly neither Form nor particular--but a 'third man'; hence, as Cherniss would have it, we would have three types of 'man': Man the Form, man the particular, and man the common predicate. When we say "man walks" we are speaking of men in general.¹² The Form is not 'men in general' for Plato, certainly; it is what is most truly real, a substance, and we are only relational entities¹³ having a sort of adjectival existence. R. E. Allen, who also holds this latter view, finds that the failure to account for common predicates is not so much an oversight on Plato's part but rather the consequence of his ontology. In fact, Allen contends that Plato's Forms are actually the causes of particulars, exemplary causes.

All statements of the form ". . . is F" are either statements of identity or relational statements.¹⁴ In the case of the latter, ". . . is F" is to be interpreted as "F is the cause of . . .".¹⁵ A variety of different Forms cause us to be the way we are, as we are, in this world of Becoming. Ontologically there is no need for common predicates, and with no such predicates no third man can arise.

Just because we use a subject-predicate sentence structure is no reason to believe that reality must correspond accordingly. In the Cratylus Plato shows that language is not perfect; like everything else in this world of flux it is only an approximation (perhaps, even better, a distortion) of the truly real. Language, unfortunately, got off to a bad start. Those who initiated it were spinning about so very much that their creation lacked the stability needed. Names and verbs were often misgiven without much thought.¹⁶ To create a closer approximation to the ideal Language at this point would be futile and so Plato is left to work with the subject-predicate structure. Predicates as we know them (to affirm as a quality or attribute of something) are out of place in Plato's philosophy (what we call 'qualities' or 'attributes' are really substance and not something predicated of it). Look, for example,

at Plato's discussion of the virtues in the Protagoras (which, by the way, was written prior to the Phaedo where Plato argues extensively for the Forms, prior to the Parmenides where he seems to argue so strongly against them, and far earlier than the Sophist where most commentators think the combining of Forms appears for the first time). At 331B Plato says "Justice is pious" and at 330D "Piety is just"; he says "Wisdom is Courage" at 350C and "Courage is Wisdom" at 361B. Now surely Justice is not the same Form as Piety, and Wisdom is not the same Form as Courage. What is meant can, I think, be explained in this way: Piety causes Justice and Justice causes Piety; Courage causes Wisdom and Wisdom causes Courage. Courage is one of those things needed to make (cause) Wisdom to be what it is. It is neither 'identical to' nor 'an attribute of.' 'Cause,' however, does not appear here in the exemplary sense as Allen shows the Forms to be of the sensible world;¹⁷ it is a necessary cause--Courage is part of the essence of Wisdom. I do not think that J. A. Ackrill is entirely incorrect in pointing out non-symmetrical relationships in the world of Forms. I agree with him that Justice is a species of virtue, whereas Virtue is not a species of Justice--one clearly comes under the other; however, I am saying this: Wisdom, Courage, Justice, and

Temperance may all be virtues--entering into what Virtue is--but then again Virtue combines with each of the others to make the others what they are.¹⁸ The same holds true for "man walks"; the Form Man certainly does not walk--Walk is not an attribute of the Form Man, it is part of its essence.¹⁹ Plato would likely take this as another example of the ability of certain Forms to combine. The Form Man combines with the Form Walk, whereas, it does not combine with the Form Fly (the Form Bird would combine with the Form Fly). Since this community of Forms is necessary, it is possible for resemblances of the Form Man to partake not only of that Form but also the Form Walk. In our common everyday language we might say "It is the nature of men to walk, say, rather than fly." That is to say, in Plato's language, that the Form Man does not combine with the Form Fly but that it does with the Form Walk; this means that the Form Man and Form Walk are necessarily combined. The Form Man causes likenesses of itself and these likenesses are capable 'of walking' by being capable of being caused also by the Form Walk. That this compatibility exists in the World of Forms, allows it to exist analogously so in the world of senses.

So getting back to this first version of the Third Man Argument, no harm can come to Plato's Theory of

Forms. If you remove the ambiguity by saying "a man is walking, but I know not which" this 'third man' is simply some unspecified particular. It is your fault for not knowing who he is--not Plato's. If, however, you take the argument with the ambiguous "man walks" the 'third man' is nothing at all. Either "man walks" is showing the communion of Forms or analogously the participation of particulars (please note from the prior discussion of the above that participation in the Form World works both ways between Forms and hence is called 'combining'; 'participation' in the world of sense is a one-way relation--the Forms cause us, we do not cause them, or we are resemblances of the Forms, they do not resemble us). The 'man' in "man walks" is not some third intruder; nothing comes in between the Forms and particular nor over and above the Form.

Another Third Man

This Third Man is attributed to the Megarian contemporary of Plato, Polyxenus, by Phantias in a letter to Diodorus. Alexander quotes from that correspondence Polyxenus' argument:

If man is man in virtue of partaking and participation in the Form or αὐτοάνθρωπος, there must be a man who has his being relatively to the Form. But neither the αὐτοάνθρωπος who is the Form, nor the particular man, is in virtue of participation in the Form. The remaining possibility is that there should be a

third man who has being relative to the Form.²⁰

Polyxenus' Third Man is quite similar to the previous Third Man in that there is found a need (supposedly) for a third man apart from Form and particular. It is similar too in that it stresses the difference between the Form Man and the particular man and in doing so leads the way to a 'third man' without an infinite regress. But instead of using a common statement such as "man walks" for its basis, the second Third Man hinges upon several ambiguities--or so it seems: the word 'man' and Socrates' trouble with 'visibles.'

Cherniss writes:

The Platonists say that 'man' ($\delta \text{ ἄνθρωπος}$) exists by participation in the idea. Then what is $\delta \text{ ἄνθρωπος}$ which has its existence in relation to the idea: it cannot be $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\alpha\text{ ἄνθρωπος}$, for that is the idea; nor can it be the particular man, for they do not say $\delta \text{ τις ἄνθρωπος}$ but $\delta \text{ ἄνθρωπος}$. Therefore the subject of this Platonic dictum must be a 'third man.' The use of the universal subject 'man' instead of 'each and every particular man' gave Polyxenus the opportunity to argue that the statement of the Platonists implied a 'third man' apart from the particular and the idea although they admitted the existence of these two alone.²¹

So it seems that an ambiguity rests again with 'man' and the desire to posit some 'relation' between Form and particular, at least as Alexander has recorded. That we know of the argument third-hand (not from Polyxenus, not from Phantias, but from Alexander) may

present even more difficulties. John Burnet, for example, contends that Polyxenus (in the above argument) uses two terms for 'participation' (μετοχή, μετουσία), which Plato never uses which leads him to believe that Polyxenus never intended his argument against Plato (or Socrates).²² Taylor, taking the cart before the horse for a change, does not give much weight to Burnet's conclusion for who else can the argument be against? The Pythagorean Timaeus is, according to Taylor, the only other 'friend of the Forms' who held that particulars exist by virtue of 'participating' in the Forms and that Timaeus "avoids the use of the words μετέχειν and μέθεξις in a very remarkable manner" ²³ There does, of course, remain the possibility that Polyxenus' words did undergo some modification in the hand-downs; if so, Burnet's conclusion is indeed shaky. Taylor reminds us that one's preference for words (Polyxenus' preference for μετοχή over μετέχειν) need not change things too much, if any.²⁴

Clemens Baeumker, finding the ambiguous 'man' of the Platonists too ambiguous, decided to clarify matters by interpreting 'man' in the first line of Polyxenus' argument as a particular man: "der sinnfallige Mensch";²⁵ further, he makes this transposition:

This cannot be the αὐτοάνθρωπος, who is

the Form, nor yet the particular man who is by participation (μετοχή) in the Form.²⁶

Whereas, however, as shown on page twelve of this thesis: neither the Form nor the particular, is in virtue of participation in the Form. Baeumker seems to remove the third man by making it a particular man who is by participation. And, as Cherniss points out, if there is no 'third man' in the argument, why should it be called a Third Man Argument? Why should it be aimed against the Theory of Forms?²⁷ By still other commentators, Baeumker's interpretation is met with mixed emotion. Taylor reluctantly held to Baeumker's words at first, attempting to see an 'intermediate man' much in the sense that Plato has 'mathematicals' as intermediates between the Forms and particulars in Mathematics; but then he returned to Alexander's rendering.²⁸ Burnet claims that he is following Baeumker's transposition; however, the conclusion he draws shows just the contrary. Burnet claims that particulars stand in no relation to the Forms--that only some perfect instance could and that this would be the 'third man'²⁹--but Baeumker's transposition already suggests that particulars do stand in relation to the Forms via participation. And Cherniss, as implied above, would like to toss Baeumker clean away.

Robert G. Turnbull, who is currently working on his own translation and commentary of the Parmenides, writes that Polyxenus' version of the argument is implied in the Parmenides at 130A-130E.³⁰ Turnbull seems to read the argument much the same way that Alexander does and attempts to show that there still remains a 'third man': a sort of odd 'third man' that appears as a share in a particular man, but of no real threat to Plato's theory. What Turnbull finds important is that this argument does allow a 'third man,' although if something like 'Likeness,' 'Beauty,' or 'Justice' were to replace 'Man,' the argument would not be so forceful; he goes as far as to say that the argument would not even be valid against these. In other words, this argument seems to be a limited attack upon the Forms--or at least against a limited number of them (Forms of visibles).³¹ At Parmenides 130A Parmenides asks whether as there is Likeness apart and distinct from the likeness we have, if there is also Man, apart and distinct from us. Socrates replies that he is not sure; he had long had trouble with making a decision about 'visibles,' although things such as filth and mud could not be since they are not capable of striving to be better filth and mud. The translation of Parmenides 130A-130E as Turnbull gives it is as follows:

Parmenides Socrates, your zest for argument is thoroughly admirable. Tell me, is this your invention, this distinction separating, on the one side, the forms themselves, on the other, those which partake of them? And do you think that there is Likeness itself, separate from the likeness we have, and One and Many and all the rest of which you just now heard Zeno speak?

Socrates Certainly.

Parmenides Are there also these: a form just by itself for just, another for beautiful, another for good, and others for all such things?

Socrates Yes.

Parmenides And what of this? Is there a form for man, separate from ourselves and all like us--a form by itself for man, another for fire, another for water?

Socrates I have many times, Parmenides, been in straits concerning these, troubled whether one must speak this way or otherwise concerning them.

Parmenides And what about these, which may seem to be absurdities: hair, mud, dirt, and other quite undignified and trifling things? Are you in straits whether one must say that there is a separate form for each of these also, a form which is other than the things which we hold in our hands?

Socrates Not at all. These are simply what we see them to be. It would be too disgusting to believe that there is a form for these. Even so, I have sometimes been distressed at the thought that what holds for one thing does not hold for all. But then, when I take this stance, I flee, lest I perish in an abyss of babbling. So, when I come back to those things which we just now said do have forms, I work away at various matters concerning them.

Parmenides You're still young, and philosophy has not yet gripped you as firmly as I think it will later. Then you will be disgusted at none of these things. Right now, in your youth, you are over attentive to other people's opinions.³²

Socrates had earlier brought out the point that Forms must be separate from particulars to account for an

individual being both 'like' and 'unlike.' That is, a man can be said to be both short and tall without being contradictory as long as short and tall are not actually the same as the individual. He can partake of 'Shortness' when someone is taller than he and he can partake of 'Tallness' when someone is shorter than he. He can be both short and tall in relation to these other individuals. Although perhaps a clever answer, Parmenides wants Socrates to make it completely clear and it is implied that there could be a problem (at least with 'visibles'). Turnbull states the implied argument:

If a given individual is f, then, to avoid the difficulties of the Zeno argument, we must think that the individual partakes of a form F and that the form itself is simply in the sense of being self-identical. To partake of F is, by the very meaning of the word, to have a share of F. Thus we must distinguish between the individual, the form, and the share the individual has of that form.³³

Although this may be a difficulty with 'man,' Turnbull points out the difference with 'Likeness' with the following example:

If Jones (a man) partakes of Likeness, he has or comes to have a (second) like in him. But for Man (or Horse, etc.) the situation is quite different. If Jones (first man) partakes of or comes to partake of Man (second man), he has or comes to have a (third) man in him. But Jones already is a man! The contrast, in Parmenides' questions, between 'separate from the likeness we have' and 'separate from ourselves and all others like us,' seen in this light, is startling.³⁴

Of course, the Third Man Argument (Polyxenus' version) is only implied here because Socrates did not really answer that there was a Form Man. According to Turnbull, then, if 'visibles' are taken as Forms, you will have the queerness of actually having another man in you so that you might be called a man, whom you already in fact are. Turnbull suggests, "Socrates ought to be 'in straits' about this matter!"³⁵ But this intermediate 'third man,' coming about as a share apart from the Form, again, like the first 'third man,' does not deny the uniqueness of Plato's Forms, but this time only that something rather strange occurs when 'visibles' have corresponding Forms and are treated in the same way 'immanent characters' are; that is, by having a share in this case.

I think, however, that there could be a way out for this 'queerness': possibly by defining 'participation' in a way other than sharing, as Socrates does go on to attempt (and later Parmenides himself) and further by treating 'visibles' unlike 'immanent characters.' Taking once again Allen's notion of Forms as exemplary causes, if the Form Man (Man I) causes Jones to be relatively man (Man II), then why should Jones come to have an additional man in him? That is, Jones is not even a first man until he partakes of the Form Man. And since it is the second

nor is there any need to sneak in another man. The difference between 'immanent characters' (such as the beauty, justice, likeness, etc., that we have) and 'visibles' (me, you, the fellow next door, the neighbor's dog, etc.) should be shown in this way: the likeness we have is so in virtue of Likeness-itself; the man that I am is so in virtue of Man-itself. I do not already as a man come to partake of Man and have another man put in me; I can, however, already as man, come to partake of (to a greater extent) Tallness (I no doubt already have some share unless I am the smallest possible thing), retire to my stretcher and emerge with a larger share of tallness in me. So it seems that Plato could have Forms of 'visibles' without running into this particular 'third man' as an intermediate share within a particular.

This route could possibly pose a problem but only if combination of Forms were impossible. Plato speaks of Forms as standards which all else should be striving for (Phaedo 75A). One can strive to be Just, or to be Beautiful--but if one is already a man, how can he strive to be Man? He would have to strive to be a better man--that is, to be Just, Beautiful, and the like. This would suggest a kind of 'communion of Forms,' another sense of 'participating' which I believe Plato reintro-

duces in the second part of the Parmenides and elaborates more fully upon later in the Sophist. But more of this later in connection with the main version of the Third Man Argument yet to be considered.

For now, this second Third Man, like the previous, does not, I think, pose any special problem to Plato's Theory of Forms.³⁶ At best it comes in as the queerness of having a man in you, but with R. E. Allen's insight into Plato's ontology (Forms as exemplary causes and particulars being relational entities), Plato (so far) has no 'third man' to worry about--and as shown in the Republic (597C) and the Timaeus (48E-51B), with Forms of all visibles in the latter), he didn't.

A Third Third Man

The third Third Man part I (found at the beginning of Alexander's discussion) is generally accredited to Eudemus and its implications lead one to the infinite regress found in part II, Alexander ascribing that part to Aristotle. It is this Third Man which brings the most controversy--that it seems to be valid and that Plato poses it himself in the Parmenides (although exactly how it is valid, what it is valid against, where it is found, or if there is an escape from it is debatable). First it would be in order to give Alexander's rendering:

Part I.

The argument which brings in the 'third man' is as follows: They say that the substances which are predicated generally are the true and proper substances, and that these are the Forms. Further, things which are like one another are so in virtue of participation in one and the same something which properly is that, and this is the Form. But if this is so, and if that which is predicated in like manner of several things, when not identical with any one of those things, is another thing over and above them--and it is just because the Form of Man, though predicated of particular men, is not identical with any of them that it is a kind--there must be a third man besides man particular--as, e.g. Socrates or Plato--and the Form, which last is also itself numerically one.³⁷

Part II.

If what is truly predicated of a plurality of subjects is a reality alongside those of which it is predicated and distinct from them--and those who postulate the Forms believe they can prove this . . . , if so, I say there will be a 'third man.' For if Man as predicate is other than the men of whom the term is predicated, and has a substantial being of its own, and if man is predicated in like manner, both of particular men and of the Form, then there must be a third man distinct both from the particular men and from the Form. And in the same way a fourth, predicable in like manner of this third man, of the Form and of particular man, and again a fifth, and so on in indefinitum.³⁸

Thus, the first part of the argument is basically this: if we grant that substances are the Forms and that these are predicated of particular things in this world, and further that all these particular things are like one another in virtue of their participation in the Forms (the particulars imitating the one over the many),

then to give the unity which was perhaps the purpose of the Platonic doctrine, one must somehow unite the Form, say of Man, and the particular man with some 'third man.'

Plato's theory of Forms, had, of course, come at a time of philosophical chaos. The Sophists at the end of the fifth century B.C. had brought harm as well as good to the people of Greece. No doubt the Sophists taught many useful things, but too often they played with words making things seem as they were not or making them seem as they would like them to be. Absolute truth and standards lost their reign to a sort of relativism where 'opinion' ruled and almost any opinion could rule because language itself was ambiguous enough to allow for 'proofs' (the Third Man Argument stands as an example) of practically anything. "Might makes right," Opinion is truth," and the world is made up of many constantly changing things. Greece was in a turmoil ethically, epistemologically and ontologically. Plato sought to restore unity and the doctrine of absolute unchanging Forms seemed the answer. The attempt was an economical one, as Cherniss says:

The dialogues of Plato, I believe, will furnish evidence to show that he considered it necessary to find a single hypothesis which would at once solve the problems of these several spheres and also create a

rationally unified cosmos by establishing the connection among the separate phases of experience.³⁹

Cherniss goes on to show that although Plato's first interest was Ethics, Epistemology and eventually Ontology entered in to give the complete picture. Joseph Moreau also sees the Platonic doctrine arising in the form of explanatory roles finding the same basic functions as did Cherniss: 'gnosological,' serving as the foundation for knowledge; 'axiological,' serving as a foundation for values and ethics; and 'cosmological,' serving as the foundation for the existence of the universe.⁴⁰ The first part of this third Third Man, bringing in yet another notion of unity, finds some 'third man' necessary to unite what appears to be two separate existences: Forms and particulars. The trouble is, despite appearances, the creator of this argument is so bound in the world of flux, so set, no doubt, on the notion that he himself is the stable entity, that knowingly or not, he is taking particulars as substances (as well as Forms) which Plato would never think of doing. Going back to Allen's distinction yet again: particulars are relational entities and not substances. Forms and particulars are in no need of some further relation to unite them. The Forms and their dependents already constitute a unity-- a sort of 'organism' as William F. Lynch⁴¹ would have it.

But more of this later. Let it suffice for now to say: if knowingly or unknowingly one also takes particulars as substances (as well as Forms), then one has the existence of two separate substances--and then it is natural to suppose that some sort of 'relation' should exist between the two, yielding, if you wish, a 'third man'.⁴²

The second part of the argument, as Alexander states it, supposes that if the Form Man is something other than the particular men it is predicated of, and that both of these are Man--that is, that Man can be predicated of both the Form and particular (they are both called 'man'), then this last 'man' would appear as a 'third man' standing distinct from and over the Form Man and the particular man. This 'third man' would then have the status of the 'one over many' and hence appear to be a Form; Form Man II. And then, of course, it might be asked if this new Form can be said to be somehow like the Form Man I and the particular man and the same in reverse. The answer seems to be : surely; they are all called man. So this new 'man' becomes a fourth in the scheme of things (Form Man III); if one presses this matter further, a fifth, sixth, a seventh, an infinite number of men will appear, each standing as a new Form (another duplicate) over the group of other duplicate

Forms, the original Form and its particulars.

This is the argument that Alexander attributes to Aristotle, originally recorded in Aristotle's Concerning Forms (now lost) and no doubt this is the variation of the argument Aristotle uses since he elaborates on it further in his Sophistical Refutations at 178b35-179.

I give here Turnbull's translation of that passage:

(There is) also (the argument) that there is a third man besides the same (i.e., man) and those with regard to each (individuals). For neither 'man' nor any common term signifies a tode ti, but rather a quality, a relation, a mode, or some such. Likewise 'Coriscus' and (Coriscus) Musician'. (Are they the same or different?) For the one signifies a tode ti, the other a quality, so that the same (i.e., musician) is not set apart. It is not the setting apart which makes the third man, but rather the uniting into a tode ti. For there will not be a tode ti encompassing both Callias and the one who is man. Nor will it make any difference if one were to say that the set-apart is not a tode ti but rather a quality. For there will still be a one besides the many, for example, man. It is therefore clear that one must not grant that something predicated--in common--of all is a tode ti, but rather that it signifies a quality, a relation, a quantity, or some such.⁴³

Now, Aristotle is correct, I think, in saying that this 'third man' comes about by connecting the Form and the particular; he is correct too in saying that it is a mistake to set apart a 'second' man in the first place--but--for the exact opposite reason he gives. The mistake, he thinks, is to set apart the Form as a this (tode ti)-- a 'this' for Aristotle meaning 'substance.'

He is, I think, flatly wrong, falling into the same situation that we found Eudemus in the first part of the argument as Alexander records it. True, it is a mistake to set something apart, but that 'something' is not the Form, but rather the particular. It is when one treats particulars as substances that the 'third man' (and in this case infinitely others) appears. It is when one believes that 'man' is a predicate and that it can be predicated of both Form and particular that the 'third man' appears. It is when particulars are literally separated from the Forms that the 'third man' appears. We must remember, and remember always, that Plato has turned what we commonly perceive as reality inside out. This is a relational sort of existence that we have; true existence is in the realm of the Forms. These Forms are not mere abstractions standing as qualities or attributes to substance; they are substantial and the higher the Form the richer it is. As Cornford says:

Suppose that Form (Being) to stand at the head of the whole hierarchy. If it were the barest of all abstractions, nothing could be got out of it by an attempt to divide it into parts. It would have no parts, but be simple and indivisible as the One Being of Parmenides. In Plato's view the highest Form, whether it be called 'Being' or 'the One' or 'the Good', must not be the poorest, but the richest, a universe of real being, a whole containing all that is real in a single order, a One Being that is also many. Such a Form is as far as

possible from resembling an Aristotelian category; for the categories are precisely the barest of abstraction, at the furthest remove from substantial reality.⁴⁴

It seems that Aristotle did not learn his lesson too well, if he did, in fact, have access to Plato's Parmenides (as he likely did) or else he would never have presented the Third Man Argument as a valid objection to Plato's Theory of Forms. He, like most of us, is too much caught up in the world of appearance. But this argument does show quite well our predicament in this existence: we are faced with problems of predication, participation, imitation, degrees of reality, unity, and our thinking can even lead to infinite regress. This Third Man Argument, unlike the other two, stresses not only the difference some construe between Forms and particulars, but also the likeness, and Forms giving up their uniqueness give rise to infinite duplications. Since this is the first Third Man to bring forth a regress, perhaps we should pause for a moment to discuss 'regress' itself along with some other 'instances' of it.

Regress Itself

Regressus in infinitum has been a frustrating ploy for quite a while and it does not show any signs of letting up. Zeno of Elea's line of dichotomy, depressed fleet-footed Achilles a loser to a turtle, arrow (alas)

without any movement, and chariots passing in half of length of time the whole length of time--plus some 'third man' does not add up to the whole of infinity. Jorge Luis Borges⁴⁵ adds to the list Cornelius Agrippa, the skeptic who conjectured that every proof stands in need of a previous proof; hence we cannot be certain of anything (Hypotyposes, I, 166). And also to the list goes Sextus Empiricus who has no faith in definitions since each of the words within the definition needs also to be defined, and then, of course, those words need defining and so on forever (Hypotyposes, II, 207). Perhaps less well known is Chuang Tzu, who according to Borges, uses infinity to dispel the idea held by some Chinese monists that the Universe was a single thing even though it consisted of Ten Thousand Things. Immediately there is more than one "because cosmic unity and the declaration of that unity are already two things; those two and the declaration of their duality are already three; those three and the declaration of their trinity are already four." (Waley, Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China, p. 25). This example is not too far removed from Plato's own discussion of Unity in the second part of the Parmenides,⁴⁶ there, Parmenides, in his dialectical exercise intended for younger members of the Academy, says that Unity cannot be one because already there is the Being that it has, then the Difference

between that Being and Unity, and then the differences between the three and so on (the usefulness of this particular argument, as I see it, will be shown in Chapter III). Finally, concerning regress, Borges asks: "Is it a legitimate instrument of inquiry or merely a bad habit?"⁴⁷

Bertrand Russell tends to bring an answer; he distinguishes between a harmless regress and a logically vicious type. The former is constituted only by implications between propositions. There is no real objection to say that 'proposition 1' leads to 'proposition 2,' which leads in turn to 'proposition 3,' and so on into infinity; 'proposition 1' can have some positive true meaning--and that true propositions follow from it is indeed harmless.⁴⁸ Taylor insists that the 'formal implication' of the Idealists involves this kind of regress (which might more adequately be called a progress):

In fact, on the hypothesis of 'Idealists' of the kind who usually make the most frequent employment of the 'regress' against their opponents, every true proposition 'p' must imply an infinite series of true propositions. For they commonly hold that a proposition cannot be true without being actually known by some mind and that this is part of what we mean by calling 'p' true. Hence the true proposition, 'x knows p', and this, being itself a true proposition, again implies 'y--who may of course be identical with x--⁴⁹ knows that x knows p' and so on in indefinitum.

The second type of regress that Russell refers to

is the vicious one. This regress makes even the first proposition meaningless--since the regress comes out of an attempt to determine its meaning. Russell chooses even not to call such an utterance a proposition since propositions much have some determinate meaning. If to arrive at the meaning of a 'proposition' we must first pass through an infinite number of others, we shall never arrive at that proposition.⁵⁰

The question which comes to the subject of this thesis, is, of course, whether the regress found in the third Third Man Argument is such that it shows that propositions involving the Platonic Forms, particulars, and their 'relationship' (as posed in the first part of the Parmenides) to be somehow lacking in meaning. If one assumes that the symmetrical (two-way) relation of particulars to Forms and of Forms to particulars is what Plato actually held, the argument, although vicious, is useful in that it clears the air for other theories--as Aristotle no doubt thought it did for his own. Or some might think that the argument was such a blow to Plato that he revised his own theory. If, however, one shows that Plato never intended a symmetrical 'relationship' (or any sort of relationship between Forms and particulars)⁵¹ then one might say that he was actually 'clearing the air' for his own theory--trying to eliminate or at least at present trying to expose foolish notions

rooted in the ambiguities of language. The latter is what this thesis intends to give some evidence for, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Notes

¹I am well aware that this is not Zeno's Stadium Paradox (named so because of objects traveling the whole time in half the time in a stadium), however, anything worthwhile (such as the performance of some 'third man') should take place in a stadium for all philosophers to enjoy. Apparently it was actually the case in early Greece that dramatists and dialogue-writers were given audiences at the Olympic Games. See Gilbert Ryle, Plato's Progress (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 33-35.

²Unless specified otherwise I will be using the translations of Plato's dialogues found in The Collected Dialogues of Plato, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).

³Timaeus 48E, 50C.

⁴I am using 'Man' here as an example although Plato sometimes seems to have doubts that there could even be such a Form. Socrates at Parmenides 130C expresses his doubt that there are Forms for man and the like; however, I doubt that Socrates is really the mouth-piece of Plato as I will show later. Further, there does seem to be evidence to indicate Plato's willingness to include Forms for every sort of thing (Republic 597C, Cratylus 389B, Timaeus 51B-52C, Seventh Letter 342D; and the Academy, after all, does call the argument the Third Man).

⁵Phaedo 100C-101C

⁶This will be demonstrated in Chapter III.

⁷Republic 597C, Parmenides 132A, Timaeus 31A.

⁸I will be using A. E. Taylor's translation of the arguments recorded by Alexander. A. E. Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, in Philosophical Studies (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), pp. 54-59.

⁹Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 55-56.

¹⁰Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 57-58.

¹¹Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 58.

¹²Harold Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), pp. 501-502.

¹³R. E. Allen's term. See "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965).

¹⁴Allen, "Participation and Predication," p. 46.

¹⁵Allen, "Participation and Predication," p. 58.

¹⁶Cratylus 411B, C, and 439C.

¹⁷Allen, "Participation and Predication," p. 58.

¹⁸See J. A. Ackrill, "Plato and the Copula: Sophist 251-259," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 213.

¹⁹Professor Donald Zeyl of the University of Rhode Island presents this view: ". . . I am inclined to think that 'man walks' could be read simply as a statement about the Form 'Man', not in the sense that Man qua Form walks--since Forms are immobile--but that Man qua being the Form that it is, viz. the Form of Man walks. To put this in a later terminology: it is part of the immutable nature (essence) of Man that he walks. In this sense 'walking' might enter the definition of the Form 'Man.'" That is, men are capable of walking.

²⁰Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 63.

²¹Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato, p. 502.

²²John Burnet, Greek Philosophy Thales to Plato (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 259.

²³Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 60-61.

²⁴Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 62.

²⁵Clemens Baeumker, Rheinisches Museum, XXXIV, pp. 84, 18. See Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato, p. 503.

²⁶Baeumker, Rheinisches Museum, pp. 84, 20. See Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato, p. 503, and

Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 65.

²⁷Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato, pp. 501-502.

²⁸Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 580-59, 62-63.

²⁹Burnet, Greek Philosophy, pp. 259-260.

³⁰Robert G. Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation of the 'Separation' of the Forms in Parmenides 127B-135C," unpublished, pp. 19-20.

³¹Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," p. 20.

³²Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," pp. 14-15.

³³Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," p. 19.

³⁴Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," pp. 19-20.

³⁵Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," p. 18.

³⁶Professor Zeyl, taking the literal reading of the argument (contra-Baeumker), contends:

The appropriate response to this sophistic objection would be to say that when the Platonists say 'man exists by virtue of a relation to an Idea' they mean by 'man' the whole disjunctive set of individual men, each of which exists in that manner. In this way the solution to this second puzzle reduces to one of the possible alternative of getting out of the first.

³⁷Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 54-55.

³⁸Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 56.

³⁹Harold Cherniss, "The Philosophical Economy of the Theory of Ideas," in Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology, ed. by Gregory Vlastos, Anchor Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 16-17.

⁴⁰Joseph Moreau, "The Platonic Idea and its Threefold Function: A Synthesis," International Philosophical Quarterly, IX (December, 1969), 477-517.

⁴¹William F. Lynch, An Approach to the Metaphysics of Plato Through the 'Parmenides' (Washington: George-

town University Press, 1959).

⁴²Professor Zeyl offers a constrasting translation and commentary of the first part of the third Third Man as presented on page 22 of this thesis. Being uncertain of translations of Greek at this time, I think it only fair (especially if Taylor is indeed incorrect) to present Professor Zeyl's interpretation. His translation of that first part of the third Third Man is as follows:

The argument which introduces the Third Man is of the following sort: they say that the things which are predicated in common of substances are such things in a full sense, and these are the Ideas. Further, things which are like one another are like one another by sharing the being (metousia) of some one thing, which is that in a full sense; and this is the Idea. But if this is so, and what is predicated of some things in common, without being identical with any of those things of which it is predicated, is something else besides them, there will be a Third Man besides the particular one such as Socrates or Plato, and besides the Idea, which itself also is one in number.

Professor Zeyl's interpretation is this:

- (1) The things which are predicated in common of (a set of) substances are those very things in a full sense. Thus man, which is predicated of S. and P. is itself a man, and man in the full sense. (And from that S. and P. are each like what is predicated of them. This is necessary for the third step.)
- (2) Whatever things are like one another share in something else which is fully what they are: thus if S. is like P. they share in something which is fully F (e.g. man).
- (3) But 'man' is predicated in common of some things (as S. and P. and--here is the relevant case--as S. and his Form; this by (1). This 'man' cannot be identical with what it is predicated of (and thus it must be non-identical with both S. and the Form).
- (4) And so it is that we have the 'Third Man', besides S. and his Form.

⁴³Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," pp. 29-30.

⁴⁴Francis Cornford, Plato's Theory of Knowledge The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill

Company, Inc., 1957), p. 270.

⁴⁵Jorge Luis Borges, Avatars of the Tortoise in Other Inquisitions 1937-1952 (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 114-120, passim.

⁴⁶parmenides 143A-D.

⁴⁷Borges, Avatars of the Tortoise, p. 119.

⁴⁸Bertrand Russell, Principles of Mathematics The Norton Library (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., n.d.), p. 349.

⁴⁹Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁰Russell, Principles of Mathematics, p. 348.

⁵¹W. F. R. Hardie, A Study in Plato (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 96-97.

II

THE THIRD MAN IN THE PARMENIDESThe 'Parmenides' Itself

Although one cannot be certain of precise dates, there tends to be general agreement that the Parmenides stands as one of Plato's 'middle dialogues'--coming after the Meno, Phaedo, Symposium, Republic, Phaedrus, and coming before the Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, and Laws.¹ (Two of Plato's dialogues, the Cratylus and the Timaeus, for various reasons,² seem not so stable in the accepted chronology of Plato's works. My interpretation of the Parmenides leads me to believe that both come after that dialogue but it is of no great significance to my thesis where they come--that Plato wrote them at all is the important thing.) The Parmenides itself has met with many reactions; its role in Plato's development has been greatly debated. It has been thought to be a turning point in Plato's Theory of Forms³--his theory undergoing considerable change after the problems presented in that dialogue. It has also been thought to be of little significance philosophically: the arguments in the first part (including the Third Man) being mere sophisms or that they are invalid and Plato know they

were; in the second part of the dialogue Plato turns the tables and meets the sophists using sophisms against what they hold true: a joke.⁴ There are, however, some commentators who find the dialogue not only serious, but also having positive philosophical import. Gilbert Ryle (in 1939) thought that the whole dialogue could be seen as an introduction to the theory of types--the first part of the dialogue presenting arguments to demonstrate that it is illegitimate to speak of Forms as having any sort of 'relation' to particulars, and the second part presenting arguments to show that some Forms must be treated in a unique way.⁵ Closer yet, I think, to finding the unity of the Parmenides is William F. Lynch: he finds that the 'one-many' problem persists throughout--the second part of the dialogue attempting to answer the first.⁶ But, the first to argue for the unity of the dialogue, Gilbert Ryle, now thinks the Parmenides is a piecemeal of two works hastily joined together for the purpose of not getting lost.⁷ It might be well to consider the division.

The Division

According to Gilbert Ryle in *Plato's Progress* the first part of the Parmenides was being written during Plato's switch over from eristic dialogues (in which Plato

mostly recounts dialogues actually heard) to his dialectic (in which the dialogue become little more than a 'yes,' 'no,' or 'so it seems' alongside full blown arguments). Ryle thinks that Plato might have originally intended to deliver it at the Olympic games, but that it is more likely that it was the sort of thing he might prefer to give to his followers at the Academy.⁸ In two previous dialogues, the Crito and the Phaedo, Plato had basically reenumerated earlier arguments from previous dialogues (Gorgias, Meno, and Alcibiades I) which seems to indicate that Plato was running out of material--and hence ended his public performances.⁹ Ryle says:

. . . his concern for the tastes of the laity was now being displaced by concern for the judgements of the members of the Academy. He was ceasing to work for success as a composer of disputation mimes and correspondingly the Athenian citizens were ceasing to care for his compositions.¹⁰

Now, as business-like as the first part of the Parmenides is, the second part is undoubtedly for the more serious philosopher wishing rigorous training in dialectic (as it is implied at Parmenides 136E). Ryle supposes that there were no students ripe for this sort of reasoning at the time when the first part of the dialogue was written which might suggest that the second part was indeed written later.¹¹ It might also explain why the dialogue changes from oratio obliqua (at 137C) to oratio recta

(with only one 'he said'). G. E. L. Owen in his "Notes on Ryle's Plato" is quick to point out, however, this: Plato doesn't even keep up the "Antiphon told me that Pythodorus told him that Socrates said . . ." in the first part; further, that Plato has been known to shift the sense in the Republic as well (134B-D).¹² But in any case, whether or not some time elapsed between the writing of the first and second parts (to allow for students to mature), I do not agree with Ryle that the two are not complementary, nor that Plato's motive in joining the two was simply to tack them together lest they be lost. That the two parts are topically compatible will next be considered.

The Unity of the Parmenides

There are several reasons, I think, to assume unity in the Parmenides. To begin with, Parmenides is the leader of the dialogue throughout (despite the fact that it is not related third-hand in the second part), and in each 'part' of the dialogue alongside Parmenides one finds a young, inexperienced student of philosophy (first Socrates, later Aristoteles). Further still the 'one-many' problem is confronted five times in the dialogue: twice in the first part ('particular to attributes,' 'Form to particulars') and three times in the second part (The One to Forms,' 'Form to particulars,' 'particular to

attributes'). This latter consideration will become more clear in a summary of the Parmenides yet to come, and hopefully substantially clearer in Chapter III where the second part of the Parmenides is suggested as an escape from the 'third man.' The former will be discussed immediately.

Historically, most commentators agree, this dialogue (the Parmenides) could not have taken place.¹³ This would meet with Ryle's view that Plato is venturing off on his own, leaving behind actual recordings of Academic Moots.¹⁴ Why, one might ask, is Parmenides given the lead role? Cornford suggests that Plato was quite impressed with Parmenides and that he ". . . looked upon himself as the successor of the man who had first drawn, however imperfectly, the distinction between the intelligible world of truth and reality and a sensible world of seeming and becoming."¹⁵ Another reason might be Plato's growing desire for rigorous dialectic as the historical Parmenides was known to have had. A. E. Taylor thinks that arguments such as the Third Man were just the sort of arguments that the historical Zeno might have and in fact probably did raise to "friends of Forms," Plato or otherwise (Pythagoreans)--and that these arguments were only sophisms.¹⁶ Taylor thinks that Plato knew these were mere sophisms being brought against his theory, so in part two of the

Parmenides he shows Parmenides hanging himself with his own logic. Taylor says, speaking for Plato: "I can easily do with you as Zeno did with the critics of his Master Parmenides--give you back as good as you bring and better, in a way which will be highly diverting to a lover of dialectic."¹⁷

The trouble is that the Parmenides presented in the dialogue is not particularly true to the historical Parmenides and his 'One.' The dialogue does not argue against the existence of multiple Forms, for these are assumed in the first part and, I think, proven in the second part.¹⁸ The first part is rather arguing against particular literal interpretations of a relationship of particulars to the Forms. And at Parmenides 135B-C Parmenides does not conclude that there cannot be many Forms, but rather implies that we must look for some other sense of 'partaking' to exhibit the 'one-many' (which, by the way, leads one to expect some attempt later in the dialogue since Forms are needed if we are to have knowledge). Parmenides, historically, did not doubt, perhaps, the existence of at least one Form ('One') and perhaps to throw doubt on Plato's multiple Forms might also succeed in making his own Form less secure.¹⁹ So I think it is possible that the historical Parmenides might give the sort of arguments appearing in the first

half as well as the second, however, he would not be assuming many Forms as this Parmenides most certainly does. This leads me to conclude that 'Parmenides' is more Plato than Parmenides. Plato has been exhibiting his Form Theory in earlier dialogues--in the Phaedo most explicitly. Forms being difficult to know and to speak of, the Phaedo is full of analogies. And perhaps, as is often the case with students, they take their professor's words too literally and further impose their own notions (consciously not not); and it just might be that Plato, in the guise of Parmenides (in the first part of the dialogue) is showing his students, followers of Socrates like himself (represented by the young, inexperienced Socrates), the ridiculous things that happen when they do so. The 'third man' is one such result. And he does this in such a cunning way as not to arrest their zest for knowledge. He does not want to belittle his students; he wants to guide them to his true doctrine. (If the foregoing is true, Aristotle apparently did not learn his lesson since he used the 'third man' as a valid argument against Plato himself.) But to understand his notion of 'partaking' one must understand the Forms and their interrelations. It is quite an exercise and not recommended for just anyone. Socrates is asked to observe a preliminary exercise in Parmenidean dialectic and the

second part of the dialogue is such an exercise, and although it is difficult, the 'one-many' and 'partaking of' are on the way to being expressable.

Summary of the Parmenides

A rather short summary of the dialogue might go like this (the Third Man Argument will be considered in detail later--so too the 'second part' of the Parmenides): Zeno begins in the dialogue by playing with the one-many problem as it appears in particulars--hoping to show Socrates the contradictions involved in believing that reality is composed of many rather than Parmenides' 'One.' How can one particular both be like and unlike? (How can I be both short and tall; how can I be one when I have four limbs and an indefinite number of other things, often contrary within me?). The argument is not precisely given in the dialogue, but since its theme is important throughout and that one should know it in order that Socrates' reply be intelligible, I choose to give Turnbull's interpretation of it (his being the clearest rendering I have found:

First, suppose that A is A and that A is B. If A really is both A and B, it is both one and the same as itself and one and the same as B. Since it is one and the same as itself and another, it is like itself and that other. Since it is unqualifiedly the same, it is unqualifiedly like But, to distinguish 'A is A' from 'A is B', we must say that A is different from

B. Given the meaning of 'different from' (if you please, 'is not'), we must say that it is unqualifiedly different from (no 'participation'!) and thus unqualifiedly unlike another. But the meaning of 'is' (i.e., 'is one and the same as') in both 'A is A' and 'A is B' must be the same, and the supposition requires that A is B (or C, or whatever). So if A is unqualifiedly different from B, it must be unqualifiedly different from and thus unqualifiedly unlike itself. So, grating that an entity may be both itself and another (which is what the supposition, 'If many are', amounts to), it must be unqualifiedly like and unlike both itself and that other. The same reasoning, of course, applies to A and C, and to B and C, indeed to any alleged pairs of entities we may choose.

Second, and this step is comparatively simple, an entity which is unqualifiedly like itself and another is, by definition, a like. An entity which is unqualifiedly unlike itself and another is, by definition, an unlike.²⁰

To the above, which results in the notion that reality as many must be impossible, Socrates gives a reply that qualifies the 'is,' taking it no longer in the sense of 'identity' but a new sense: 'partaking.' Socrates suggests that we 'partake of' several unique Forms, being identical with none of them. That is, we can partake of Likeness and also Unlikeness. I can, for example, be like other men and unlike beds. By partaking of Man I also partake of Likeness with respect to myself. Or if another individual partakes of the Form Man, we partake of Likeness with respect to each other. I can partake of more than one Form and so also partake of Unlikeness; I can partake of the Form Justice, whereas a

bed cannot--so the bed and I partake of the Form Unlikeness with respect to each other. What seems contradictory is not when qualified in this way. However, if one could show that Unity Itself is Many or that Likeness Itself is Unlike, that would be strange. The paradox that Zeno has presented is no paradox at all; contraries in particulars can be explained by the Forms. This might seem like an adequate answer that Socrates gives; however, Parmenides presses him for clarity: exactly what does it mean to 'partake'? With such a request Socrates abounds with various literal interpretations, none of which prove satisfactory. Socrates has implied that Forms are separate from particulars and that the unique individual Forms are also separate from each other--or at least he has not pointed out to Parmenides that these are false assumptions. It seems, then, that there is a gap to fill and if some 'partaking' fills it that notion should be made as clear as possible.

Socrates first suggests a literal interpretation of the word 'partake,' that being: 'have a share (of).' This leads to problems for if one has a share of a Form, does one have the whole Form or only a part of it? If particulars are separate from the Forms, then the Forms are separate from themselves (which is absurd). A particular cannot possess the whole Form because then

it would be all used up. If you say that each particular may possess a part of the Form, strange things occur (for example, the Form Small would be larger than its part in the particular).

Parmenides then suggests that taking the literal meaning of Form would be no better. For if one still maintains that Forms are indeed quite separate from the particulars, then, in this case, an infinite regress will occur. If one looks at a number of things and they all look large and that Large is separate from the things looked at, and further if the large things and that specific 'look' all look large, then there will be another Largeness by virtue they all appear large. And then one could look at all of those and find yet another Form Large and so on.²¹

Socrates wonders, then, if Forms might be taken as thoughts. Although 'looks of Largeness' may be infinitely duplicated a thought which can only be in minds might escape the difficulties. Parmenides could, I think (and so also Turnbull)²² have given some of the criticisms of the above argument once more; but, to avoid duplication and show further problems, Parmenides shows that in this case (one Form being the same in all) would lead one to think either that everything thinks or that there must be thoughts which are not thought--the latter being contradictory and the former strange. David Keyt believes

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this argument to exhibit the 'fallacy of division': "It is as bad as arguing that since Forms are intelligible entities . . . and things share in Forms, each thing is an intelligible entity."²³ However, fallacy or not, the suggestion of Forms as thoughts (as long as Forms are taken as being separate)--'thinking a thought'--could run into the same difficulties as 'seeing a look.'

Next Socrates suggests that Forms are patterns in reality and that particulars are likenesses of them. Parmenides wonders if the Forms would not in turn be like their copies; that is, would not the Form and its copies have the same character? If this is so and if one further takes 'being like' as 'partaking of one and the same form' then an infinite regress occurs. (This argument is closest to Aristotle's Third Man.)

Finally Parmenides shows that if the Forms are steadfastly separate from particulars then there is no certain knowledge of the Forms, nor can there be. He shows that particular slaves, for example, are relative to

still agree: a) Forms must exist--lest we have nothing upon which to fix our thoughts, and b) 'partaking of' must be explained in some other way--for as long as the gap remains, little or no sense is made of the notion. (One might, then, be led to believe that at least another attempt will be forthcoming.)

Beginning at 135C the teacher tells the student that he must go through a preliminary exercise, a difficult one. The exercise consists in taking a notion, drawing all that can be drawn from it and then taking the contrary of that notion and all that follows from it. After such a ritual the student will be more apt at definition. The exercise will show that there is a 'logic' to be discovered in the realm of Forms, that what the young Socrates originally hinted would constitute a paradox (One being Many, etc.) is, once again, only a paradox of appearances--a certain peculiarity of our language (as will be further expanded upon with reference to toher dialogues later). Parmenides is begged to give an example of such an exercise and Aristoteles (Aristote's namesake?--being

any entity in each of the Hypotheses (simultaneously 'The One,' any specific 'Form,' any specific 'articular').²⁴ Such a notion hardly fits with what is actually found in the Hypotheses; that is at times only 'The One' can be meant, at others only a 'Form' can be meant, and at still other times a 'particular' must be what is being referred to. Hans Rehol contends that the 'one' is taken throughout strictly as meaning individual Forms, saying, "In short, in the second part of the dialogue the Idea is exclusively called the One for the same reason that the whole dialogue is called the Parmenides"; since Parmenides is dealing with individual Forms in the first part, he must be dealing with them in the second.²⁵ Again, I find little credence in this theory for reasons given above (and will be shown further in Chapter III). Cornford, on the other hand, does allow for a shift in meaning of the 'one' and comes closer to my interpretation.²⁶ I tend to summarize the Hypotheses in this way: I. Assuming 'One' there is no intelligibility; the 'one' is without 'predicates' and being. II. Assuming 'One is' there is intelligibility; the One is with infinite 'predicates'; Forms combine and are generated in certain ways being intelligible; particulars become intelligible. III. Assuming 'One is' as a

others being Forms and particulars made intelligible.

IV. Assuming 'One' others are not a plurality of 'ones' and therefore unintelligible. V. Assuming a 'one-entity as non-existent' such a unity (particular) is intelligible and has the possibility of becoming. VI. Assuming the 'One as non-entity' there is no intelligibility, nothing. VII. Assuming the 'One as non-existent' (having no limit) then others (Forms) have only the appearance of limit, likeness, etc. VIII. Assuming the 'One as non-entity' others will be nothing, having not even the appearance of anything. Or, of all eight Hypotheses, in short: The Many causes the One to be intelligible; the One causes the Many to be intelligible. One without many is nothing; many without one is nothing. That the One cannot be without the Many and the Many cannot be without the One is not a contradiction or a silly notion; that is just how it is in reality. Now, having shown the context in which the Third Man argument appears, we are ready to discuss the 'third man' himself (providing we can agree on just where he is).

The Third Man Argument Itself

All commentators agree that the Third Man is found in the Parmenides. As we have already seen in Chapter I, Turnbull found what I have called the 'second' Third Man

implied at 130A-130E. But what about the 'third' Third Man? Problems, as stated earlier, prevail. Where is it and in how many forms? Some commentators (Francis Cornford and Marc Cohen)²⁷ find it at 132A-B, although Gregory Vlastos and Colin Strang²⁸ recognise 132D-133A as a version of it (but in no important respect). Taylor seeing it twice, thinks the former is against participation, the latter against copying.²⁹ And, finally, where most think it is (132A-B), Turnbull thinks it isn't: he thinks that it does not really appear until the passage at 132D-133A.³⁰ And last, and least, it should be mentioned that P. T. Geach has a version found nowhere in the Parmenides.³¹ Since Taylor and Turnbull go to considerable length to show their points perhaps these should be considered before venturing on. And although in the end I shall agree with the latter, the symbolism used by the others (save Taylor who uses none and Geach who eloquently avoids any passage in the dialogue), on the passage at 132A-B will pretty much do for the passage at 133A. But the difference between 132A-B and 133A is at least somewhat significant as Turnbull shows.³²

The Precise Location of the TMA

According to Taylor the Third Man Argument is found at 132A-B and at 132D-133A; he finds both hinging on the relation of particulars to the Forms. However, the latter argument deals specifically with the Copy Theory (that

particulars are copies of Forms) opposed to the first that deals with 'participation' in general.³³ In the first argument it is assumed that there is only one reason for believing in the Forms and that is the fact that several things we perceive have some common character; there is one Form which they all participate in or partake of. Now Parmenides does a curious thing: he assumes that the character (Form) itself possesses its own character (Largeness is Large), making it a thing (a substance capable of having predicates in Aristotle's terminology, and here Taylor accepts Aristotle's criticism--whereas I do not in Chapter I). Then he asks if it would not be right to say that these two things (particular and Form) have something in common. That which they have in common surely cannot be one or the other, hence, it must be some third character: Form Largeness₁,³⁴ and it must appear large along with the particular and Form Largeness implying still another Form Largeness and so forth.³⁵ It is with the translation of this argument that Turnbull disagrees. The two agree on what the argument at 132D-133A is designed to meet; that is, it shows the problems involved when particulars are taken as copies of Forms and if 'likeness' works both ways and if it is by virtue of some Form that things are alike, then a regress ensues. (Taylor tries to avoid this 'third man' by insisting

the relationship is asymmetrical,³⁶ but this will not provide an escape as I intend to show in the next chapter). Turnbull agrees with Taylor that this is the Third Man Argument and very near the one Aristotle presents. The former (Parmenides 132A-B) cannot be because there is not even a first man.

Turnbull finds the argument at 132B-C as that showing what happens when the notion of 'Form' is taken too literally. Turnbull translates the passage leaving in the significant Greek terms:

Parmenides I think that your reason for thinking each form (eidos) to be one is this. When many seem to you to be large, there seems to you, as you look at (idont) them all, some one form (idea) which is self-same; hence you think that there is one Large.

Socrates That's true.

Parmenides If, in your mind's eye, you look at (ideis) the Large itself and the other larges--all of them--in the same way, will not yet another large appear to be one, a Large which is required for all of these to appear to be large?

Socrates So it seems.

Parmenides Thus another form (eidos) of Largeness will appear, having come to be alongside the Large itself and those that partake of it. And then another along with all of these by which all of these will be large. So each of your forms (eidon) will be by no means one, but unlimited in multitude.³⁷

Turnbull describes the Greek words for Form in the following way:

The Greek words are 'eidos' and 'idea', both derivatives from a verb whose second aorist infinitive is 'idein' and whose first person singular present indicative is 'eido'. By

Plato's time the verb had no employment in its present tense. But its employed forms admit of a double meaning. In the second aorist, it has the meaning of 'see' or 'look at'. In the perfect it has the meaning of 'know' (possibly from the commonplace that what one has seen he knows). "Idea", of course, derives from 'idein', and its common or, if you please, literal meaning is 'look' or 'appearance', as in the phrase 'the look (appearance) of a thing'. 'Eidos' derives from 'eido', and its common meaning is 'that which is seen' or 'shape'.³⁸

The passage at 132A-B can be understood in the sense that 'look' also appears in English with a double meaning; that is, it acts as both a verb ("Look at that!") and as a noun (Turnbull's example being: "You should have seen the look on his face.") In some sense, then, a 'look' can be seen. The trouble is that the 'look' does not exist apart from that which has the look.³⁹ And if Forms are separate, then there will be an infinite regress. Aristotle's argument deals with 'visibles' or 'particulars' and it is because there are two things (Form and particular) that a further character is needed. In this case one has a Form and a character appearing in the argument (large). Further, Aristotle nowhere says to 'look in your mind's eye.'⁴⁰ If 'look' were not introduced into this particular argument at 132A-B, there would be no need for a 'third man.'

What the two arguments do have in common, of course, is the introduction or assumption of some sort of 'self-predication' and an infinite regress. And although the

former argument might be called a Third Man Argument, the latter is more deserving of that name. With that point granted, let us proceed to formalizing the argument so as to determine its validity.

Validity of the TMA

Ever since the year 1954 when Gregory Vlastos introduced his step in formalizing the Third Man Argument as it appears in the Parmenides showing it to be formally a non-sequitur,⁴¹ even more commentators have become interested in the argument pronouncing upon its alternations of various sorts. There had always been some question as to whether or not the argument was indeed invalid, but the ambiguity was usually resolved by attempting to see if Plato revised or rejected his theory (if he did, the argument was valid; if he did not, the argument was not valid). The 'modern way' of dealing with arguments is to put them in symbolic form and then by a host of rules determine whether that which is shown following from the premisses actually should. Vlastos was, apparently, the first to perform such an operation of the Third Man (dealing mostly with the passage at 132A-B although recognizing, symbolically at least, the parallel of it in the passage at 132D-133A). The argument is valid formally only if certain 'suppressed premisses' come to the surface and Vlastos proceeded to show just

what those were. Opening the door to symbolic representation and bringing in justification of something called 'self-predication,' Wilfrid Sellars, Colin Strang, and Marc Cohen⁴² (and to a less extent still others) attempted the modern way with the TMA, trying to improve upon Vlastos' step toward formulation. Since it was Vlastos who started it all, I shall attend to him first. Vlastos gives the first step at 132A in this way:

(A1) If a number of things, a, b, c, are all F, there must be a single Form F-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, as all F.⁴³

('F' is taken to stand for any discernible character or property.) The next step is this:

(A2) If a, b, c, and F-ness are all F, there must be another Form, F-ness₁, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, and F-ness as all F.⁴⁴

The conclusion (A2) asserts something more than what is found in the first step (A1): namely, that F-ness itself is among those things which have the property, F.

Vlastos conjectures that Plato must have been thinking of something more than the steps he gives, since Socrates does seem to take the argument seriously. Vlastos looks for suppressed premisses and credits the first one he finds to Taylor, although he believes Taylor never drew out all of its implications. This secret premiss Vlastos calls the 'Self-Predication Assumption':

(SP) Any Form can be predicated of itself.
 Largeness is itself large. F-ness is itself
 F.⁴⁵

Vlastos suggests that Plato came very close to stating this in the passage when he said "Will not a single largeness appear once again, in virtue of which all these ('Largeness and the other large things') appear large?" (Parmenides 132A). This seems to indicate that Largeness itself appears large.⁴⁶ Spiro Panagiotou, in commenting on Vlastos' interpretation, goes so far as to say that 'viewing' itself entails the notion of self-predication, that Vlastos did not need to go off looking for some other textual evidence of it (as he does do).⁴⁷ The premiss alone, however, is still not enough to yield the needed result so Vlastos seeks next to justify the consequent of (A2) coming up with what he calls the 'Non-Identity Assumption':

(NI) If anything has a certain character, it cannot be identical with the Form in virtue of which we apprehend that character. If x is F, x cannot be identical with F-ness.⁴⁸

Simply put: if the largeness of a thing is not identical with that thing, then if Largeness is large, its largeness also cannot be identical with Largeness. The two additions are inconsistent with each other and it is just for that reason we can generate any conclusion we like. Peter Geach goes so far as to say that the two are contra-

dictory: "For no F is (identical with) F-ness' is equivalent to 'F-ness is no F,' which is the direct contradiction of 'F-ness is itself an F.'" ⁴⁹ (It is, of course, necessary to be able to substitute a Form for x in any case.) This further leads Vlastos to believe that Plato could never have been aware of what these premisses were for he is not the sort of philosopher to present an argument with inconsistent premisses leading to a trifling conclusion. ⁵⁰ Vlastos does think, however, that these two premisses are just those necessary to to bring on the regress. But are they? If (SP) and (NI) are actually required then the conclusion must be logically inconsistent, but it is not. But as Marc Cohen sees (and no doubt others have seen) the conclusion should be understood to be the contradictory of the notion of the Forms cited at 132A; that is, it should read: "And so there will no longer be one Form for you in each case, but infinitely many." ⁵¹ The result: no inconsistency. An inconsistent premiss set is not necessary for the conclusion.

The above being the case, Sellars, Strang, and Cohen have attempted to formulate the argument with a consistent set of premisses. Sellars, perhaps, is next in line. First of all Sellars does not think that (SP)

and (NI) necessarily need to be taken as contradictories⁵² and further points out a problem with the expression of 'F-ness' in Vlastos' formulation of the argument. There seem to be two syntactic categories (and a combination of the two) to which we could possibly assign expressions which come about from 'F-ness' when 'F' is replaced by one of its substituends, these being:

- (1) a representative symbol or name--the proper name of a Form, 'Largeness,' for example; or
- (2) a variable proper allowing us to quantify in respect to the substituends for F-ness. "For all Largenesses . . ." etc; or
- (3) a combination of "modes of variability" and "representative variables"--which means 'F-ness' stands in place of not a class or mere names of simple Forms, but a class of variables.

It is the latter view that Sellars takes, finding that Vlastos errs in his use of (SP) and (NI) by allowing free occurrences of the stand-in variable 'F-ness.'⁵³ The remedy, it seems, is to add quantifiers and Sellars does:

- (SP') All F-nesses are F.
 (NI') If x is F, then x is not identical with
 the F-ness by virtue of which it is F.⁵⁴

But, now, to make the argument complete, Sellars adds two further premisses:

- (G) If a number of entities are all F, there must be an F-ness by virtue of which they are all F.
 (P) a, b, c, etc., particulars, are F.⁵⁵

So now fresh forms can be generated by a consistent set of premisses: (P) gives the supply of particulars and

(G) provides the generation of a Form by virtue of which they are all called F. (NI') tells us that none of the Fs in the group is identical with the Form (G) has generated, and (SP') tells us that the Form just now generated is also an F, and this goes on forever.

Marc Cohen finds that there is a problem with Sellar's (NI') because it will not generate the regress allowed for at 132B. Sellars' formulation seems to imply that $F\text{-ness}_2$ can never cover any of the particulars that $F\text{-ness}_1$ does. Cohen suggests it might be better put this way:

(NI²) if x is F, then x is not identical with any of the F-nesses by virtue of which it is F.⁵⁶

In 1955 Vlastos gave a reply to Sellars claiming that substituends for 'F-ness' are not properly variables but rather proper names of the Forms, which means that the premisses are in fact only (SP) and (NI) forming an inconsistent set.⁵⁷ In 1969 Vlastos admitted that he would be more impressed with a consistent set of premisses rather than an inconsistent set but that Sellars' formulation simply did not fit the text. Sellars' (G) implies that there is at least one Form corresponding to a given thing, when throughout the dialogue Plato means it to be exactly one. It is only in this way that the uniqueness thesis can be denied. Vlastos changes Sellars' (G) to (G¹):

- (G¹) If a number of entities are all F, there must be exactly one Form corresponding to the character, F; and each of those entities is F by virtue of participating in that Form.⁵⁸

By adding this (G¹) to his own slightly reformulated (A1) and (A2) Vlastos (in 1969) finds an inconsistent triad. A similar notion had been put forth by Anders Wedberg some fourteen years earlier:

- (1) A thing is Y if and only if it participates in the Idea of Y-ness.
- (ii) An Idea is never one among the objects participating therein.
- (iii) The Idea of Y-ness is a Y.⁵⁹

Wedberg's (ii) is similar to Vlastos' (NI) and although (ii) and (iii) are not inconsistent, when added to (1) which is necessary, the three do form an inconsistent set.

Colin Strang is another commentator eager to make the set of premisses needed for the TMA a consistent set. He, like Sellars, looks for the answer in the shift of meaning of 'one.' His argument is this:

1. Let there be several (a set of) A's; call them Set I.
ASSUMPTION: (OM) Given a set of A's, they participate in one and the same F (A).
2. By OM, the A's of Set I participate in one and the same F (A); call it F₁ (A).
3. There is one and only one F (A).
CALL THIS (U) short for the Uniqueness Thesis
ASSUMPTION: (SP) F₁ (A) is an A.
ASSUMPTION: (NI) F₁ (A) is not a member of Set I.
4. By SP and NI, the A's of Set I together with F₁ (A) form a new set of A's; call it Set 2.

5. By OM, the A's of Set 2 participate in one and the same $F(A)$; call it $F_2(A)$.
 ASSUMPTION: (SP) $F_2(A)$ is an A.
 ASSUMPTION: (NI) F_2 is not a member of Set 2.
6. By NI, $F_2(A)$ is another $F(A)$.
7. Moves 4-6 may be repeated again, and indeed indefinitely.
8. Therefore there are an infinite number of $F(A)$'s.
9. Therefore not-U.

Strang then draws out two further implications:

10. But U (i.e., not-not-U)
11. Therefore either not-OM or not-SP or not-NI.⁶⁰

Strang points out, in the passing, that although one needs to work to surface the (SP) in the version of the argument at 132A-B, (SP) is less concealed and plays a more prominent role in the argument at 132D-133A.⁶¹ This is true and it makes me think how much simpler it would have been for Vlastos had he considered that argument for his exercise as his prime interest--but, again, the two are very close.

Strang's argument, above, is somewhat appealing but again shifts between what Strang calls the (strong OM) and the (weak OM). This does not seem to be warranted by the text and Marc Cohen brings an alternative which would allow for a consistent set of premisses and the same sense of (OM) throughout. If it works, and I think it does, Cohen's formulation has more merit.

Cohen begins his search for the most desirable formulation (quasi-formulation -- no commentator has put the argument in strict symbolic form) of the Third Man

by attempting to revise Sellars' (G) which was: If a number of entities are all F, there must be an F-ness by virtue of which they are all F. And, of course, Vlastos had changed it to (G1): If a number of entities are all F, there must be exactly one Form corresponding to the character, F; and each of those entities is F by virtue of participating in that Form. Vlastos (G1) is rejected in hopes of stating (G) such that no inconsistency would appear in the premisses. Cohen makes a number of attempts (too numerous to consider here) to find just the right (G) when he finally decides that some definitions would be in order. And those, I think, should be given:

- (D1) An object is anything of which 'F' can be predicated.
- (D2) A particular is an object in which nothing (can?) participates.
- (D3) A Form is an object that is not a particular.
- (D4) An object is an object of level one if
 - (a) All of its participants are of level $n-1$ or lower, and
 - (b) All objects of level $n-1$ or lower participate in it.
- (D7) A set of objects is a set of level n if it contains an object of level n and no higher-level object.
- (D8) A set of level n will be said to be a maximal set if it contains every object of level m for every $m \leq n$.⁶²

To all of this Cohen adds an axiom and two theorems to arrive at his best alternative for (G):

- (OM-Axiom) For any maximal set there is exactly one Form in which all and only members of that set participate.
- (T1) No object is on more than one level.⁶³

The above he gets from (D6), (D8) and the (OM-Axiom). Now Cohen thinks he is ready to announce his (G), which is, by the way (G11) for him by this time:

(G11) For any set a , there is exactly one Form participated in by all and only members of the lowest-level maximal set which contains every member of a .⁶⁴

Still, alas, there remains a problem: the Form generated cannot be said to be over, in the sense that we want it to be; that is, one over many. What we have is a one over one. What we need is a form immediately over and not the set itself, but each of the members. This is the way Plato must have meant it. It is Cohen's (OM-Axiom) which contains the flaw and to revise it he needs even more definitions:

(D9) x is over y =df y , or if y is a set, every member of y , participates in x .⁶⁵

But this makes the relation not a one-one nor a one-many. So on to:

(D10) x is immediately over y =df x is over y and x is over all and only those sets whose level is equal to or less than that of y .⁶⁶

This means that while the over relation may be many-many, the immediately over relation is one-many (which is what we want). Cohen is ready for his revised Axiom:

(IOM-Axiom) For any set of F s, there is exactly one Form immediately over that set.⁶⁷

This, by the way, is equivalent to (G11) and entails the

(OM-Axiom). To this add one more theorem and Cohen is ready for his argument:

(T3) If x is immediately over Y , then the level of x is one greater than the level of y .⁶⁸

The above theorem is derived from definitions 6-10. And now, at last, Cohen's final version of the TMA:

1. Let A be any set of F s (of level n).
 2. There is exactly one Form immediately over A , call it 'F-ness I'. (1), (IOM-Axiom)
 3. F-ness I is of level $n + 1$. (1), (2), (T3)
 4. F-ness I is not a member of A . (1), (3), (T1), (D7)
 5. $A \vee$ (F-ness I) is of level $n + 1$. (1), (3), (D7)
 6. There is exactly one Form immediately over $A \vee$ (F-ness I), call it 'F-ness II'. (5), (IOM-Axiom)
 7. F-ness II is of level $n + 2$. (5), (6), (T3)
 8. F-ness II is not a member of $A \vee$ (F-ness I) (5), (7), (T1), (D7)
 9. F-ness II $\neq$ F-ness I (8)
- .
- .
- . etc.⁶⁹

This argument yields exactly one Form for the set under consideration at each step, the (IOM-Axiom), revised from the (OM-Axiom), is consistent too with there being more than one Form over the set with which we start. Further, in this argument (SP) and (NI) do not come in as bona fide premisses--as is true also in the passage at Parmenides 132A-B. Instead (SP) is presupposed in the definitions of 'Form' and 'object.' (NI) comes in as a consequence in Step (4) being an instance of the theorem that a Form is not a member of the set it is over.⁷⁰

Cohen's interpretation directs one's attention to

the 'one-many' problem which persists in the Parmenides. As Cohen says, ". . . it is the point of the TMA to show that the One-over-Many principle, far from supporting the Uniqueness thesis, leads to its denial."⁷¹ What one must do, of course, is this: reject the 'one-over-many' showing how the 'one-many' is intelligible (as I interpret Parmenides as doing in the second part of the Parmenides). Let it suffice for now to say that the argument is valid. And since the argument (both versions in the dialogue) involves 'self-predication,' and the original-copy argument brings in Forms as 'paradigns' and both versions deal with 'exemplification,' it might be well in order to discuss each of these notions.

Self-Predication

Since Vlastos was first to bring the principle of Self-Predication to light, perhaps it is best to consider just what he has to say about it. First, however, I think it undoubtedly true that 'self-predication' does come into the Third Man Argument(s) of the Parmenides (Cohen's version coming closest to the passage). And if I am correct in thinking that the argument is not against what Plato really held, but rather the argument is used as a diuretic to purge others of the over-simplified notions therein, then one should not find 'self-predication' elsewhere in Plato's works; or, if it appears to be there (as it must

have for anyone to assume it), there must be some other explanation of the language used. Vlastos himself does not think that Plato ever intended 'self-predication' (further, that he did not even recognize its existence in the Third Man, to which I find the contrary), however, he thinks it does appear to be implied by his Degrees-of-Reality Theory and by his Copy-Theory:

For if an F particular is only 'deficiently' F, and only the corresponding Form is perfectly F, then F-ness is F. Or if the F particular is a copy of F-ness and resembles F-ness in respect of being F, then, once again, F-ness is F.⁷²

This is, of course, the way the copy theory is at least as presented in the Third Man at 132B-133A (and I think hardly evidence that Plato held it). But Vlastos thinks also that various statements about particular Forms found throughout Plato's dialogues imply this assumption. In the Lysis (217D) Socrates says that when a man's hairs have turned white "They have become such as that which is present in them, white through Whiteness." This seems to imply, Vlastos thought, that the white hairs have the same quality that Whiteness itself does. Another example may be taken from the Protagoras (300C-D): Socrates says, "What other thing could be holy, if holiness isn't holy"--implying that holiness is holy. Also in the Phaedo (100C) Socrates says, "If anything else is beautiful, beside Beauty itself," and the Symposium certainly gives the

implication that Beauty is beautiful--more fair than any of its instances. Vlastos does admit that not all Forms are open for 'self-predication'; for example: Change, Becoming, Perishing, and Moving. To say that Change changes, Becoming becomes, Perishing perishes or that Movement moves clearly goes against what Plato means as Form in the first place, since Form are to be absolutely perfect being with no changes.⁷³ If one could get rid of 'self-predication' then the 'third man' would not arise, But it appears that we do have it.

Paradigmatism.

Much has been said about Forms as paradigms. Plato certainly does imply that Forms do stand as archtypes as is clearly evident in the Cratylus (389B) where if a shuttle is broken, it is to the Form Shuttle that we look, not the broken particular, when we make another. Forms are presented as paradigms in the Republic at 402C, 472C-D, 484C-D, 500E-501C, 510A-B, 520C, 540A, and in the Phaedrus at 250A-B, 251A, and in the Timaeus at 29B-C, 37C-E, 39D-E, 48E-49A, 50C, 52C, 92C, and at numerous other passages throughout Plato's texts.

To make some sense out of the above analogies have been drawn, the most popular one being the analogy of the Standard Pound; Geach uses it to show the relation of Forms to particulars. He says that the Standard Pound

must weigh a pound no matter what it weighs, whereas the particular pounds are weighed against the Standard Pound, more or less weighing a pound. The Standard Pound is not, however, weighted against itself. We say that the Standard Pound is a pound or weighs a pound analogously. Plato did not think of Forms as 'attributes' as the analogy should show; Forms are the standards to be measured up to. Geach thinks too that 'self-predication' involved in the Form as standard is simply, once more, analogous to the predication we use of particulars.⁷⁴

Vlastos does not find much meaning in this word 'analogous' and the Standard Pound "weighing a pound no matter what it weighs" (as Geach put it) is misleading. We would be inclined to look for some further Standard Pound to weigh the first one against (a Third Man Argument of sorts would occur).⁷⁵

Colin Strang, who by far has the most interesting account of paradigmaticism, finds that the TMA in the Parmenides carries along with it the notion of Forms as paradigms. He thinks that Plato was aware of self-predication and further if it goes, so too do Forms as archetypes. Strang defines a paradigm as that which has the character perfectly, and this is certainly self-predication. If 'self-predication' is rejected (as it must be since the TMA is a valid regress argument) there

is nothing left of the Form to serve as a standard of anything.⁷⁶ Forms are invisible, however, so perhaps we should look for an invisible analogy: the Imperial Standard Yard (opposed to the Standard Yard which was once damaged and its replacement was constructed according to its certified copies:),⁷⁷ "it is the length the standard bar has under the conditions specified."⁷⁸

But there remains a problem even with this. If Forms are invisible, how can particulars be copies resembling the Forms? (Further, as Strang points out, other problems arise with the Imperial Standard Yard: it was not that looked to for the making of the Standard Yard, only copies some years later; and it could be redefined or changed if the standard bar shrinks as it just possibly might.)⁷⁹ There simply does not seem to be any way to keep Forms as paradigms, if one makes the assumptions that Strang does.

Exemplification.

In the Third Man Argument in the Parmenides Socrates is trying to find a meaningful way of explaining 'partaking of'--or the more common way of putting it, 'being an instance of.' Gilbert Ryle thinks that 'exemplification' is not to be trusted and that further no sense can be made of 'being an instance of.' To do this he presents an

argument which leads to an infinite regress showing that something must be wrong with 'exemplification' itself.⁸⁰

His argument can be seen more clearly, I think, if we put it in this way:

(a is T) exemplifies E ₁	(two instances of exemplifying	
(b is S) exemplifies E ₁	Exemplification)	
[(a is T) exemplifies E ₁]	exemplifies E ₂	
[(b is S) exemplifies E ₁]	exemplifies E ₂	
{[(a is T) exemplifies E ₁]	exemplifies E ₂ }	exemplifies E ₃
{[(b is S) exemplifies E ₁]	exemplifies E ₂ }	exemplifies E ₃
	.	
	.	
	.	etc.

That is, if we take Exemplification as the Form over and above, say, Tallness, instead of Tallness once again (as it happens with Largeness in the TMA at Parmenides 132A-B) we still will have an infinite regress--a duplication of the same Form. If this is so, Ryle concludes, it is illegitimate to speak of 'exemplification' at all.⁸¹ Does this mean, then, that there is no possible way to avoid the 'third man'?

We have shown that the TMA is logically valid, that it does involve self-predication, that Forms as paradigms have fallen, and now an argument that proposes to show that 'being an instance of' is impossible. Look to Chapter III.

Notes

¹See Francis Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), p. 63.

²See W. C. Runciman, Plato's Later Epistemology (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1962), pp. 1-5; G. E. L. Owen "The Place of the Timaeus in Plato's Dialogues" and Harold Cherniss, "The Relation of the Timaeus to Plato's Later Dialogues," both in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965).

³See Owen, "The Place of the Timaeus."

⁴A. E. Taylor, Plato, The Man and His Work (New York: The Humanities Press, 1949), pp. 350-351. Also see: W. G. Runciman, "Plato's 'Parmenides,'" in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 167; for a tidy summary of several other interpretations see pp. 167-176.

⁵See Gilbert Ryle, "Plato's Parmenides," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965).

⁶William F. Lynch, An Approach to the Metaphysics of Plato through the 'Parmenides' (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1959), pp. 42-43.

⁷Gilbert Ryle, Plato's Progress (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1966), p. 294.

⁸Ryle, Plato's Progress, p. 287.

⁹Ryle, Plato's Progress, p. 204.

¹⁰Ryle, Plato's Progress, p. 290.

¹¹Ryle, Plato's Progress, p. 291.

¹²G. E. L. Owen, "Notes on Ryle's Plato," in Ryle: Modern Studies in Philosophy, ed. by Oscar P. Wood and George Pitcher, A Doubleday Anchor Original (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970), p. 371.

¹³See Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, p. 64.

¹⁴Ryle, Plato's Progress, p. 292.

¹⁵Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, pp. 80-81.

¹⁶Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno and Socrates, in Philosophical Studies (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), pp. 65-66.

¹⁷Taylor, The 'Parmenides' of Plato (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 111.

¹⁸I will attempt to show this in Chapter II. For the view that the existence of the Forms is not assumed in the Parmenides see: J. M. E. Moravcsik, "The Concept of Existence and Self-Exemplification in Plato's Philosophy," (Stanford University), unpublished.

¹⁹It might well be that Parmenides' 'One' is Matter-- I remain unresolved on this matter. See Leonardo Tarán, Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965).

²⁰Robert G. Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation of the 'Separation' of the Forms in Parmenides 127B-135C," unpublished, pp. 7-8.

²¹I follow here the same interpretation that Turnbull sees on pp. 27-28 in "Plato's Repudiation."

²²Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," p. 34.

²³David Keyt, "The Mad Craftsman of the Timaeus," The Philosophical Review (April, 1971), 235. Professor Donald Zeyl of the University of Rhode Island sees Plato arguing in just that way in the Republic: "In fact, I think in the Rep. Plato does imply that the things which share in Forms, by virtue of this relation, are intelligible entities." Of course, the issue at this point in the Parmenides is whether or not 'Forms' can be taken as meaning 'thoughts.'

²⁴Lynch, An Approach to the Metaphysics of Plato, pp. 44 ff.

²⁵Hans Reichenbach, "The Dialogue 'Parmenides': An Insoluble Enigma in Platonism?" International Philosophical Quarterly, XI (December, 1971), 159.

²⁶Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, pp. 109-115.

²⁷Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, pp. 87-90; Marc Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," paper presented at a Symposium on Plato's Parmenides, Institute in Greek Philosophy and Science, Colorado College (July, 1970).

²⁸Gregory Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 241-242; Colin Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," in Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology, ed. by Gregory Vlastos, Anchor Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), p. 184.

²⁹Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 65-66.

³⁰Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," pp. 28-32.

³¹Peter T. Geach, "The Third Man Again," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 271-275.

³²Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," pp. 28-38.

³³Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 44.

³⁴Vlastos' term. See "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides."

³⁵Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 45-46.

³⁶Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, pp. 87-89.

³⁷Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," p. 25.

³⁸Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," pp. 26-27.

³⁹Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," pp. 27-28.

⁴⁰Turnbull, "Plato's Repudiation," p. 33.

⁴¹Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," pp. 233-241.

⁴²Wilfrid Sellars, Vlastos and 'The Third Man', in Philosophical Perspectives (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1967); Strang, "Plato and the Third Man"; Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man."

⁴³Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," p. 232.

⁴⁴Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," p. 233.

⁴⁵Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," p. 236.

⁴⁶Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," p. 237.

⁴⁷Spiro Panagiotou, "Vlastos on Parmenides 132A1-B2: Some of His Text and Logic," The Philosophical Quarterly, XXI (July, 1971), 255-259.

⁴⁸Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," p. 237.

⁴⁹Geach, "The Third Man Again," p. 265. Geach, I think, makes a shift in the meaning of 'is' which is unwarranted.

⁵⁰Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," p. 241.

⁵¹Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," pp. 5-6.

⁵²Sellars, Vlastos and 'The Third Man', pp. 30-31. Largeness is not large in the same sense that particulars are large, which implies that Sellars thinks it is wrong to substitute F-ness for x to begin with.

⁵³Sellars, Vlastos and 'The Third Man', pp. 34-35.

⁵⁴Sellars, Vlastos and 'The Third Man', p. 36.

⁵⁵Sellars, Vlastos and 'The Third Man', p. 36.

⁵⁶Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," addenda to his footnotes, #13a :

. . . Plato thinks of the particulars a, b, c, as being F in virtue of the first Form, F-ness I, and all of these, in turn, as being F in virtue of a second Form, F-ness II. But (NI') disallows this, since it requires that there be, for each F thing, such a thing as the F-ness by virtue of which it is F. Hence F-ness II cannot cover any of the particulars that F-ness I covers, and the regress will not develop.

⁵⁷Vlastos, "Addenda to the Third Man Argument: A Reply to Professor Sellars," Philosophical Review, LXIV (1955), 438-448.

⁵⁸Vlastos, "Plato's 'Third Man' Argument (Parmenides 132A1-B2): Text and Logic," Philosophical Quarterly, XIX (October, 1969), 289-301.

⁵⁹Anders Wedberg, Plato's Philosophy of Mathematics (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1955), pp. 36-37.

⁶⁰Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," p. 185.

⁶¹Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," p. 186.

⁶²Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 15.

⁶³Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," pp. 16-17.

⁶⁴Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 19.

⁶⁵Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 19a.

⁶⁶Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 19b.

⁶⁷Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 19b.

⁶⁸Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 19c.

⁶⁹Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 19c.

⁷⁰Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 18.

⁷¹Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 19d.

⁷²Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," p. 248.

⁷³Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," pp. 249-251.

⁷⁴Geach, "The Third Man Again," pp. 267. 276.

⁷⁵Vlastos, "Postscript to the Third Man: A Reply to Mr. Geach," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 284-285.

⁷⁶Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," p. 188.

⁷⁷Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," p. 188.

⁷⁸Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," p. 189.

⁷⁹Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," pp. 189-191.

⁸⁰Ryle, "Plato's Parmenides," pp. 106-107.

⁸¹Ryle, "Plato's Parmenides," p. 107.

III

ESCAPING THE THIRD MAN

The Relation and the Related

It is at 133D, if you recall, that Socrates suggests that Forms are reality and stand as patterns to particulars, particulars being likenesses of the Forms. Parmenides then asks if the Forms would not in turn be like their copies. Socrates replies, "so it seems" and the regress ensues. (It happens in a similar way in the argument at 132B with 'looks of largeness'--particular and Form--being like some further 'look' of largeness.) The question is: are Forms like their copies? 'Self-predication.' Forms as paradigms, and exemplification are all involved. Although Socrates is allowed to answer, "So it seems," what if we answer 'No'? What justification can there be (assuming that either Plato was not aware of any justification, thus saving him, or assuming, as I do, he was)?

Cornford, Taylor, and Cherniss¹ stand as prime proponents of an 'asymmetrical' relation holding between Forms and particulars. That is, as Proclus (Neo-Platonist) put it: "the copy is a copy of its original, but the original is not a copy of the copy."² In other words, particular things are like each other in virtue of a Form,

but the Form cannot be like them in the same manner.

Taylor tries to make it more obvious with this example:

My carte-de-viste photograph and my living face may be like one another, but the likeness is not such that it could be argued "This photograph is a likeness of you, ergo, by conversion, you are a likeness of it".³

The example shows that 'like' changes its meaning.

Cherniss says that if 'like' is allowed to be taken the way it is in the Parmenides, it proves "nothing can be a likeness of image of anything whatever"⁴--which would be absurd. Taking the relation between particulars and Forms as asymmetrical rather than symmetrical, Cornford, Cherniss and Taylor hope to avoid the vicious regress of the TMA. But does this 'asymmetrical' relationship remove all problems? I think not (so too Vlastos, Runciman, and Hardie⁵), for to even admit that they are alike in any sense is to invite the regress. A copy and that of which it is the copy of are similar and similarity does work both ways.

R. E. Allen does have somewhat of a solution, I think (as implied in Chapter I). He goes to his looking-glass and shows that Plato's metaphor does not even imply that the particulars resemble the Forms.⁶ Here Allen goes well beyond Taylor. He gives this example:

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

reflection is a scarf. Is it true that it is red? 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.⁷

Allen contends that it is all right to say that the image is a scarf--to give the image that name; however, we mean something entirely different when we speak of the image than when we speak of the real thing. The image depends entirely upon the existence of the real thing and the medium (the mirror in this example--space in Plato's metaphysics as shown in the Timaeus). And since there is such a dependence (obviously the dependence is not the other way around--heavy dust could prevent my image from existing--and I would in no way be altered), the image does not resemble reality, but rather it is a resemblance of reality.⁸ A reflection is a different 'sort' (cf. the Sophist 240A-B).

Taylor's earlier example of his photograph--although it does succeed in showing an asymmetrical relation--does not have the force and added significance of the mirror example. My photograph, although it might be said to resemble me, does not continually depend upon me for its

existence. I could have a heart transplant, plastic surgery and even die and rot away; still, the picture might well remain. Not so with Allen's looking-glass; the image depends entirely upon me--in a three or more-way mirror all of the images would depend upon me continuously and if I should vanish so too would my resemblances (and they could vanish without me vanishing by interference of some sort). It is because of this complete dependence that Allen chooses to call particulars resemblances of the Forms, which is something stronger and quite different from saying that particulars merely resemble the Forms. As Allen puts it:

'Resemblances of' are quasi-substantial; relational entities, not relations. They stand to their originals as the dependent to the independent, as the less real to the more real.'

It is, as stated earlier, quite all right to call these relational entities by the same name as their Form but predication as we understand it is not found in Plato. Vlastos has convicted Plato a bit hastily with his 'self-predication' assumption. Plato's predicates are not what they might appear to the uncritical eye. The 'F-itself' might be called F but that does not imply that F is indeed predicated of it. For proof of this he turns to the following:

Phaedo 102B2

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

after [the emphasis is Allen's] them.

Phaedo 103E

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.

And from Aristotle (although he does not grasp the significance):

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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.

Allen wishes to show that these passages indicate that '. . . is F' is not a common predicate but rather a 'relational' or 'identifying' statement. 'F' is really a 'common name'--although not univocal--the Form being designated as F and the particular instances being called 'F' by being named after the Form, similar to the way in which a boy is named after his father. '. . . is F' is actually systematically ambiguous: in its primary designation it is a synonym of 'the F-itself' and 'F-ness' ('F-ness is F' states an identity of the Form)¹⁰--and in its derivative designation it names particulars indicating that they are causally dependent upon the F. Forms are exemplary causes of particulars, sharing no common attribute with the Forms.¹¹ Forms are the substances; particulars are not substances with attributes. Predication is not what it seems.

In Vlastos' recent article "The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras," after studying Plato's passages which seem to predicate not only just of Justice, but piety and the other virtues as well, Vlastos concludes that his prime example of self-predication (Justice is just) fails to be so.¹² Part of the article is in response (partial) to Allen's article written some twelve years prior. He is not, however, willing to grant that Allen is completely correct; i.e., that Justice is just is a statement of identity.¹³ Instead, he concludes that the virtues are complementary and that when we have one of the virtues, the others are so similar we are likely to have them as well. "Justice is pious" is example of what Vlastos now calls 'Pauline Predication' (derived from St. Paul's: Charity suffereth long and is kind"--this is not intended of a form or universal but rather those who have charity); that for once Plato is talking about groups of particulars.¹⁴

Vlastos contends that Plato originally gave only three instances of the (SP) principle: a) that of Justice (actually, also Holiness), b) that of Beauty, and c) that of Whiteness. (a), of course, has been rejected and Vlastos goes on to reconsider the others in a footnote. He decides to reject "Whiteness is white" as self-predicative in the following instance (Lysis 217D7-E1) referring back to his previous article:

the white hairs are 'such as' or 'of the same quality as' Whiteness; they have the same quality that Whiteness has.¹⁵

This last 'has' was only 'gratuitous' and should be 'is.' Hence, the statement is one of self-identity (at which point Allen would agree). However, Vlastos does not intend to give up self-predication completely. He still sees it as a necessary explanation of the passage at Phaedo 100C: "if anything else is beautiful, besides Beauty itself."¹⁶ He expresses it this way:

Here the 'is' must express predication, not identity . . . the doctrine that Beauty is (supremely) beautiful is a clear and necessary consequence of the doctrine that Beauty is (supremely) lovable and that nothing is lovable unless it is beautiful; the identity, 'the beautiful is the beautiful,' or 'Beauty is Beauty,' could not begin to capture this doctrine.¹⁷

So Vlastos is only slightly giving in to Allen's interpretation. But he does commend Allen's interpretation as:

. . . a splendid protest against the imputation of (unrestricted) self-predication to Plato which I was sponsoring in my 1954 paper on the Third Man, and which had been blandly accepted by many others beside myself and appears to be widely accepted today.¹⁸

As I have implied in my discussion of the Protagoras earlier (in Chapter I), I think that Vlastos' 'Pauline Predication' is analogous to certain Forms actually combining. One could take such a passage as Vlastos

interprets it as evidence of Forms combining, therefore allowing for certain possible resemblances of them.

There is, however, something important in what Vlastos says about the Form Beautiful. That is, Plato does seem to be saying something more than simply A is A. And an additional problem one might bring to Allen's notion of identity and relational designation is that Plato does sometimes confuse the two which would seem to imply that we could take F univocally. Keeping the notion that things are named after the Forms, and that the Form holds the name properly and the particular holds it commonly, isn't there just something more to 'identity' than Allen is telling us? I think there is, and, again, this brings in 'communion of Forms'; further, such statements of identity ('F-ness is F') are applicable to all Forms.

An improvement upon Allen's notion of 'identity' might be this: when we say a man is wise we are not saying that he is perfectly wise of Wisdom itself, we are saying that he is more or less wise with respect to the Form; he is, as it were, a relational entity (a resemblance of Man) reflecting to some degree (yet deficiently) Wisdom. No matter how good his image was and no matter how much he was wise he still would not measure up to the real Man or real Wisdom. He is not completely what it means to be wise; that is, he may be a little just, a little temperant,

but not courageous at all. He does not fit, nor no matter how hard he tries will he ever completely fit, or be, the definition of Wisdom. Wisdom is not alone in the world of Forms; it combines with others, is what it is because of others. Although Wisdom is what we may fix our thought upon, more is involved.¹⁹ Consider the 'gift of the gods' at Philebus 16D:

. . . we ought, they said, whatever it be that we are dealing with, to assume a single form and search for it, for we shall find it there contained; then, if we have laid hold of that, we must go on from one form to look for two, if the case admits of there being two, otherwise for three or some other number of forms.

When we say, then, that Wisdom is wise, or Justice is just, or Beauty is beautiful, etc., we are saying that it combines with all the other necessary Forms, and it does so without qualification. "Beauty is beautiful" does not mean that Beauty participates in itself--nor that it has the attribute of Beauty. If anything, it has as its essence a certain combination of other Forms and the statement "A is ," being far from a mere tautology, identifies the Form, reinforcing the notion that the Form is what it is fully (implying a combination of other Forms, making this Form unique). Resemblances of the Forms are more or less deficient in the number of Forms that make up the Form in question--and even if they were to participate in every Form necessary, they still would be a Form.

Not only is there 'degrees' in participation, but between Form and particular there is difference in kind. There is no doubt that Plato's language suggests self-predication; however, if this was on purpose, I can see nowhere in the Platonic corpus where Plato makes use of the notion. Quite to the contrary, I find him attempting to put an end to it with the Third Man.

Next it would be in order to give some justification for Allen's notion of Forms as being 'exemplary' causes. Geach had some sort of a similar notion when in his formulation of the Third Man he writes: "There is a man from whom all other men are descended"²⁰--'descended from' being the logical parallel of 'being made to be an F by the Form.' R. Robinson and J. D. Denniston write of Plato:

He leaves the relations between 'forms and things somewhat vague; but the 'forms' are certainly causes of things, both in that each 'form' causes the things named after it and, apparently, in that the 'form' of the Good helps to cause all things. The relation of a 'form' to its namesake is represented as that of original to the copy, but also as that of what is shared in to what shares.²¹

Now, just where in Plato do commentators actually find Forms acting as causes? I might mention these several passages. In the sixth book of the Republic (508) and in the seventh book (157B) Plato speaks of the Form of the Good causing the other Forms (I also find 'One' causing the other Forms in the second part of the Parmenides which will be discussed a little later in this chapter). At

Hippias Major 287C-D Platos says this:

Then this--I mean Justice--is a certain thing?

Certainly.

Then, too, by Wisdom the wise are wise and by the Good all good things good?

Of course.

And these are real things since otherwise they would not do what they do.

To be sure, they are real things.

Then are not all beautiful things beautiful by the Beautiful?

Yes, by the Beautiful.

Which is the real thing?

Yes, for what alternative is there?

Just how this causation works is indeed left vague and

Plato was no doubt aware of the problem when in the

Phaedo at 100B he writes:

Well, said Socrates, what I mean is this, and there is nothing new about it As I am going to try to explain to you the theory of causation which I have worked out for myself . . . I am assuming the existence of absolute beauty and goodness and magnitude and all the rest of them.

And at 100C:

. . . It seems to me that whatever else is beautiful apart from absolute beauty is beautiful because it partakes of that absolute beauty, and for no other reason.

And at 100D:

. . . I cling simply and straightforwardly and no doubt foolishly to the explanation that the one thing that makes that object beautiful is the pressence in it or association with it, in whateverway the relation comes out, of absolute Beauty. . . . It is by Beauty that beautiful things are beautiful.

And further at 100E:

Then it is also by largeness that large things

are large and, by smallness that smaller things are smaller.

Again, the theory of causation given is not terribly informative. Vlastos, in his article "Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo," tries to derive some meaning from the above passages. He cites Eduard Zeller (Philosophie der Griechen, II, 1, 5th edition; Leipzig: 1922) as finding the Ideas to be the 'formal, efficient, and final causes all rolled into one.' So too he lists Paul Shorey (What Plato Said, Chicago: 1933) as uncovering a 'tautological logic' in place of our usual notions of cause. Vlastos himself is in more agreement with the latter.²² In the Phaedo at 95E Socrates starts on his discussion of cause. He is quite distressed that philosophers prior to himself had sought only material and mechanical causes, whereas the teleological sense of causation is the more real (99B). Socrates then takes the 'safe route' as shown in what was quoted from 100D-E. Actually, according to Vlastos what Socrates gives is not so much a cause but a reason. It is also uninformative but it is meant to save us from having to look into trivial matters for causes.²³ Socrates goes on to give what Vlastos calls the 'clever *aitia*'²⁴ at 103E2. When asked "Why is x F?" instead of naming one Form, Socrates suggests looking at a range of Forms--all related ('communion of Forms' as shown in the Sophist).

Vlastos concludes that Plato was seeking to explain physical laws with logical necessity.²⁵ This, now, is not altogether different from by justification that Plato did not actually hold to 'self-predication'; that is, we have one Form before us, but then must go on to other Forms necessarily involved.

It seems to me that what Socrates is suggesting at Phaedo 103E2 (and earilier) is a sort of formal cause-- which is not incompatible with the Timaeus (50C-D) and Allen's 'exemplary' cause. Further, as formal causes Socrates' desired 'teleological' cause could possibly enter in. Let me first quote the Timaeus at 50C-D:

But the forms (taken here as 'shapes' or 'structures,' I gather) which enter into and go out of her (space, the receptacle for the world of Becoming) are the likenesses of eternal realities modeled after their patterns in a wonderful and mysterious manner, which we will hereafter investigate. For the present we have only to conceive of three natures: first, that which is in process of generation; secondly, that in which the generation takes place; and thirdly, that of which the thing generated is a resemblance naturally produced. And we may liken the receiving principle to a mother, and the source or spring to a father, and the intermediate nature to a child, and may remark further that if the model is to take every variety of form, then the matter in which the model is fashioned will not be duly prepared unless it is formless and free from the impress of any of those shapes which it is hereafter to receive from without.

God (or the Demi-urge) is found in the Timaeus myth, apart from the Forms, using the Forms as patterns for his creation--space being a ready receptacle. God might be

thought of as being the original efficient cause of the sense world becoming as it is. The Forms are the patterns he 'looked to' when giving structure in the world of becoming. In this sense the Forms are the formal cause (or reason for, if you wish) of structured existence.

The Forms appear as exemplars--more precisely: they are exemplars; the god of the Timaeus used them as his models, and it sees that we should look to them, attempting to imitate the divine order in our lives and in our creation of artifacts. To find out what a 'good man' is, for example, we fix our thoughts on the Forms Good and the Form Man; then we go on to other Forms to see what man is capable of having (what other Forms combine with Man) and what sort of goodness he can have (what other Forms combine with the Form Good that also combine with Form Man), and having a soul (which has experienced the Forms before--cf. Meno 80D, 81C, 85C; Phaedo 65C, 75, 73A; Phaedrus 249C; Republic 524B-C, 526B) it is natural that we reach toward the divine design. Plato did not give this 'teleological' extension in the Timaeus, but in light of what he did say, one might make some sense of Socrates' holding the view that the teleological sense of causation was somehow more real at Phaedo 99B.

Now, then, suppose we grant "Forms are causes," just how are we to take this statement. Assuming that my inter-

pretation of Forms combining with others is correct, 'cause' here would have the standing as a Form--and rather than merely being in addition to the other Forms, it combines with each. Each unique Form has as part of its essence: Cause. Nowhere does Plato exactly say this--but it is implied if one takes particulars as existing dependently on the Forms.

Assuming the above to be true, we are saved from the regress of Ryle's argument against 'exemplification.'²⁶ If 'is' is taken as 'cause' and not the usual sense of 'exemplification' we have no infinite regress.

T(Tallness) causes a to be tall (a depends on T)
S(Shortness) causes b to be short (b depends on S)

What causes T and S to cause a and b? Nothing more than is within their natures. It is the nature of T and S being unqualifiedly what they are--exemplars--that they are combined with Cause. There is no 'cause' lying outside to do some further causing in this case. The particular stands as the dependent to the independent--perhaps getting closer and closer to what it means to be short or tall, but never being what it means to be short or tall. Particulars are not in the full sense 'being.'

The Second Part of the 'Parmenides'

That some Forms necessarily combine with others, is I think, found in the second part of the Parmenides. It is

in this section that Parmenides (Plato leads the young student through an exercise that demonstrates that the Form Theory is not so simple as it might first appear. The 'one-many' exists in the realm of the Forms as well as in the sense world and 'between' Forms and particulars. There is no real separation between the one and the many on any level of existence although a 'one' (be it 'The One' or a specific Form, or a specific particular) is considered 'unique.' Socrates was right at Parmenides 129D to point out that there was no puzzle in what Zeno was saying at the beginning of the dialogue (127D: that if things are many they must be like and unlike). As Plato says in the Philebus (14D-E) such an argument is 'commonplace' and 'childish.' However, it is the 'one-many' in the Forms that needs to be dealt with. Plato says at Philebus 15B-C:

Socrates: . . . But suppose you venture to take as your one such things as man, ox, the beautiful, the good; then you have the sort of unities that involve you in dispute if you give them your serious attention and subject them to division.

Protarchus: What sort of dispute?

Socrates: First, whether we ought to believe in the real existence of monads of this sort; secondly, how we are to conceive that each of them, being always one and the same and subject neither to generation nor destruction, nevertheless is, to begin with, most assuredly this single unity and yet subsequently comes to be in the infinite number of things that come into being--an identical unity thus being found simultaneously in unity and in plurality. Is it torn in pieces, or does the whole of it, and this would seem the extreme of impossibility, get apart from itself? It is not

your questions, Protarchus, but these questions, where the one and many are of another kind, that cause all manner of dissatisfaction if they are not properly settled, and satisfaction if they are.

It is in the eight Hypotheses in the second part of the Parmenides, I believe, that Plato attempts to settle the matter and on all levels of existence. In the Philebus he summarizes the main feature of the demonstration with his four 'kinds': the Limit, the Unlimit, the mixture, and the Cause. Again, I think, the moral of such an exercise is this: the 'one' is not not intelligible, nor can it be, without the 'many,' and the 'many' are not intelligible, nor can they be, without the 'one.' How to the Hypotheses themselves.

The first Hypothesis (137C-142A) shows what there would not be if just 'One' were assumed with no combination with other Forms--or with no 'predicates' in common everyday language. A whole list of what would not be for this 'One' follows from the singular notion itself. Here are some of the possibilities: the one cannot be many, cannot be a whole of parts, has no limits, has no extension or shape, is nowhere (neither in itself nor in another), is neither in motion nor at rest, is not the same as, or different from itself or another, is not like or unlike itself or another, is not equal or unequal to itself or to another, cannot be, or become, older or younger than, or in

time at, and it cannot be named or in any way known. (A name must be a different entity apart from that which has it--cf. the Sophist 244D.) If the 'One' taken by itself is unintelligible and cannot be, we must then assume 'One' in another way.

The second Hypothesis (142B-157B) is perhaps the most important of the eight for this thesis. Here it is shown what can happen if 'One is,' that is, if one has being. In this case a whole host of possibilities arise. By assuming 'One is' a whole series of different 'ones' is generated (numbers) and these 'ones' must also have being (so now what we call Forms, I gather), and in turn these can generate other distinct 'ones' (particulars). The entire gamut of reality is possible. Before explaining what this would be like, however, let us see exactly how it all begins. At 143A Parmenides (Plato) says:

We are saying that the One has being; that is why it is; and it was for that reason that a 'One which is' was seen to be a plurality.

As soon as the 'One' has being, it is also a plurality. That is, One partakes of Existence or: Existence causes the One. The cause is different from its effect, therefore we now have three things: Existence or Being (cause), Difference(other than), and One (effect)--yet all are combined. Now with those three, by a process of addition and

multiplication we get unlimited numbers (of Forms) and each of these, in turn, is a unity and the same process can be worked upon them to yield an unlimited plurality of other things (particulars)--infinite numbers resulting from the process of generation must, you see, not only be 'ones' but must have being. (143D-144D). And to quote from 144D:

And unity, being one, cannot be in many places at once as a whole. And if not as a whole, it must be divided into parts; only so can it be present to all the parts of being at the same time.

Further from 144E:

. . . for nothing that is lacks unity, and nothing that is one lacks being.

This shows that Being is an organic whole. Existence causes the One to exist, that One with Cause causes other Forms to exist, and these Forms, as unities, cause particulars. Now with a process of addition and multiplication becoming becomes--the 'One is' being capable of coming to be (through particulars no doubt) many things with many characteristics, some of which are these: it can have extension and shape, can be both in itself and in another, can have motion and rest (unlike Forms, particulars are in something else, space, cf. Timaeus 52A, and are the ever moving semblances of, cr. Phaedo 83B), is the same as and different from itself and others, is

both like and unlike itself and others, is equal and unequal both to itself and others, exists in Time, and is and is becoming, and is not and is not becoming, has existence or becomes (the object of cognition and the subject of discourse as Forms), comes into existence and ceases to exist (the 'sudden' or 'instant' with particulars). Unless one admits a sort of 'causal' connection (logical necessity, if you wish), 'being' will not be known nor can it truly be said to be. Each specific Form must combine with Being, Unity, Difference and Sameness (at least) and each particular must be more or less capable of partaking of the above listed (extension, being in time, etc.).

In Hypothesis III (157B-159B), because of the generation of unique different 'ones' that was shown to take place in Hypothesis II, the 'One is' may now be assumed as a 'one-many' or a 'whole of parts.' Others are a plurality of other 'ones' by participation in the 'One which is.' This Hypothesis, I believe, can be applied to all levels of being. And others can now be taken as a unity.

ONE

MANY

The One	- Other Forms
One specific Form	- Other likenesses (particulars)
A particular likeness	- Other likenesses it has

Of the 'others' we may say this: they share in unity apart from the 'one' (if they were not a unity or units therein, they would be nothing), abstracting their unity in thought leaves them unlimited, it is when the limit imposes itself on the unlimited that they are 'ones' (remember Philebus 27B), all that was true of the 'One' itself (as being) is true too of these 'ones' (Forms) as being (having contrary characters, etc.), they are both like and unlike themselves and one another, and the same for all others.

Therefore, we do not have a share of the Form Unity in us--nor do we have the whole of Form Unity in us. We are, rather, limited by the Form. The Form causes us (imposes upon us) specification. That is, the Form Man being a unity (combining with Form Unity) causes us to become one man. The Form Man defines what we are (in combination with Being, Unity, and a host of other Forms).

In Hypothesis IV (159B-160B) we find, if, on the contrary, we simply assume 'One' as we did in Hypothesis I, 'others' would have no unity as a whole of parts and would not even be a plurality of other 'ones' possessing contrary (different, distinct) characters.

We must conclude, then, that the One is, that communion of Forms is not only possible but necessary. The last four Hypotheses deal with the not-being of particulars

and the possible non-being of 'One.'

In Hypothesis V (160B-163B) we find that a some one thing which is not can be known--several characteristics about this negative unity can be known. Something which is not is that it is not (likeness) and is not what others are. Something which is not is not equal to others. It actually has a 'sort' of being; that is, we are saying something when we say it is not. Further this one thing that is not can possibly come into being (and if it does, it can also pass out). Here we find that a 'one' (taken as a particular), although it is not, something can be known about it.

In Hypothesis VI (163B-164A) we assume the 'One' itself as non-being or as a non-entity. Here we find the 'One' is equivalent to nothing; it cannot begin to exist or change, nor have any character, nor be distinct from anything, nor be the subject of discourse or the object of cognition. That is, whereas non-being is understandable in a particular, it is not of the 'One' itself.

In Hypothesis VII (164B-165E) we assume there is no 'one' taken as limit (on any level, 'being' with 'one')--in which case we would have only the appearance of limit, the appearance of greatness, smallness and equality, the appearance of likeness and unlikeness, etc.

In Hypothesis VIII (165E-166B) we assume no 'One';

that is, not only would there be no one but also no being. This would be complete negation. Others would be nothing; there would not even be the appearance of 'one' or 'many,' limit or unlimit.

In conclusion: the 'One' must be (must combine with Being) and by being it is also many (Forms). And each Form must be (must combine with Being, Unity, Sameness and Difference and therefore also other Forms) and by being and being one it is capable of being many (particulars in space and time). We are not Not-Being, nor completely Being; we are both, having a sort of adjectival existence, and not really separate from the unique Forms we partake of. The Third Man, has I think, been answered. 'Self-predication' does not appear in the second part of the Parmenides: a necessary communion of the Forms does. The Forms are not separate from particulars: together they form wholes. Specific Forms are not duplicated: each Form is a unique one. One does not have an infinite regress of duplicate Forms, but rather a progress of other Forms.

The Essential Bed

No treatise on the Third Man would be complete without the Essential Bed. Many who have found few or no answers to the Third Man in the second part of the

Parmenides have taken a retreat to the Bed found in Plato's Republic (597C); it has, in fact, been the most popular escape. Vlastos hints at it, Harold Cherniss draws from it a denial of 'self-predication,' and Cornford recognises it as a precise foreseen objection to the Third Man.²⁷ Here is that passage:

Now God, whether because he so willed or because some compulsion was laid upon him not to make more than one couch in nature, so wrought and created one only, the couch which really and in itself is. But two or more such were never created by God and never will come into being.

How so? he said.

Because, said I, if he should make only two, there would again appear one of which they both would possess the form or idea, and that would be the couch that really is in and of itself, and not the other two.

As Cornford says, "The Form, Bed, is not a bed; and it is not true that it has the character in the same way that individual beds have it. Rather it is the character, and there is no ground for duplicating it."²⁸ By showing that the Form is the character and that it does not have the character, Cherniss emphasises, then F-ness is not predicated of F.²⁹

On the other hand, rest in such a Bed might not be so pleasant. Strang and Cohen³⁰ see it leading to further difficulties. Strang, for example, points out that the Form Bed in the above passage is taken as a paradigm.

It is that to which the carpenter looks when making his bed, and that to which the artist looks when making his. If Cherniss and Cornford are right, then, according to Strang, the Form Bed cannot be a paradigm. And further an infinite regress of Beds could result if one says that it is the character which particulars have and it is the paradigm of that character.³¹ Now, as for this regress, Strang is taking too literally (as did the young Socrates) this notion of having a Form in us. But Strang is not alone--so too do Cornford, Taylor and Cherniss. By saying (as Plato does not in the text, as I will show) that the Form is the character other beds have, we either can have no degrees of reality (something being more or less so and so) or we are back to the problem of having a whole or a share in you. Cherniss and the others would never admit to the latter so they must (unknowingly) accept the former. If that is the case, the Form is what we have and yet we are not paradigms and supposedly there are Forms as paradigms. So, accepting all of that, Strang is right: we can take the Form that we have, add to it the Form as paradigm, and we are right back at the Third Man Argument (only this time with beds).

First of all it should be pointed out that the passage does not say that the Form is the character we have; and secondly even if one could somehow draw such a

notion out of the passage, it should not be taken literally. If Cherniss, Taylor, and Cornford knew this they should have gone on to explain just what they and Plato meant. As it is we are thrown back to the problems in the first part of the Parmenides. Strang, of course, sees the problem but not the answer. He thinks that the Form Bed must also have the character Bed to be the paradigm that it is meant to be. And of course, that can lead to an infinite regress.³²

To resolve the problem put forth by Strang I think it is necessary to take particulars as being 'relational entities' (as Allen does and further as they need to be as shown in the second part of the Parmenides), and adding the distinction between two sorts of relational entities (in this case): namely, 'visibles' and 'immanent characters.' Now, the Form Bed is not just a name--nor is it a bare entity. It is a paradigm, but how? When you get out of your bed in the morning and look at it and think how it could be a better bed, you do not say to yourself "that thing ought to be more Bed!" period (I hope). Fixing your thought upon the Form Bed, you move on to other Forms: Stability, Comfort, Neatness, Beauty, etc. These are the things that your bed is deficient in--not in being a bed--it already is a very visible bed. What makes the Form a paradigm is not that it is the bed that we

have (this is ambiguous and even if it is taken as meaning: the Form is truly the Bed and we have less than perfect beds, deficiently the real Bed, nothing much is being said and infinite regress creeps in). Neither is the Form Bed a paradigm because it has a bed (although it like one with all the abuse it has been getting!). The Form Bed is a paradigm precisely because it fulfills completely, without qualification, all that is necessary to be a bed, combining with all the necessary Forms. Our beds are resemblances of the Form Bed reflecting imperfectly (or in some cases not at all) the other necessary Forms. What the passage in the Republic shows is that if you have a Form Bed which is truly everything a bed can be, then there cannot be another identical to it; for that which is truly Bed has completely all that there is to have. If there were two beds they would have to share what it means to be bed; hence, 'what it means to be bed' would be the real Bed, the Form Bed, whereas the other two would have to be relational entities. Such a notion will put Marc Cohen to rest as well.

Cohen thinks that the Essential Bed contains a variant because it does not establish the Uniqueness thesis. All that it shows, he says, is that there cannot be more than one Form of Bed--not exactly one. Because, suppose we add the third Bed to the other two (TMA style); we

would have an infinite regress, and unless the argument could show how the regress can be stopped, it could not claim exactly one Form. Then, Cohen says, add that notion to the Third Man Argument and you have no forms at all! The Third Man shows that there is not exactly one Form (an infinite number) and if the Third Bed shows that there is not more than one--neither exactly one nor more than one--then none whatsoever.³³ This argument is, of course, sophistic. First of all it is based upon a misreading of the Republic passage and a misunderstanding of Plato's Theory. The Third Bed Argument does show that the Form must be unique (as demonstrated above) and although the Third Man Argument is valid (as he very well shows), it is not valid against what Plato really thought. So it is not valid to add the two arguments together--and even if it were, this 'not exactly one' and 'not more than one' business is misleading, a mere play on words. There is no real trap; Plato escapes.

Why Socrates Didn't Escape

Plato did not need to escape the Third Man; he had held the answer to such an argument long before the Parmenides (Republic 597C, 476A; Protagoras 300D-331B; Euthydemus 301A; Phaedo 100D), but it was not until the second part of the Parmenides that he actually demonstrated how the

'one-many' is to be taken and how 'participation' works. Plato does not change his Theory of Forms after the Parmenides (cf. Theaetetus 176E, 185D, 186A-B; Republic 523-524; Sophist 249C-D, 253C-254A; Philebus 15A-B, 16C-E, 58C-59D, 62A; Phaedrus 277A; Laws 965B-E; Timaeus 51B-52C; Seventh Letter 342D). The reason he put forth the Third Man Argument in the first part of the Parmenides and the reason he demonstrated that it does not work in the second part is this, I think: Plato did not have a ready-made language for his Theory of Forms³⁴ and using existing language was confusing; those who had some acquaintance with his theory tended to take it too literally and were unable to escape appearances.

It is in the Cratylus (likely written shortly after the Parmenides) that Plato deals most fully with the language problem. The general gist of the problem is this: names stand to things as representations and so ideally they should not be wholly arbitrary but allowed to take on a natural resemblance; i.e., of softness, hardness, quickness, slowness, etc. Syllables should exhibit these, and whereas the same syllables need not be identical in all languages, essential resemblance and consistency is important. However, we do not have the ideal language. There are several problems: 1) Our language being a copy is naturally deficient.³⁵ 2) The originators of language

did not see clearly that which they were trying to imitate; they, being imperfect copies themselves, were likely too far grounded in the world of flux. Still, that which they created does serve to spark some recollection in us.³⁶ 3) Language undergoes change due to pure euphony: people prefer a certain sound and therefore incorporate it into places where it does not belong; consistency is lost.³⁷ 4) Names can be completely arbitrary.³⁸ Names, of course, are only a step towards knowledge--they are instruments as shown at 388C. At Theaetetus 177D-E, "Our aim is not to say the name, it is to consider the thing named." Again this is echoed in the Sophist (218C):

At present you and I have only the name in common with regard to this creature, and the thing to which we apply the name is perhaps private to each of us; but we ought always to agree on the thing itself by means of logoi rather than on the name without logs.

This 'logos' is obviously the communion of the Forms--what it means to be something, and our language does reflect this. "Truth is not found in names but in sentences" (Sophist 263A-B). But as Plato says in his Seventh Letter: language is weak (343A1)--that names and statements have a "bad nature" (343D8). It is no wonder that people have trouble with Plato's Forms--the 'one-many' problem as well; as Plato says in the Philebus (15D-E):

we get this identity of the one and the many cropping up everywhere as the result of the sentences we utter; in every single sentence ever uttered, in the past and in the present, there it is. What we are dealing with is a problem that will assuredly never cease to exist; this is not its first appearance. Rather it is, in my view, something incidental to sentences themselves, never to pass, never to fade.

And once one thinks he has a paradox of being:

He has no mercy on his father or mother or anyone else listening to him--a little more, and he would victimize even animals, as well as human beings in general, including foreigners, to whom of course he would never show mercy provided he could get hold of an interpreter.
(Philebus 15E-16A)

What sounds or appears to be a paradox--as a result of our language--is in fact not, as shown by the second part of the Parmenides.

Socrates does not stop Parmenides in the Third Man Arguments (132A-B, 132D-133A) precisely because students very likely were not aware of the problems involved; Plato wanted to show the young members of the Academy just what ridiculous things could follow from their over-literal interpretations and their inability to escape appearances. And the Third Man is the prime example (in its various forms).

Once again, Plato had nothing to fear from any of the three Third Man Arguments; they arose out of the failure to understand Plato's theory--and in turn, he used them (the 'second' and the 'third') to help clear

the way towards a better understanding.

Understanding, however, does not come easily as Plato recognizes (having tangled with it in the Theaetetus and the Sophist) in his Seventh Letter at 342B-D:

For everything that exists there are three classes of objects through which knowledge itself must come; the knowledge itself is a fourth, and we must put as a fifth entity the actual object of knowledge which is the true reality [Forms]. We have then, first, a name, second, a description, third, an image, and fourth, a knowledge of the object Of all these four, understanding approaches nearest in affinity and likeness to the fifth entity, while the others are more remote from it.

Only some people have a natural affinity with the Forms and even then these people are ripe for Plato's theory only if they are also intelligent and studious. (Seventh Letter 344A-B). Plato continues in this letter to show that 'recollection' still plays an important role in his philosophy:

Hardly after practicing detailed comparisons of names and definitions and visual and other sense perceptions, after scrutinizing them in benevolent disputation by the use of question and answer without jealousy, at last in a flash of understanding of each blazes up, and the mind, as it exerts all its powers to the limit of human capacity, is flooded with light. (344B-C3)

'Insight,' or 'recollection,' or 'the soul seeing through herself' is nothing readily at hand. One must work, going beyond mere naming (as communion of the Forms insists), beyond language (as criticised in the Cratylus),

beyond the sense impressions (stopping here was the error of the Sophists as shown in the eristic dialogues), and beyond reflection, gaining the right opinion of the relations of the Forms (where the Theaetetus and Sophist stop).

Therefore, since our tools for coming to reality are defective, and we already being defective (being but resemblances of the truly real), very few are capable of understanding reality--very few, if any, will be able to understand Plato. As he himself says in the Seventh Letter at 341C-D:

One statement at any rate I can make in regard to all who have written or who may write with a claim to knowledge of the subjects to which I devote myself--no matter how they pretend to have acquired it, whether from my instruction or from others or by their own discovery. Such writers can in my opinion have no real acquaintance with the subject Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining.

Perhaps I too have not come close; then again, perhaps I have.

Notes

¹Francis Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957), pp. 93-94; A. E. Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates in Philosophical Studies (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), pp. 87-89; Harold Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), pp. 374-375.

²See Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 87.

³Taylor, Parmenides, Zeno, and Socrates, p. 87.

⁴Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato, p. 375.

⁵Gregory Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 242; Walter Garrison Runciman, "Plato's Parmenides," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 319; W. R. F. Hardie, A Study in Plato (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), pp. 96-97.

⁶R. E. Allen, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 50.

⁷Allen, "Participation and Predication," pp. 49-50.

⁸Allen, "Participation and Predication," p. 50.

⁹Allen, "Participation and Predication," pp. 50-51.

¹⁰Allen, "Participation and Predication," pp. 46-47.

¹¹Allen, "Participation and Predication," pp. 58-59.

¹²Gregory Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras," The Review of Metaphysics, XX (March, 1972), 452-453.

¹³Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues," pp. 456-457.

¹⁴Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues," pp. 446-452.

¹⁵Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues," pp. 452-453.

¹⁶Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues," p. 452.

¹⁷Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues," p. 456.

¹⁸Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues," p. 457.

¹⁹I have come to to this interpretation quite independently of Charles H. Kahn, whom I have recently discovered as presenting something quite similar. Cf. "The Meaning of 'Justice' and the Theory of Forms," The Journal of Philosophy, LXIX (October, 1972), 567-579.

²⁰Peter T. Geach, "The Third Man Again," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 272.

²¹Richard Robinson and J.D. Denniston, "Plato," in Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology, ed. by Gregory Vlastos, Anchor Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), p. 9.

²²Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo," in Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology, ed. by Gregory Vlastos, Anchor Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 132-133.

²³Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes," p. 156.

²⁴Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes," p. 158.

²⁵Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes," p. 160.

²⁶See Chapter II of this thesis, pp. 75-76.

²⁷Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," pp. 259-260; Cherniss, "The Relation of the Timaeus to Plato's Later Dialogues," in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. by R. E. Allen (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), p. 372; Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, p. 90.

²⁸Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, p. 90.

²⁹Cherniss, "The Relation of the Timaeus," p. 373

³⁰Colin Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," in Plato I: Metaphysics and Epistemology, ed. by Gregory Vlastos, Anchor Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 192-193; Marc Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," paper presented at a Symposium on Plato's Parmenides, Institute in Greek Philosophy and Science, Colorado College (July, 1970), pp. 21-22.

³¹Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," p. 193.

³²Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," p. 199.

³³Cohen, "The Logic of the Third Man," p. 21.

³⁴See Wilfrid Sellars, Vlastos and 'The Third Man', in Philosophical Perspectives (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1967), pp. 41, 47, 53. Sellars finds Plato hard-put to mold existing language to express his theory, as do I.

³⁵Cratylus 430B, 431B-D, 434A.

³⁶Cratylus 411C, 349C-D.

³⁷Cratylus 414C-D.

³⁸Cratylus 414D.

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