PLATO'S EXPLANATORY PREDICATION

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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January 2011

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Cornell University 2011

One of the most classic puzzles in Plato's metaphysics is how to interpret his apparently self-predicational language. Plato seems committed, at least in his middle dialogues, to the view that for all forms, the form of F "is F". For instance, he seems to say that the form of largeness itself "is large", and to generalize this claim to all forms. Commentators have struggled to find an interpretation of such claims that is consistent with Plato's text and that attributes to Plato a view with some plausibility.

One aim of this dissertation is to show that we have good reason to doubt all of the most influential interpretations offered by commentators. The views discussed include Narrow Self-Predication, the Tautologous Identity view, two Non-Tautologous Identity views, the Pauline Predication view, Broad Self-Predication, and a view distinguishing different kinds of predication. It is doubtful whether any of these interpretations correctly captures Plato's self-predicational commitments.

Another aim of the dissertation is to argue that the textual evidence most often thought to commit Plato to the Self-Predication Assumption (SP), that for all forms, the form of F is itself an F thing, is insufficient to establish such a commitment. One chapter focuses on Plato's repeated discussion of the resemblance between form and participant. Other chapters present new interpretations of key arguments: the argument in the *Phaedo* distinguishing the form of equality from "sensible equals" and the famous Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*. On a correct interpretation of these passages, they do not express a commitment to SP.

Finally, this dissertation defends a new interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language called the Explanatory Predication view (EP). According

to EP, Plato rejects SP and, when he suggests that for all forms, the form of F "is F",

he *only* means to emphasize the explanatory role of forms. In such contexts, he uses

the predicate 'F' as shorthand to refer to the property of being *F-explaining* rather than

to the property of being F. EP ought to be favored over other views because it is

consistent with the textual evidence and avoids any highly counterintuitive

consequences.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Saul Gordon Rosenthal was an undergraduate at Wesleyan University, where his interest in philosophy was first sparked in an Introduction to Philosophy class for non-majors. He went on to major in philosophy and wrote an Honors thesis on Plato, which received High Honors and the Wise Prize for best departmental thesis. He received honors studying both Greek and Latin at the Latin/Greek Institute in New York City. Saul was a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, where he received a Masters in philosophy after completing a thesis on Plato's *Timaeus*. He became a doctoral student in the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell University in order to pursue his interests in Plato's metaphysics and Greek philosophy in general. Saul is currently a Mellon Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania.

"But are *you* happy with it?"

—Stuart A. Rosenthal

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

cite me in one of his books. I am also appreciative of the fruitful discussions I had with Paolo Crivelli and with Chris Shields, while doing graduate study at Oxford University. I also want to thank Hardy Hansen, Alan Fishbone, Collomia Charles, Colin King, and the other dedicated teachers at the Latin/Greek Institute, for their infectious love of Greek and Latin.

Beyond those in my dissertation Committee, other members of the Sage School of Philosophy are deserving of acknowledgement. I would especially like to thank Andrew Chignell, Karen Bennett, Scott MacDonald, and Tamar Gendler. And I want to thank all of the graduate students of the Sage School, for helping to make the department such a supportive environment. I am especially thankful to Kristen Inglis and Scott O'Connor, for many helpful hours of philosophical discussion, and to Jacob Klein, for his generosity and invaluable guidance throughout the dissertation process. For their friendship and for teaching me so much over the years, I would also like to thank Alice Phillips, Flora Lee, Sydney Penner, Andrew Alwood, Vincent Baltazar, Patrick Mayer, and Nate Jezzi, among others.

Of course, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my mother and father. Among so many other things, my mother, Susan Rosenthal, has been the source of endless support and love, and has taught me the importance of dedication to one's work and the value of family. And my father, Stuart Rosenthal, has instilled in me a desire to strive for excellence and a high standard with which to judge my work. I am also thankful to my sister, Stephanie Rosenthal, for her love and encouragement, and for being the only member of my immediate family to truly understand a word of my work in philosophy.

Special thanks goes to my cat Moxie, for his companionship during countless late nights of work. His constant rubbing against my ankles as I worked, and the

comic relief of his sprawling himself across my papers and books, were essential to the completion of this dissertation.

Most of all, I would like to thank my editor and partner in life, Wendy Rosenthal. This dissertation would have been impossible without her standing by me for these many years, offering her love, making me laugh uncontrollably, urging me to forge onward, and reading and rereading my esoteric and potentially boring papers. It seems to me, at least, impossible for anyone to be as supportive as she has been, and to sacrifice so much with such ease and love. She deserves a great deal of credit for the work contained herein.

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INTRODUCTION

In the *Phaedo*, Plato makes claims that seem to commit him to some version of a Self-Predication Assumption (SP), that any form of F is itself an F thing.[1] In his argument at 74b7-c6, intended to distinguish the many sensible equals from the form of equality, Plato relies on the claim that the form of equality "is not unequal".[2] But underlying this argument is also the assumption that the form of equality "is equal", a claim that Plato makes more explicit immediately after the argument at 74d5-7. Here Plato claims that the form of equality "is equal" whereas sensible equals fall short in "being equal". And Plato stresses at 75c10-d4 that what he argues in this passage is no more about the form of equality than it is about all other forms. So Plato seems to be committed here to the view that any form of F "is F". Later in the *Phaedo* at 102e5-8, Plato claims that largeness-in-us "is large and is not small", and that smallness-in-us "is not large." And Plato again generalizes his claims (at least to those forms for which there are opposites), when he argues at 103b4-5 that the form of F and the immanent characters of the form of F "are not opposite-F."[3] Plato has argued that largeness-in-us "*is large* and is not small". And underlying his claim that both the form of largeness and largeness-in-us "are not small" would seem to be the claim that not just largeness-in-us but both largeness-in-us and the form of largeness "*are large*."

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[1] SP could also be expressed as the view that any form of F is an instance of itself (perhaps but not necessarily by way of participation in itself), or that any form of F is a member of the class of Fs, or that any form of F is characterized by F-ness, or that any form of F has in it a form-particularization of itself. This latter expression of the view will be explicated later in the dissertation, when I discuss immanent characters. Note that I do not use SP in the same way as John Malcolm does, for example, rather I understand SP in the way that Malcolm construes self-exemplification (Malcolm 1991, 1). He takes SP more widely to be the view that "any form of F is F", with this claim left entirely without interpretation. Instead, as I am treating SP, Plato will only be committed to SP if he holds that the form of F is itself an F thing. If Plato holds that "any form of F is F", but only because he understands this claim such that it does not entail that any form of F is itself an F thing, then he will not be committed to SP.

[2] See Chapter Six on this argument in the *Phaedo* to find a defense of this quick claim I make here about the argument and the brief remarks that follow here.

[3] See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of this passage.

Plato seems here committed to the view that the form of largeness "is large and is not small", and that more generally, the form of F "is F and is not opposite-F." So in both of these passages in the *Phaedo*, Plato *appears* to express a commitment to SP, that any form of F is in fact an F thing, along with the many sensible Fs.

But we ought to be careful about concluding that Plato was committed to SP based solely on his use of language that seems to have self-predicational force.[4] Perhaps in some cases when Plato expresses that "the form of F is F", he means to express something other than that the form of F is an F thing.[5] How are we to determine Plato's intentions? How can we decide what Plato is trying to convey by this apparently self-predicational language? And if it is right that Plato often does not intend genuine self-predications through his use of this language, what exactly does he want to express?

Many commentators have argued that Plato's intention in using this language is indeed to express his commitment to SP. In particular, most of these SP-theorists have held that Plato is committed to Narrow Self-Predication (NSP), the view that any form of F is an F thing in the same way as the many sensible Fs.[6] So, for example,

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[4] On this point, see Wilfred Sellars 1955, 423; K. W. Mills 1957, 147; R. E. Allen 1965, 44; and David Gallop 1975, 128. They all argue that even if Plato is committed to the view that "any form of F is F", this is not sufficient to show that he was committed to SP. More work needs to be done to show that Plato intends these claims as genuine self-predications, to say that the form of F is an F thing. Otherwise, the possibility is left open that Plato intends to express something other than self-predications when he makes these assertions.

[5] Of course, even if Plato sometimes uses these sorts of expressions to convey something other than a genuine self-predication, there might be some specific cases in which he does assert that "the form of F is F" in order to express that the form of F is an F thing. The hope would be that Plato provides us with sufficient contextual clues such that we can discern his meaning.

[6] I follow Gail Fine in calling this view Narrow Self-Predication (Fine 1992, 25; Fine 1993, e.g. 62; and Fine 2003, 314-ff). I explain what this view means in more detail shortly in Chapter One. Some commentators who appear to have attributed NSP to Plato include: Gregory Vlastos 1965, 248, 287; P. T. Geach 1965, 270; G. E. L. Owen 1965, 295, 310, Owen 1986, 231, 235, Owen 2000, 320; Terence Irwin 1977, 318 n. 25, 319 n. 29; J. E. Raven 1965, 81-2; Norman Gulley 1962, 28-33, A. E. Taylor 1936, 187-8; Nicholas White 1976, 67-9, 81 n. 25; F.C. White 1981, 160-1; J. M. Rist 1964, 29; and Robert Heinaman 1989, 56-ff. Many of these commentators also attribute to Plato what I call paradigmatic-SP, the view that the form of F is a perfectly F thing. Sometimes they fail to distinguish between the two, but it should be clear that paradigmatic-SP implies SP but SP need not imply paradigmatic-SP. On a possible construal, any form of F might be an F thing and yet might not be a

just as all sensible equals are equal things by having sameness of measure[7], the form

of equality, on NSP, is an equal thing by also having sameness of measure. And the

form of fish, if there is one, would be a fish in the same way that a trout or a carp is a

fish, perhaps by being a gilled sea-dweller. Now, many commentators have claimed

that NSP is an absurd, incoherent, contradictory, fallacious, or crazy view, and some

of these commentators, after recognizing the implausibility of NSP, have argued that

we therefore ought not to attribute such a view to Plato.[8] However, a great number of

commentators who have stressed the absurdity of NSP have still attributed the view to

Plato, and have used this as a means of criticizing him, by claiming that he *is*

committed to an obviously absurd view as a result of confusion or lack of awareness.[9]

How are we to determine whether Plato is in fact committed to NSP and whether the

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perfectly F thing. It seems Fine's Broad Self-Predication view, which I discuss in Chapter Four, is such a view.

[7] Plato suggests that equality is sameness of measure at *Parmenides* 140b7-8.

[8] Taylor, Allen, Vlastos (in a later paper), and Terry Penner are four examples of commentators who argue that because of the contradictoriness and absurdity of NSP, we ought not to attribute the view to Plato. Taylor argues that Plato never made such a nonsensical assumption as NSP (Taylor 1915-6, 253-5). Allen asserts that NSP is not only peculiar but it is absurd, and such a "thorough confusion is not lightly to be imputed to any man, let alone to Plato" (Allen 1965, 43-4). Vlastos argues that the "horrendous", "logically illicit", and contradictory results following from NSP (Vlastos 1981, 259-62) would be so obvious that it is unreasonable to think that Plato could have missed them (Vlastos 1981, 262). And Penner argues that NSP is such a crazy view (Penner 1987, 9, 44-6, 185, 252) that it is not even one which Plato "could have had in mind" (Penner 1987, 43-4, 56).

[9] Examples of commentators who have used a commitment to NSP as a means of criticizing Plato are as follows: (Note that sometimes as in the case of Owen and N. White their criticisms involve also attributing a certain sort of paradigmatic-SP to Plato along with NSP.) Vlastos, while attributing the view to Plato, claims that "[a]bsurdity or contradiction inevitably results" (Vlastos 1965, 240 n. 2) and that the view "leads to self-contradiction" (Vlastos 1965, 250). Owen, while also attributing the view to Plato, claims that the instance of NSP in the case of bigness "makes no sense" (Owen 1965, 297 n. 2) and the instance of NSP in the case of equality is absurd and paradoxical and involves the "mistreatment of 'relative' terms" (Owen 1965, 310). Owen presents a "one-level paradox" which he thinks is well-founded and is faced by one like Plato who accepts NSP (Owen 1986, 231) and later he points out "an incurable contradiction" which follows from NSP (Owen 1986, 236-7). Owen also claims that NSP is a "fallacy" and "mistake" made by Plato (Owen 2000, 320). N. White argues that in holding NSP, Plato is mistaken and is committed to paradoxical views, Plato's "line of thought here goes astray", and Plato fails to see clearly enough that the entailments of NSP make "dubious sense" (N. White 1976, 67-9). In a note, White adds that Plato is confused and does not recognize the full paradoxicality of his views and White points out an entailment of Plato's view which White claims "makes no sense" (N. White 1976, 79 n. 16). Also see Geach 1965, 270; Gulley 1962, 33; and F.C. White 1981, 143, 154, 160-1.

view is indeed absurd? And if Plato is not committed to NSP, then what does he intend to convey by his apparently self-predicational language?

This dissertation will be divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter, I will initially attempt to spell out the NSP view in more detail than has been done in Plato scholarship. I will then argue, from both textual and philosophical considerations, that Plato is not committed to NSP (at least in the *Phaedo*). I will argue that in those places in the text of the *Phaedo* in which Plato might seem to be relying on NSP most of all, he is not in fact doing so. I will also present what I take to be the strongest argument to show that NSP entails consequences which contradict assumptions to which Plato was obviously committed, and consequences which are perhaps absurd. If NSP entails contradictory or absurd consequences, we have very good reason not to attribute it to Plato, unless there is overwhelming evidence for thinking he was so committed. But in fact, as I will have argued, the most relevant evidence for NSP (at least in the *Phaedo*) cannot rightly be taken as evidence of a commitment to the view.[10]

But if I am right that Plato is not committed to NSP, then how ought we to understand his apparent statements of self-predication in the *Phaedo*? In the second chapter of this dissertation, I will examine Plato's views on immanent characters or what I call form-particularizations, which he briefly discusses at 102b-ff, and which have been discussed often in the secondary literature. I will argue that if we consider how Plato understands form-particularizations and what he writes about them in this passage of the *Phaedo*, we can see a good reason for doubting many of the interpretations offered by commentators of Plato's apparent statements of self-predication. I will argue that what Plato asserts about form-particularizations provides

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[10] Later in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I examine further textual evidence in numerous dialogues that has led commentators to attribute NSP to Plato in the middle dialogues. I argue that on a correct interpretation, these passages do not provide evidence of a commitment to NSP (or any version of SP).

us with good evidence against the following views: the Tautologous Identity view (derived from R. E. Allen and H. F. Cherniss), two different Non-Tautologous Identity views (one derived from K. W. Mills and one derived from Alexander Nehamas), Gregory Vlastos' Pauline Predication view, and Sandra Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "conservative reinterpretation". We have good reason for thinking that these views do not correctly capture Plato's commitments, at least in the *Phaedo*.

In the third chapter, I will present my positive account of the view to which Plato was committed, the Explanatory Predication view (EP), which is a non-SP view. According to my view, Plato was not committed (at least in the *Phaedo*) to any version of a genuine self-predication assumption. I will argue that in the relevant passages in the *Phaedo*, Plato intends his apparent statements of self-predication to be understood as "explanatory predications". For example, when Plato claims that "the form of equality is equal", what he means is *only* that the form of equality is equal-explaining, or that it explains things' being equal. I will set out my view, provide some textual evidence for it, and I will show how my view appears to be consistent with what Plato asserts concerning form-particularizations, unlike the other views I will have surveyed in the previous chapter.

However, my view (EP) is not the only view which seems immune to the argument from the second chapter based on form-particularizations. In the fourth chapter, I examine some other views which also seem immune to this attack and consistent with Plato's claims regarding form-particularizations. These views include two that attribute a genuine Self-Predication Assumption (SP) to Plato, and one main view that does not. The two versions of SP views are Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "expansive reinterpretation" and Gail Fine's view developed from this one, Broad Self-Predication (BSP). The remaining non-SP view considered

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here is the one defended by Michael Frede and Constance Meinwald. I will outline these views and explain how they may seem to be consistent with what Plato says about form-particularizations in the *Phaedo*. But I will argue that we have good reason to favor EP over any of these views. At this point, the hope is that I will have provided some positive defense for EP, and have provided good reason for doubting all of the influential interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language.

In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I examine textual evidence that has often been thought by commentators to express Plato's commitment to SP in the middle dialogues. As I will argue, on the correct interpretations, these passages do not express such a commitment, and can and should be read consistently with EP. In the fifth chapter, I address what has been taken as the main objection facing any views that attribute the rejection of SP to Plato. It seems that Plato is committed to the view that the participation relation between a form and its participant is some sort of resemblance relation. But some commentators have argued that one cannot make sense of Plato's talk of the resemblance between form and participant if one rejects SP and holds that it is not the case that for all forms, the form of F is an F thing. According to the argument, if there is a case in which the form of G is not a G thing, then the relation between the form of G and the many Gs that participate in it cannot be a resemblance relation. But this would directly conflict with Plato's commitment to a resemblance between form and participant.

I will respond to this argument by examining how participants are resemblers of forms. I argue that this is a complex resemblance relation involving a more direct resemblance between the form and the form-particularization in the participant. Because of this, even though it is right to attribute to Plato the view that participation involves resemblance, there is no good reason to think that this resemblance *entails* SP. But if it is not *in being F* that F-ness-particularizations resemble the form of F to

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which they correspond, then what is the nature of the resemblance between them? I
will end the chapter by specifying what I take to be the nature of the resemblance
relation between form and form-particularization. We will see how the form of F
remains as a paradigm with respect to F-ness-particularizations, even though the form
of F need not be an F thing.

In Chapter Six, I examine textual evidence from the Recollection Argument in
the *Phaedo* from 72e-77a, which has been thought to provide clear evidence of a
commitment to SP. I focus on the vexing argument at 74b-c, in which Plato has been
thought to be relying on the claim that the form of F is F and is not opposite-F. I
argue against the most popular interpretations of this argument, and I defend a new
interpretation. According to my interpretation, no commitment to SP is involved in
the argument, and therefore it is consistent with EP and with the rejection of SP.

Further, I discuss the passage from 74d-75b that follows this argument, in
which Plato claims that sensibles "fall short" of forms and are "inferior" to them.
Commentators have often thought that sensible Fs fall short and are inferior precisely
because they are deficiently F, while the form of F is F non-deficiently. I argue
against this interpretation. Because the contrast between sensibles and forms
discussed here should be understood as the same contrast drawn in the argument at
74b-c, and since *that* contrast does not involve a commitment to SP, neither does the
one at 74d-75b. I explain what the relevant contrast here between sensibles and forms
consists in. Throughout the Recollection Argument in the *Phaedo*, on the
interpretations I defend, we do not find evidence of a commitment to SP, and so this
passage is consistent with EP.

In the seventh and last chapter, I discuss Plato's famous Third Man Argument
(TMA) in the *Parmenides* at 132a-b. Commentators have often taken Plato to be
relying on some version of SP in this argument. Further, they have claimed that

Plato's purpose in presenting the TMA is to point out that SP, to which they say he was committed in the middle dialogues, must now be rejected in order to avoid disastrous regresses for forms. In this chapter, I argue that even if Plato is relying on some version of SP in the TMA, this is not sufficient evidence that he was actually committed to such a view in any of his dialogues. Further, I point out that we have good reason for thinking that Plato was not using the TMA to emphasize that SP must now be rejected, since the rejection of SP would only be an inadequate response to the TMA. To avoid all of the disastrous regresses that follow from the TMA, the rejection of SP will not suffice. Instead, I argue that Plato responds to the TMA by rejecting a different premise, Non-Self-Explanation (NSE). And we have ample textual evidence showing that Plato was never committed to this premise.

At the end of the dissertation, the hope is that I will have shown that the textual evidence that is most often used by commentators to defend the view that Plato is committed to SP in the middle dialogues, fails to establish that point. And we have good reason to doubt all of the most influential interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language, because of their textual inconsistency or their implausibility. On the other hand, all of the textual evidence is consistent with EP, and EP avoids attributing anything highly implausible to Plato, with the result that it is a view that Plato "could have had in mind".[11] We ought then, I think, to adopt EP as the correct interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language.

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[11] Here I am echoing a phrase of Penner's. He argues that we should strive to attribute to Plato a position he "could have had in mind" (Penner 1987, 43-4, 56). What Penner means is that we should not attribute to Plato positions which have immediate implications that "are so crazy he could only have arrived at those positions as a result of some grammatical error or some seriously misleading analogy suggested by our language…" (Penner 1987, 44). Penner's admirable goal is to remove the idea that all we can learn from Plato's metaphysics is what mistakes we should try to avoid (Penner 1987, 56).

CHAPTER ONE
THE REJECTION OF NARROW SELF-PREDICATION

I. Introduction

Narrow Self-Predication (NSP) is one version of a genuine Self-Predication Assumption (SP). This is the case because according to NSP, any form of F is an F thing. But NSP says more than this. NSP is the view that any form of F is an F thing in pretty much the same way as the many sensible Fs are F things. So according to this view, the form of largeness is large in a way very much like the way in which the many sensible large things are large, by, let us suppose, exceeding in measure. Now, while it seems fairly easy to have an intuitive grasp of this view and the view has been discussed quite often in Plato scholarship, it seems that a detailed description of the view has not been provided, and to do so is no easy task. And although NSP has been criticized numerous times by commentators, a sufficient account of why it should not be attributed to Plato has not been provided. In this chapter, I will first attempt to explain NSP in more detail than has been done previously. Then I will argue that based on textual and philosophical considerations, we ought not to attribute NSP to Plato.

II. What is NSP?

In explanations of NSP provided by scholars, and even in the account I have just quickly sketched, NSP is expressed as the view that the form of F is F in *the same way* (or in roughly the same way) as the many Fs are F. What this suggests is, first of

all, that there is one single way in which all of the many sensible Fs are F. It then suggests that the form of F is also F in this one way (or in a way very close to this one). For instance, Terry Penner describes the view by saying that "the Form of F-itself is itself F *in just the same way* that sensible instances of F-ness are F…" (Penner 1987, 91, my emphasis). For Peterson, from NSP, the form of justice would be just according to a use of 'just' that has a very narrow extension. On such a use, x is just "if and only if x is just *in the way* appropriate to non-forms…" (Peterson 1973, 462 n. 18, my emphasis). This suggests that there is one way in which things ordinarily considered just are just. Fine often refers to "*the way* in which sensible particulars are F" (Fine 1993, 62) and argues that according to NSP, the form of F and sensible Fs are F "in essentially the same way" (Fine 1992, 25). These scholars seem to suggest that there is a *single* way in which all sensible Fs are F and, according to NSP, the form of F is F in this way as well.

But now this view seems counterintuitive, and not for the reason that most commentators have suggested, (namely that numerous absurd cases or ones contradicting Plato's commitments will follow if every form self-predicates in this way). Does it even seem plausible to suggest that there is one single way in which all sensible Fs are F? In fact, there appear to be numerous ways in which F things are F. For instance, Myron's Discobolos and the Grand Canyon may both be beautiful, but it seems they are beautiful in different ways. Of course it is difficult to specify the ways in which both are beautiful. For our purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that things are beautiful in many different ways, by displaying symmetry or by having a bright color, for example. And two things might be equal by having the same three inch length, or by having the same five pound weight. And a trout and a carp are both fish, but they appear to be fish in different ways, because they are different kinds of fish. One is a fish by being a trout and the other by being a carp. The specifics of these

examples are unimportant, but the point is that it appears to be obvious that there are, at least in most cases, numerous ways in which sensible Fs are F. It seems that all sensible Fs are not F in one and the same way. And so it appears to be impossible for the form of F to be F *in the same way* that sensible Fs are F.

However, the matter is more complicated than it might at first seem. While it is true that there are (usually) numerous ways of being F, one can also count the number of ways differently based on the level of specificity or abstraction in which one is operating. For example, things might be equal by having the same three inch length, by having the same seven inch length, and so on. On this level of specificity, there are an infinite number of ways of being equal. But one could move to a higher level of abstraction and characterize fewer ways of being equal, under which the more specific ones are subsumed. For instance, things can be equal by having sameness of length, by having sameness of weight, and so on. Note that 'having sameness of length' is a way of being equal that includes all of the more specific ways of being equal that specify particular lengths. Now at this higher level of generalization, one can specify fewer possible ways of being equal, and still cover all cases of sensible equals. But one can abstract even further. All of the sensibles which are equal by having sameness of length or by having sameness of weight or by being equal in some other way, are equal by having sameness of *measure*. This way of being equal, namely 'having sameness of measure', is one that contains within it all of the more specific ways of being equal. So, once we reach a certain level of abstraction, it seems to be true that all sensible equals are equal in *one* single way, by having sameness of measure. Perhaps we can say that in all cases of an unambiguous term 'F' for which Plato posits a form, at a certain level of abstraction, there will be one single way in which the many Fs are F.

In fact, I think it is reasonable to attribute such a view to Plato based on his acceptance of what is called the Unity Assumption. Plato is committed to the view that, at least in cases of an unambiguous term 'F' for which a form exists, there is one single form through which all sensible Fs are F and one single way in which they are all F. For example, in the *Euthyphro*, Plato claims that "the pious is the same in every action" (*Euthyphro* 5d1-2) and all pious things are pious through one form (*Euthyphro* 6d11-e1). In the *Meno*, Plato argues that "even if virtues are many and various, they all have some one form on account of which they are virtues" (*Meno* 72c6-8). He also argues that all bees do not differ at all in *the way* in which they are bees (*Meno* 72b8-9). And there is one form of health which is the same in all cases (*Meno* 72d8). And Plato goes on to make analogous claims in the cases of largeness and strength (*Meno* 72e4-9).[12] So Plato seems committed to the claim that there is one and the same way in which all sensible Fs are F. Through Plato's commitment to the Unity Assumption, he holds that, although there may often be many different specific ways in which sensible F things are F, at some level of abstraction one can specify a single way in which all sensible Fs are F.

Now we are in a position to give a more thorough expression of NSP. We have seen that, for Plato, it is possible to specify one way in which all sensible Fs are F, (at least in any case of an unambiguous 'F' for which a form of F exists). For instance, in the case of equality, the way in which all sensible equals are equal seems to be by having sameness of measure. So it seems that there will be a least abstract way of characterizing the way in which all of the sensible Fs are F, such that all sensible Fs are F in this way. Let us call this specification of a way of being F "the general narrow way of being F". And we can call all more specific ways in which sensible Fs are F, which are subsumed under the general narrow way of being F,

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[12] Also see *Laches* 192a-b, where Plato makes the same point about speed.

different "narrow ways of being F". So NSP is the view that any form of F is F in the general narrow way, which is rightly called *the* way in which all sensible Fs are F. We can see now that the commentators who describe NSP as the view that the form of F is F in "the same way" as sensible Fs were not incorrect, but now we have a better understanding of why. It is because, although there are numerous specific ways in which Fs are F, at a higher level of abstraction we can see that all sensible Fs are F in the same way.

III. Rejecting NSP: "The form of F is not opposite-F"

So is it correct to attribute NSP to Plato, the view that any form of F is F in the general narrow way? Is it true for Plato that any form of F is F in the way which is the least abstract specification of the way in which all sensible Fs are F? For instance, is the form of equality equal by having sameness of measure, is the form of largeness large by exceeding in measure, and so on for all forms? In fact, Plato does not hold such a view. First, let us look at the passage in the *Phaedo* which might be taken as the best evidence for the claim that Plato was committed to NSP. This includes the argument intended to distinguish the form of equality from sensible equals starting at 74b6 and the text that immediately follows the argument. In this argument, Plato asserts that there is no time when the form of equality "appears unequal" to Simmias (*Phaedo* 74c1). What Plato is arguing here is that the form of equality never "appears unequal" or is thought to be unequal by someone like Simmias, who is in a privileged epistemological position with respect to equality.[13] Plato has just pointed out that

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[13] Again, see Chapter Six on this argument in the *Phaedo* to find a defense of the interpretation of the argument I favor here.

Simmias (and Socrates) are in this privileged epistemological position with respect to the form of equality, when he asserts that they know it itself, what it is (*Phaedo* 74b2). Plato is relying on the claim here that the form of equality in fact "is not unequal", but further that it indeed "is equal". He makes this further point that the form of equality "is equal" more explicit right after the argument, when Plato argues that the sensible equals do not "appear to us to be equal" like the form of equality itself "appears to be equal" (ἆρα φαίνεται ἡμῖν οὕτως ἴσα εἶναι ὥσπερ αὐτὸ τὸ ὃ ἔστιν ἴσον) (*Phaedo* 74d5-7).[14] Again, what appears "to us" (i.e., what we think is true) about the form of equality is the truth, since we have knowledge of the form. And so Plato seems committed here to the view that there is at least some reading according to which it is true that the form of equality "is equal". In this passage from 74b6-d7, Plato tells us that the form of equality "is equal and is not unequal". And shortly after this passage Plato generalizes his claim to all forms, (at least those for which there are opposites) (*Phaedo* 75c10-d4). So Plato suggests here that any form of F "is F and is not opposite-F".

But can it be correct to read these claims as an expression of a commitment to NSP? It seems we ought to apply the same reading to Plato's claim at 74c1 that the form of equality "is not unequal" as we apply to Plato's claim underlying the argument and expressed shortly after it at 74d5-6, that the form of equality "is equal". Can these claims be read according to NSP? Can Plato be taken to mean that the form of F is F in the general narrow way of being F and is not opposite-F in the general narrow way of being opposite-F?[15] This cannot be the case, at least for the reason that

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[14] As Gallop notes, the text here is "very uncertain" (Gallop 1975, 229 n. 24). But as Gallop explains, according to any of the possible textual variations, whether it is explicitly stated or not, "ἔστιν ἴσον has to be understood as completing the ὥσπερ clause." Plato must be asserting that with respect to how the form of equality "*is equal*", sensible equals fall short of "being equal".

[15] Note that if something is not opposite-F in the general narrow way of being opposite-F, then it is not opposite-F in *any* narrow way of being opposite-F. This follows from the definition of these terms above. If something is F in any narrow way of being F, then it is thereby F in the general narrow way

Plato does not accept that no form of F is opposite-F in the general narrow way. In

other words, there will be numerous cases for Plato in which the form of F is opposite-

F in the general narrow way. As Fine recognizes, some forms will suffer this sort of

compresence: "some forms of F are also not-F" (Fine 2003, 313-4). And Fine clearly

has narrow ways of being opposite-F in mind.[16] In some cases, it is true for Plato that

the form of F is opposite-F in a narrow way.[17]

What are some examples of the forms for which it will be true that the form of

F is opposite-F in the general narrow way, and is Plato clearly committed to the

existence of such forms in the *Phaedo*? Two such forms are the form of sameness and

the form of difference, two of the most important forms discussed in the *Sophist* 254d-

9c. Plato holds that the form of sameness is different, in so far as it is different from

other forms (*Sophist* 256d12-e2). Also, as the argument at *Phaedo* 74b6-c6 would

show in the case of the form of sameness, the form of sameness is not the same as

sensible sames and so is different from them. Likewise, the form of difference is (the)

same because it is identical to itself. While Plato does not explicitly mention the

forms of sameness and difference in the *Phaedo*, sameness and equality are closely

related, as Plato makes clear in the *Parmenides*, since equality is characterized there as

sameness of measure (*Parmenides* 140b7-8). Therefore, it is unlikely that Plato

accepts the existence of the form of equality but not the form of sameness. And if he

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of being F, since the general narrow way of being F is an abstract specification which covers all of the
more specific narrow ways of being F.

[16] Fine argues that some forms suffer compresence with respect to narrow ways of being F. But, on her
view, with respect to the broad explanatory way of being F, the form of F does not suffer compresence.
I discuss Fine's view in detail in Chapter Four.

[17] The point here could also be applied to the interpretation of the passage at *Symposium* 211a. Plato
seems to claim there that the form of beauty "is not both beautiful and ugly". But we ought not to
generalize this as the claim that no form of F is both F in the general narrow way of being F and
opposite-F in the general narrow way of being opposite-F, (nor should we generalize this as the claim
that no form of F is both F and opposite-F in *any* way). And we should not do this because of the fact
that Plato *is* committed to cases in which the form of F is F and opposite-F in some narrow ways.
Generally speaking, the form of F does escape some sort of compresence, but it is not with respect to
being F in a narrow way that it does this.

posits the existence of the form of equality, inequality, and sameness, it seems he must also accept the existence of the form of difference. And it would seem that even according to commentators who try to restrict the set of forms that Plato posits in the *Phaedo* (to the forms of opposites and numbers for example), the forms of sameness and difference would be included as ones he does accept. Since he thinks that the form of sameness is different in the general narrow way—the way that all sensible differents are different—and the form of difference is (the) same in the general narrow way, Plato does not accept the universal claim that for all forms, the form of F is not opposite-F in the general narrow way.[18] And so Plato's claim that "the form of F is not opposite-F" should not be interpreted according to NSP.

As I have noted, in this passage of the *Phaedo*, Plato seems to rely on the claim that "the form of F is not opposite-F", and he appears to generalize what he argues here to all forms (*Phaedo* 75c10-d4). But one might argue that, even though sameness and difference are closely related to equality and inequality, and sameness and difference are two of the most important forms discussed in the *Sophist*, Plato may not have posited the existence of these forms in the *Phaedo*. Perhaps "the form of F is not opposite-F" can be true for Plato interpreted according to NSP once it is restricted only to forms (of opposites) that Plato actually posits in the *Phaedo*. However, there

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[18] Malcolm employs a strategy to try to resolve apparent contradictions that follow from NSP, which one might think could be used here. Malcolm makes use of the distinction between qualities that a form has *qua* form and the qualities that it has *qua* the particular form that it is (Malcolm 1991, 89-90). One might try to argue that while some form of F might be opposite-F *qua* form, no form is opposite-F *qua* the particular form that it is. Then one can say that when Plato asserts that "the form of F is not opposite-F", he *does* mean this to be interpreted as saying that the form of F is not opposite-F in the general narrow way, but the claim should be qualified: The form of F is not opposite-F in the general narrow way *qua* the particular form that it is. But I think this can be quickly shown to be false as well for Plato. For instance, the form of difference is the same even *qua* the particular form that it is, since it is "the same as the form of difference", and it is the only form which has this quality. "Being the same as the form of difference" is a quality which the form of difference has *qua* the particular form that it is, not *qua* form. So even *qua* the particular form that it is, it will not be true for Plato that the form of F is not opposite-F in the general narrow way. This distinction cannot be used to rescue the NSP reading here.

are examples of forms discussed explicitly in the *Phaedo* for which it will be false that the form of F is not opposite-F in the general narrow way.

For instance, consider the form of evenness. First of all, Plato is committed to the view that every form is one and a unity. Vlastos explains that every form in Plato's system must be "unitary" (Vlastos 1981, 259) and that Plato would have found it absolutely unacceptable for a form not have "unity" and so not to be "*one* Form, *one* number, *one* being, and so forth" (Vlastos 1981, 337).[19] In the *Phaedo*, Plato argues that all forms are noncomposite (ἀσύνθετον) (*Phaedo* 78c1-9) and uniform (μονοειδὲς) (*Phaedo* 78c10-d7, 80b2). In the *Republic*, he asserts that the beautiful and the ugly are each one (ἓν) (*Republic* 476a2), and he immediately generalizes this claim to all forms (πάντων τῶν εἰδῶν) adding that each of them is itself one (ἓν) (*Republic* 476a4-6). Later in the *Republic* at 507b6-7, Plato again claims that each form is one (μιᾶς).[20] Now Plato clearly posits the existence of a form of evenness in the *Phaedo*, calling it "the even" (τὸ ἄρτιον) in numerous places from 104b3-e9 and more explicitly "the form of the even" (ἡ τοῦ ἀρτίου ἰδέα) at 104d14, e1, and 105a6. Since the form of evenness is one of the many forms, it will itself be one (ἓν). He argues in the *Phaedo* at 101c2-7, that whatever is one (ἓν) must share in oneness (μονάδος). It follows that since the form of evenness is one, it shares in oneness. Further, Plato claims that oneness (μονάς) is such that it always brings with it oddness (105c4-5).[21] So, since the form of evenness shares in oneness and is one (in number), it follows that the form of evenness is odd (in number). But being odd by being one (in number) is a narrow way of being odd, and so it falls under the general narrow way of being odd, (which is

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[19] Also see Malcolm 1991, 89, on this point that every form must be *one*.
[20] Also see *Philebus* 15a1-b8, where Plato suggests that forms are unities (ἑνάδων and μονάδας) and repeatedly suggests that they are one (ἓν). And see *Timaeus* 35a1-2, where Plato suggests that forms are indivisible (ἀμερίστου).
[21] See Denis O'Brien on this point, who takes Plato to be asserting here that "oneness entails oddness" (O'Brien 1967, 224-5).

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perhaps 'being of a number that is not divisible into two equal parts'—see *Euthyphro* 12d7-10). Therefore, the form of evenness is odd in the general narrow way, the same way as sensible odds.

Another example of a form explicitly mentioned in the *Phaedo*, for which it will be false to claim that the form of F is not opposite-F in the general narrow way, is the form of plurality. Plato mentions this form at 101b6 (πλήθει καὶ διὰ τὸ πλῆθος). Again, since all forms are one (in some narrow way), plurality will be one, which is its opposite. So plurality will also be an example of a form such that the form of F *is* opposite-F in the general narrow way.

So Plato cannot consistently accept that no form of F is opposite-F in the general narrow way. We then have good reason not to interpret the claim underlying his argument at 74c1, that "the form of F is not opposite-F", along the lines of NSP.[22] This is because, if so interpreted, it would obviously contradict what Plato is clearly committed to (in the middle dialogues and the *Phaedo* itself) in the case of numerous forms, (at least two of which are explicitly posited in the *Phaedo* itself).[23] Within this argument from 74b6-c6, Plato is relying on the claim that "the form of F is not opposite-F" and the further claim that "the form of F is F", a claim that Plato makes more explicit at 74d5-7. Since we have good reason not to read "the form of F is not opposite-F" along the lines of NSP, the further claim involved here that "the form of F is F" also ought not receive this reading. When Plato suggests in this argument and shortly after it the general claim that "the form of F is F", he does not intend to say that for all forms, the form of F is F in the general narrow way of being F or that it is F

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[22] The same could be said about Plato's analogous claim at 103b4-5 that "the form of F cannot be opposite-F". I examine this claim and the passage in which it is found in the next chapter in which I discuss immanent characters.

[23] There are other relevant forms than the forms of sameness, difference, evenness, and plurality. For instance, it seems Plato would accept that the form of change is at rest, although this is perhaps a controversial case.

in the same way as sensible Fs. He does not mean to express a commitment to NSP.

We have found at least one good reason to hold that commentators are incorrect to find a commitment to NSP expressed in this passage.

IV. Rejecting NSP: In some cases, the form of F cannot be F

As I have noted above, many commentators argue that NSP leads to numerous absurdities and contradictions.[24] *If* it is true that NSP leads to obviously absurd results or ones that obviously contradict views to which Plato was clearly and consciously committed, then I think we have very good reason not to attribute NSP to Plato. Remember that according to NSP, any form of F is F in the general narrow way, which is the same way in which all sensible Fs are F. Commentators have quickly suggested many examples of forms such that, if the form of F is F in the same way as sensible Fs, an absurd result follows, or one that Plato clearly rejects. Vlastos lists numerous cases in which he thinks Plato simply cannot consistently accept NSP: The form of whiteness cannot be white since it cannot be colored, visible, or extended (Vlastos 1981, 337 n. 8). The form of plurality cannot be plural nor can the form of motion be in motion, since all forms must be unitary and immobile (Vlastos 1981, 259). The form of animal cannot be (an) animal because all animals are moving, and again, forms must be immobile (Vlastos 1981, 262). And Vlastos claims that NSP cannot be true in the case of the forms of change, becoming, perishability, sensibility, corporeality, imperfection, or any other forms which are "contrary to those which define the conditions of Platonic being" (Vlastos 1965, 251). Penner focuses on the form of largeness and argues that since Plato takes all forms to be non-spatial objects,

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[24] See footnotes 8 and 9.

and only spatial objects can be large (in the same way as the sensible larges), Plato did

not think that the form of largeness is large (in the same way as sensible larges)

(Penner 1987, 9, 44). F.C. White points to the cases of the form of man and the form

of triangularity, arguing that the form of man cannot be a man nor can the form of

triangularity be a triangle (F. C. White 1981, 154). G. E. L. Owen cites the example

of the form of death, which he says seems to be entailed by *Phaedo* 105, as a form that

Plato cannot consistently hold is F in the same way as sensible Fs (Owen 1986, 228 n.

20).[25]

I will not examine all of these examples in detail. Perhaps for some of them,

there is some way to explain how Plato *can* claim that the form of F is F in the same

way as sensible Fs, without absurdity or inconsistency. Instead, I will focus on one of

the strongest cases in which Plato could not have held that the form of F is F in the

same way as sensible Fs, without committing himself to inconsistency and perhaps

absurdity. I have in mind the form of visibility. Before I explain why Plato could not

accept that the form of visibility is visible in the same way as sensibles, I want to deal

with an initial objection to my argument here. The objection is that Plato never

explicitly mentions the form of visibility, and so perhaps it is incorrect to even

attribute the existence of such a form to him. Did Plato posit the existence of a form

of visibility, and did he do so when he wrote the *Phaedo* and other middle dialogues?

Vlastos asserts that the form of sensibility is one that Plato never mentions, but

it is one "which his Theory would require him to recognise" (Vlastos 1965, 251). If

Vlastos is correct that Plato is required to recognize the existence of the form of

sensibility, then he would also be required to posit the form of visibility.[26] But why

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[25] And see Gallop 1975, 127-8: "Equality cannot itself be equal; no more can smallness be small, or largeness large. Forms, as universals, cannot, in general, *have* the characters that they *are*."
[26] Note that my entire argument here dealing with the form of visibility could also be applied in the case of the form of sensibility or perceivability, which Vlastos claims Plato is required to recognize (Vlastos 1965, 251). And it seems that often when Plato refers to visibility as in the Affinity Argument in the

exactly does Plato's theory commit him to the existence of such forms? David Ross

argues, by referring to *Republic* 596a6, that Plato posits the existence of a form

"answering to every common name" (Ross 1951, 24). Ross again claims that

according to Plato's "doctrine of Ideas", "for every set of individuals called by a

common name there must be an Idea" (Ross 1951, 36). If Ross is correct that Plato

posits a form corresponding to every common name, then it would follow that Plato

posits a form of visibility, since there is such a common name as 'visible'. However,

Plato provides us with evidence even within the middle dialogues that he does not

want to posit the existence of a form corresponding to *every* common name. In the

Phaedrus at 265e1-2, Plato claims that forms cut things up according to the joints in

nature (κατ᾽ ἄρθρα ᾗ πέφυκεν). So Plato will not posit the existence of a form

corresponding to those common terms that do not cut things up at natural joints. In

the *Politicus*, a later dialogue, he makes his view more explicit. There at 262b-e, Plato

argues that not all divisions pick out forms. For example, although there is a term

'barbarian', there is no form corresponding to this term, whereas 'even' and 'odd' are

terms with corresponding forms, because they cut up number according to a natural

joint. The divisions that successfully pick out forms must be explanatory and must

pick out the genuine divisions in nature (Fine, 1993, 111; Allan Silverman 2002, 24).

Now it is true that it does not follow from what has been said that *all* terms which cut

things up according to joints in nature *must* have corresponding forms, but Plato does

seem to be suggesting a commitment to this view. And even if Plato is committed in

the *Phaedo* to a restricted set of forms that only includes opposites and numbers, for

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Phaedo, he could very well be understood as having sensibility and not merely visibility in mind. This
is the case because his argument seems to be picking out a more general distinction between sensibles
and forms than one having to do only with the sense of sight.

example, and so not all forms which cut at natural joints[27], this would not rule out a commitment to the form of visibility. This is the case because 'visible' is a term which is usually discussed in contrast with its opposite, 'invisible'. So contrary to Ross, we cannot simply conclude on the basis of the fact that 'visible' is a common term, that Plato posits the existence of the form of visibility. But if the form of visibility does cut things up according to a joint in nature, there seems to be some good reason for thinking that Plato posits its existence.

What reason is there for thinking that the form of visibility would cut things up according to a joint in nature? In the Affinity Argument in the *Phaedo* at 78b-80b, Plato suggests that reality can be genuinely divided into the visible (τὸ ὁρατόν) and the invisible (τὸ ἀιδές). Plato refers to the visible and the invisible as δύο εἴδη τῶν ὄντων, two kinds or forms of beings (*Phaedo* 79a6-7). Even if he does not mean to explicitly posit these as *forms* here, he does indeed suggest that they reflect genuine divisions in nature. Plato is clearly aware here of a joint in nature between the visible and the invisible, and he seems to hold that there are forms corresponding to natural divisions. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that Plato posits the existence of forms corresponding to these common terms 'visible' and 'invisible', even though he does not posit forms corresponding to all common terms. And it also seems reasonable to suppose that he is aware of being so committed.

But supposing that I am right to say that Plato is committed to the existence of the form of visibility, why is it the case that Plato cannot consistently adhere to NSP in this instance? Why can't the form of visibility be visible in the same way as the many visibles are visible? Plato is very clear in repeatedly affirming that, contrary to sensibles, all forms are invisible. For instance, within the Affinity Argument, Plato

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[27] According to this view, Plato would not be committed in the *Phaedo* to the existence of a form of fire, man, or finger, for example, even though the terms 'fire', 'man', and 'finger' presumably cut nature up at the joints, and 'finger' does this quite well.

asserts that it is possible to grasp forms *only* through reasoning, and he emphatically adds that forms are not visible but are invisible (ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἀιδῆ τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ οὐχ ὁρατά) (*Phaedo* 79a2-4). Earlier in the *Phaedo*, Plato argues that there is *no way* (οὐδαμῶς) in which one can see the forms with one's eyes (*Phaedo* 65d9-10). He adds that the forms are never grasped by any of the senses (*Phaedo* 65d11-2). And in the *Republic*, Plato claims that forms are intelligible but not visible (ὁρᾶσθαι δ' οὔ) (*Republic* 507b8-10), invisible (τὸ ἀόρατον) (*Republic* 529b5), and only graspable without all sense perceptions (ἄνευ πασῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων) (*Republic* 532a5-b2). Plato seems to be committed to the view that forms are not visible or sensible in any way whatsoever. At least we can be sure that Plato thinks forms are not visible in any way in which the many visibles are visible, in any narrow way. But then the form of visibility simply cannot be visible in any narrow way and so it cannot be visible in the general narrow way. Plato rejects the claim that narrow self-predication is true of the form of visibility, but since NSP is a view that is supposed to hold for all forms, we have good reason to hold that Plato rejects NSP.

But perhaps this is too quick here. John Malcolm suggests a strategy for dealing with blatant inconsistencies that seem to follow, in some cases, from the form of F's being F in the same way as sensible Fs. He argues that in interpreting Plato we might be able to exploit the distinction between qualities that a form has *qua* form and qualities that it has *qua* the particular form that it is (Malcolm 1991, 89). For instance, all forms must be one *qua* form, and so the form of duality must be one *qua* form. And the form of duality is one since it is a single unified form. However, the form of duality might also be two (in a narrow way) *qua* the particular form that it is, by being a set of two units. So the form of duality might be one in a narrow way that respects the formal properties (or the properties that all forms must have), and yet also two (or dual) in a narrow way such that is consistent with NSP. Malcolm suggests that this

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sort of strategy might resolve all of these potential cases of inconsistency, and perhaps

by making use of this distinction, Plato could consistently hold NSP. But while this

move might work in the case of the form of duality, it simply will not do in our case of

the form of visibility. As I have noted, Plato is insistent in his claim that forms are

invisible beings. Further, he suggests that there is *no way* in which forms are visible.

But beyond what he claims in the text, it also seems simply impossible for an invisible

thing to be visible in a (narrow) way. It seems to be absurd to claim that the form of

visibility is an invisible being and is invisible *qua* form, and yet it is visible in the

general narrow way—the same way as sensibles—*qua* the particular form that it is.

Since it is an invisible being, it cannot be visible in *any* (narrow) way. And so we

ought not to attribute to Plato the view that forms are invisible beings and yet the form

of visibility, while an invisible being, is visible in some narrow way. As we have

seen, this would be to attribute an absurd view to him.[28] In the absence of good

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[28] My argumentative strategy concerning the form of visibility could also, with very little modification, be applied in the case of other forms such as the form of corporeality or body. This is another form that Vlastos argues Plato would be required to recognize (Vlastos 1965, 251). Incorporeality is another formal property, a property that all forms must have. In the *Sophist* at 246b7-8, Plato describes the friends of the forms as holding that all forms are bodiless or incorporeal (ἀσώματα). Once again, it seems impossible for the form of corporeality to be incorporeal and an incorporeal being *qua* form, and yet to be corporeal (in a narrow way), *qua* the particular form that it is. An incorporeal being cannot be corporeal in any narrow way. Since it seems that Plato is committed to the existence of the form of corporeality, at least in the middle dialogues, and this form cannot be corporeal in the same way as the sensible corporeals, Plato cannot without inconsistency and absurdity accept NSP. Therefore, we have good reason not to attribute NSP to him. A distinct sort of argument might be raised concerning the form of life mentioned explicitly in the *Phaedo* at 106d5-6 (αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς εἶδος) and its opposite, the form of death (θανάτου), which Owen notes as a form to which Plato was committed that is problematic for NSP (Owen 1986, 228 n. 20). Can Plato really be taken to have thought that the form of life is alive and the form of death is dead, in narrow ways? First, it seems impossible for forms to be alive in any narrow way. Second, since all forms are deathless or ἀθάνατον (*Phaedo* 79d2, 80b1), it seems impossible for the form of death to be dead in any narrow way. Similarly, since being dead (in a narrow way) seems to imply having once been alive for Plato, it seems impossible again for the form of death to be dead in any narrow way. Since Plato is explicitly committed to the existence of the forms of life and death and fairly obviously could not have consistently thought that these forms self-predicate in narrow ways, we have good reason not to attribute NSP to Plato.

evidence which might show a commitment to NSP in the *Phaedo*, we ought to assert that Plato was not so committed, at least in this dialogue.[29]

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[29] In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I further examine textual evidence often thought to show a commitment to NSP in the *Phaedo* and middle dialogues more generally. I argue that properly construed, these passages do not provide evidence for NSP (or any version of SP for that matter).

CHAPTER TWO

IMMANENT CHARACTERS AND THE B-REQUIREMENT

I. Introduction

As I argued in the introduction to the dissertation and in the previous chapter,
Plato appears in the *Phaedo* to be committed to the view that for all forms, the form of
F "is F".[30] What I argued in the previous chapter is that we ought not to interpret this
commitment along the lines of NSP. Plato does not intend to express a commitment to
the view that for all forms, the form of F is F in the general narrow way, the way in
which all sensible Fs are F. But if Plato holds that the form of F "is F", and does *not*
intend this as an expression of the view that the form of F is F in the same way as
sensible Fs, then what view are we to attribute to him? How should we understand
these apparent statements of self-predication that we find in the *Phaedo*? Even if
Plato is not committed here to NSP, is he committed to some other version of a
genuine Self-Predication Assumption (SP)? Perhaps he still thinks that the form of F
is F, but in some way other than sensible Fs. Or when Plato claims that for all forms,
the form of F "is F", does he want to express something entirely different from the
view that the form of F is an F thing? What else might he intend?

Scholars have suggested many different ways of understanding Plato's
apparent statements of self-predication. In this chapter, I will argue against certain
influential interpretations including: the Tautologous Identity view (derived from
Allen and Cherniss), two different Non-Tautologous Identity views (one derived from

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[30] The strongest evidence for such a commitment is found at 74b7-75d4 and 102d6-103c9. At 74d5-7,
Plato claims that the form of equality "is equal", and he clearly intends this claim to be generalized to
all forms (*Phaedo* 75c10-d4). In the later passage, which I will examine in detail in this chapter, Plato
suggests that the form of largeness "is large" and that this claim should again be generalized.

Mills and one derived from Nehamas), Vlastos' Pauline Predication view, and Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "conservative reinterpretation". These five views are all non-SP views, in that they hold that Plato is committed to the view that for all forms, the form of F "is F", but he is *not* committed to the view that for all forms, the form of F is an F thing.[31] All these views introduce different interpretations of the claim that for all forms, the form of F "is F".

In this chapter, my strategy will be first to examine what Plato writes in the *Phaedo* about what have been extensively called "immanent characters" in Plato scholarship. Examining Plato's views on immanent characters will be useful for my overall strategy of showing that we have reason to avoid attributing certain views on self-predication to Plato. But as we will see, this examination will also help to clarify Plato's views on what it means for particulars to have properties and to undergo an alteration of properties. In particular here, I will argue that Plato intends immanent characters to be understood as what I will call form-particularizations[32], which are immanent in particulars. I will then adopt and further develop an argument from Robert Heinaman's "Self-Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues" about the relationship between what Plato writes about forms and what he writes about immanent characters. I will argue that based on the nature of form-particularizations and on what Plato asserts about them in the *Phaedo*, we have good reason to doubt all of the five views above.[33] We ought to be skeptical of these views about how to interpret Plato's apparent statements of self-predication in the *Phaedo*.

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[31] The possible exception here is Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the conservative reinterpretation. According to this view, any form of F *is* an F thing, but it is an F thing in a different *sense* of 'F' than the sense in which sensible Fs are F. For a view to be a version of SP, it perhaps ought to hold that any form of F is an F thing in the same *sense* of 'F' as sensible Fs. I discuss Peterson's view in detail later in this chapter.

[32] Here I follow Mark McPherran's use of the term in both McPherran 1984 and McPherran 1988.

[33] Note that my argument against these five views in this chapter relies on the interpretation of immanent characters that I argue for in Section II of this chapter, that immanent characters are entities ontologically distinct from forms. If one does not accept my interpretation of immanent characters as

II. The F-nesses-in-us

Before I argue for how we should understand immanent characters, let us look at what Plato actually writes about them in the *Phaedo*. Unfortunately, he only very briefly discusses them. At *Phaedo* 102b4-6, as Plato begins his final argument in the *Phaedo* for the immortality of the soul, he asserts that when Simmias is larger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, there is both largeness (μέγεθος) and smallness (σμικρότητα) *in* Simmias (ἐν τῷ Σιμμίᾳ). Simmias is larger than Socrates by the largeness which Simmias happens to have (τῷ μεγέθει ὃ τυγχάνει ἔχων), and because of the fact that Socrates has smallness in relation to the largeness of Simmias (ὅτι σμικρότητα ἔχει ὁ Σωκράτης πρὸς τὸ ἐκείνου μέγεθος) (*Phaedo* 102b8-c6). And Simmias is smaller than Phaedo because Phaedo has largeness in relation to the smallness of Simmias (ὅτι μέγεθος ἔχει ὁ Φαίδων πρὸς τὴν Σιμμίου σμικρότητα) (*Phaedo* 102c7-10). But what is this largeness and this smallness that is said to be in Simmias, Socrates, or Phaedo? Plato has just been arguing in *Phaedo* 100c-102b that it is the form of F that makes things F. Is this largeness and smallness in Simmias, for example, supposed to be identical to the forms of largeness and smallness, or is Plato discussing something distinct here?

Shortly after Plato has introduced this talk of the largeness and smallness in Simmias, Plato goes on to distinguish between largeness and smallness themselves and the largeness and smallness *in us*. At 102d5-103a2, he writes:

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ontologically distinct entities, one will not be persuaded by the particular argument I offer here against these five views.

For it seems to me that not only is largeness itself never willing to be at the same time large and small, but also the largeness in us never admits the small nor is willing to be overcome, but one of two things happens, either it flees and retreats whenever its opposite, the small, approaches, or it is destroyed when that approaches. But it is not willing to be other than what it was, enduring and admitting smallness, as I, admitting and enduring smallness, also am still who I am—I this same man am small. But *that*[34], being large, does not venture to be small. In the same way, also the small in us is not ever willing to become and to be large, nor is any other of the opposites willing at the same time to become and be its opposite while still being what it was, but either it goes away or is destroyed in such a circumstance.

Λέγω δὴ τοῦδ' ἕνεκα, βουλόμενος δόξαι σοὶ ὅπερ ἐμοί. ἐμοὶ γὰρ φαίνεται οὐ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος οὐδέποτ' ἐθέλειν ἅμα μέγα καὶ σμικρὸν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος οὐδέποτε προσδέχεσθαι τὸ σμικρὸν οὐδ' ἐθέλειν ὑπερέχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ δυοῖν τὸ ἕτερον, ἢ φεύγειν καὶ ὑπεκχωρεῖν ὅταν αὐτῷ προσίῃ τὸ ἐναντίον, τὸ σμικρόν, ἢ προσελθόντος ἐκείνου ἀπολωλέναι· ὑπομένον δὲ καὶ δεξάμενον τὴν σμικρότητα οὐκ ἐθέλειν εἶναι ἕτερον ἢ ὅπερ ἦν. ὥσπερ ἐγὼ δεξάμενος καὶ ὑπομείνας τὴν σμικρότητα, καὶ ἔτι ὢν ὅσπερ εἰμί, οὗτος ὁ αὐτὸς σμικρός εἰμι· ἐκεῖνο[34] δὲ οὐ τετόλμηκεν μέγα ὂν σμικρὸν εἶναι· ὡς δ' αὕτως καὶ τὸ σμικρὸν τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἐθέλει ποτὲ μέγα γίγνεσθαι οὐδὲ εἶναι, οὐδ' ἄλλο οὐδὲν τῶν ἐναντίων, ἔτι ὂν ὅπερ ἦν, ἅμα τοὐναντίον γίγνεσθαί τε καὶ εἶναι, ἀλλ' ἤτοι ἀπέρχεται ἢ ἀπόλλυται ἐν τούτῳ τῷ παθήματι.

Just after this passage Plato reaffirms the point that "the opposite itself could never become opposite to itself, neither that in us nor that in nature" (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον ἑαυτῷ ἐναντίον οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο, οὔτε τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν οὔτε τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει) (*Phaedo* 103b4-5).

Plato suggests here that the-F-ness-in-nature or the form of F[35] "is not opposite-F" and

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[34] The ἐκεῖνο here at 102e5 seems best understood to have the largeness in us as its antecedent instead of largeness itself. From 102d7-ff Plato has been referring to the largeness in us, and if Plato meant to refer to largeness itself here it seems he would have made this explicit. (And he goes on to discuss the smallness in us immediately after this, which might also suggest that he means largeness in us here.) See Gallop who argues that the ἐκεῖνο here must refer to largeness in us as opposed to the form (Gallop 1975, 55, 235 n. 69), and also F.C. White 1981, 56 and Nehamas 1973, 474. G. M. A. Grube, wrongly I think, takes the ἐκεῖνο to refer to the form of largeness (Grube 1997, 88). However, not too much seems to hang on this point because what Plato claims here about the largeness in us he also holds concerning largeness itself. At 102d6-7, Plato explicitly claims that largeness itself is never both large and small. Based on Plato's discussion at 74b-ff, for instance, it seems reasonable to assume that Plato thinks largeness itself is never both large and small because largeness is large and is not small (at least according to some crucial construal of 'is large' and 'is not small'). So what Plato claims here at 102e5-6, that largeness in us is large and does not venture to be small, he would also claim about largeness itself. But what he means by these claims is a further question, which I will go on to discuss.
[35] Burnet argues that when Plato refers to the F *in nature* he must have the form in mind (Burnet 1911, 117 n. b5). There are other places where Plato uses this expression to refer to forms: At *Republic*

the-F-ness-in-us likewise "is not opposite-F". We will have to wait to see how exactly these claims ought to be understood, but for now it is clear that Plato seems to draw some distinction between the forms and things that are *in us* which correspond to the forms. But what is this distinction supposed to be? What sort of things are the-F-nesses-in-us supposed to be and how are they related to the forms themselves?[36]

Many commentators argue that although Plato does seem to distinguish between the-F-ness-in-nature and the-F-ness-in-us, he does not intend to introduce new ontologically distinct entities. These commentators urge that the terminology of "immanent characters" is misleading because it suggests a commitment to a new class of entities distinct from particulars, such as Simmias or a stick, and forms. When Plato distinguishes between the-F-ness-in-nature and the-F-ness-in-us, all he is doing, these commentators argue, is drawing a distinction between the forms as they are by themselves and the forms as they are related to things that participate in them. For example, Charlotte Stough claims that Plato is merely distinguishing between "the Form as such, just by itself (ἐν τῇ φύσει, αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ) with the Form as it is shared in by (related to) some individual, in its manifestation as a characteristic of (say) Simmias (ἐν ἡμῖν)" (Stough 1976, 23). She argues that Plato is not committed to a tripartite ontology and is not adding "a third element to an ontology already burgeoning with new entities" (Stough 1976, 23, 23 n. 1). W. C. K. Guthrie likewise

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597b5-7, the form of bed is the one ἐν τῇ φύσει. And at *Parmenides* 132d1-2, Plato suggests that the forms are set ἐν τῇ φύσει like παραδείγματα.

[36] Note that although I focus here on the *Phaedo*, commentators have suggested passages in other Platonic dialogues in which they claim that immanent characters, or these F-nesses-in-us, are discussed. One such example is at *Parmenides* 130b3-4, where Plato claims that likeness itself is distinct from the likeness we have. O'Brien and Daniel Devereux take this passage to make the same distinction between forms and immanent characters as we find in the *Phaedo* (O'Brien 1967, 201 n. 1; Devereux 2000, 199 n. 13), but Charlotte Stough and W. C. K. Guthrie disagree and do not see immanent characters as being referred to here (Stough 1976, 23 n. 33; Guthrie 1975, 354). In another passage shortly after this in the *Parmenides* at 133c3-134a1, Plato seems to draw a distinction between the forms themselves and things corresponding to the forms which are *in us*. Other passages in which immanent characters may be present include *Timaeus* 48e-52c and *Symposium* 210b6-7, although these are perhaps controversial. In this chapter, I focus my attention on the discussion in the *Phaedo*.

argues for the view that the-F-nesses-in-us are "simply the familiar Forms entering into particulars" (Guthrie 1975, 353) and that the forms themselves enter into and combine with bodies (Guthrie 1975, 355). Burnet claims that largeness in us is just the form "so far as it 'is present' in us or we 'participate' in it" (Burnet 1911, 116, d7).[37]

Perhaps the strongest proponent of the view that the-F-nesses-in-us are identical to the forms is R. M. Dancy. Dancy argues that "Socrates does not tell us that there is a third layer of entities between the Forms and mundane objects" (Dancy 2004, 310). In fact, Dancy argues, "there are no such animals as 'immanent characters'…" (Dancy 1991, 14). The contrast between the contrary itself ἐν ἡμῖν and ἐν τῇ φύσει:

> …is not a contrast between two different entities, but between a single entity under two different conditions: the contrary itself, the Form tallness or whatever it is, as it is by itself and as it is when it bears whatever relationship it does to Simmias, Socrates, Phaedo, or whoever. (Dancy 2004, 309-10)

Dancy relies most of all on the passage at 103b7-8, where Plato claims that "now [we are speaking] about those things themselves [from] which, when they are in [them], the things named get their derived names…" (νῦν δὲ περὶ ἐκείνων αὐτῶν ὧν ἐνόντων ἔχει τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τὰ ὀνομαζόμενα) (Dancy's translation in Dancy 1991, 18). Dancy argues that the "things themselves" here that are said to be "present in" particulars "are simply the Forms…" (Dancy 2004, 310).[38] If the forms themselves are said to be

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[37] There are some commentators who argue that Plato is committed to the view that the-F-nesses-in-us are just identical to the forms themselves, but express reservations about the plausibility of such a view. Paul Shorey and Dorothy Tarrant are two examples. Shorey claims that although the talk of τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν and τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει "seems to yield three things" (when taken along with particulars), "there are really only two things", form and particular (Shorey 1903, 41 n. 284). But Shorey goes on to suggest that the way in which the form can be in itself and in particulars is a "mystery". Tarrant argues that in claiming that forms are themselves immanent and in identifying forms with the-F-nesses-in-us, Plato's resulting position is "curious and impossible" (Tarrant 1928, lvi-ii).

[38] The passage at 102b1-2 might be thought to support Dancy's reading of 103b7-8. At 102b1-2, when Plato is clearly referring to the form themselves (as opposed to the-F-nesses-in-us), he claims that "other things get their derived names by sharing (μεταλαμβάνοντα) in these things themselves (αὐτῶν

present in particulars, then they are the-F-nesses-in-us, and we do not have good

reason to attribute *distinct* immanent entities to Plato here.

But here Dancy simply begs the question. Dancy provides no evidence for the

claim that 'ἐκείνων αὐτῶν' must refer to forms themselves rather than the-F-nesses-in-

us, and the text is somewhat ambiguous. In fact, it seems likely that Plato is using

'ἐκείνων αὐτῶν' here to refer to the important entities that he has just distinguished in

the previous sentence, the-F-nesses-in-us (*Phaedo* 103b4-5). Now it could be argued

by Dancy that even if 'ἐκείνων αὐτῶν' refers to the-F-nesses-in-us, these are just the

forms themselves—but some independent argument is required here. For, of course,

this is the question at hand. To be sure, I have not provided a definitive argument here

showing that Dancy is incorrect, my point is only that the main evidence he provides

is not enough to support his view that there are no immanent characters as distinct

"animals" from the very forms themselves.[39]

How are we to decide if these commentators are correct in their claim that the-

F-nesses-in-us are not meant to be new entities distinct from the forms? A common

criticism of the *identification* of the-F-nesses-in-us with the forms is that Plato

suggests that the-F-nesses-in-us are perishable, and yet the forms are clearly

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τούτων)". Perhaps this suggests that in the similar claim at 103b7-8, Plato is suggesting that things get
their names by having the forms themselves present in them. But note the switch from "sharing in" at
102b1-2 to "being present in" at 103b7-8. Plato's point seems to be that sharing in forms is one way of
specifying the account of how things get their names, and yet another is the presence of form-
particularizations in them. The use of the different participles in the two claims may go hand in hand
with the reference to distinct entities.

[39] O'Brien is often considered to be another proponent of the view that immanent characters are just
identical to the forms, when they are in things. For instance, see Gallop 1975, 195, and Fine 2003, 306
n. 7, who both cite O'Brien as holding this view. But in fact, while O'Brien does reject a tripartite
ontology, he seems to do so by placing immanent characters together with particulars, and not by
identifying immanent characters with forms. He *does* seem to hold that forms and immanent characters
are distinct sorts of entities. For instance, see 201, where O'Brien argues that immanent characters are
not distinct from what he calls "particularizations of forms" (O'Brien 1967, 201), but this is different
from the claim that immanent characters are not distinct from forms. He gives Simmias as an example
of a particularization of a form. In his view, immanent characters are "particularizations of forms" just
like those things which we would normally consider to be particulars, but they are quite distinct from
forms.

imperishable. Plato suggests that the-F-nesses-in-us are capable of going away or of being destroyed (102d9-e2, 103a1-2, 103d5-12, 104b6-c3).[40][41] Since (at least in some cases[42]) the-F-nesses-in-us are capable of being destroyed and the forms are not, the-F-nesses-in-us must be distinct from forms.[43]

Now if the-F-nesses-in-us are perishable and the forms are not, this may be enough to establish that the-F-nesses-in-us are not identical to forms as a whole—the-largeness-in-Simmias is not simply identical to the form of largeness as a whole. But is this alone sufficient to establish that the-F-nesses-in-us are new entities that are completely ontologically distinct from forms? I do not think so. This is the case

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[40] Note that while the first two instances are clearly about the-F-nesses-in-us, the latter two cases are controversial. In these passages it seems that Plato may be referring to particulars that have immanent characters in them, rather than to the immanent characters themselves.

[41] Some commentators argue that although Plato notes that the-F-nesses-in-us might withdraw or perish, he is only listing logical or abstract possibilities and does not believe that the-F-nesses-in-us are in fact capable of perishing. On this suggestion, see Guthrie 1975, 354 n. 1 and Dancy 2004, 310. But this seems like an unlikely suggestion. Devereux presents a nice argument for the claim that immanent characters are indeed perishable (Devereux 2000, 197-9), which goes roughly as follows: Plato argues that fire is such that it always brings with it hotness. Wherever there is fire, it will always have hotness in it (*Phaedo* 106b6-7). He claims that *if* the hotness were indestructible, then fire and its hotness would always withdraw at the approach of the cold (*Phaedo* 106b7-c7). However, fires are obviously often extinguished, and while they will never admit the cold, they are not indestructible. Fires are extinguishable and destructible because the hotness in them is itself perishable and destructible.

[42] I think it is correct that Plato distinguishes immanent characters from forms and holds that they are, in general, perishable. But not all immanent characters will be perishable. In particular, it would seem that Plato's point is that the-life-in-Socrates'-soul is an immanent character that is not perishable, and renders Socrates' soul imperishable. Also, if Plato allows that forms can themselves have immanent characters, which I think he does, then those will be other examples of imperishable immanent characters, since forms cannot lose their immanent characters.

[43] Many commentators have relied on the perishability of immanent characters to distinguish them from forms. Robert Turnbull claims that "Socrates' taking for granted the possibility of a character's perishing is quite enough to show that characters and forms cannot be considered as identical in the *Phaedo*" (Turnbull 1958, 131-2). R. S. Bluck argues that "the alternative 'perish or withdraw' could hardly apply to Forms themselves, which cannot move or change, still less perish" (Bluck 1955, 17). Devereux focuses on the perishability of immanent characters to distinguish them from forms (Devereux 2000, 197-9, 201 n. 18, 202). David Keyt argues that "the form in nature is indestructible (ἀνώλεθρον, Tim. 52a2); but many immanent forms are not…" (Keyt 1963, 168). Keyt adds that the "crushing objection" to one who identifies forms with immanent characters is that forms cannot have a "perishable aspect", which they would have according to this identification (Keyt 1963, 169 n. 1). Raphael Demos claims that unlike immanent characters or what he calls "empirical forms", "ideal forms not only do not change, they do not become or perish either: thus they have no temporal being whatever" (Demos 1948, 458). Job van Eck argues that the-F-nesses-in-us and the forms are distinct because, for example, the beauty in Miriam can be destroyed but beauty itself cannot be (Eck 2008, 120 n. 15). Also see McPherran 1988, 536, 543; Kenneth Dorter 1982, 142; and John Brentlinger 1972, 68.

because, as some commentators have argued, the-F-nesses-in-us might be perishable *parts* of forms.[44] According to such a view, the-F-nesses-in-us are not simply identical to forms as a whole, but they are not exactly distinct from forms either. In "Immanence", Fine argues for such a position. The view she defends there is that the-F-nesses-in-us or immanent characters are perishable parts of forms that come into and go out of existence (Fine 2003, 308). Fine claims that "since each form consists in an infinite nondepletable amount of stuff, gaining or losing a part makes no real difference" (Fine 2003, 308). Forms still remain unchanging in the relevant ways that are important to Plato, even when they gain or lose parts. Fine argues that when Plato asserts that forms are unchanging, he only means that "forms cannot change in any way that would jeopardize their remaining the very forms they are…" (Fine 2003, 308). Gaining or losing perishable parts does not jeopardize their remaining the forms that they are, and so Plato allows that forms are changeable in this way. The view of immanent characters as parts of forms is consistent with the claim that immanent characters are perishable and forms are not. So the perishability of immanent characters does not in fact show that they are completely ontologically distinct from forms—for all we have seen, immanent characters might be parts of forms.

There are other commentators who also attribute to Plato the view that immanent characters are parts of forms, but they go on to criticize Plato for holding such a view. David Scarrow argues that "there is no reason for not reading Plato grossly and literally and taking him to mean that things which participate in a Form each have a piece of it as people who participate in a pie each have a piece of it" (Scarrow 1961, 251). Since a form does not perish when its pieces perish, the form "must be conceived of as an inexhaustible reservoir of such pieces" (Scarrow 1961,

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[44] W. J. Verdenius appears to be an example of one who holds such a view, but what he says is unclear. He writes that "in the present passage τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐναντίον is part of αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον" and that there is an immanent "aspect" of the forms (Verdenius 1958, 232-3).

251). Scarrow favors the view that, "in the *Phaedo* Plato conceived of participation in the thing-like manner of one thing possessing a part of another…" (Scarrow 1961, 252). David Bostock also attributes such a view to Plato. Bostock "fears" that Plato is committed to the view that when someone participates in a form, "some *chunk* of the form is lodged within him" (Bostock 1986, 182). He goes on to suggest that the view is "totally absurd" and "easy to make fun of" and that it is "simply a muddle" (Bostock 1986, 182-3). Still he attributes the view to Plato that immanent characters are parts of forms in this "absurd" way.

Could it be correct to claim that Plato sees immanent characters as perishable parts of imperishable forms? And if this is Plato's view of immanent characters, would the view necessarily be as absurd as Bostock suggests? In fact, I think we have good reason to hold that immanent characters are entirely ontologically distinct from forms, and are not identical to forms as a whole or as parts. The reasons for distinguishing immanent characters from forms or form-parts are (a) the immutability of forms and (b) the imperceivability of forms. As I noted above, Fine argues that, for Plato, forms *can* change by gaining and losing parts, and they must only remain unchanging insofar as they remain the very forms that they are. But in fact, I do not think that Plato allows forms to be changing by gaining and losing parts. In the *Phaedo*, Plato emphasizes the immutability of forms. At 78d3-7, Plato argues that forms never admit of any change whatsoever (μή ποτε μεταβολὴν καὶ ἡντινοῦν ἐνδέχεται), that they remain the same according to the same things (ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχει), and that they never in any way at all admit of any change (οὐδέποτε οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς ἀλλοίωσιν οὐδεμίαν ἐνδέχεται). More specifically, in the *Symposium* at 211b2-5, Plato makes it explicit that forms are not changed when their participants come to be or pass away:

All the other beautifuls share in that [namely, the form of beauty] in some way of this sort, that when the others come to be or pass away, that becomes in no way at all greater or smaller nor is it affected in any way.	τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα τρόπον τινὰ τοιοῦτον, οἷον γιγνομένων τε τῶν ἄλλων καὶ ἀπολλυμένων μηδὲν ἐκεῖνο μήτε τι πλέον μήτε ἔλαττον γίγνεσθαι μηδὲ πάσχειν μηδέν.

Since, according to the view of immanent characters as parts of forms, forms would be composed of an *inexhaustible* amount of parts, perhaps it is consistent with the view for forms not to become at all greater or smaller with the gaining or losing of parts. But Plato adds here that forms *are not affected in any way* when their participants come to be or perish. But if immanent characters were parts of forms, it at least seems that forms would be affected in some intrinsic way when their participants came to be or perished, because the forms would gain or lose perishable parts. According to this view, at one moment the form of largeness would have a part located in Simmias, and at another moment, at the death of Simmias for instance, this very part of the form would no longer exist. This would seem to be a real change for the form to undergo at the perishing of its participant, which Plato explicitly rules out in this passage in the *Symposium*. Because Plato is so emphatic in claiming that forms must be completely immutable and cannot be changed in any way at the coming to be or perishing of participants, it seems that he did not see immanent characters as perishable parts of forms.

There is also another reason why it seems we ought not to identify immanent characters as parts of forms for Plato, and this deals with the imperceivability of forms. As I argued in the previous chapter, Plato is emphatic in holding that forms are completely imperceivable. In the *Phaedo* itself, Plato argues that there is *no way* (οὐδαμῶς) in which one can see the forms with one's eyes (*Phaedo* 65d9-10) and that the forms are never grasped by any of the senses (*Phaedo* 65d11-2). He claims that it is possible to grasp forms *only* through reasoning, and he adds that forms are not

visible but are invisible (ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἀιδῆ τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ οὐχ ὁρατά) (*Phaedo* 79a2-4). In

the *Republic*, Plato claims that forms are intelligible but not visible (ὁρᾶσθαι δ' οὔ)

(*Republic* 507d8-10), invisible (τὸ ἀόρατον) (*Republic* 529b5), and only graspable

without all sense perceptions (ἄνευ πασῶν τῶν αἰσθήσεων) (*Republic* 532a5-b2).

Although he often focuses on the sense of sight, it is clear that Plato thinks forms

cannot be perceived at all by any of the senses. But, as some commentators have

noted, it seems that (at least some) immanent characters will be perceivable.[45] In

"Participants and Particularizations in the *Phaedo*", Mark McPherran gives as

examples of immanent characters the "*sensible* equalities in equal things" (McPherran

1984, 31, my emphasis). Later in the paper, he argues that "forms have different

properties from immanent characters", because for instance, the form of beauty is

invisible while the immanent characters of beauty are "apprehensible by the senses"

(McPherran 1984, 34-5). He seems to suggest here that all immanent characters, as

opposed to forms, are perceivable. However, perhaps he just means that in the case of

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[45] Verdenius, who seems to hold that immanent characters are parts of forms, argues that "a direct
apprehension of the Forms is facilitated by their being present in a sense in the visible world"
(Verdenius 1958, 233). He seems to suggest that immanent characters (which he mistakenly, I think,
identifies with form-parts) are present in the visible world and so are perceivable. Bluck refers to
immanent characters, which he calls form-copies, as "phenomenal instances" of forms (Bluck 1956,
34). Bluck also claims that immanent characters are "*copies* of Forms that inhere in sensible objects"
and that a form-copy "appears in this world of sense" (Bluck 1955, 17-8). And Bluck asserts that form-
copies which are "in us" are "sensible qualities that represent [forms]" (Bluck 1955, 118). F. M.
Cornford appears to refer to immanent characters of equality as instances of equality in sensible things
and in our perceptions (Cornford 1957, 75). Owen discusses Aristotle's argument in the *Topics*
113a24-32 that if forms exist in us "they will also be perceptible, since the form in the individual is
recognized by means of sight" (Owen 1986, 226). What Aristotle claims is that contraries would be
true of forms if they were to exist in us—since a form existing in us would be in motion as well as at
rest, and perceivable as well as thinkable. If forms exist in us, Aristotle argues, they will be visible,
because we recognize forms present in things through sight (*Topics* 113a24-32). This suggests that F-
nesses-in-us (as opposed to Platonic forms) *are* themselves moveable and perceivable. Demos refers to
immanent characters as "phenomenal forms found in sense-experience…which are immanent, visible
and concrete", and he suggests that the *perception* of them stimulates recollection (Demos 1948, 456).
He claims that immanent characters, which he refers to as "phenomenal forms", are "concrete and
perceptible" (Demos 1948, 457). All of these commentators appear to suggest that *all* immanent
characters are perceivable, which seems incorrect, as I will argue.

equality and beauty the immanent characters are all perceivable.[46] McPherran is more careful in another paper, "Plato's Particulars", to point out that immanent characters are "possessed by particulars and constitute their *sensible and non-sensible* characteristics…" (McPherran 1988, 536, my emphasis). Here he asserts correctly, I think, that not all immanent characters will be sensible. Daniel Devereux claims that "*many* immanent characters can be perceived by the senses" (Devereux 2000, 202, my emphasis). As Devereux argues, it is possible to see the largeness in Simmias and to feel the heat in the fire (Devereux 2000, 202). The-hotness-in-that-fire appears to be a perfect example of an immanent character that can be felt by the sense of touch. But an immanent character such as the-justice-in-that-law seems to be one that is not perceived by the senses. McPherran and Devereux seem to be correct in the claim that some but not all immanent characters are perceivable. But if even some immanent characters are perceivable, then immanent characters cannot be identical to parts of forms, since then at least some forms would have some perceivable parts. But Plato does not allow forms to have perceivable parts—they must be completely imperceptible.

Because Plato appears to hold that many immanent characters are changeable (insofar as they are perishable and perhaps moveable) and perceivable, we ought not to think that he identified them with forms or form-parts, since forms must be entirely unchanging and imperceivable. Plato's view seems to be that immanent characters are completely ontologically distinct from forms. Many scholars have held that immanent characters are additional entities in Plato's ontology.[47] From what I have argued, I

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[46] Note that even this more reserved claim appears to be false, as it seems that, for instance, the-beauty-in-the-form-of-the-good or the-beauty-in-the-form-of-beauty would be instances of immanent characters that are not perceivable. And there seem to be non-forms which possess beauty that is not perceivable. For instance, the-beauty-in-that-law may be an example of an immanent character of beauty that is not perceivable.

[47] There are numerous scholars who adopt this ontological distinction with little or no argument. For instance, see R. Hackforth 1955, 143-4, 149 n. 4; Vlastos 1981, 83, 83 n. 19, 84, 85 n. 27; Ross 1951,

think they are correct that immanent characters are in fact completely distinct from forms—the-largeness-in-us for example is completely distinct from the form of largeness. But if immanent characters are not identical to forms or form-parts, how ought we to understand them? I have already discussed the perishability and perceivability of at least many immanent characters. Yet another important feature of immanent characters seems to be their "particularity". Plato not only refers to the-F-ness-in-us in general but also refers to the particular largeness-in-Simmias. This makes it seem that an immanent character is the sort of thing that is located in only one place at a time, in the thing of which it is an immanent character. R. S. Bluck refers to a specific immanent character as a "particular manifestation" of a form (Bluck 1955, 18). F. M. Cornford discusses "the particular instance of shortness which is in Simmias…" (Cornford 1957, 79). McPherran argues that an immanent character is "one particularization out of many of the Form participated in, and whose existence depends upon that particular so participating…" (McPherran 1988, 534). Job van Eck asserts that when two objects *x* and *y* are both F and participate in the form of F, "the F-ness *x* has as a result, the F-ness 'in *x*', and the F-ness *y* has are two different items" (Eck 2008, 119). As Devereux argues in "Separation and Immanence in Plato's Theory of Forms":

30-1; Gallop 1975, 195-6; Silverman 2002, 18, 21, 102, 313 n. 10; Mohan Matthen 1982, 90, and Matthen 1984, 281; Fujisawa 1974, 45, 45 n. 42; Dorothea Frede 1978, 28; Nehamas 1973, 475, 477; Rist 1964, 30; and F.C. White 1981, 3, 43, 48, 56, 136-7, 141, 147. Other scholars provide some argument for the distinction: Bluck is more reserved in one paper to claim that the ontological status of immanent characters "is left very uncertain" (Bluck 1957, 123), but elsewhere he confidently asserts that they are distinct entities which he refers to as form-copies and particular manifestations of forms (Bluck 1959, 6, 8; Bluck 1956, 33-4; and Bluck 1955, 17-8, 118). Also see Cornford 1957, 75-80; Dorter 1982, 142; Turnbull 1958, 131-2; Keyt 1963, 168, 169 n. 1; and Brentlinger 1972, 68. And there is more extensive argumentation for the view in the following: Demos 1948, 456-8; Devereux 2000, 197-9, 201 n. 18, 202-3, 205, 216; McPherran 1984, 31-5, and McPherran 1988, 533-6, 543; and Eck 2008, 119, 120 n. 15.

> Socrates' use of the expression 'the largeness in Simmias' suggests that there are distinct immanent characters in different objects; corresponding to the single Form largeness, there will be many immanent characters of largeness—as many as there are participants in the Form of largeness. (Devereux 2000, 202)

And Devereux makes a similar point later when he argues that immanent characters are not a "one in many" because they are in only one thing (Devereux 2000, 214). These commentators appear to be right about the particularity of immanent characters, based on Plato's distinction between different largenesses in this or that large thing. Plato seems to hold that there is a distinct immanent character of the form of F in every F thing.

But even if immanent characters are (for the most part) perishable and perceivable, and have particularity, we still do not have a very clear picture of their exact nature. The most plausible view of immanent characters, given these properties attributed to them by Plato, seems to be that they are what I will call "form-particularizations", which are property-instances or tropes. This is the view preferred by David Gallop, who refers to immanent characters as "individual instances" of a form and as the "property-instances" of a form (Gallop 1975, 195-6). Silverman repeatedly refers to immanent characters as "property-instances" and "tropes" (Silverman 2002, 18, 102, 313 n. 10) And Nehamas' favored interpretation is that the relation between immanent characters and their corresponding form is "the relation obtaining between tokens and type" (Nehamas 1973, 477). He explains that "to participate in a universal, a particular would have to possess a property which was a token of the type possessed by all similarly qualified particulars" (Nehamas 1973, 477). I think there remains a difficult question of what exactly the nature of the relation between a type and its tokens is, and for Plato, what exactly the nature of the relation is supposed to be between form and its corresponding immanent characters. For our present purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that the-F-nesses-in-us are

property-instances that are present in each F particular. All of the-F-nesses-in-us will be related to the form of F in some special way in which they are not related to the form of G, but for now we can leave the specific nature of that relation undetermined.[48] For now, it is enough that we have established that immanent characters have a particularity such that each is located in a distinct particular. For Plato, in every large thing, there is a distinct largeness-particularization.

III. A Requirement on Adequate Interpretations

Now that we have a better understanding of what Plato means by the-F-nesses-in-us, we will be able to gain insight into his views on the self-predication of forms. We can do this by looking at what Plato asserts about immanent characters in the *Phaedo*, and the accompanying apparent statements of the self-predication of forms. In "Self-Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues", Heinaman argues that given evidence drawn from Plato's text, there are four requirements that any adequate interpretation of apparent statements of self-predication must satisfy. Here I will focus on the second of these requirements, which deals with immanent characters, and which Heinaman calls "the B-requirement". He generalizes the requirement in the following way (Heinaman 1989, 61):

> [I]n statements of the form
>   (B) the F-ness in *a* (a sensible object) is F
> the predicate 'is F' must apply to the immanent character in precisely
> the same way that the predicate 'is F' applies to its subject in
> (B3)   F-ness is F.

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[48] In Chapter Five, I discuss the exact relation which I think Plato believes holds between a form and its corresponding form-particularizations. I argue that his preferred interpretation is that there is a resemblance relation between the form of F and the-F-nesses-in-us, and I discuss exactly what this resemblance relation may consist in. It must be admitted, however, that Plato is not very explicit about the exact nature of this relation, especially in the *Phaedo*.

Heinaman's point is that it is a requirement on a suitable interpretation of Plato's apparent statements of self-predication that the interpretation can consistently be applied to similar statements involving immanent characters. If an interpretation of apparent statements of self-predication of forms does not work when applied to the statements involving immanent characters, then that interpretation of apparent statements of self-predication ought not to be attributed to Plato.

But what is the argument for the claim that Plato is indeed committed to the B-requirement, and what exactly does this requirement entail? What does it mean to say that a predicate must apply to an immanent character "in precisely the same way" that it applies to a form? Let us look at the argument for the B-requirement, and perhaps that will shed light on what it means to say that predicates must apply in "the same way" to immanent characters and their corresponding forms.

As we have already seen, at *Phaedo* 102d6-7, Plato suggests that the form of largeness "is not both large and small" (αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος οὐδέποτ' ἐθέλειν ἅμα μέγα καὶ σμικρὸν εἶναι). Immediately after this Plato adds that also the-largeness-in-us "is not small" (καὶ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος οὐδέποτε προσδέχεσθαι τὸ σμικρὸν) (*Phaedo* 102d7-8). Now, Plato believes that both of these claims are true because of his commitment to the following claims (although note that how these claims ought to be interpreted is still an open question):

(B1)   The form of largeness is large and is not small.
(B2)   The-largeness-in-us is large and is not small.

Plato makes (B2) explicit at 102e5-6 (ἐκεῖνο δὲ οὐ τετόλμηκεν μέγα ὂν σμικρὸν εἶναι). In the case of the form of largeness, Plato does not make the positive claim explicit here, although he suggests that the form of largeness "is not small" (*Phaedo* 103b4-5, and see *Phaedo* 74c1-2). But it is certainly not a stretch to see this as implied in the

passage.[49] R. Hackforth claims that the fact that the form of F and the-F-ness-in-us "are both F" is "evident from 102d6-8" (Hackforth 1955, 153), the very passage in which Plato asserts that the form of largeness "is not both large and small" and the-largeness-in-us "is not small". Underlying these claims is the view that both the form and the immanent character "are large and are not small". If Plato holds (B1), that "the form of largeness is large and is not small", and wants his claim to avoid being highly misleading, then as Heinaman puts it, the 'is large' and 'is not small' must both apply in "the same way" to the subject, the form of largeness. Likewise, in (B2), the statement "the-largeness-in-us is large and is not small", the predicates should both apply to the-largeness-in-us in "the same way". For instance, we should not take Plato to be asserting by (B2) that the-largeness-in-us is *identical* to largeness and is not *characterized* by smallness. For now, let us remain silent about exactly what the "way" is that Plato does intend.

Now at *Phaedo* 103b4-5, Plato's claim, as applied to the case of largeness, is:

(B3)   The form of largeness and the-largeness-in-us are not small.

The general claim applied to the case of largeness is presented as follows: "'The large is not small' is true of both the-largeness-in-us and the form of largeness" (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον ἑαυτῷ ἐναντίον οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο, οὔτε τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν οὔτε τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει) (*Phaedo* 103b4-5). A reasonable restriction on what Plato could plausibly intend here seems to be that the predicate 'is not small' is applied to both subjects "in precisely the same way". So 'is not small' is applied to the form of largeness in "the same way" as it is applied to the-largeness-in-us. And from (B1) of the previous step of our argument,

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[49] And Plato does appear to make the positive assertion that the form of equality "is equal" at 74d5-7, and intends what he says here to be generalized to all forms (*Phaedo* 75c7-d4). This is right after he has relied on the claim within the argument at 74b7-c6 that the form of equality "is not unequal". So Plato is committed in this passage to the view that the form of equality "is equal and is not unequal", and more generally that the form of F "is F and is not opposite-F". So in our case here, he holds that the form of largeness "is large and is not small". For more on these points, see Chapter Six on the 74b7-c6 argument.

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'is not small' is applied to the form of largeness in "the same way" as 'is large' is applied to it. Likewise, from (B2), 'is not small' is applied to the-largeness-in-us in precisely "the same way" as 'is large' is applied to it. What follows is that since, from (B3), 'is not small' is applied in "the same way" to both the form and the immanent character, then 'is large' is also applied in "the same way" to both. Plato is committed to the following claim, with the predicate applied in "the same way" to both subjects:

(B4)   The form of largeness and the-largeness-in-us are large.

So Plato is committed to the B-requirement, at least in this passage of the *Phaedo*, that the predicate 'is F' applies in precisely "the same way" to both the form of F and the-F-ness-in-*x*. It seems reasonable to conclude then that, in the claims "the form of F is F" and "the-F-ness-in-x is F", claims to which Plato appears committed in this passage (although the precise correct interpretation of these claims has yet to be established), Plato intends 'is F' to apply in "the same way" to both subjects.

But what exactly does Heinaman mean, or ought he to mean, when he claims that Plato intends the predicate to apply in "the same way" to form and immanent character? Unfortunately, Heinaman is not very clear about exactly what he means by this. He suggests that in a statement such as "The F would never become opposite-F, neither that in us nor that in nature" (*Phaedo* 103b4-5), there is "a certain type of situation" and "the *same* type of state of affairs" that is being said to be impossible for both the-F-ness-in-us and the-F-ness-in-nature (Heinaman 1989, 60). A statement of this form "cannot be ruling out two radically different types of situation for the two subjects" (Heinaman 1989, 60). Heinaman makes his point a bit clearer when he writes that Plato "cannot mean that in one case the opposite does not become identical with its opposite and in the other case it does not become characterized by its opposite" (Heinaman 1989, 60). So when Heinaman refers to a predicate applying in the same way to two subjects, he has in mind that 'is' is not used for a predication in

one instance and for an identity in the other. What Heinaman does not mean, and ought not to mean, is that in a statement like this one and in a statement such as "*x* and *y* are both F", if 'is' is being used predicatively, both *x* and *y* must be F in the same *way*. For instance, there is nothing misleading in the statements "Salmon and trout are fish" and "The Grand Canyon and Mozart's Requiem are beautiful", even though the subjects are characterized by the predicates in different ways. Salmon and trout are not fish in precisely the same way, nor are the Grand Canyon and Mozart's Requiem beautiful in precisely the same way. But there is nothing wrong or misleading with these statements. Although he does not make it entirely clear, all that Heinaman seems to mean is that the 'is' in these statements must be being used in the same way as applied to both subjects. For instance, it would be misleading to assert that "Neither Volvo nor Korean are Japanese", where what is meant is that Volvo is not a Japanese automaker and 'Korean' and 'Japanese' are not identical. In these sorts of statements, there ought to be the same use of 'is' as applied to both subjects.

But I think Heinaman could have gone a bit further here. For these statements to avoid being highly misleading, not only must the use of 'is' be the same, but if 'is' is being used predicatively, the predicate 'F' must have the same *sense* as applied to both subjects.[50] For instance, it would be very misleading to claim that "Wachovia and La Rive Gauche are banks", where what you mean is that Wachovia is a financial institution and La Rive Gauche is a slope of land beside a river. In statements of this kind, not only must 'is' be used in the same way, but the predicate must also have the same *sense*.[51] The same could be said in a case in which 'is' is being used consistently

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[50] Perhaps Heinaman has this in mind when he claims that the predicate should be taken to ascribe "the same property" to the subjects (Heinaman 1989, 65).

[51] It must be admitted that in special metalinguistic contexts, a statement might involve a different sense of the predicate (or use of 'is') as applied to different subjects, without the statement being at all misleading. For instance, one might nonproblematically say: "'Bank' is an ambiguous term having two senses: for instance, Wachovia and La Rive Gauche are both banks." However, we can reasonably suppose that Plato's statements throughout *Phaedo* 102d-103c do not involve an intrasentential shift in

to express an identity. In identities of the form "*x* and *y* are (identical to) F" or "F is (identical to) *x* and *y*", the sense of 'F' must remain consistent in order to avoid confusion. For instance, it would be very misleading to claim that "John and Steven are the brightest students in my class", where what is meant is that John is the student with the lightest colored shirts and Steven is the most intelligent. Similarly, it would be very confusing to claim that "Earth is the third planet from the Sun and dirt", where what you mean is that the third planet from the sun is identical to Planet Earth and 'dirt' is identical to 'earth'. As stated, the sentence seems to mean that our planet is identical to dirt, which we are supposing was not the intention. So in order to avoid being unbelievably confusing, statements like these should involve the same use of 'is' to express either predications or identities (or perhaps some other use of 'is'), and however 'is' is being used, the *sense* of 'F' should remain the same.

So, unless Plato is being very misleading in his language throughout this passage of the *Phaedo* from 102d-103c, we should interpret his claims such that they do not involve this immediate intrasentential shift in the use of 'is' or in the sense of the predicate. Throughout this passage, Plato appears committed to the underlying claim that "the form of F and the-F-ness-in-x are both F". At least in this passage, it seems we should take Plato to intend either a predication or an identity (or perhaps some further use of 'is'), and the same sense of 'F', as applied to both subjects.

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the sense of the predicate or the use of 'is', because there is no indication here of any such metalinguistic context.

IV. Applying the Requirement

With the B-requirement (and the nature of immanent characters) having been established and clarified, we are equipped with a useful tool for evaluating different interpretations of Plato's apparent statements of the self-predication of forms. Commentators have suggested many different ways of understanding Plato's commitment to the view that "any form of F is F". Since Plato seems committed to the B-requirement in our passage of the *Phaedo*, if an interpretation of the view that "any form of F is F" is to be consistent with this passage, it should involve a reading that also works in the case of immanent characters. We are now ready to examine the following views: the Tautologous Identity view (derived from Allen and Cherniss), two different Non-Tautologous Identity views (one derived from Mills and one derived from Nehamas), Vlastos' Pauline Predication view, and Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "conservative reinterpretation". I will treat each in turn and show that we have reason to doubt that these views are correct interpretations of Plato's general commitment in the *Phaedo* to the view that "any form of F is F", on the grounds that they seem inconsistent with the evidence from the *Phaedo*. In all of these cases, since the interpretation appears to be false when applied to immanent characters or form-particularizations, we have reason to hold that it is not a correct interpretation of what Plato intends in the *Phaedo* by his general claims as applied to all forms. This is the case because the B-requirement necessitates that the same interpretation be applicable to forms *and* to form-particularizations.

The first view I will consider is what I call the Tautologous Identity view (TI), which is derived from a more extreme and more implausible view held by Allen and Cherniss. TI is the view that Plato intends his general commitment to the view that "any form of F is F" to be understood as an expression of a tautologous identity. In

other words, what Plato means is just that "any form of F is identical to the form of F".

Allen claims that "F-ness is F" states an identity where 'F' is used as "a synonym of

'the F Itself' and 'F-ness'" (Allen 1965, 46). The statement "F-ness is F" really just

means "F-ness is F-ness". So when Plato suggests that "the form of equality is equal"

and "the form of largeness is large" and suggests that these claims ought to be

generalized to all forms, all Plato means to express is that every form is self-identical,

identical to the form that it is.

Now the particular view of Allen and Cherniss is in fact more extreme than TI.

They hold that not only does Plato intend his general commitment in this way, but

Plato *never* intends any apparent statement of self-predication to be understood as a

genuine predication. According to them, Plato *never* claims that "the form of F is F"

where he means that the form of F is an F thing. For Plato, they argue, no form of F is

an F thing. For instance, Allen argues:

> [T]o say that F-ness is F is to state an identity…. In the first place, 'F-ness is F' is not a predicative statement. Second, we *cannot* mean by it what we mean when we say that a particular is F. (Allen 1965, 46, my emphasis)

Cherniss similarly claims that Plato distinguishes two "meanings" of 'is x', that of

predication and of identity, and Plato "assumes that whatever 'is x' in one sense is not

x in the other" (Cherniss 1965, 370), and that "the idea of x, since it is identical with x,

cannot have x as a character or property…" (Cherniss 1965, 372, my emphasis). So

Allen and Cherniss hold the extreme view that no form of F is an F thing, or what

might be called universal non-SP.[52]

Now the extreme universal non-SP view of Allen and Cherniss is quite

implausible and it is fairly easy to see that it ought not to be attributed to Plato. And

this is the case because Plato is clearly committed to the view that at least for some

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[52] Malcolm notes that Allen and Cherniss do not allow for exceptions. For instance, they do not allow that the form of beauty is itself a beautiful thing (Malcolm 1991, 195 n. 11).

forms, the form of F is an F thing.[53] As Vlastos points out, Plato would find it

"absolutely unacceptable" for the form of unity not to have unity (Vlastos 1981, 337).

And likewise it would be mandatory for all of the following forms to genuinely self-

predicate: rest, being, sameness, difference, immutability, intelligibility, and

incorporeality (Vlastos 1981, 337). In short, there are certain "formal properties" that

Plato tells us all forms have, and so the forms of these formal properties must

necessarily self-predicate. Plato is committed to the view that, in the case of any form

of a formal property, the form of F is indeed an F thing. For instance, since all forms

are beings, the form of being is itself a being. Since Plato thinks that there are

properties common to all forms and that forms exist which corresponding to at least

some of these properties, he must reject the universal non-SP of Allen and Cherniss.

But this does not show that TI is mistaken. TI is a more plausible view in that

it allows for there to be some exceptional cases in which the form of F is an F thing.

What TI says is that Plato's general commitment to the claim that "any form of F is F"

ought to be understood as expressing tautologous identities in the case of all forms. TI

holds that Plato means to express that "any form of F is identical to the form of F",

and that Plato is not committed to a genuine self-predication assumption for *all* forms,

although there may be some exceptional cases of genuine self-predication.

How are we to assess the plausibility of the less extreme TI view? As might be

expected, we can do so by a consideration of the B-requirement and the nature of

immanent characters. According to the B-requirement, for instance, in the statements

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[53] Richard Patterson makes the point that some forms "exemplify themselves simply because everything must exemplify them" (Patterson 1985, 74). He adds that there are some forms such that "it only makes good sense, and is quite harmless, that these Forms should be self-exemplifying" (Patterson 1985, 74). And J. M. E. Moravcsik argues that, concerning propositions like "Existence exists" and "Unchangeability is unchanging", "[u]nlike most statements involving self-predication, these make sense, and Plato was clearly committed to them" (Moravcsik 1963, 52).

"the form of largeness is large"[54] and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large", the predicate 'is large' must apply to the subjects in precisely "the same way". And what this means is that the use of 'is' and the sense of 'large' must remain the same. According to TI, in the statement "the form of largeness is large", the 'is' is being used to express an identity and 'large' means or is a "synonym" for largeness itself or the form of largeness. According to the B-requirement, "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" would have to be read as the claim that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is identical to the form of largeness".[55] But from our examination of immanent characters, it seems that for Plato the-largeness-in-Simmias is a specific form-particularization that cannot be identical to the form of largeness. Immanent characters are form-particularizations that are not identical to forms or even to form-parts. Since it seems that the statements involving the form and the immanent character cannot receive "the same reading", the reading cannot be correct in the case of the form without violating the B-requirement. Since Plato appears committed to the B-requirement in the *Phaedo*, we have good reason not to attribute TI to him there. It seems that Plato's view that "any form of F is F" should not to be interpreted as the claim that "any form of F is identical to the form of F", (although Plato obviously thinks that this claim is true).

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[54] Here I take the statement "the form of largeness is large" as one for which Plato intends 'is large' to be read in "the same way" as he would intend 'is F' to be read in the generalized claim that "any form of F is F". At least at *Phaedo* 102b-ff, Plato does not intend largeness to be a special or exceptional case, and what he relies on there about largeness is generalizable.

[55] One might argue that "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" should both be taken to mean that the referent of the subject term is self-identical—it would then not follow that the form and form-particularization are identical to one another. One way for this to be possible is if the predicate 'large' is being used here just to mean 'self-identical' in general, but this seems highly implausible. Another possibility is that 'large' is being used to mean 'the largeness that it is', such that the claims say respectively that the form of largeness is identical to the largeness that *it* is and the-largeness-in-Simmias is identical to the largeness that *it* is. Each of the subjects would be identical to the largeness that it is, but they would not thereby be identical to one another. But the predicate 'large' would then have different senses in the two statements, and the B-requirement would not be met. If Plato does accept the B-requirement, then it seems he could not intend both statements as identities without thereby identifying the form with its form-particularization.

Another view similar to TI is what I will call the Non-Tautologous Identity view derived from Mills (NTI-M). Like TI, NTI-M is a more plausible view derived from an extreme view proposed by Mills. NTI-M is the view that Plato intends his general commitment to the view that "any form of F is F" to be understood as an expression of a certain type of *non*-tautologous identity. Specifically, NTI-M is the view that what Plato means by the general claim that "any form of F is F" is that "any form of F is the nominatum of 'F'" or "is the thing that 'F' is a name of'". Mills appears to argue for a more extreme view than NTI-M, which holds that *whenever* Plato asserts that some form of F is F, he *must* mean to be expressing that it is the nominatum of 'F'. Mills claims that in the statement "the form of justice is just", 'is just' is required to be "interpreted as equivalent to…'is the nominatum of 'just''" (Mills 1957, 146). And Mills argues that "when Plato says that the Form of Likeness ὅμοιόν ἐστιν, he takes this as meaning that it is actually identical with ὅμοιον (with the πρᾶγμα of which the term 'ὅμοιον' is presumed to be a name)…" (Mills 1958, 42). Mills holds that at least in the middle-period, Plato assumes that "the meaning of ὅμοιον consists *entirely* in its naming something", in such a way that "ὅμοιόν ἐστι *can only mean* 'is the thing that ὅμοιον is a name of'" (Mills 1958, 42, n. 1, my emphasis). And Mills adds that "the 'is' in this phrase is plainly synonymous with 'is identical with'" (Mills 1958, 42, n. 1). Now the view that this is what Plato must always intend is implausible, since as we have discussed, at least sometimes Plato clearly wants to assert that the form of F is an F thing. But NTI-M is a more plausible view derived from this extreme view. Unlike Mills' own interpretation, NTI-M allows for there to be some exceptional cases in which Plato uses the expression "the form of F is F" to assert that "the form of F is an F thing". What NTI-M holds is that Plato's general commitment is to the view that "any form of F is the nominatum of 'F'", and Plato is not committed to a genuine self-predication assumption for all forms.

Again, we find reason to doubt that NTI-M is a correct interpretation of Plato's view in the *Phaedo*, by considering the B-requirement and the nature of immanent characters. According to the B-requirement, an example of the general claim that "any form of F is F" such as "the form of largeness is large", ought to receive "the same reading" as the statement "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large". NTI-M holds that "the form of largeness is large" (as one instance of the general commitment) means that "the form of largeness is identical to the nominatum of 'large' or the thing that 'large' is a name of". As Mills suggests, the 'is' in the statement is the 'is' of identity, as it is "plainly synonymous with 'is identical with'" (Mills 1958, 42, n. 1). And in the original claim, 'large' means "the thing that 'large' is a name of". So by the B-requirement, the statement "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" must be read as the claim that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is identical to the thing that 'large' is a name of".[56] Once again, according to this construal, the form of largeness would be identical to the-largeness-in-Simmias, since they are both said to be identical to the thing named by 'large'. But since forms and form-particularizations are distinct, this interpretation seems incorrect as long as Plato is committed to the B-requirement. So we have good reason to doubt that NTI-M—the view that "any form of F is F" should be read as expressing that "any form of F is the nominatum of 'F'"—is a correct interpretation of Plato's view in the *Phaedo*.

The last identity view I will consider is closely related to NTI-M. This is the Non-Tautologous Identity view derived from Nehamas (NTI-N). NTI-N is the view that Plato is committed to the general claim that "any form of F is F", but he intends this to be understood as the claim that "any form of F is what it is to be F". But in

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[56] Again, if we instead take 'large' in this statement to mean "the thing that 'large-*in-Simmias*' is a name of", and so as referring to the largeness-particularization as opposed to the form of largeness, then the B-requirement is violated. This is the case because 'large' would have different senses in the two statements.

"Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms", Nehamas presents an extreme and more implausible view, that whenever Plato asserts that some form of F is F, he *always* means this to express that the form of F is what it is to be F. And he goes even further: whenever Plato writes that *anything* "is F", he always means by this that it "is what it is to be F". Nehamas suggests that only the form of beautiful is beautiful (Nehamas 1999, 176) and that Plato interprets "*every sentence* of the form 'a is F' as 'a is what it is to be F'" (Nehamas 1999, 179, my emphasis), and that "Plato understands all predication on this model" (Nehamas 1999, 179). Again, Nehamas asserts that "*only* Justice is just" (Nehamas 1999, 180), and that instances participate in the form of beauty but are not beautiful (Nehamas 1999, 183), and that participation is "an alternative to, and not an analysis of, *being* F" (Nehamas 1999, 184). On his view, Plato does not allow that anything other than the form of F is F. It is not true to say, for instance, "Helen is beautiful", because what this statement must mean for Plato is that "Helen is what it is to be beautiful", which is clearly false.

But concerning this more extreme view, Nehamas is certainly incorrect. This is the case because Plato allows that things other than the form of F really can be F. At *Phaedo* 100c, Plato argues that if anything is beautiful besides the beautiful it is beautiful by participation in the form of beauty. Nehamas is correct that this statement alone leaves it as an open question whether or not anything besides the form is beautiful (Nehamas 1999, 176). Nehamas admits that in Plato's view there are many things which participate in the form of beauty, but Nehamas holds that they are not thereby beautiful (Nehamas 1999, 183-4). But what Plato *suggests* here in the *Phaedo* is that things other than the form of beauty are beautiful by way of participation in the form. There will be many cases for Plato in which things other than the form of F are F via participation in the form. But while these things are F, they are not what it is to be F, and so Plato at least sometimes intends another reading of "is F". In addition,

there are many cases for Plato in which the form of F is G, where F ≠ G. For instance, the form of beauty will be at rest, since all forms are, but the form of beauty will not be what it is to be at rest. So again, Plato does not always intend "is what it is to be F" when he asserts that something "is F".

But even though Nehamas' extreme view is incorrect, the more moderate NTI-N survives these points. This is the case because NTI-N allows for there to be exceptional cases—there can be cases in which the form of F or the form of G is an F thing, and cases in which non-forms can be F things. What NTI-N holds is only that Plato's intended general commitment is that "any form of F is what it is to be F", and that Plato is not committed to a genuine self-predication assumption for *all* forms. Before this view can be assessed, we must be clear about exactly what it entails, for there is some disagreement about exactly what "the form of F is what it is to be F" means. In my naming of the view, I have suggested that this would be a kind of non-tautologous identity statement, but this is hardly obvious. What Nehamas says about his own view is that these statements "describe the Forms, but what they describe is the Forms' very nature. They are thus not just ordinary predications, yet they are not pure tautologies either" (Nehamas 1999, 179). So it seems that Nehamas does not understand these claims to be *tautologous* identities. In "On a Proposed Redefinition of 'Self-predication' in Plato", Vlastos argues that although Nehamas does not recognize it, these statements are simple disguised tautologous identities (Vlastos 1981(b), 76, 78). Malcolm agrees that the statements are identities, but he suggests they ought to be read as non-tautologous identities which say that, for instance, the form of beauty is the nature or essence of beauty (Malcolm 1991, 75). In my view, Malcolm is right here. The statement "the form of F is what it is to be F" is not simply

the claim that the form of F is self-identical.[57] It is an identity, but it says more, albeit not much more. What is says is that the form of F is the essence of F-ness, whatever that turns out to be. So NTI-N is another version of a non-tautologous identity view.

But how ought we to determine whether it is plausible to attribute this view to Plato? Once again, because of the B-requirement and the nature of immanent characters, we have good reason for thinking that this is not a correct interpretation of Plato in the *Phaedo*. When we again consider "the form of largeness is large" as an instance of the general claim that "any form of F is F", again we see that 'is large' in this statement must receive "the same reading" as it receives in the claim that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large". The 'is' of identity must remain the same as well as the meaning of 'large' as "what it is to be large". So both the form of largeness and the-largeness-in-Simmias are said to be identical to what it is to be large, or the essence of largeness. Again, what follows is that the form of largeness would be identical to the-largeness-in-Simmias. But since Plato sees forms and immanent characters as distinct, he could not without inconsistency intend this interpretation of his statements in the *Phaedo*. So there is good reason for thinking that NTI-N—the view that "any form of F is F" should be read as the claim that "any form of F is what it is to be F"—is not a correct interpretation of Plato in the *Phaedo*.

The next view I will address is not another version of an identity view. It is the Pauline Predication interpretation that Vlastos defends (VPP). Peterson, whose distinct view I will discuss shortly, introduces the notion of Pauline predication into Plato scholarship. Peterson argues that a sentence of the form "Charity is kind" is true, not because charity itself (whatever it is) is kind, but because instances of charity are kind. What Peterson and Vlastos argue, in slightly different ways, is that Plato's

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[57] Note that if "the form of F is what it is to be F" were just a tautologous identity, then NTI-N would be identical to the TI view that I have already considered. If this were the case, which I do not think it is, then we would have the same reason to doubt NTI-N as with TI above.

apparently self-predicational language ought to be interpreted, at least when generalized to all forms, as Pauline predications. Vlastos' specific view, VPP, is the view that Plato is not committed to a genuine self-predication assumption for all forms, but instead holds that "any form of F is F", with this understood according to Pauline predication as follows: *Any form of F is such that necessarily any instance of the form of F is F* (Vlastos 1981, 407-9). What follows, Vlastos points out, is that "any form of F is F" is analytically true (Vlastos 1981, 408). The instances of the form of F are precisely those things which are F.[58] Vlastos notes that according to his view, in a Pauline predication about a form, "the copula was evidently not meant to assign the predicate to the εἶδος named by the subject-term, but to unnamed instances of that εἶδος…" (Vlastos 1981, 407). According to Vlastos then, "any form of F is F", understood according to Pauline predication, predicates 'F' of the instances of the form of F and it does not predicate 'F' of the form itself. Only the instances of the form of F are said to be F.

Again, let us apply the B-requirement to VPP. Vlastos interprets the statement "the form of largeness is large" as meaning "the form of largeness is such that necessarily any instance of the form of largeness is large". By the B-requirement, the predicate 'is large' must apply in precisely "the same way" in the case of the-largeness-in-Simmias.[59] So the statement "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" must be read as the claim that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is such that necessarily any instance

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[58] Perhaps this could be denied by someone who held that the "instances" of the form of F, the many Fs, are not really F, and that only the form of F is really F. But as I argued briefly above, Plato seems committed to the view that there are often many things other than the form of F that are F. However, as I go on to argue in Chapter Five, there is still *some* reading according to which it is true to say for Plato that only the form of F "is perfectly F".

[59] In the case of a Pauline predication, it is more difficult to distinguish between the use of 'is' and the sense of 'F' and to specify exactly what they are, at least according to Vlastos' interpretation. As we will see, Peterson's view focuses more on unique senses of 'F' or ways of being F. For Vlastos, it would seem, 'F' just remains the same as in ordinary predication, but the use of 'is' changes, such that it predicates 'F' of the instances of the referent of the subject term, rather than of the referent of the subject term.

of the-largeness-in-Simmias is large". But this claim is logically absurd for Plato,

because the-largeness-in-Simmias is not the sort of thing which can have instances. If

anything, one might say that the-largeness-in-Simmias *has* one instance, in Simmias.

But this seems incorrect. The-largeness-in-Simmias does not have an instance in

Simmias. Instead, it *is* that particular thing that is in Simmias. Remember that the-

largeness-in-Simmias is a form-particularization that has particularity and only exists,

in this case, in Simmias. Form-particularizations simply cannot have instances in the

way that something like a universal has instances. Because of how Plato understands

immanent characters, it seems he did not intend "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" to

be understood according to Vlastos' Pauline predication reading. Therefore, because

of his commitment to the B-requirement in the *Phaedo*, it seems he cannot

consistently intend "any form of F is F" to be understood in this way either. We then

have good reason to doubt that VPP is a correct interpretation of Plato's apparently

self-predicational language in the *Phaedo*.[60]

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[60] A tweaked version of VPP might avoid my criticism here. What I have in mind here is something
like the view that "the form of largeness is large" means "the form of largeness is such that necessarily
anything to which the form of largeness is related in the relevant way is large". This interpretation as
applied to the-largeness-in-Simmias yields that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is such that necessarily
anything to which the largeness-in-Simmias is related in the relevant way is large". And this claim
seems true, because the-largeness-in-Simmias is related to Simmias in the relevant way, by being in
him—and he will be large when he has the-largeness-in-Simmias in him. While this tweaked
interpretation is not susceptible to my specific criticism of VPP, as it makes no mention of "instances",
it still seems to fail the B-requirement. But it is difficult to specify exactly how it fails—see the
previous footnote. One way to explain how this view fails is that it seems to involve two different uses
of 'is' in the two statements. In the statement regarding the form, 'is' predicates 'F' of whatever the
referent of the subject term is related to by way of it, the F thing, *participating* in the referent of the
subject term. But in the statement regarding the form-particularization, 'is' predicates 'F' of whatever
the referent of the subject term is related to by way of it, the F thing, *having in it* the referent of the
subject term. The relevant relations in the two cases are different, which seems to involve different uses
of 'is'. But even if this tweaked view does satisfy the B-requirement, there are other difficulties. For
instance, it seems that that which is related to the form of F and to F-ness particularizations in the
relevant ways is sometimes (even necessarily) opposite-F, which appears to count against the view. For
example, since unequals are necessarily equals (to themselves at least), unequals that are related in the
relevant way to the form or the form-particularization will be necessarily equal. So "the form of
inequality is equal" would seem to turn out true on this tweaked view (and perhaps VPP as well).

The final view I will consider here is closely related to VPP, but relies on a slightly different interpretation of Pauline predications. This is Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to what she calls the "conservative reinterpretation" (PPP-C).[61] PPP-C is the view that Plato intends his general commitment to "any form of F is F" to be understood in the following way: Any form of F is F_2, insofar as all of its instances are F_1, and this is a countenanced way of being F_2. This view differs from VPP by not incorporating a necessity operator, and also by taking an apparent statement of self-predication to predicate something of the form and not merely its instances. As Peterson explains, "the predicate…is true of what the subject expression refers to", and that is the form (Peterson 1973, 461). In the statement "the form of F is F_2", the form of F is really F_2 as a result of the fact that all of its instances are F_1. And according to PPP-C, F_1 and F_2 are to be understood as two different senses of 'F'. Any form of F is really F, but it is F in a different sense of 'F' than the many Fs which participate in it and are its instances. For example, having all of its instances being equal makes the form of equality itself equal, but it is equal in a different *sense* than the many equals. But like some of the other views I have considered, PPP-C allows for exceptions. It holds that Plato's general commitment to the claim that "any form of F is F" ought to be given this sort of Pauline predication reading, but Plato may allow for numerous exceptions. Plato holds that "any form of F is F_2", and yet there may be numerous cases in which the form of G happens to be G_1, or G in the same sense as the instances of the form of G.

We can assess this view in a way similar to VPP. By the B-requirement, "the form of largeness is large", taken as an instance of the general claim that "any form of

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[61] In Chapter Four, I consider Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "expansive reinterpretation" and the view which Fine develops from it. I do not consider either view here because both are immune to my argument in this chapter based on the B-requirement and the nature of immanent characters. Later, I will explain why these two views are immune and discuss my specific reasons for rejecting them.

F is F", must receive "the same reading" as the claim that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large". In "the form of largeness is large", the 'is' is the 'is' of predication and the sense of 'large' is $large_2$. Something is $large_2$ when all of its instances are $large_1$. If Plato is committed to the B-requirement here, we must take him to intend the same use of 'is' and sense of 'large' in the two statements. But then his claim in the case of the-largeness-in-Simmias would be that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is $large_2$", and this would mean that all of the instances of the-largeness-in-Simmias are $large_1$. Once again, it would be logically absurd to claim that the instances of the-largeness-in-Simmias are $large_1$, since the-largeness-in-Simmias is a form-particularization that is not the sort of thing which can have instances. Since it seems that we cannot reasonably read the statement in the case of the form-particularization in "the same way" as we did with the form, we should not adopt the reading in the case of the form as an interpretation of Plato's general view in the *Phaedo*, as he is committed to the B-requirement there. We have good reason then to doubt that PPP-C is a correct interpretation of Plato's general commitment in the *Phaedo* to the claim that "any form of F is F".

To sum up, because Plato seems to be committed to the B-requirement in the *Phaedo* and to specific views about the nature of immanent characters, there are numerous interpretations of self-predication that we should be reluctant to attribute to Plato there. From my discussion of the first three views, it is clear that we have good reason to doubt whether any identity interpretation of "any form of F is F" can be correctly attributed to him in the *Phaedo*. This is the case because what seems to follow from considerations of the B-requirement is that forms are identical to immanent characters, which as we saw, seems to conflict with Plato's view. From my discussion of the last two views, we see good reason not to attribute to Plato in the

Phaedo any interpretation that takes "any form of F is F" as referring to instances of or participants in the form. And this is the case because immanent characters seem not to be the sort of things that can have either instances or participants. If I am right about Plato's commitment to the B-requirement and to the particularity of ontologically distinct immanent characters, then we have found evidence for doubting, at least as interpretations of the *Phaedo*, all five of the interpretations discussed in this section, as well as any other views like them in the relevant respects.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLANATORY PREDICATION

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented some evidence against numerous interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. These interpretations of what Plato means in the middle dialogues by his generalized apparent statements of self-predication seem incorrect, I argued, because they appear to be inconsistent with evidence found in the *Phaedo*. In particular, Plato seems committed there to the existence of form-particularizations, which are ontologically distinct from forms. They appear not to be identical to forms or to parts of forms. The evidence from the *Phaedo* also suggests that Plato intends the claims "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" to receive "the same reading". What this means is that we should take Plato to be using the same the use of 'is' and the same sense of the predicate 'large' in both claims. And in this passage of the *Phaedo* at 102d-103b, Plato does not intend to focus on something peculiar about largeness, but his claims can be generalized to all forms and form-particularizations. As I explained in the previous chapter, this evidence can be used to tell against certain interpretations of Plato's self-predicational commitments—namely, any identity interpretation and any interpretation that takes the apparently self-predicational statements to refer to instances of the subject term.

If my arguments in the first two chapters are successful, then we have found some good reason to avoid attributing NSP to Plato, or any identity or instance interpretation of his self-predicational commitments. Is there any remaining hope to find an interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language that will avoid

the difficulties I have raised and that will be consistent with the text? Perhaps there is

simply no nonproblematic interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational

language that will be consistent with the textual evidence. In fact, I think there is hope

to find a successful interpretation, and the goal of this chapter will be to present and

begin defending my own interpretation, which I call the Explanatory Predication view

(EP). I will first explain exactly what my view is, and I will examine some textual

support from the *Hippias Major* for my sort of interpretation. I will then present and

rebut the main argument from a recent paper by Eck, against any sort of explanatory

interpretation such as my own.[62] Next, I will explain how my view seems immune to

the main attack of Chapter Two.[63] EP seems immune to the argument from Chapter

Two because Plato holds that it is not only forms that are explainers—form-

particularizations are explainers as well. I will end this chapter by resolving some

related difficulties concerning form-particularizations, which on my view are essential

to Plato's account of explanation. Commentators have disagreed about whether form-

particularizations can themselves be instances of forms, whether they can themselves

have form-particularizations in them, and whether this would lead to regress worries.

I end the chapter by explaining how my own account of form-particularizations deals

with these difficulties.

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[62] In fact, Eck directs his argument against Fine's BSP view, although Eck seems to misinterpret her
view. Fine's view (which I discuss in detail in Chapter Four) and my own view are alike in taking Plato
to use his apparently self-predicational statements to emphasize the explanatory role of forms, although
we differ on exactly how Plato does this. If Eck's argument were successful, it would undermine Fine's
view as well as my own, (and even, it seems, Eck's own view). But as I will argue in this chapter, the
argument does not work.
[63] There are two other main types of views that also seem to be immune to the attack from Chapter
Two. I consider those in Chapter Four, and explain there why EP ought to be favored over them.

II. Explanatory Predication

What does Plato mean when he claims, for instance, that "the form of equality is equal"? We have looked at many interpretations that have been defended by commentators, and we have seen reason for doubting whether they can be correctly attributed to Plato, at least in the middle period. For example, it seems we should not take "the form of equality is equal" to mean: "the form of equality is an equal thing in the same way as sensible equals", "the form of equality is what it is to be equal", or "the form of equality is such that necessarily any instance of the form of equality is equal". In my view, when Plato suggests, for instance, that "the form of equality is equal" in the argument at *Phaedo* 74b7-c6 and essentially makes this assertion at 74d5-6, he does not mean to say that the form of equality is itself an equal thing. Instead, Plato *only* means to convey that the form of equality is equal-*explaining*, or that it explains things' being equal. And this interpretation can be applied more generally. Whenever Plato claims that "the form of F is F" in a context in which he intends this claim to be generalized to all forms, he *only* means to say that "the form of F is F-explaining", and he does not mean that the form of F is an F thing. Of course, a particular form of F might also be an F thing, but that is a further and completely distinct question.

So the Explanatory Predication view (EP) is just this, that Plato's generalizable apparent statements of self-predication express only that forms are explainers and not that they are, to put it perhaps roughly, instances of themselves. But there is more that can be said about exactly how Plato uses the statement "the form of F is F" to express that the form of F is F-explaining. Plato might be taken here to be introducing a new use of 'is' or perhaps a new sense of the predicate 'F'. But in my view, nothing so peculiar is required or intended. When Plato claims that "the form of F is F" he

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intends to predicate a quality of the subject term—he wants to say of the form of F, that it has a certain quality, namely the quality of explaining things' being F. So, as opposed to the Frede-style view that I examine in the next chapter, Plato is not introducing a new kind of predication. The 'is' in the generalizable apparent statements of self-predication is the 'is' of predication. So I call my view the Explanatory *Predication* view not because I want to attribute to Plato a new *kind* of predication called "explanatory predication". Instead, the point is just that these apparent statements of self-predication are *predications* that emphasize the *explanatory* role of forms.

Perhaps then, by using 'F' in these statements to mean "F-explaining", Plato is introducing a new sense of the predicate 'F'. What this would mean is that for every seemingly unambiguous predicate for which Plato posits a form, there are in fact two senses of the predicate. There are two senses of 'equal', one meaning "sameness of measure" and the other meaning "explaining things' having sameness of measure", two senses of 'large', one meaning "exceeding in measure" and the other meaning "explaining things' exceeding in measure", and so on for all predicates for which forms exist. This view would be a tweaked version of Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the *conservative* reinterpretation, which was considered in the previous chapter. Both views introduce a new sense of the predicate 'F', one which is intended to be applied to the form of F as opposed to the many Fs. But this too is not exactly what my EP is attributing to Plato. When Plato claims that "equality is equal", he does not mean that there is some new property 'equal' that is being attributed to equality. Instead, Plato is merely using the predicate 'equal', in these special contexts in which Plato intends his claims to be generalized, as a shorthand to refer to the property of being equal-explaining.

Let us examine an example of this sort of language, to help make the view clearer. In the context of a discussion about what music to listen to before going to bed, John might express his opinion that "Offenbach's Barcarolle is sleepy". Now one might disagree with John's view of the music, but the issue at hand is not whether the music is itself literally sleepy or drowsy. In fact, the music is simply not the sort of thing that can be a sleepy thing. But John's statement can still be true because what he means is not that the Barcarolle is a sleepy thing but rather that the Barcarolle is sleepy-*making*—it induces sleepiness in its listener. There is not a different sense of 'sleepy' which means "makes one drowsy" instead of simply "drowsy", but rather John is just using the term 'sleepy' in this context to refer to the distinct property of making one sleepy.[64] In this context, John could be said to be *attaching* the sense 'sleepy-making' to the word 'sleepy'. In such contexts, *as* John *uses* the word 'sleepy', such as when he is referring to things like music and films perhaps, the word (in the statement uttered by John) might be said to have the sense 'sleepy-making'. But the word *itself* does not have this meaning—it only has this speaker-meaning as it is being used by a speaker in these sorts of contexts, where its meaning is clear for the most part. Most listeners would understand John's meaning, and not think that he was saying that the Barcarolle was itself a drowsy thing.[65]

Likewise, when Plato claims that "the form of equality is equal", he does not mean to say that the form of equality is *really equal* according to some distinct sense that the predicate 'equal' *itself* has. All that he means, in this generalizable context, is

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[64] It might be argued that the word 'sleepy' actually has this other sense according to which it means "sleepy-making". For the purposes of my example, I assume that this is not the case. And if there is in fact this other sense of the word, it seems likely that it was derived from the use of 'sleepy' in the first place as shorthand to mean "sleepy-making".

[65] Perhaps another example, although not perfectly analogous, is if John says "Sam is grammatical", assuming that grammatical means something like "well-formed according to the rules of grammar" (such that only linguistic items and not things like Sam can literally be grammatical). In such a context, on the view I am outlining here, John is merely using 'grammatical' in his statement to refer to the distinct property of something like *using grammatical language*.

that the form of equality is equal-explaining. Plato is using the word 'equal' as shorthand to mean 'equal-explaining'. EP, then, does not attribute to Plato a new use of 'is' or a new sense of predicates. EP does, however, hold that in certain contexts Plato uses the word 'F' to refer to the property, not of being F, but of being F-explaining. Admittedly, this seems unusual to say the least, and it would be good to find some textual evidence for such a use.

III. An Explanatory Interpretation in the *Hippias Major*

It is certainly easy to find evidence in Plato of the claim that forms are explainers. For instance, at *Phaedo* 100c-101c[66], we are repeatedly told that sharing in forms is what *makes* things have the qualities that they have (at least in cases in which forms exist), and it is *because of* or *on account of* or *by* this sharing in forms that things have these qualities. Plato clearly holds that the form of F is F-explaining or explains the many Fs' being F, by way of the many Fs' sharing in the form. What "sharing in" amounts to exactly is left somewhat undetermined in the text of the *Phaedo*, but I will have more to say about it shortly.

However, just because Plato accepts that, for all forms, the form of F is F-explaining, this alone in no way supports my view that Plato sometimes intends to assert such a claim when he says that "the form of F is F". Plato also accepts, for example, that the form of F is self-identical and that necessarily the instances of the form of F are F things, but I have argued that we should avoid attributing these interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language to him. To support EP, it would help to find evidence showing that Plato uses the statement "the form of

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[66] See Section V of this chapter, in which I examine these specific passages.

F is F" to mean "the form of F is F-explaining", and not just that Plato is committed to the view that the form of F is F-explaining, which is relatively uncontroversial.

Unfortunately, we do *not* find Plato explicitly telling us that he sometimes says "is F" as a shorthand to mean "is F-explaining". And we do *not* find him explicitly saying, for instance, that when he claims that "the form of largeness is large" all he means is that the form of largeness explains things' being large. But I do think that in a passage from 286d-91d in the *Hippias Major*, which was likely written by Plato close to the time of the *Phaedo*[67], there is some evidence of Plato using 'is F' when he intends to convey "is F-explaining". Now to be sure, we will not find Plato explicitly asserting here that *a form* is F when he clearly intends to say that the form is F-explaining. But if Plato sometimes uses the locution 'is F' to mean "is F-explaining", then we have at least some textual support for thinking that this is his intention when he uses his puzzling apparently self-predicational language.

But a word of caution is in order here, about what I take this evidence from the *Hippias Major* to show. While the textual evidence I go on to discuss in this section lends some support to EP, it would also equally support any other explanatory interpretation, such as Fine's BSP, which also takes Plato to be using his apparently self-predicational language to emphasize the explanatory role of forms. The evidence here will suggest that Plato uses 'is F' *somehow* to convey "is F-explaining", but it leaves underspecified exactly how this happens. For instance, Plato might simply be using 'is F' as shorthand only to mean "is F-explaining" (EP) or he might be using 'is F' to mean "really is an F thing in the broad explanatory way of being F" (BSP). I go on to discuss BSP in detail and how it differs from EP in Chapter Four, and there I provide reasons for favoring EP over BSP. But the textual evidence here in the *Hippias Major* lends support to either view, without itself suggesting any reason to

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[67] See Teloh 1981, 4 n. 9; Woodruff 1982, 93-103; and Malcolm 1991, 21.

favor one view over the other. Here we find support for an explanatory interpretation in general, but not necessary EP. Once we see good reasons in the next chapter for rejecting BSP, the main alternative explanatory interpretation, we can more directly take the evidence from the *Hippias Major* as evidence for EP in particular.

Early in the *Hippias Major*, Socrates asks Hippias to teach him about the nature of the fine itself (*HMa.* 286d8-e1). With lines reminiscent of the passage from *Phaedo* 100c-101c, Socrates gets Hippias to agree that *the* F or the F itself is that by which F things are F (*HMa.* 287c1-8). In particular, all fine things are fine by the fine (*HMa.* 287c8-d1). Socrates makes it clear that he is not looking for any old thing that is fine, but rather for *the fine*, that by which all fine things are fine (*HMa.* 287d4-e1). A bit later Socrates again stresses that what he is looking for is "the fine itself by which everything else is ordered and appears fine, whenever that form is added" (αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, ᾧ καὶ τἆλλα πάντα κοσμεῖται καὶ καλὰ φαίνεται, ἐπειδὰν προσγένηται ἐκεῖνο τὸ εἶδος) (*HMa.* 289d2-4). The goal at hand is to find that which makes or explains things' being fine, the form of fineness.

At 289d6-e6, Hippias attempts to respond to Socrates' question by proposing that that which makes things fine, the fine itself, is nothing other than gold. Socrates restates the suggestion that gold is what makes everything fine, wherever it is added (χρυσὸς ἄρ' ἐστὶν ὁ πάντα καλὰ ποιῶν, ὅπου ἂν προσγένηται) (*HMa.* 290b6-7).[68] Socrates goes on to present a quick argument against this suggestion, and it is in this argument

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[68] Note that forms of φαίνεσθαι are used throughout this section of the text, as in 289d2-4 above, when Socrates claims that they are looking for that which makes things *appear* fine. But the claim is made that the fine will not only make things appear ordered but will actually make them ordered (κοσμεῖται). The point is made clearer here at 290b6-7 that whatever the fine turns out to be is not just what makes everything appear fine but that which actually makes things fine. This point that they are not looking for that which merely makes thing appear fine is again clear at 290d5-6, when Hippias states that whatever is appropriate to each thing *makes* each thing fine.

that we find what looks like a use of 'is F' to say that something has the property of being F-explaining or F-making.

Socrates gets Hippias to agree that different materials are more appropriate in different applications, and that if gold ever makes things fine, it only does this when it is appropriate. Hippias agrees that it is whatever is appropriate to each thing that makes that thing fine (*HMa.* 290d5-6). Next, Socrates argues that in the case of a bean soup, a spoon made of figwood is actually more appropriate and makes the soup better (*HMa.* 290d7-291a2). A gold spoon will actually make the soup worse in a number of ways. Figwood is more appropriate than gold in these sorts of circumstances and so in cases like this, it is more fine-making. It seems then that gold cannot be what Socrates is looking for, that which makes thing fine, since in cases like a bean soup it actually makes things foul. And in these cases, it seems that it is figwood that would make things fine.

The instance of *elenctic* reasoning employed here can be written up as follows:

1. The fine itself is gold. (*HMa.* 289e3)
2. The fine itself is what makes everything fine wherever it is added. (*HMa.* 289d2-4)
3. So gold is what makes everything fine wherever it is added. (*HMa.* 290b6-7) [1, 2]
4. What is appropriate to each thing makes it fine. (*HMa.* 290d5-6)
5. Figwood is more appropriate than gold for bean soup. (*HMa.* 290d7-291a4)
6. Figwood more than gold makes the soup fine—in fact, gold makes it foul. (*HMa.* 290d7-291a4) [4, 5]
7. But contradiction 3&6 – So reject 1: The fine itself is not gold.

Socrates uses this argument to show that Hippias' candidate, gold, cannot be the fine itself. At step 6, Socrates has reached the conclusion that, in the case of the bean soup, figwood is more fine-making than gold. What follows is that *gold is in no way more fine-making than figwood* in the case of the bean soup, and gold in fact ruins the soup in a number of ways.

But what is most interesting for our purposes is how Socrates sums up the argument by saying that what results from the claim that the fine is gold is that *gold is in no way finer than figwood*. He explains that if he is asked what the fine itself is, i.e. what it is that makes things fine, and he responds that it is gold, it will be shown to him that gold is in no way *finer* than figwood (οὐδὲν ὡς ἔοικέ μοι ἀναφανήσεται κάλλιον ὂν χρυσὸς ἢ ξύλον σύκινον) (*HMa.* 291c6-8). Socrates seems to be assuming that since gold is in no way more fine-making than figwood, gold is in no way finer than figwood. Socrates has repeatedly stressed that he is looking for that which makes all things fine. The relevant point in the argument is that gold cannot be that by which all things are fine, because there are many cases in which figwood rather than gold would seem to be that by which things are made fine. What we would expect here is for Socrates to say only that, if he tries to claim that the fine itself is gold, he will be made to see that gold is in no way more fine-making than figwood. But in the text we find this further and seemingly distinct point that gold is in no way finer.

Socrates seems to be relying on the general assumption that, *if x is in no way more F-making than y, then x is in no way more F than y*. This seems related to a principle often attributed to Plato, mistakenly I think, called the Causal Principle.[69] The principle is as follows:

Causal Principle (CP): If x makes things F, x is itself F.

The idea is that something cannot possibly cause things to be F or explain things' being F unless it is itself F. And the principle seems quite implausible. For instance, it is absurd to claim that something that causes other things to be dead must itself be dead. Perhaps one might argue that for a restricted set of predicates or for certain types of causation, the principle stands a chance. But for our purposes here, I will not examine in any detail whether the principle is false or whether Plato may be

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[69] For instance, see Teloh 1981, 4, 42-6, 69, 156-8; and Malcolm 1991, 11-6, 21-4, 152-6, 170-5.

committed to it elsewhere. Our question is whether Plato is relying on a version of CP in the argument we have been investigating in the *Hippias Major* at 286d-291d, and if not, what it is that he is relying on here.

Malcolm argues that CP is repeatedly stressed throughout our passage (Malcolm 1991, 21). In fact, Plato appears to be relying on a similar but distinct principle. What we find here is closer to the *inverse* of CP with the added complexity of a comparative:

> Inverse of CP + comparative (ICP+): If x is in no way more F-making than y, x is in no way more F than y.

What we have in the text itself is the assumption that if x is not more F-making than y, then x is not more F than y. Notice that ICP+ is crucially distinct from CP. The point in ICP+ is that if something is not more F-making, then it cannot possibly be more F. CP says that if something causes things to be F, it had better be F. What we have here is roughly that if something does not cause things to be F, it had better not be F. What this entails is that if something is F, it had better cause things to be F, which is certainly distinct from CP. Again, CP says that causes of things' being F must themselves be F. But this principle entails roughly that things that are F must be causes of things' being F.

What follows exactly is the contrapositive of ICP+, that if something is more F, then it is more F-making:

> Contrapositive of ICP+ (CON-ICP+): If x is more F than y, x is more F-making than y.

Now, on the face of it, this seems like a blatantly absurd premise, and one that Plato clearly rejects. Plato holds that many things can be more or less F without themselves being more or less F-making, or F-making at all. There are many sensible beautifuls that are more or less beautiful, which are made beautiful by sharing in the form of beauty, but which do not themselves make things beautiful. As Socrates has

repeatedly affirmed in our passage of the *Hippias Major*, it is the F itself by which

things are made F, and as is clear in *Phaedo* 100c-101c, it is *only* by way of sharing in

the F itself that things are made F. The many Fs fall short of the form of F (at least

partly) because of the fact that while the form of F explains things' being F, the many

Fs do not. Plato is clearly committed to the view that there are many things that are

more or less F that do not make things F—therefore, he seems to reject CON-ICP+

outright.

But then how can we explain the fact that the text we have been examining in

the *Hippias Major* appears to rely on CON-ICP+. At *Hippias Major* 291c7-8,

Socrates expresses the conclusion of the argument as the claim that gold is in no way

finer than figwood. But what we expect Socrates to claim is only that gold is in no

way more fine-making than figwood. Socrates seems to be using 'is fine' in such a

way that entails being fine-making. The text appears to rely on CON-ICP+, and yet

this principle is blatantly false for Plato if 'is F' means "is an F thing" or "has the

property of being F", unless these claims somehow receive an explanatory reading.

What this passage suggests is that Plato has some special use of 'is F' according to

which what he intends to convey is that something is F-making.[70] If Plato uses 'is

fine' or 'is finer' in the *Hippias Major* when he means "is fine-explaining" or "is more

fine-explaining", then this at least lends *some* plausibility to the claim that Plato

intends this in other places as well. So we find here some evidence to support an

explanatory interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language, such as

EP, which takes Plato to be asserting "the form of F is F" when he intends to

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[70] Again, while the evidence here supports an explanatory interpretation, it does not clearly favor mine
over other versions. For instance, the evidence here is supportive of BSP as well. CON-ICP+ turns out
to be true if it is interpreted along the lines of BSP: if x is more F than y in the broad explanatory way, x
is more F-making than y. This passage in the *Hippias Major* only suggests that Plato uses 'is F' in
some way to convey "is F-making", but exactly how he does this is left undetermined in the text.
Again, in the next chapter, I examine BSP in detail and present my reasons for favoring EP over it.

emphasize that the form of F is F-explaining. Perhaps when Plato suggests that "equality is equal" or "largeness is large" in the *Phaedo*, his intention is to convey that equality makes things equal and largeness makes things large. At least, it seems more plausible that this could be Plato's intention, given that he uses predication to this end in the *Hippias Major*.

IV. Against an Explanatory Interpretation

In the *Hippias Major*, we find evidence suggesting that some explanatory interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language might be correct. However, in a recent article called "Self-predication and Being the *Aitia* of Things", Eck argues against any explanatory or causal or "aetiological" reading of Plato's self-predicational commitments. Eck presents an argument, relying on a passage at *Phaedo* 101c2-4, which he claims reduces an explanatory analysis of apparent statements of self-predication "to an absurdity" (Eck 2008, 115). In fact, we will see that Eck's argument is entirely unsuccessful. We will also see that if Eck's argument were satisfactory, it would not only undermine an explanatory interpretation but also, as Eck fails to recognize, his own preferred interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. However, the argument is problematic and, in the end, is silent as regards self-predication.

Eck's main textual evidence for his argument (that we will soon examine in detail) comes from *Phaedo* 101c2-4, which is within the passage of the *Phaedo* in which Plato repeatedly stresses that participation in the form of F is that which explains things' being F. But at 101c2-4, Plato says "You'd shout loudly that you know of no other way in which each thing comes to be except by participating in the

peculiar being of each thing in which it participates" (μετασχὸν τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας ἑκάστου

οὗ ἂν μετάσχῃ) (Eck's trans. adapted from Gallop 1975, Eck 2008, 110 n. 3, 112). This

quote makes it sound as if, most precisely, something does not participate in a form

but rather participates in the being or οὐσία *of* the form. Eck claims that Plato is

specifying here "what it is that something participates in when it participates in some

form F-ness", but Eck warns that Plato is not specifying some additional thing besides

the form itself (Eck 2008, 112). Eck continues: Plato is here specifying that when

something participates in a form, it participates in the specific being of the form, or the

being that the form involves, namely being F (Eck 2008, 112). But the specific being

of a form, Eck claims, is identical to the form itself, which seems to follow from a

passage at *Phaedo* 65d12-e1 in which forms are identified as themselves beings or

οὐσίαι (Eck 2008, 112).

Now, I think there is certainly a question as to whether Eck correctly interprets

this textual evidence from the *Phaedo*. For instance, it seems as if 101c2-4 could be

taken simply to say that something participates in the form which is itself an οὐσία,

rather than literally the οὐσία that the form has. However, for our purposes here, let us

assume that Eck is correct that Plato is specifying that when something participates in

a form, it more precisely participates in the particular being or ἰδία οὐσία of the form.

Even if we admit this reading of the textual evidence to Eck, his argument will be

unsuccessful.

Eck uses this textual evidence to argue directly against Fine's view of Plato's

commitment to self-predication. He takes Fine's view (mistakenly I think[71]) to be the

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[71] I examine Fine's BSP in detail in the next chapter. In short, Eck takes Fine's view to be that when
Plato says "the form of F is F" he *only* means that "the form of F is the ultimate explanation of things'
being F". Although Fine (rarely) says things that might be taken to suggest this view, she repeatedly
explains that she takes Plato to be saying that the form of F is really F, but that it is F in a "broad"
way—namely by explaining things' being F, which Plato countenances as a way of being an F thing.
So according to Fine's actual view in contradistinction to Eck's construal of it, "the form of F is F" says

claim that when Plato says "the form of F is F" he only means that "the form of F is the ultimate explanation of why anything is F". But the argument, if successful, would work against any explanatory account and not only this particular one that he attributes to Fine. Eck argues as follows (Eck 2008, 115):

> *Phaedo* 101c2-4, cited above, reduces the analysis of statements of self-predication as in Definition 1 (F-ness is F means: F-ness is the ultimate explanation of why anything is F) to an absurdity. We learn from the passage that participating in F-ness is participating in the peculiar being of F-ness (cf. μετασχὸν τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας ἑκάστου οὗ ἂν μετάσχῃ, c3-4). Now, this peculiar being of F-ness, its specific being, is the being F-ness involves (a being 'according to its own nature', in the words of *Sophist* 250c), which is being F. So, to participate in F-ness is to participate in the peculiar being of F-ness, in being F. But now, if this being F of F-ness means being the ultimate explanation of why anything is F as the above analysis would have it, then participation in F-ness would be participation in being the ultimate explanation of why anything is F, and this makes a sensible thing itself the explanation why anything is F!

In short, the argument seems to be roughly that, when something participates in the form of F, it participates in the form's being F. An explanatory interpretation would take it that the form's being F means the form's explaining things' being F, or the form's being the ultimate explanation of things' being F. But since this is what participants participate in, the participants would themselves explain things' being F or would themselves be the ultimate explanation of things' being F. This is impossible for Plato, so these interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language, of the form of F's "being F", cannot be correct.

Before we can see where Eck's argument goes wrong, it may help to look at a more precise formalization of it:

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that the form of F is an F thing, and it emphasizes that the form explains things' being F but not necessarily that it is *the ultimate explanation* of things' being F.

1. If a sensible x participates in the form of F, x participates in the peculiar being of the form of F. (*Phaedo* 101c2-4)
2. If x participates in the peculiar being of the form of F, x participates in the being the form of F involves. (Eck 2008, 112, 115)
3. If x participates in the being the form of F involves, x participates in *being F*, or the being F of the form of F. (Eck 2008, 112, 115)
4. Now suppose this "being F" of the form of F means "being the ultimate explanation of why anything is F" [for *reductio*]
5. Then if x participates in the form of F, x would participate in being the ultimate explanation of why anything is F. [1, 2, 3, 4]
6. So if x participates in the form of F, x would be the ultimate explanation of why anything is F. [5]
7. But sensible participants in the form of F cannot be the ultimate explanation of why anything is F.
8. Contradiction [6, 7] – so reject 4: The "being F" of the form of F cannot be "being the ultimate explanation of why anything is F".

Notice that although this argument is specifically intended against the view that "the form of F is F" means "the form of F is the ultimate explanation of why anything is F", if successful, it would also work against my EP view (or any other explanatory account). Step 4 could be rewritten as the claim that the "being F" of the form means "being F-explaining" or "explaining things' being F". Then what would seem to follow is that participants in the form of F would themselves be F-explaining or would themselves explain things' being F. And since Plato clearly rejects the claim that all participants in the form of F themselves explain things' being F, then the explanatory interpretation of EP would have to be rejected, according to the argument.

So where does the argument go wrong, or does it pose a serious problem for EP or any other explanatory interpretation? Before we get to this, it is interesting to notice, as Eck fails to, that if this argument were successful against an explanatory interpretation, it would also undermine Eck's own preferred reading of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. Eck defends a Frede-style interpretation according to which, when Plato says that "the form of F is F" what he intends is an "inside predication" (and not an identity or an attribution/ascription) which asserts that "the form of F is F in virtue of its own nature" (Eck 2008, 111-4). Briefly (and

puzzlingly), what this means is that the form of F's being is being F or that the very being the form of F is is being F (Eck 2008, 114).[72] It seems the view reads "the form of F is F" as saying roughly that "being F" is part of the definition of the form of F. But if Step 4 of the argument is rewritten as the assumption that the "being F" of the form of F means "being F in virtue of its own nature", as Eck would have it, then it would follow that participants in the form of F are themselves F in virtue of their own nature. Then sensible participants would themselves be being F or "being F" would be part of their definition. But this is certainly not true for Plato in the case of all participants in the form of F. So this would have to be rejected as an interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. Eck's own argument, if successful, would reduce his own view to an "absurdity", and not merely all aetiological accounts.

So how can we rescue EP and, as it turns out, Eck's own view, from Eck's argument? It is a bit difficult to pinpoint exactly where the argument goes wrong, because of the fact that Eck's use of the term 'being F' is somewhat mysterious. Depending on what Eck means by this term, the fault in the argument will be found in premise 3 or premise 4. To clarify the ambiguity, let us examine an example. How are we to understand what Eck would mean by "the being equal of the form of equal"? There are two relevant interpretations here. On one reading, 'being equal' is identical to the form of equality—perhaps on this reading 'being equal' could be taken as shorthand for 'the property of *being equal*'. (This reading seems to be suggested on 114, when Eck says that "the being largeness is, is being large.") In this sense, it seems relatively uncontroversial to claim that the form of equality is identical to the property of being equal (as long as it is admitted that forms are properties). Alternatively, the 'being equal' of the form of equality might be the form of equal's

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[72] I examine this Frede-style view (that *appears* not to be susceptible to my attack from Chapter Two) in more detail in Chapter Four.

"being equal", or whatever is meant by 'is equal' in Plato's claim that "the form of equality is equal". Eck may be assuming that these two readings somehow amount to the same thing, but he should not do this in an argument intended to show that explanatory interpretations of the claim that "the form of F is F" are absurd, unless he wants to beg the question in his argument.

How are we to decide between these two readings of 'being equal', and what effect will this have on the argument? Suppose first that the 'being equal' of the form of equality just means the property of being equal. Premise 3 of the argument would then be nonproblematic, because it merely states that when something participates in the form of equality and so the οὐσία or being of the form of equality, it participates in the property of being equal. In premise 4, we find the claim that the 'being equal' of the form of equality means "being the ultimate explanation of why anything is equal". What this amounts to on this reading is that the property of being equal is identical to *the property of* being the ultimate explanation of why anything is equal. It would then follow that if something participates in the form of equality, it participates in the property of being the ultimate explanation of why anything is equal, and then it would be the ultimate explanation. And this is an absurd result.

The trouble with the argument, on this reading, is that an explanatory interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language would never be committed to premise 4. The explanatory interpretation would not be committed to the claim that the property of being equal is the property of being the ultimate explanation of why anything is equal. The form of equality, which is identical to the property of being equal, is not identical to the property of being the ultimate explanation of why anything is equal. An explanatory interpretation holds that Plato intends to emphasize the explanatory role of forms when he claims that "the form of F is F". Such an interpretation is obviously not, however, committed to the claim that

the form of F, or the property of being F, is identical to the property of explaining things' being F. For example, equality is the property of being equal—it is the property of having sameness of measure. Now, while this property may *have* the property of explaining things' being equal, this is not the property that it is.[73] So on this interpretation of Eck's use of the 'being F' of the form of F, the argument attributes and reduces to absurdity an assumption to which explanatory interpretations are not committed.

Since it seems so inappropriate to attribute premise 4 to the explanatory theorist on this reading, perhaps we had better understand Eck to intend the second possibility sketched above. On this reading, by the "being equal" of the form of equality, Eck means the form's own being equal—on *whatever* reading it is true of the form that it "is equal". Premise 4 now states that in such a claim as "the form of equality is equal", what 'is equal' means is "is the ultimate explanation of why anything is equal". And this is exactly what the explanatory view Eck is arguing against is committed to. But even if we take premises 1 and 2 as correct interpretations of the textual evidence from the *Phaedo*, premise 3 simply does not follow and would (correctly) be denied by the explanatory theorist. Let us accept that when something participates in the form of equality, it participates in the οὐσία or being of the form (premise 1). Premise 2 appears to be roughly a restatement of this first claim. But now premise 3 says that if something participates in the οὐσία of the form, it participates in the "being equal" of the form, or on this interpretation, in "being equal" according to whatever reading of 'is equal' is intended in the claim that "the form of equality is equal".

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[73] On BSP, which I examine in the next chapter, one way of being equal *is* to explain things' being equal. Still, even if the form of equality is the property of being equal, it will not be simply *identical* to the property of explaining things' being equal. Explaining things' being equal is only one way of being equal, on this view.

But it is entirely unclear why one who accepts an explanatory reading of Plato's apparently self-predicational language would accept such a claim. For, the question of how to interpret Plato's apparently self-predicational language is distinct from the question of how to understand what the οὐσία of a form is. The οὐσία of a form seems to be the sort of thing that Socrates is looking for when he asks his "what is F?" question—it is the essence of the form as opposed to an accidental feature of it. For instance, in the *Euthyphro*, Socrates is looking for the essence of piety (ἐρωτώμενος τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν, τὴν μὲν οὐσίαν μοι αὐτοῦ οὐ βούλεσθαι δηλῶσαι), as opposed to some accident (πάθος δέ τι) (*Euthyphro* 11a7-9). And as Socrates sets out to find the οὐσία of piety, he already recognizes that it is that by which all pious things are pious (ἐκεῖνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσιά ἐστιν) (*Euthyphro* 6d10-1). Now it seems incorrect to claim that the explanatory role of a form is an accidental feature of it—far from it—but at least the οὐσία of it is something distinct from this explanatory role, or at the very least, something more.

In the case of the form of equality, it would seem that the οὐσία or being of the form would be *sameness of measure* (*Parmenides* 140b7-8). Premises 1 and 2 in Eck's argument seem to follow from the textual evidence of the *Phaedo* that he cites: if something participates in the form of equality, then it participates in the οὐσία of the form of equality—it participates in sameness of measure. If something participates in the οὐσία of the form of equality, it will be equal and will have sameness of measure. But now premise 3 holds that if something participates in the οὐσία of the form of equality, or the οὐσία "that the form involves", then it will participate in "being equal" according to the reading of 'is equal' on which the form of equality "is equal". This simply does not follow from the textual evidence, nor would the explanatory theorist have any reason to accept it. What Plato means when he asserts that "the form of F is F" is simply a distinct question from what Plato thinks the οὐσία of a form is. The

explanatory theorist is under no obligation to say that when x participates in the form of F, it will be true to say that x "is F" on whatever exact reading it is true to say that the form "is F".

So to sum up, if in Eck's argument we take the 'being F' of the form of F to be a way of referring to the property of being F (or perhaps the form of being F), then no explanatory theorist will be committed to premise 4 or one analogous to it. If, on the other hand, the 'being F' of the form of F is a way of referring to the form's being F or the 'is F' according to which the form of F "is F", then no explanatory theorist will be committed to premise 3. Participating in the form of F (or the οὐσία of the form of F) simply does not *entail* participating in "being F", where this means "being F" on whatever exact reading it is true (in general) that the form of F "is F". Eck's argument against an explanatory interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language such as EP, which he takes to be decisive, is entirely unsatisfactory. Luckily for Eck, his argument also fails to undermine his own view on self-predication. But in Chapter Four, we will return to the consideration of Frede-style views such as Eck's, and we will see why they ought to be rejected in favor of EP.

V. Explanatory Predication of Form-Particularizations

So far in this chapter, I have provided an account of my EP view, and I have presented some textual evidence to help support the view. In the last section, I argued against a recent attempt to undermine explanatory accounts of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. I have only suggested, and not argued for, the claim that, unlike the number of views considered in Chapter Two, EP is not susceptible to the main argument there. In short, the main argument of that chapter was that, based on

evidence from the *Phaedo*, Plato is committed to the existence of form-particularizations that are distinct from their corresponding forms. Further, Plato intends the same use of 'is' and the sense of the predicate 'F' in the generalizable claim that "the form of F is F" and the corresponding claim concerning form-particularizations, that "the-F-ness-in-x is F". For instance, the use of 'is' and the sense of the predicate 'large' is the same in the claims that "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large". This evidence tells against numerous interpretations—namely, any interpretation that sees "the form of F is F" either as an identity statement or as referring to instances of or participants in the subject term.

But a difficulty seems to arise for EP itself. According to EP, "the form of largeness is large" should be read as meaning only that the form of largeness is large-explaining, or that it explains things' being large. But can we apply this reading to form-particularizations? To do so, 'is' must be taken as the 'is' of predication and the predicate must also be taken to refer to the property of being large-explaining. But could it possibly be true that the-largeness-in-Simmias is large-explaining? Does the largeness-particularization, in addition to the form, explain things' being large?

If form-particularizations are ontologically distinct from forms, as I have argued, then it *seems* as if they cannot possibly be explainers along with forms. It seems as if Plato has repeatedly told us in the *Phaedo* that only forms can be explainers. It is only the form of F that makes things F or explains things' being F, isn't it? In fact, if we look closely at the evidence from the *Phaedo*, we will see that he is not committed to this claim exactly. When Plato is being most precise (in passages that we will examine shortly), what he says is not that the form of F is the only explanation of things' being F, but rather that *participation* or *sharing* in the form

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of F is the one explanation of things' being F.[74] Now Plato does repeatedly make it sound as if the explanation of things' having the properties that they have, in cases in which a form exists, is simply the form itself. For instance, Plato states in two instances in the *Phaedo* that all beautiful things come to be beautiful *by the beautiful* (τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ [γίγνεται] καλά) (*Phaedo* 100d7-8) (τῷ καλῷ τὰ καλὰ [γίγνεται] καλά) (*Phaedo* 100e2-3). Right after these points, he claims that the same holds in the case of the forms of largeness and smallness. He claims at 101a2-5:

Everything that is larger than something else is larger by no other thing than by largeness, and it is larger on account of this, namely on account of largeness; and whatever is smaller is smaller by no other thing than by smallness, and it is smaller on account of this, namely on account of smallness.	τὸ μεῖζον πᾶν ἕτερον ἑτέρου οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ μεῖζόν ἐστιν ἢ μεγέθει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μεῖζον, διὰ τὸ μέγεθος, τὸ δὲ ἔλαττον οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἔλαττον ἢ σμικρότητι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἔλαττον, διὰ τὴν σμικρότητα.

It seems that the explanation of things' being beautiful, large (or larger), and small (or smaller) are simply the forms of beauty, largeness, and smallness respectively. And Plato makes it clear in this passage that these claims ought to be generalized to all forms (*Phaedo* 100c4-6, 101c2-4). Together, these claims make it seem that the form of F, and the form of F only, explains things' being F. How then can the ontologically distinct form-particularizations possibly explain things' being F as well? Are we forced to say that EP is susceptible to the main argument from Chapter Two along with the other views considered there? For it seems that "the same reading" that EP affirms, for example, in the claim that "the form of largeness is large" cannot be applied in the claim "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large". While the form of largeness is large-explaining, it seems the-largeness-in-Simmias cannot possibly be, since that role seems reserved for the form alone.

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[74] This is according to the safe αἰτία of the *Phaedo*, which in my view Plato maintains at least throughout this dialogue.

However, both immediately before and immediately after these claims in which Plato suggests that the form of F is *the explanation* of things' being F, he spells out more fully what the explanation really amounts to. At 100c4-6, Plato states:

If any other thing is beautiful except the beautiful itself, it is not beautiful on account of another single thing than because it *shares* in that beautiful—and indeed I speak in the same way concerning all things.	εἴ τί ἐστιν ἄλλο καλὸν πλὴν αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, οὐδὲ δι' ἓν ἄλλο καλὸν εἶναι ἢ διότι μετέχει ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ· καὶ πάντα δὴ οὕτως λέγω.

The explanation of things' being beautiful is not simply the form of beauty but rather, more precisely, sharing in the form of beauty, whatever that amounts to exactly. Right after this the point is reaffirmed, when Plato claims that no other thing makes anything whatsoever (ὁτιοῦν—100d1) beautiful than the presence of or association with that beautiful, or however or whatever the way of attaching is[75] (οὐκ ἄλλο τι ποιεῖ αὐτὸ καλὸν ἢ ἡ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ εἴτε παρουσία εἴτε κοινωνία εἴτε ὅπῃ δὴ καὶ ὅπως προσγενομένη) (*Phaedo* 100d4-6). And again at 101c2-7, Plato makes it clear that it is not simply the form of F that is the explanation of things' being F, but rather the sharing or participation (μετάσχεσις) in the form:

And you would shout loudly that you do not know another way in which each thing can come to be than by sharing in the particular being of each thing in which it shares, and in the case of these things, you do not have another explanation of becoming two other than the sharing in twoness, and it is necessary for things which are going to be two to share in this, and whatever is going to be one to share in oneness.	καὶ μέγα ἂν βοῴης ὅτι οὐκ οἶσθα ἄλλως πως ἕκαστον γιγνόμενον ἢ μετασχὸν τῆς ἰδίας οὐσίας ἑκάστου οὗ ἂν μετάσχῃ, καὶ ἐν τούτοις οὐκ ἔχεις ἄλλην τινὰ αἰτίαν τοῦ δύο γενέσθαι ἀλλ' ἢ τὴν τῆς δυάδος μετάσχεσιν, καὶ δεῖν τούτου ετασχεῖν τὰ μέλλοντα δύο ἔσεσθαι, καὶ μονάδος ὃ ἂν μέλλη ἓν ἔσεσθαι....

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[75] I use the translation here of "attaching" for προσγενομένη, but this could be, and probably is, intended as metaphorical for whatever relation holds between form and participant. There is certainly disagreement here about how to take ὅπῃ δὴ καὶ ὅπως προσγενομένη. See Dancy, who notes some unattractive textual emendations and suggests both "however and in whatever way it becomes added to [them]" and the vaguer "however and in whatever way it comes-to-be-related-to [them]" (Dancy 1991, 15, 129 n. 61).

So although Plato sometimes speaks as if the form itself is the cause or explanation of something's being the way it is, in fact his view is that (not the form itself, but) sharing or participation in the form is the cause or explanation.

But what does this participation amount to, between something which is F and the form of F? Plato seems explicitly noncommittal on the exact nature of this relation. In one of the passages I have just quoted from the *Phaedo*, Plato claims that what makes something beautiful is the presence of or association with the form of beauty, or *however or whatever the way of attaching is* (*Phaedo* 100d4-6)—by which he seems to mean whatever the relation turns out to be, perhaps upon further investigation into its nature. Plato continues by expressing his reservations, when he has Socrates say that he is not confidently affirming anything further about this relation (οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τοῦτο διισχυρίζομαι) (*Phaedo* 100d6-7). So perhaps in the *Phaedo*, Plato's view is that the explanation of something's being F is participation in the form of F, but what that participation amounts to is left entirely unspecified.

In fact, Plato does tell us a bit more about the nature of participation in the *Phaedo*. Just after Plato introduces the notion of participation and claims that participation in forms is the explanation of things' being the way they are (in cases in which forms exist), he introduces talk of form-particularizations. And this is, I think, no accident. At 102b1-2, Plato reaffirms the point about participation (although admittedly adding a point about naming) when he claims that "each of the forms exist and other things receive the name of these very things by sharing in them" (εἶναί τι ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν καὶ τούτων τἆλλα μεταλαμβάνοντα αὐτῶν τούτων τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχειν). And Plato continues in the next sentence at 102b3-7 to first introduce talk of form-particularizations:

And I said, if indeed you say these things are so, when you say that Simmias is larger than Socrates and smaller than Phaedo, do you mean then that there are both in Simmias, namely both largeness and smallness? I do.	Εἰ δή, ἦ δ' ὅς, ταῦτα οὕτως λέγεις, ἆρ' οὐχ, ὅταν Σιμμίαν Σωκράτους φῇς μείζω εἶναι, Φαίδωνος δὲ ἐλάττω, λέγεις τότ' εἶναι ἐν τῷ Σιμμίᾳ ἀμφότερα, καὶ μέγεθος καὶ σμικρότητα; Ἔγωγε.

Here Plato affirms that when Simmias is larger and smaller, there is both largeness and smallness in Simmias. Very shortly after this, Plato goes on to refer more explicitly to form-particularizations and distinguish them from forms, when he discusses the largeness and smallness *in us* as opposed to those *in nature*, and then generalizes what he says to all opposites (*Phaedo* 102d5-103c1).[76] So, what is true of x when it is large—what is the explanation of x's being large—is participation in the form of largeness. And when x is large (or larger), there is a largeness-in-x. So when something is F (in a case in which a form exists), not only is it true to say that it participates in the form of F, but it is also true that there is an F-ness-particularization in it.

But can we draw any conclusion here about the *nature* of participation? I do not mean to suggest that the whole story of what participation in forms amounts to is merely the possession of form-particularizations. However, Plato is suggesting that x's having an F-ness-particularization in it is at least part of the nature of x's participation in the form of F. Something's having a form-particularization in it is at least one important part of the explanation of its being the way that it is.

Now we are in a position to see how EP can be immune to the main attack against interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language from Chapter Two. As I have argued, the explanation of something's being F is not simply the form of F—this is not the whole story. Rather, the explanation is participation in the form

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[76] See Chapter Two for an argument for the claim that form-particularizations as distinct from forms are being referred to in this passage.

of F. And what this amounts to is at least partly the possession of an F-ness-particularization. While the form of F is not simply the explanation of things' being F, the form of F is F-explaining because it plays a central role in that explanation. The form of F explains things' being F because it is by way of participation in the form that things are F. However, the-F-ness-particularization-in-x is also F-explaining because it too plays a crucial role in that explanation. What it means for something to participate in the form of F is at least partly for that thing to have an F-ness-particularization in it. So, for instance, not only the form of largeness but also the-largeness-in-Simmias explains Simmias' being large, because it is (partly) by way of having a largeness-particularization in him that Simmias is large.[77] So "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" can receive "the same reading", the one that EP proposes is Plato's intention, because both the form and the form-particularization are large-explaining. They both explain Simmias' being large, because they both play important roles in the explanation of his being large.[78]

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[77] See Devereux on the explanatory role of form-particularizations, or as he refers to them, immanent characters:

> For Plato, immanent characters have a definite explanatory role. If the explanation of Socrates' being white must include reference to something *in* him, and the Form whiteness is not in him, there must be some other entity, the immanent character of whiteness, to do the job. (Devereux 2000, 216)

[78] Note that EP satisfies the B-requirement even though the form of F and the F-ness-particularization are F-explaining in different *ways*. As I argued in Chapter Two, Section III, the B-requirement requires that "the form of F is F" and "the-F-ness-in-x is F" involve the same use of 'is' and the same *sense* of the predicate 'F', but *not* that the predicate is true of the subjects in the same *way*. As examples, I noted that there is nothing at all misleading with the claims: "Salmon and trout are fish" and "The Grand Canyon and Mozart's Requiem are beautiful", even though the predicates are true of the subjects in different ways. Note that according to EP, the predicate 'F' is not (in general) literally true of the form of F or of the-F-ness-in-x, but the B-requirement is still satisfied because *one and the same sense of the property that the word 'F' is being used to refer to* is true of both subjects. According to EP, the statement involving the form and the one involving the form-particularization both involve the 'is' of predication, and they say that the referent of the subject term has the property of being F-explaining. Now, as I have just argued in this chapter, the form and the form-particularization are F-explaining in different *ways* because they have different roles to play in the explanation of things' being F. But since the predicate 'F' is being used in both statements to refer to the same thing, the property of being F-explaining, EP satisfies the B-requirement.

However, one might object to my line of argument that, as I have pointed out, Plato seems to clue his reader in to the fact that he is unsure about the exact nature of the participation relation—or at least that he will not express a firm position about it here in the *Phaedo*. At 100d, Plato is explicit that he is not confidently affirming what the nature of participation is, but I have been claiming that he goes on to spell out that participation involves the possession of form-particularizations. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Dancy argues against the view that Plato posits distinct form-particularizations. Dancy claims further that Plato merely uses the term 'participation' as a placeholder for whatever the relation between the form of F and the many Fs turns out to be—Plato is explicitly silent about what the relation amounts to (Dancy 1991, 15). Dancy argues that because of Socrates' "fence sitting" with regard to the nature of participation, we should be suspicious of a view attributing form-particularizations to Plato here, because:

> [Plato] had said that, to keep things safe, he would have nothing to say about how the relationship between Forms and mundane objects worked, but, under this interpretation, he certainly does have something to say, and it is far from safe. (Dancy 2004, 309)

Dancy argues that, with regard to the nature of participation, Plato is "emphatic that he is committed to nothing whatever" (Dancy 1991, 15). But in my view, Plato is committed in the *Phaedo* to the claim that participation (at least partly) involves the possession of form-particularizations.

I certainly agree with Dancy that there is evidence that Plato is reluctant in the *Phaedo* to spell out the exact nature of the participation relation. However, my account of what Plato thinks participation involves in the *Phaedo* is consistent with his reluctance, because even on my account Plato has not yet fully specified the nature of participation. In my view, Plato holds that the explanation of x's being F is participation in the form of F, and that this participation involves x's having a

corresponding form-particularization in it. But Plato has remained silent about the relation between form and its corresponding form-particularization. Plato has told us nothing about how exactly, for instance, the-largeness-in-Simmias is related to the form of largeness, beyond the fact that they are distinct and that the-largeness-in-Simmias as opposed to the form is *in* Simmias. But an F-ness-particularization is an *F-ness*-particularization rather than a G-ness-particularization because it is related in some special way to the form of F—and Plato has left the nature of this relation entirely unspecified in the *Phaedo*. So Plato's reservation concerning the exact nature of participation is consistent with my view that he does propose the mere involvement of form-particularizations. Plato does suggest uncertainty concerning the nature of participation—and this uncertainty is explained by the fact that Plato has not at all spelled out the way in which forms are related to their corresponding form-particularizations.[79]

VI. Form-Particularizations of Form-Particularizations

Let us agree that Plato thinks in the *Phaedo* that the explanation of x's being F is participation in the form of F, and that this participation in the form involves x's having an F-ness-particularization (that is distinct from the form) in it. A difficulty arises here for this interpretation. For one wonders whether it is possible for an F-ness-particularization to itself be an F thing and itself a participant in the form of F. If so, would the F-ness-particularization be F by its having an F-ness-particularization in itself? And if *this* further F-ness-particularization is F too, would it then have an F-

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[79] Plato's preferred view of the relation between form and its corresponding form-particularizations seems to be one of resemblance or similarity, although this is not made clear in the *Phaedo*. I return to a discussion of the exact nature of this relation in Chapter Five.

ness-particularization in it, and so on *ad infinitum*? Would this interpretation then commit us to there being at least some instances of form-particularizations with infinite numbers of form-particularizations in them? Isn't this a devastating result? Both Mohan Matthen and McPherran, who attribute to Plato form-particularizations and a role for them in participation, respond to this puzzle differently. I will examine both of their responses to these questions, which I argue are extreme and unsatisfactory. Then I will argue for my own account according to which Plato accepts that there can be form-particularizations of form-particularizations. Although this view may commit Plato to some infinite regresses of form-particularizations, the regresses, I will argue, are not vicious.

In two papers, "Plato's Treatment of Relational Statements in the *Phaedo*" and "Forms and Participants in Plato's *Phaedo*", Matthen argues for the view that all form-particularizations are participants in their corresponding forms. Matthen puzzles over the question of whether form-particularizations, which he takes Plato to posit as a third sort of thing along with forms and particulars (Matthen 1982, 90, 96; Matthen 1984, 281), "in addition to the bearers of properties, are participants in the forms" (Matthen 1984, 281). He claims that it follows from Plato's ontology that "Simmias participates in tallness" *implies* that "Some characteristic present in Simmias participates in tallness" (Matthen 1982, 94, 96). Matthen's view is that the characteristic present in Simmias when he participates in tallness, the form-particularization or immanent character in Simmias, will itself be a participant in tallness along with Simmias. And he thinks that this generalizes to all form-particularizations.

But why should we think that all form-particularizations are participants in their corresponding forms? Matthen seems to hold this view on the basis of some confusion about the distinction between 'being an F thing' and 'being an F-ness'. Matthen suggests that it is the central claim of Plato's theory of forms that "bearers

have their properties *because* they participate in a form—for example, that [Praxiteles'] Aphrodite is beautiful because it participates in beauty" (Matthen 1984, 281). But Matthen continues: "An analogous claim would be that the relevant character in the Aphrodite (that is, the beauty in the Aphrodite) is *a* beauty because *it* participates in beauty" (Matthen 1984, 281). What it means to say that the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite is "a beauty" is that it is a property-instance of the form of beauty—it is a beauty-particularization. But contrary to what Matthen suggests, the claim that the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite is *a beauty*, is *not* a claim analogous to the first, now in the case of a form-particularization. The relevant analogous claim would be that the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite is *beautiful* because it participates in beauty. On Plato's view, it is not being *an F-ness* which is explained by participation in the form of F, but rather being F or being an F thing. But Matthen seems to miss the important distinction here between 'being F' and 'being an F-ness'. Again, Matthen reveals his confusion when he claims that "equality is *an* equal, that is, it is an equality" (Matthen 1984, 294). What it would seem to mean for equality to be "an equal" would be for it to be an equal thing, and this is certainly distinct from the claim that it is an equality.

So Matthen is correct in his claim that all F-ness-particularizations "are F-nesses" in the sense that they are each the-F-ness-in-something. But Matthen seems wrong to think, if he does, that all F-ness-particularizations are F things. And they would all be participants in the form of F only if they were all F things. Being an F-ness alone does not entail *participating* in the form of F.[80] Matthen is certainly wrong in thinking that all F-ness-particularizations must be participants in the form of F *on the grounds* that they are all F-nesses.

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[80] I do think, however, that being an F-ness-particularization does have something to do with being related to the form of F in some special way, just not by participation. Again, I return to a discussion of this relation in Chapter Five.

But while Matthen may suggest that all form-particularizations are participants in their corresponding forms on the basis of some confusion, the question still remains whether form-particularizations *can* be participants in (their corresponding or other) forms. McPherran accepts Matthen's general account of Plato's ontology and theory of forms, but offers a "small correction" (McPherran 1984, 30). McPherran argues that on the correct interpretation of participation and the role of form-particularizations or immanent characters, similar to the one I have argued for in Section V of this chapter, "only particulars—and *not* immanent characters—need to be said to participate in forms…" (McPherran 1984, 32). Although form-particularizations do not *need* to be said to participate in forms, this seems to leave open the possibility that some of them, in fact, do. But in other places, McPherran clearly stresses that he thinks it is impossible for form-particularizations to participate in forms. He claims that form-particularizations are "nonparticipating" (McPherran 1984, 31) and that "no one, including Matthen, *ought* to think that Plato's immanent characters participate in forms…" (McPherran 1984, 33). Again, he asserts bluntly that "immanent characters do not participate in forms" (McPherran 1984, 36). So while Matthen mistakenly holds that *all* form-particularizations are participants in their corresponding forms (merely because they are F-nesses), McPherran seems to hold an opposing extreme view—*no* form-particularizations are participants in their corresponding forms (or perhaps any forms at all).

McPherran provides two main reasons for attributing such a view to Plato, one textual and the other philosophical. First, he claims that "there is no textual demand" for attributing to Plato the view that form-particularizations are participants in forms (McPherran 1984, 36). Now McPherran is correct that Plato never explicitly states that form-particularizations participate in forms—he does not say, for instance, that the-largeness-in-Simmias participates in the form of largeness, or any such analogous

claim. But there does seem to be some textual evidence for claiming that (at least

some) form-particularizations are participants. Plato is emphatic in the *Phaedo* in

suggesting that if *anything whatsoever*[81] is F (perhaps with the only exception being

the form of F), it is F because it participates in the form of F. So if it is true to say that

there are cases in which form-particularizations are F, in cases in which a form of F

exists, then it seems Plato's view is that they will be F as well by participation in the

form of F.[82] Shortly, I will return to the point that there are obviously numerous cases

of 'F' in which it will be true to say that form-particularizations are F. Also, even if

McPherran is right that there is no explicit textual demand for claiming that some

form-particularizations are participants, the textual silence would certainly leave this

as a live possibility.

But McPherran thinks we should attribute to Plato the view that it is

impossible for form-particularizations to be participants, mainly because he thinks that

disastrous philosophical consequences would follow if they were participants. In

"Plato's Particulars", McPherran hesitantly suggests what would follow if form-

particularizations or immanent characters were participants in forms and thereby had

form-particularizations in themselves: "[I]mmanent characters do not possess other

immanent characters (and should not, it would seem, on pain of a possible infinite

regress of possessors of possessors)" (McPherran 1988, 545). In an earlier paper,

"Participants and Particularizations in the *Phaedo*", McPherran puts the point more

fully and confidently:

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[81] For instance, see the τί at 100c4, the ὁτιοῦν at 100d1, the πᾶν at 101a2, and the ἕκαστον at 101c3.
[82] Of course, it could be argued that Plato intends to restrict the claims he makes throughout this
passage to all particulars, and does not intend for these claims to apply in addition to form-
particularizations. I only want to stress that Plato is emphatic in suggesting that these claims apply to
all Fs, and if I *and McPherran* are correct that Plato already has form-particularizations in mind here as
he introduces participation, it seems likely that what he says here is meant to apply to form-
particularizations as well as particulars.

> [I]f immanent characters participate in forms, then immanent characters possess immanent characters, which in turn would themselves be participants in forms. The result is then an infinite regress of the possession of immanent characters by immanent characters possessing immanent characters *ad infinitum*. Plato, however, would seem to have been a good enough philosopher to have been able to spot *this* obvious a 'third man'. If so, then participation within the context of a tripartite ontology should be understood to be limited to particular subjects (the possessors of immanent characters), and forbidden to immanent characters. (McPherran 1984, 38)

So McPherran argues that the-F-ness-in-x cannot participate in the form of F, nor can the-F-ness-in-x be F. (For if the-F-ness-in-x were F, it would be F by way of participation in the form of F). He makes his commitment to this further point, that the the-F-ness-in-x cannot be F, clear when he asserts that "immanent characters do not have their characteristics predicated of them; rather, their characteristics are what they *are* (identical to)" (McPherran 1984, 38-9). In the particular case of Praxiteles' Aphrodite, the argument would go as follows: Suppose that the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite were itself a beautiful thing, and so, in addition to the Aphrodite, also participated in the form of beauty. What this would mean is that there would be, in the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite, another beauty-particularization—there would be the-beauty-in-the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite. But this beauty-particularization of the first beauty-particularization would itself be a beautiful thing.[83] And so there would be a further beauty-particularization in it, and so on, *ad infinitum*. To avoid this obvious "third man" regress, McPherran argues, we should attribute to Plato the view that F-ness-particularizations simply cannot be F nor can they participate in the form of F.

While I think that McPherran is correct in criticizing Matthen's view that *all* form-particularizations must participate in their corresponding forms, McPherran is wrong to go for the opposite extreme view that no form-particularizations can

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[83] This does not necessarily follow—perhaps the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite is beautiful but the-beauty-in-the-beauty-in-the-Aphrodite is not beautiful. However, this seems highly unlikely and *ad hoc*. If the first beauty-particularization counts as a beautiful thing, why wouldn't the second?

participate, and that this leads to a disastrous third man-type regress. Consider again what McPherran claims when he says that "immanent characters do not have their characteristics predicated of them; rather, their characteristics are what they *are* (identical to)" (McPherran 1984, 38-9). McPherran's claim here is not correct in all cases. Form-particularizations are "characteristics", and so there is some sense in which it is true to claim that they "are identical to their characteristics", but they also have some characteristics, and sometimes they have "their own characteristics". McPherran might be right to claim that the-largeness-in-Simmias is identical to a largeness (i.e., a largeness-particularization), but the-largeness-in-Simmias is not itself large and so does not participate in the form of largeness. But there are other cases in which it seems that Plato is committed to the view that F-ness-particularizations are F, and so in these cases, contrary to what McPherran suggests, immanent characters *do* have their characteristics predicated of them. Beauty is perhaps such a case. Plato might think that beauty-particularizations are in fact beautiful things, participate in the form of beauty, and thereby have beauty-particularizations within themselves. And consider what might be a less controversial example, sameness or self-identity. Socrates is the same as himself (i.e., is self-identical) because he participates in sameness. What follows is that there is a sameness-particularization in Socrates. But it certainly seems correct to claim that the-sameness-in-Socrates, that particular sameness-particularization, is itself the same as itself. If so, then the-sameness-in-Socrates participates in the form of sameness and has a sameness-particularization in *itself*. It seems unavoidable that at least in some cases, form-particularizations will participate in forms and have form-particularizations in themselves.

But while McPherran is wrong to claim that form-particularizations cannot participate and cannot possess form-particularizations, he does seem right to suggest that an infinite regress follows from such a view. For clearly, the-sameness-in-the-

sameness-in-Socrates will itself be self-identical, and this will require a further

sameness-particularization, and so on *ad infinitum*. This is undeniable. However, I

want to suggest that, contrary to what McPherran asserts, this is not a vicious regress

or a "third man". The (first) Third Man Argument (TMA) of the *Parmenides* is

vicious (in part) because it is explanatory.[84] According to the regress of the TMA, the

question of what explains something's being F is never fully answered. Something is

F because it participates in a never-ending sequence of ontologically distinct forms of

F. If something is F, it is F by way of participating in the form of F at level 1, the

form of F at level 2, the form of F at level 3, and so on *ad infinitum*.[85] A complete

account of what makes something F would have to mention an infinite number of

things. So at least one reason why the regress of the TMA is so disastrous for the

theory of forms is that a complete explanation of things' being the way they are

requires reference to an infinite string of forms, as opposed to a unique form in each

case.

On the other hand, the regress of form-particularizations of form-

particularizations is different. The question of what makes x F has a complete answer

involving a finite number of entities[86]: x is F because x participates in the form of F,

which involves x's having in it an F-ness-particularization (which is related in a

special way to the form of F). That is the end of the story. Whether the F-ness-

particularization is itself F is a further and entirely unrelated question. The F-ness-in-

x's being F has nothing to do with x's being F. For instance, Socrates is the same as

himself because he participates in the form of sameness and so has a sameness-

particularization in him. That is the complete account of what explains Socrates'

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[84] I examine this argument in detail in Chapter Seven.
[85] Again, see Chapter Seven for a defense of this claim.
[86] That is, assuming that the theory of forms of the middle dialogues is not otherwise susceptible to the regresses of the TMA, which is a position I argue for in Chapter Seven.

being self-identical.[87] Now the question of whether the-sameness-in-Socrates is identical to *itself*, is entirely irrelevant to the question of what makes Socrates self-identical. It turns out of course that the-sameness-in-Socrates is self-identical, but that is a further unrelated point that has its own complete explanation.[88]

But let us not be too hasty here. We should not ignore what might be thought to be an undesirable result of this interpretation of Plato's ontology and his understanding of participation. One might think that this interpretation attributes to Plato an inelegant and messy ontology. It certainly does not seem like much of a desert landscape. Not only do numerous intelligible forms exist in addition to particulars, but there will also be infinite strings of form-particularizations within form-particularizations all over the place. But we should not forget what sort of things form-particularizations are supposed to be—even if they can have form-particularizations in them, they are not particulars like Socrates or Praxiteles' Aphrodite. So it may not be a disastrous feature of the view that it posits lots and lots of form-particularizations. It does in fact seem true to claim that Socrates' self-identity is self-identical, and so on and so forth, and it seems other theories may find it difficult to explain this fact. Whether or not the view I am attributing to Plato is a true account of reality, in my view, at least it should not be quickly cast aside. The explanatory elegance of the view far outweighs any inelegance it might have on the basis of its lack of parsimony—at least, it offers a fairly straightforward account of what it means for anything to have and gain and lose properties.

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[87] Admittedly, it is relevant to know what makes the-sameness-in-Socrates a *sameness*-particularization. This will have to do with there being a special relation between the-sameness-in-Socrates and the form of sameness. Again, I argue in Chapter Five that there is evidence in Plato to suggest that his preferred view is that the relation is a resemblance relation. I also spell out there what exactly this resemblance between form and form-particularization amounts to.

[88] Also note that the TMA is problematic for Plato because, if there are infinitely many forms of F, his uniqueness assumption is violated. (See Chapter Seven for more on this point.) But there being infinitely many form-particularizations within form-particularizations does not present any analogous difficulty for Plato—he does not seem to be committed to any relevant uniqueness assumption in the case of form-particularizations.

CHAPTER FOUR
OTHER REMAINING VIEWS

I. Introduction

We have been looking for an interpretation of Plato's puzzling apparently self-predicational language that will be consistent with the textual evidence and, to borrow a phrase from Penner, will be one that Plato "could have had in mind". So far, we have seen textual and philosophical reasons to avoid attributing NSP to Plato. We also saw evidence from the *Phaedo* concerning form-particularizations that was especially helpful to our project: Plato seems committed to the view that, for instance, "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large", with these claims receiving "the same reading". What this means is, at least, that the use of 'is' and the sense of the predicate 'large' should be understood to be the same in the two claims. This argument led us to doubt numerous influential interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. In particular, we saw that the following views seemed susceptible to our argument: the Tautologous Identity view (derived from Allen and Cherniss), two different Non-Tautologous Identity views (one derived from Mills and one derived from Nehamas), Vlastos' Pauline Predication view, and Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "conservative reinterpretation". All of these views seemed not to satisfy the B-requirement because, according to them, "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" could not receive "the same reading".

In the last chapter, I introduced the Explanatory Predication (EP) view, presented textual evidence from the *Hippias Major* for any explanatory view such as this one, and explained how EP seems immune to the argument based on the *Phaedo*

evidence concerning form-particularizations. According to EP, the use of 'is' and the sense of the predicate 'F' (or perhaps more precisely, the sense of the property that the predicate 'F' is being used to refer to) can successfully be kept the same in the statements "the form of F is F" and "the-F-ness-in-x is F"—both statements say that the referent of the subject term has the property of being F-explaining. This is a happy result for Plato, I argued, because both forms and form-particularizations have important explanatory roles to play in what makes something the way it is (in cases in which forms exist). It looks as if we may have found a successful interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language, at least in so far as it does not commit Plato to anything grossly implausible, and it seems consistent with the textual evidence (that we have looked at so far).[89]

But we cannot be too hasty here. EP seems immune to the main argument from Chapter Two concerning the form-particularization evidence from the *Phaedo*, while numerous influential views do not seem to fare as well. However, there are some other influential views that appear unsusceptible to this main argument and consistent with the textual evidence from the *Phaedo* relied on in this argument. These views fall into two main groups, the first attributing a genuine self-predication assumption to Plato and the second not. Views in the first group hold that Plato expands the extension of predicates (at least in cases in which forms exist) in such a way that, although the form of F and sensible Fs are F in the same *sense* of 'F', the form of F is F in a different *way*. Both Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "expansive reinterpretation" and Fine's Broad Self-Predication view (developed from Peterson) fall into this group. Views in the second group hold that Plato uses a

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[89] In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I examine further textual evidence from the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*, and *Parmenides*, thought by many commentators to commit Plato to a *genuine* self-predication assumption (SP)—and so not EP—in the middle dialogues. I argue that these passages can and should be read consistently with EP and do not provide adequate evidence for SP.

new *kind of predication* when he uses apparently self-predicational language in contexts in which he intends to generalize his claims. Frede and Meinwald are the main proponents of this sort of interpretation.[90] They claim that Plato distinguishes a different kind of predication called *kath' hauto*, *pros heauto*, or tree predication, and according to this special kind of predication, it will be true in all cases to say that "the form of F is F".

In this chapter, I will examine the views falling into these two groups, views which at least seem immune to the argument from Chapter Two. I will argue that although the Peterson/Fine views succeed when faced with the main argument from Chapter Two, they ought not to be attributed to Plato, because there is evidence to suggest that Plato did not expand the extension of predicates as these views require. Concerning the Frede/Meinwald view[91], I will first argue that it does seem *not* to be immune to the main argument from Chapter Two. Further, I will show that even if we take this view to be immune to that argument, there is good reason not to attribute it to Plato—this view is inconsistent with Plato's generalized claim that "the form of F is not opposite-F".

By the end of this chapter, we will have shown that there is good reason to doubt all of the main interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language that have been offered by commentators.[92] On the other hand, there is some textual

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[90] Silverman and Eck are other proponents of views of this sort, but I focus on Frede and Meinwald here, and Frede's later presentation of his view. For his earlier thoughts, see Frede 1967, 12-36.

[91] I discuss the different presentations of the views of Frede and Meinwald, but treat their views as one and the same for our purposes. There are some subtle distinctions however. For instance, Frede takes it that participation only explains something's "being F" according to the "ordinary" use of 'is', while Meinwald thinks that participation explains something's "being F" according to both the "ordinary" and "special" uses of 'is' (Meinwald 1992, 381). In this regard, I think Frede's interpretation is more plausible—participation is meant to explain the display of features.

[92] In this chapter, I do not discuss in detail Penner's own interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language, in large part because it seems unclear and underdeveloped. For instance, Fine notes that he does not provide an adequate explanation of his position nor does he sufficiently distinguish it from other views (Fine 1991, 131 n. 7). It is difficult to understand and evaluate Penner's position in the absence of an elaboration of his view. It does seem as if his view might be another interpretation that would be immune to the main argument from Chapter Two. Penner suggests that,

evidence to support EP and EP does not seem susceptible to the objections faced by the others. Unless EP is shown to face its own serious difficulties or is inconsistent with the textual evidence, we have good reason to accept it as a correct account of what Plato's intention is when he suggests that for all forms, "the form of F is F".

II. The Expansive Interpretations – Peterson and Fine

In Chapter Two, I presented Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "conservative reinterpretation", or PPP-C, and I explained how this view seems inconsistent with evidence drawn from the *Phaedo* concerning form-particularizations. Once again, PPP-C is the view that Plato intends his general commitment to "any form of F is F" to be understood in the following way: Any form of F is F_2, insofar as all of its instances are F_1, and this is a countenanced way of being F_2. According to PPP-C, F_1 and F_2 are to be understood as two different senses of 'F'. Any form of F is really F, but it is F in a different sense of 'F' than the many Fs which participate in it and are its instances. For example, having all of its instances being equal makes the form of equality itself equal, but it is equal in a different *sense* than the many equals. The many equals are equal$_1$ by having sameness of measure because of their participation in the form of equality, while the form of equality is equal$_2$ by having its participants

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although in general the form of F is not literally an F thing, it is still true to say that for all forms, "the form of F is F", because there is "something the same seen or otherwise apprehended in both [the form of F and F particulars]" (Penner 1987, 298). Penner's view seems to be that there is "something" present in the form of F that is sufficient to make particulars literally F when it is present in them, but does not make the form literally F. Perhaps this view would be immune to the argument from Chapter Two, because an F-ness-particularization might also "be F" (with or without being literally F), by having this same "something" present in it. But what sort of thing is this "something" supposed to be exactly? And why would this "something" make large things large but not the form of largeness? On my view, large things are large not because they possess something that is also possessed by the form of largeness, but rather because they possess something that is a resembler of the form, namely a form-particularization (see Chapter Three, Sections V-VI, and Chapter Five).

being equal$_1$. The key point here is that according to PPP-C, equal$_1$ and equal$_2$ are two different *senses* of 'equal'.

This view seemed susceptible to the argument from Chapter Two, because, for instance, Plato could not consistently intend the same sense of 'large' in the statements "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large". According to PPP-C, 'large' in "the form of largeness is large" is large$_2$, the sense of 'large' according to which it means "having one's instances being large$_1$" or perhaps "having one's instances exceeding in measure". As we saw, the-largeness-in-Simmias is not the sort of thing that could be large in the same sense of 'large', namely large$_2$, because it is not the sort of thing that can have participants or instances. But the textual evidence from the *Phaedo* suggests that in both of these statements, the sense of the predicate should be the same.

In contrast to PPP-C, Peterson also presents a Pauline Predication view according to what she calls the "expansive reinterpretation" (PPP-E). On this view, as on PPP-C, any form of F is F$_2$, insofar as all of its instances are F$_1$. But now F$_1$ and F$_2$ are *not* taken to be different senses of 'F'. Instead, these are different *ways* of being F according to the same sense of 'F'. Peterson explains that on this view "'just' is more widely applicable than one might have thought before reflection on 'Justice is just': that is, it is held that 'just' has the same extension as 'just$_1$ or just$_2$'…" (Peterson 1973, 462). So on PPP-E, Plato is taken to have expanded the extension of predicates in such a way that having one's instances being F is countenanced as another *way* of being F, according to the same sense of 'F'. For instance, the form of largeness is itself really a large thing, in the same sense of 'large' as the many sensible larges. But while the sensible larges are large by way of exceeding in measure, the form of largeness is large in a different way, namely by having its instances exceeding in

measure. And having one's instances exceeding in measure is understood as another way of being large, in the same sense of the predicate 'large'.

Now it may seem that, like PPP-C, PPP-E also succumbs to the main argument from Chapter Two. On PPP-E, "the form of largeness is large" is true because, one way of being large is having one's instances exceeding in measure, and this is true of the form. But how is it supposed to be true to say that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large"? The-largeness-in-Simmias does not seem to exceed in measure, nor does it have its instances exceeding in measure, since it is not the sort of thing that has instances to begin with. As Peterson might put it, the-largeness-in-Simmias does not seem to be large$_1$ or large$_2$. It does not seem to be large according to the two countenanced ways of being large.[93] It would seem to follow that on PPP-E the form-particularization is not large in the same sense as the form, and so it seems we ought to be as skeptical of PPP-E as we were of PPP-C.

But this is perhaps too hasty. The spirit of PPP-E is that Plato expanded the extension of predicates to include other ways of being (or ways of having predicates) than we might have at first recognized. So, one might develop the view a bit further to say that, while the-largeness-in-Simmias is not large$_1$ or large$_2$, perhaps it is large$_3$— perhaps Plato also countenanced some further way of being large according to which it will be true to say that the form-particularization is large. For example, perhaps Plato countenanced 'being a form-particularization the possession of which makes a thing large' as a third way of being large according to the same sense of 'large'. If so, then it would be true to say that the-largeness-in-Simmias is large, and it would be large in

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[93] In fact, it seems strange to claim that there are only these two countenanced ways of being large, because there are seemingly infinitely many ways of exceeding in measure. For instance, something can exceed in measure by exceeding in length or even by exceeding in length by two inches, etc. But all of these different ways of exceeding in measure can be captured under the more abstract description of 'exceeding in measure'. All of these infinite ways of exceeding in measure fall under the more abstractly specified way of being large by 'exceeding in measure'. For more on this, see Chapter One, Section II.

the same sense of 'large' as the form of largeness, although in a different way. Still,

such a view would be immune to the argument from Chapter Two, because the use of

'is' and the *sense* of the predicate 'large' can be the same in the statements "the form

of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large".

Before setting out why I think we ought not to attribute PPP-E to Plato, I will

first present Fine's expansive interpretation, as my response can be used against both

views together. Fine defends a view developed from Peterson's called the Broad Self-

Predication view (BSP). Fine explains the view as follows:

> On BSP, as on NSP, the Form of F is predicatively F; the Form of F is
> a member of the class of F things. However, BSP countenances more
> ways of being F, more criteria for being included in the class of F
> things, than NSP does. In particular, on BSP the Form of F is F in
> quite a different way from the way in which (most) sensible F
> particulars are F. It is F because, being the property of F, it explains
> the F-ness of things…. For Plato, if something explains the F-ness of F
> things, it is itself predicatively F, of belonging to the class of F things.
> (Fine 1992, 26)

As on PPP-E, BSP holds that Plato expands the extension of predicates, (at least those

for which forms exist). The form of F is really an F thing in the same sense of 'F' as

the many sensible Fs[94], but it is F in a different way. The form of F is F by explaining

things' being F, which is countenanced as another way of being F. For instance, the

form of largeness is itself large and is a member of the class of large things, not

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[94] At one point, Fine claims the following, which makes it seem that "the form of F is F" is *not* supposed to say that the form of F is really an F thing: "To say that the Form of F is F is *only* to say that it is the ultimate source or explanation of why anything is F, and that reference to it never as such explains why anything is not F" (Fine 1992, 26, my emphasis). This makes it seem that "the form of F is F" is *reducible* to the claim that the form of F explains things' being F, and does not say that the form of F is really an F thing (by way of explaining things' being F). But Fine is clear that "the form of F is F" does not merely say that the form explains things' being F, but it says that the form is an F thing (in the same sense of 'F' as sensible Fs) because of this explanatory role. Fine also points out in a note that her account differs from Vlastos' Pauline Predication view because her view is not reductive (Fine 1992, 26 n. 27). Vlastos takes "the form of F is F" to just make a claim about the instances of the form, whereas BSP takes that statement to be about the form and to say that the form of F is really F, because of its explanatory role.

because it exceeds in measure, but because it explains things' being large. And while explaining things' being large seems like a drastically different *way* of being large, it is counted as itself a way of being large along with the more mundane way of exceeding in measure. According to BSP, both explaining things' being large and exceeding in measure are ways of being large according to the same sense of 'large'.

It is clearer in the case of BSP, as opposed to PPP-E, to see how the view is immune to the argument from Chapter Two. This is so because the form of largeness and the-largeness-in-Simmias can both be large in the same broad way that BSP attributes to the form. According to BSP, "the form of largeness is large" says the form of largeness is really a large thing, because it explains things' being large. Explaining things' being large is counted as what might be called a broad way of being large, as opposed to the narrow way of being large in which the many sensible larges are large, by exceeding in measure. Likewise, "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" can also be taken to say that the referent of the subject term is really a large thing, not only in the same sense of the term 'large' (which is all that the Chapter Two argument requires), but also in the same (broad) way as the form. As I argued in Chapter Three when discussing EP, form-particularizations are explainers in addition to forms. The-largeness-in-Simmias is therefore a large thing by being large in the same broad way that the form is, by explaining things' being large, or in this case, by explaining Simmias' being large. According to BSP, "the form of largeness is large" and "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" can receive "the same reading". Note too that even if it was thought (contrary to what I have argued) that the-largeness-in-Simmias does *not* explain Simmias' being large and so is not large in the same *way* as the form, the form-particularization could still be large in the same *sense* as the form, by being large in some further broad way (as I argued when discussing PPP-E above). And this is all that is required for BSP to be immune to the argument from Chapter Two.

So if PPP-E and BSP are both consistent with the textual evidence concerning form-particularizations from the *Phaedo*, do we have any reason to favor EP over these views? Both of these views hold that Plato expands the extension of predicates (for which forms exist) in such a way that *having one's instances being F* (PPP-E) or *explaining things' being F* (BSP) is countenanced as just another way of being F along with the more usual ways in which sensible Fs are F. Any view that does this, I will argue, not only attributes to Plato a view that, as Fine admits, at first sounds counterintuitive (Fine 1992, 26), but a view that seems quite implausible. And there is textual evidence to suggest that Plato did not expand the extension of predicates in the sort of way suggested by PPP-E or BSP.

As we will see, Plato seems committed to the view that (unambiguous) predicates (for which forms exist) must have single non-disjunctive definitions.[95] If these broad ways of being F were really countenanced by Plato as ways of being F according to the same sense of 'F' in which sensible Fs are F, then (as I go on to discuss) it seems very difficult to imagine what definitions of predicates would look like. We will also look to actual definitions that Plato presents in numerous dialogues, definitions which it seems he is at least fairly satisfied with—these definitions would all be entirely unsatisfactory if Plato truly expanded the extension of predicates as PPP-E and BSP propose. But Plato seems to accept the definitions or at least accepts that they are very close to being correct. Based on the fact that Plato seems committed to the view that definitions (in cases in which forms exist) are non-disjunctive, and

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[95] This view is closely related to the Unity Assumption that I discussed in Chapter One, Section II. The Unity Assumption says that in cases in which forms exist, there is one single form through which all Fs are F. This is similar to Dominic Scott's "unitarian assumption", although Scott's assumption seems unrestricted—it seems to apply to all cases in which the same term applies to many different things (Scott 2006, 25-30). As I argued in Chapter One, Plato is committed to the Unity Assumption. Further, it seems that, for Plato, the definition of an unambiguous predicate in the case in which a form exists will specify (the essence of) a form. Plato seems committed to the view that definitions (in cases in which forms exists) are non-disjunctive because of his commitment to the Unity Assumption—since there is one single form in these cases, there will also be one single non-disjunctive definition of these predicates.

adopts the sort of definitions that he does, it seems an expansive interpretation such as PPP-E and BSP ought not to be attributed to Plato.

As I have suggested, Plato seems committed to the view that (concerning an unambiguous predicate 'F' for which a form exists) while things may be F in many different *ways*, there is some single non-disjunctive account according to which they are all F. All things that are F in the same sense of 'F' (at least in a case in which a form exists) will be F according to a single non-disjunctive account. For example, in the *Euthyphro*, Plato claims that "the pious is the same in every action" (ταὐτόν ἐστιν ἐν πάσῃ πράξει τὸ ὅσιον αὐτὸ αὑτῷ) (*Euthyphro* 5d1-2) and all piouses are pious (and impiouses impious) through one form (μιᾷ ἰδέᾳ τά τε ἀνόσια ἀνόσια εἶναι καὶ τὰ ὅσια ὅσια) (*Euthyphro* 6d11-e1). What follows is that, although there may be many different ways in which things are pious, there is a single non-disjunctive account that will cover *all* (and only) cases of piety. Likewise, in the *Meno*, Plato argues that "even if virtues are many and various, they all have some one and the same form on account of which they are virtues" (Οὕτω δὴ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν· κἂν εἰ πολλαὶ καὶ παντοδαπαί εἰσιν, ἕν γέ τι εἶδος ταὐτὸν ἅπασαι ἔχουσιν δι' ὃ εἰσὶν ἀρεταί) (*Meno* 72c6-8). Plato also uses the example of bees to illustrate his view. There may be many different ways of being a bee or kinds of bees—one could be a bee by being a bumblebee or by being a honeybee for example. But all of the thousands of different kinds of bees do not differ from one another in any way insofar as they are bees (οὐδὲν διαφέρουσιν, ᾗ μέλιτται εἰσίν, ἡ ἑτέρα τῆς ἑτέρας) (*Meno* 72b8-9). There will be a single non-disjunctive account of 'bee' that will cover all cases of the many different kinds of bees.

As Plato points out first in the *Euthyphro* when discussing what is required for an acceptable definition, the definition of 'F' must cover all cases of Fs. Socrates asks Euthyphro to provide him with an account of the pious, and Euthyphro first answers by claiming that "the pious is to do what I am doing now, to prosecute the wrongdoer"

(*Euthyphro* 5d8-10).[96] Socrates responds to this attempted definition by saying to Euthyphro: "You did not teach me adequately (ἱκανῶς) when I asked what the pious was…" (*Euthyphro* 6d1-2). And Socrates goes on to spell out why this account is inadequate. First, he has Euthyphro recognize that there are many other pious actions that have nothing to do with prosecuting the wrongdoer (*Euthyphro* 6d6-8). Then Socrates stresses that he was not asking Euthyphro to tell him some one or two examples of the many pious things, but wanted to be instructed as to the *one* form itself by which *all* pious things are pious (*Euthyphro* 6d9-e1). What Socrates wants is the *single* form that he can look to and use as a model (παραδείγματι) to tell whether something is pious (*Euthyphro* 6e3-6). Since there is one single form of piety covering all cases of pious things, the definition of piety must likewise be single and non-disjunctive, and must be comprehensive and not too narrow, in the sense that it must cover all cases of pious things.[97] If one comes across a pious thing, one should be able to use the form as a model, and one should be able to see whether that thing satisfies the definition of piety—so again, all instances of pious things must be captured by the definition.

Now, according to PPP-E and BSP, Plato expands the extension of predicates to include expanded or broad ways. One way of being F (in the same sense of 'F' as the many sensible Fs)—one way of being included in the class of F things—is to have one's instances being F (PPP-E) or to explain things' being F (BSP). What follows is that, for Plato, the definition of 'F' would have to cover the cases of F things that are

[96] Euthyphro's attempted definition here is ambiguous. Euthyphro may be claiming that piety ought to be defined as the action-type of prosecuting the wrongdoer, or he may be claiming (perhaps oddly) that piety ought to be defined as the specific action-token of prosecuting his father that Euthyphro is currently undertaking. In what follows, I assume that Euthyphro means the former, but this distinction is not relevant for my present purposes. Even if Euthyphro is taken to define piety as his action-token, Socrates' point still stands that this definition is too narrow because it fails to cover all cases of piety.
[97] On the point that, in the Socratic dialogues, the objects of definitions are forms and that definitions are thereby non-disjunctive, see Fine 1993, 46-8.

only F in these broad ways. If the definition does not cover all cases of Fs and all countenanced ways of being F, then the definition will be inadequate because it is too narrow. So for instance, an acceptable definition of 'largeness' cannot possibly be something like 'exceeding in measure'. Such a definition is inadequate because it does not cover all ways of being large countenanced by PPP-E or BSP. For instance, for BSP, one way of being large is simply to explain things' being large. But explaining things' being large is not another way of exceeding in measure—this is admitted by BSP, because explaining things' being large is supposed to be distinguished as a broad and non-narrow way of being large.[98] So *explaining things' being large* is not captured by the proposed definition of largeness, namely exceeding in measure. An acceptable definition of largeness would have to cover the narrow and non-narrow ways of being large. But what would such a definition look like? Remember that Plato holds that a definition must be *one* and non-disjunctive. So the definition of largeness cannot be "exceeding in measure *or* explaining things'

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[98] Here I am assuming that explaining things' being large, or explaining things' exceeding in measure, is *not* being counted as a way of exceeding in measure, which is considered as the narrow way of being large. For instance, Fine argues:

> [O]n BSP the form of F is F in quite a different way from the way in which sensible particulars are F. For example, any particular sensible object that is equal is equal in virtue of having the same measures as something. But when Plato suggests that the form of equal is equal, he does not mean that it has the same measures as something. He means that it is equal because it explains why particular sensible things are equal to one another…. (Fine 1993, 62)

When Plato claims that equality is equal, he does *not* mean that it is equal by having sameness of measure, but rather by explaining things' being equal. Likewise, largeness is large *not* because it exceeds in measure, but rather because it explains things' exceeding in measure. *Explaining things' being large* or *explaining things' exceeding in measure* is supposed to be a distinct way of being large than the narrow way of 'exceeding in measure'. Now one could alternatively argue that 'exceeding in measure' works as a comprehensive definition of 'largeness' as long as *explaining things' being large* or *explaining things' exceeding in measure* is considered as a way of *exceeding in measure*. One might then say that largeness is large by exceeding in measure, and it exceeds in measure by explaining things' exceeding in measure. But it seems we have just postponed the problem. Now, largeness seems to have a single non-disjunctive definition, 'exceeding in measure', and this definition covers all cases. But if we look at what 'exceeding in measure' means, we can no longer specify a single account that is not overly abstract and counterintuitive. 'Exceeding in measure' does not *really* have to do with having a measure that exceeds, because the form of largeness "exceeds in measure" merely by explaining things' exceeding in measure.

exceeding in measure". There would have to be some more abstract specification of largeness that covers both of these ways of being large, if these ways of being large are really accepted as ways of being large according to the same sense of 'large', as BSP proposes. I must admit that it is very unclear to me what such a definition would look like, and the defenders of PPP-E and BSP have not offered us any such account. Largeness really does seem to have something to do with exceeding in measure, but it is unclear how an adequate definition of largeness, which respected the expansive views of Peterson and Fine, would still have to do with exceeding in measure. Likewise, one would expect a definition of hotness roughly to have something to do with having a high degree of heat or warmth, but the definition of hotness would have to cover all cases of hot things and be usable to tell whether anything is hot. On PPP-E or BSP, one instance of a hot thing is the form of hotness itself, which is itself a hot thing either by having its instances being hot (in the narrow way) or by explaining things' being hot (in the narrow way). But having one's instances being hot or explaining things' being hot does not seem to have anything to do with exuding heat. Again, it is very unclear what exactly the single definition of hotness would look like, and it seems as if it would not really be about what we think of as hotness anymore.

Not only would definitions of predicates (in cases in which forms exist) seem overly abstract and counterintuitive according to PPP-E or BSP, but there are textual reasons for thinking that Plato was not committed to such definitions. Plato seems to present numerous definitions that he either takes as correct or at least as very close to correct. For example, in the *Laches*, Socrates asks Laches to provide him with a definition of courage, a single definition that will cover all cases of courageous things (*Laches* 190d-191e). At first, Laches fails to provide Socrates with an adequate response, because his attempted definition is too narrow. So, to illustrate to Laches what he is looking for, Socrates offers a definition of speed: Socrates says that "speed

is the power to accomplish many things in little time, both concerning speech and running and all the other things" (τὴν ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ πολλὰ διαπραττομένην δύναμιν ταχυτῆτα ἔγωγε καλῶ καὶ περὶ φωνὴν καὶ περὶ δρόμον καὶ περὶ τἆλλα πάντα) (*Laches* 192b1-3). In looking for a definition of courage, Socrates wants Laches to speak in the same way about courage as he did about speed (*Laches* 192b5-6).[99]

According to this definition of speed, all things having speed will have speed by having the power to accomplish many things in little time—the definition picks out what makes all things having speed have speed, and what does this is having the relevant power. But, suppose that Plato accepted BSP for instance. It would follow that the form of speed itself has speed in the broad explanatory way, by explaining things' having speed. But explaining things' having speed is certainly different from having the power to accomplish many things in little time. So the form of speed would have speed in a non-narrow way that is not covered by the proposed definition. Therefore, the definition of speed that Plato seemingly accepts, would be too narrow if Plato accepted BSP.[100] The definition of speed would be too narrow because it would not cover all ways of having speed that BSP (or PPP-E) says Plato accepted. It seems

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[99] One might object here that it is unclear whether Plato posited a form of speed, and so one cannot use the definition of speed as evidence for what Plato accepts as an acceptable definition in the case in which a form does exist. But there are numerous reasonable responses to this move: First, even if Plato was committed in the middle dialogues to a restricted set of forms containing opposites and numbers, it is likely that he was committed to the form of speed. Second, I will go on to discuss other examples of definitions that we find in Plato in cases in which he explicitly posits the existence of a form, and these definitions also seem inconsistent with PPP-E and BSP. Third, even if Plato did not posit a form of speed, this example is still intended to be illustrative of the sort of definition that Plato is looking for in the case in which forms do exist. It is reasonable then, even if there is no form of speed for Plato, to think that the definition in the case in which a form does exist would be analogous. (Note that if he had wanted to, Plato *could* have presented a definition of speed that also covered non-narrow ways of being speedy, as an illustrative example, even if he did not posit a form of speed.)

[100] One might argue that the form of speed could be said to have speed by way of itself having the power to accomplish many things in little time, (since in no time at all it explains many things' having speed). Even if this is admitted, it will not help here. What would follow is that, in addition to having speed in the broad explanatory way, the form of speed would also have speed in the narrow way in which the many sensibles have speed. It would still be the case according to BSP, however, that the form of speed also has speed in the broad explanatory way, and this is supposed to be another *distinct* way of having speed. The definition of speed is still too narrow because it does not cover all countenanced ways of having speed.

unreasonable, however, to think that Plato presented a definition of speed that he seems to accept, which was itself too narrow, immediately after pointing out that Laches' definition failed because of its narrowness. Plato seems to think that an acceptable definition of speed need only cover all *narrow* ways of having speed. Since Plato also thinks that an adequate definition of 'F' must cover all countenanced ways of being F, he seems not to have countenanced non-narrow ways of being F as ways of being F according to the same sense of 'F'. Since PPP-E and BSP both take Plato to admit non-narrow ways of being F, it seems we should not attribute either of these views to Plato.

Analogous arguments could also be made in the case of other definitions that Plato seems to accept. For instance, in the *Euthyphro*, when again illustrating what sort of definition he is looking for, Plato seems to provide a definition of evenness: He writes that the even is the part of number that is divisible into two equal parts (*Euthyphro* 12d7-10). So, a group of four sticks is even in number because it is divisible into two equal parts, two groups of two. According to PPP-E or BSP, the form of evenness is also even in the same sense of 'even', but it is even in a different way, by having its instances being even or by explaining things' being even. But these are distinct ways of being even that have nothing to do with the form itself being divisible into two equal parts. Again, these non-narrow ways of being even would not be covered under the proposed definition, and so this definition would be too narrow if Plato did really accept these expansive ways of being even.[101]

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[101] Note that EP is not susceptible to these objections. EP is not committed to the claim that the form of evenness is even in the same sense of 'even' as the many evens, or even in any sense for that matter. Instead, in the generalized claim applied in this case, that "the form of evenness is even", Plato just would be using the predicate 'even' as shorthand to refer to the property of being even-explaining. But the predicate 'even' does not *itself* have the sense of 'being even-explaining' (even though the word in Plato's statement might be said to have this speaker-meaning attached to it) nor is 'being even-explaining' considered as a *way* of being even. The definition of even as the part of number that is divisible into two equal parts, can be exhaustive and can cover all cases of even things. The form of evenness is not a case of an even thing, even though it is true for Plato to say, in generalizable contexts, that "the form of evenness is even". This statement is true not because the form of evenness is literally

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There are numerous other examples of definitions that Plato seems to accept, but which would be wholly inadequate and too narrow if Plato did countenance these expansive ways of having predicates.[102] Based on Plato's acceptance of definitions that only cover narrow ways and his commitment to the non-disjunctiveness of definitions, it seems views such as PPP-E and BSP should be rejected as interpretations of Plato because they attribute to him ways of having predicates that he simply seems not to have countenanced.[103]

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even, but because the form of evenness is literally *even-explaining*, which is the property that the predicate 'even' is being used to refer to in these contexts.

[102] Another example of a definition that Plato seems to accept: In the *Meno*, again when illustrating what sort of definition he is looking for, Plato proposes two definitions of shape. First, shape is defined as that which alone of things always traces color (*Meno* 75b8-c1), but the further attempt that shape is that which limits a solid (*Meno* 76a4-7) is preferred because it is in terms that are understood. And this account is said to hold true of *every* shape (*Meno* 76a5). But according to PPP-E or BSP, the form of shape would be a shape by having its instances being limits of a solid or by explaining things' being limits of a solid, and these are countenanced as ways of being a shape. Then it would follow that the form of shape is a shape (in same sense of 'shape') in a way that is not covered by the proposed definition. Plato seems at least fairly pleased with the proposed definition of shape (*Meno* 75b11-c1), but this sort of definition would not even be close to adequate if these broad ways were countenanced as ways of being F according to the same sense of 'F'. The true definition of shape would have to be broader to cover the case of the form, but it is unclear what the nature of such a non-disjunctive definition would be, and Plato does not feel the need for one. Other examples: In the *Republic*, Plato seems to define justice as an inner harmony consisting of parts doing their proper work (*Republic* 442d-444b). And Plato suggests that this account covers not only the just man and the just city in particular, but justice itself more generally (*Republic* 444a4-5). In the *Parmenides*, Plato appears to define equality as sameness of measure (*Parmenides* 140b7-8). In these cases, Plato presents (perhaps plausible) definitions that he seems to accept. But again, these definitions would be too narrow if Plato were to countenance non-narrow ways of having predicates such as are proposed by PPP-E and BSP. For instance, on these views, the form of equality is supposed to be equal in some other way than by having sameness of measure. But then the definition of equality cannot *be* sameness of measure, because the definition would fail to cover all instances of equality and all ways of being equal. Since Plato seems to accept this (plausible) definition of equality, it seems he did not countenance non-narrow ways of being equal.

[103] A proponent of PPP-E or BSP might respond to my general strategy here by claiming that these purported "definitions" in the text are not really intended by Plato to be true definitions of predicates. Rather, they are merely non-disjunctive accounts meant only to cover *narrow* ways of being F. Perhaps Plato is not trying to provide *definitions*, but is only giving a single account of the way all everyday Fs are F—this would explain why these attempted "definitions" do not cover non-narrow ways of being F. This would perhaps involve rethinking what the purpose is of the Socratic "What is 'F'" question. For, Fine is clear in taking the Socratic "What is 'F'" question to be asking for definitions, and real rather than nominal ones (Fine 1993, 46-9). But with this being granted, the question would remain as to whether Plato is committed to non-disjunctiveness with respect to actual definitions. If yes, then the objection remains that real definitions (covering both narrow and non-narrow ways) would turn out to be strange indeed. If no, then again definitions turn out to be fairly strange. For every predicate 'F' for which a form exists, there is one single sense of 'F' but the definition of 'F' is always disjunctive.

III. Interpretations Distinguishing Kinds of Predication – Frede and Meinwald

The final remaining interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language is one developed by Frede and Meinwald, which takes "any form of F is F" to involve a special *kind of predication*. In "Plato's *Sophist* on false statements", Frede argues that in the *Sophist*, Plato "distinguishes two uses of '…is…'" (Frede 1992, 401). He introduces the distinction between the two uses of 'is' as follows:

> Some of the things we say something is, it is by itself; other things we say something is, it just is with reference to something else, it is by standing in the appropriate relation to something else. (Frede 1992, 400)

So, for example, "Socrates is white" is an instance of the second (normal) use of 'is'. Socrates is white by having a certain feature, by way of being related to the form of white (if there is one) in the appropriate way—by way of participation in the form (Frede 1992, 400-1). However, "White is a color" is an instance of the first (special) use of 'is', because it "lies in the very nature" of white to be a color, and it is not by being related to some other thing that white is a color (Frede 1992, 410). Frede does clarify that "The same is the same (with itself)" is still an instance of the *second* (normal) use of 'is', even though it is not correct here to say that the same is the same by standing in the appropriate relation to *something else*. The same is being related in an appropriate way to *itself*, but it is still an instance of the second use of 'is' rather than the first because of the involvement of this (participation) relation. The same is not the same as itself because of its very nature, but because it happens to have the feature of being the same (as itself), because it participates in itself.

Frede does not merely claim that this distinction between uses of 'is' is relevant for understanding the *Sophist*, but he argues that it ought to be applied more

widely to interpreting Plato. He suggests one way in which we should apply this distinction of the two uses of 'is':

> This [distinction] allows us to distinguish different kinds of self-predication and to claim that the kind of self-predication Plato had been interested in *all along*, and continues to hold on to, is the one that innocuously involves the first use of "…is…". (Frede 1992, 402, my emphasis)

So, Frede's view is that Plato is committed all along to the claim that for all forms, "the form of F is F", but that this claim ought to be understood as involving the first use of 'is'. He says this would be a commitment to "self-predication", but as we have been using the term, that is not the case. For us, Plato is only committed to Self-Predication (SP) if he holds that for all forms, the form of F is an F thing (in the same sense of 'F' as the many sensible Fs). And Frede does not want to say that this is Plato's view. Instead, Frede thinks that Plato is not committed to the view that every form of F has the feature of being F (by way of participating in itself or otherwise). His view is just that for all forms, being F lies in the very nature of the form of F.

Now, this view is still admittedly somewhat unclear. What does the claim "the form of F is F" mean exactly when interpreted as involving the first (special) use of 'is'? Meinwald follows Frede and further explains the distinction between these two uses of 'is'. In "Good-bye to the Third Man", Meinwald, too, suggests that Plato distinguishes between two "kinds" of predication (Meinwald 1992, 367, 378). Meinwald calls the second kind of predication *pros ta alla* (*Parmenides*), *pros allo* (*Sophist*), or "common", "garden", "ordinary", or "everyday" predication. If "x is F" involves this second kind of predication, it is "a predication in relation to the others" and it "concerns the display of features by an individual" (Meinwald 1992, 380-1, 5).

On the other hand, the first (special) kind of predication is called *pros heauto* (*Parmenides*), *kath' hauto* (*Sophist*), or "tree" predication. If "x is F" involves this first kind of predication, it involves the "predication of a subject in relation to itself"

(Meinwald 1992, 379). Meinwald explains this kind of predication in more detail: "A predication of a subject in relation to itself holds in virtue of a relation internal to the subject's own nature, and can so be employed to reveal the structure of that nature" (Meinwald 1992, 378). A *pros heauto* predication "offers an analysis of the nature in question" (Meinwald 1991, 71)—it is "grounded in the structure of the nature in question" (Meinwald 1992, 379). Meinwald calls these "tree" predications, because she explains that a predication of this kind will be true if it reflects the actual structure of something like a Linnaean genus-species tree. For example, Persian Cat appears in a genus-species tree far below the kind Animal (Meinwald 1992, 378-9). Because of this, it will be true to say "Persian Cat is an animal" if this sentence is interpreted as involving this first kind of predication. What the sentence says if so interpreted, is that being an animal is part of what it is to be a Persian Cat. Another example that Meinwald discusses is the sentence "Dancing moves". This is a true tree predication because moving is part of what it is to dance, or as Meinwald puts it, "Motion figures in the account of what Dancing is" (Meinwald 1992, 380). "Justice is virtuous" is also a true tree predication, because being virtuous is part of what it is to be just.

Now we can understand how one would interpret a statement such as "the form of largeness is large" as a *pros heauto* predication. What such a statement would mean is that being large is part of what it is to be large, or that being large figures into the account of what it is to be large. As Meinwald explains, such a statement is true but uninformative (Meinwald 1992, 380). So all statements concerning forms which appear to be self-predicational, would be true but uninformative if understood as *pros heauto* predications. *Pros heauto* "self-predication" is trivially true of all forms. But as we have seen with some examples, not all true *pros heauto* predications have this form and are uninformative. For instance, "the form of largeness has a measure" would be a true *pros heauto* predication, because having a measure figures into the

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account of what it is to be large—since to be large is to exceed in measure, and so crucially to have a measure. As Meinwald would agree however (Meinwald 1992, 384-6), "the form of largeness is large" and "the form of largeness has a measure" would be false *pros ta alla* predications, because the form of largeness does not itself display the feature of being large or of having a measure.[104]

The question remains: is the Frede/Meinwald view immune to the main argument from Chapter Two, and if so, why ought we to reject this interpretation in favor of EP? One can see how the Frede/Meinwald view *seems* immune to our argument. According to Frede/Meinwald, the statement "the form of largeness is large" should be taken as a true *pros heauto* predication which trivially says that being large is part (or in this case is all) of the nature of being large. Remember that our argument requires that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" receives "the same reading"—so at the very least, the use of 'is' and the sense of the predicate 'large' must be the same in both statements. According to the Frede/Meinwald construal then, "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" would have to be a true *pros heauto* predication. But is it true to say that being large is part of what it is to be the-largeness-in-Simmias? Is being large part of the internal nature of this form-particularization? At least at first, it seems that being large is part of the nature of the-largeness-in-Simmias, since this form-particularization is a largeness-particularization. If one were to give an account of what the-largeness-in-Simmias is, being large would

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[104] Meinwald thinks that drawing this distinction between the two kinds of predication will allow Plato to "say good-bye" to the Third Man (Meinwald 1992, 387). However, as I point out in Chapter Seven on the Third Man Argument (TMA), this move will not suffice as an adequate response to the TMA. If Plato holds that for all forms, "the form of F is F", but only with these taken as *pros heauto* predications, he will avoid the result that there are infinite regresses of forms *in all cases*. However, Plato certainly will still admit that there are *some* remaining forms for which *pros heauto* and *pros ta alla* "self-predications" are true, and for these, vicious regresses will remain unless Plato rejects some other premise(s) of the TMA. Contrary to Meinwald, this distinction of kinds of predication will not allow Plato to adequately say good-bye to the TMA.

seem to figure in that account. Therefore, the Frede/Meinwald view seems immune to the main argument from Chapter Two, as it seems that the statement involving the form and the one involving the form-particularization can both be taken as true *pros heauto* predications.

However, on further reflection, it seems that the statement involving the form-particularization ought not to be taken as a true *pros heauto* predication according to the Frede/Meinwald view. Recall that a *pros heauto* or tree predication will be true if it conveys part of the real structure of the world, by accurately representing genus-species structures (Meinwald 1992, 387). The structures or trees are made up of kinds (Meinwald 1992, 379), and these kinds are no different from forms (Meinwald 1992, 395 n. 27). Meinwald argues that *we* cannot be subjects of true tree predications because we "are not the kind of things that figure in the structures represented by tree predications" (Meinwald 1992, 388). So as Meinwald notes, for example, "nothing can be correctly predicated *pros heauto* of Callias" (Meinwald 1991, 178 n. 17). When Meinwald claims that a *pros heauto* predication "offers an analysis of the nature in question", she does not mean that this kind of predication analyzes the nature of whatever happens to be the referent of the subject term. Instead, a *pros heauto* predication is only used to analyze a "real nature"—these predications present "the internal structures of *the real natures*" (Meinwald 1991, 71, my emphasis). And these predications "hold in virtue of reflecting genus-species structures (which they do by showing the internal structures of properties)" (Meinwald 1991, 71). So it seems that only properties, kinds, or forms can be subjects of true *pros heauto* predications, since it is only these that figure in the tree structures. The-largeness-in-Simmias is simply not the sort of thing that figures in any of these trees reflecting the real structure of properties in the world. Since "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" cannot be a true *pros heauto* predication, it cannot consistently be taken to involve the same use of 'is'

that the Frede/Meinwald view claims is involved in the statement "the form of largeness is large". So it would seem that the main argument from Chapter Two does provide us with reason to doubt the Frede/Meinwald view.

However, one might respond that although the key role of *pros heauto* predications is to reveal the internal structure of forms, these predications might also be used to reveal the internal nature of form-particularizations. Even if what Meinwald says *suggests* that this is impossible, perhaps this was not her intention or perhaps she could slightly tweak her view to allow for true *pros heauto* predications involving form-particularizations as the referents of the subject terms. However, a main and undeniable feature of the distinction between *pros heauto* and *pros ta alla* predication, to which both Frede and Meinwald are explicitly committed, is that *pros heauto* predication holds of something "in relation to itself" and *pros ta alla* predication holds of a thing "in relation to something else". And *pros ta alla* predication holds of something because it has or displays a feature, by way of being related to something (by participation). On the other hand, *pros heauto* predication holds of something in relation to itself, in the sense that it does *not* hold true by way of an external relation (such as participation). What is crucial to note is that a statement like "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" appears to fail to fit neatly into either kind of predication. "The-largeness-in-Simmias is large" is not supposed to be a *pros ta alla* predication—the-largeness-in-Simmias is not supposed to be large because it displays the feature of being large by way of participation in the form of largeness. (It is Simmias who is large by way of participation in the form of largeness and by way of possession of the form-particularization.) Even if the-largeness-in-Simmias could be said to display the feature of being large, which I think ought to be avoided, that would not suffice to allow the Frede/Meinwald view to be immune to the argument from Chapter Two. To be immune to that argument, "the-largeness-in-Simmias is

large" must be able to be read as involving the same use of 'is' and so the same kind of predication as "the form of largeness is large". So the question is, again, whether "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" can be a true *pros heauto* predication. And the answer seems to be that it cannot, and not again for the reason that the subjects of true *pros heauto* predications can only be forms. The further point here is that being large does not seem to be part of the nature of the-largeness-in-Simmias *in relation to the form-particularization itself.* In other words, the-largeness-in-Simmias is a *largeness-*particularization because of an external relation it has to something other than itself, namely the form of largeness. Now in this case, the relevant external relation is not participation. Still, the-largeness-in-Simmias is a largeness-particularization rather than an equality-particularization because it is related in a special way to the form of largeness.[105] As I have already suggested, the preferred understanding of the relation between the form-particularization and its corresponding form seems to be one of resemblance or similarity, and this is an external relation.[106] So we seem to have another reason to hold that "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" cannot be taken as a true *pros heauto* predication. Being large is only part of what it is to be the-largeness-in-Simmias, if it is at all, because of the relation that this form-particularization has to the form of largeness—and so it is not large in relation to itself. It seems then that the Frede/Meinwald view is susceptible to our main argument from Chapter Two.

However, even if we ignore all of this and claim that the statement "the-largeness-in-Simmias is large" could be a true *pros heauto* predication, there is *still* good reason not to attribute the Frede/Meinwald view to Plato. As I pointed out in

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[105] As Silverman argues: "The form-copy…seems to have a relational aspect to it. Not so the Form. The Form is what it is in its own right." (Silverman 2002, 99) The form-copy is not what it is in its own right, because it is the form-copy that it is because of its (copying) relation to the form.
[106] I discuss the nature of this relation between form and form-particularization in more detail in Chapter Five.

Chapter One when arguing against NSP, Plato expresses in the *Phaedo* a commitment to the view that for all forms, "the form of F is not opposite-F" (Chapter One, Section III). This generalized assumption could not be intended as involving the kind of predication that the Frede/Meinwald view classifies as *pros ta alla* predication, because there will be numerous cases of forms that display the feature of their opposites, (for instance, the forms of sameness, difference, evenness, plurality, etc.). Also, it is clear that Plato intends the generalized claim "the form of F is not opposite-F" to receive "the same reading" as the generalized claim "the form of F is F".[107] The Frede/Meinwald view holds that Plato intends the statement "the form of F is F", when generalized to all forms, to be understood as involving *pros heauto* predication, and so this view would be forced to say that the same kind of predication is involved in the claim that for all forms, "the form of F is not opposite-F".

What would the statement "the form of F is not opposite-F" mean when understood as a *pros heauto* predication? What it means is that being opposite-F is *not* part of what it is to be F. Consider Meinwald's example of what the following true *pros heauto* predication means: "Justice is not curved". Meinwald explains that "As a tree predication the sentence holds in virtue of the fact that being curved is not part of what it is to be just" (Meinwald 1992, 383). Our generalized assumption will then turn out true in the case of the form of justice. "The form of justice is not unjust" is a true *pros heauto* predication, because being *unjust* is obviously not part of what it is to be *just*. However, this generalized assumption will not turn out true for Plato in the case of all forms. For instance, consider the case of the form of change. "The form of change is not at rest" appears to be false as an instance of a *pros ta alla* predication, because the form of change, like all forms, seems to display the feature of being at rest. But more relevant for our purposes here, this statement also seems false for Plato

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[107] On this point see Chapter Two, Section III.

as a *pros heauto* predication. That is the case because, for Plato, being at rest *does*

seem to be part of what it is to change. In other words, Plato seems committed to the

view that change is impossible without some aspect of rest, but more than that, that

part of what it *means* for something to change is for some aspect of it to be at rest

throughout the change.

When Plato provides his preferred positive account of change in the *Phaedo*,

he seems to hold that rest is going to play an important role in the analysis of change.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Plato argues that what explains something's coming to

be a certain way (in a case in which a form exists) is participation in the relevant form.

Plato writes that there is "no other way in which each thing can *come to be* than by

sharing in the particular being of each thing in which it shares" (*Phaedo* 101c2-4).

What follows from this account is that when x becomes F or changes into being F, it

comes to share in the form of F, (which as I argued involves its taking on an F-ness-

particularization in it). But what is crucial to this account of change here is that there

will always be some x that underlies the change, some x that comes to participate in

the form and comes to possess a form-particularization. For something to change, it

must persist through the change when it comes to participate in a form. Plato

emphasizes the persistence of the changing thing when he points out that when

Socrates becomes small, he endures and remains the same through this change.

Socrates says: "I, receiving and enduring smallness, also still am who I am, namely, I

am this small man." (ἐγὼ δεξάμενος καὶ ὑπομείνας τὴν σμικρότητα, καὶ ἔτι ὢν ὅσπερ εἰμί,

οὗτος ὁ αὐτὸς σμικρός εἰμι) (*Phaedo* 102e3-5). Plato seems to think that part of what it

is for something to change is for that thing to remain and endure through the change.

Therefore, Plato appears committed to the view that being at rest figures in the account of what it is to change.[108]

Because of this, Plato will hold that "The form of change is *not* at rest" is a false *pros heauto* predication. If Plato did intend the generalized statement "the form of F is F" to be understood along the lines of the Frede/Meinwald view, then it seems he would also have intended "the form of F is not opposite-F" to be taken along these lines as well. But the form of change would be a counterexample to this generalized assumption, since Plato thinks that being at rest is part of what it is to change. Therefore, we have good reason not to attribute the Frede/Meinwald view to Plato, even *if* such a view is immune to our main argument from Chapter Two, which as we saw already, is highly doubtful.

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[108] There do seem to be a number of difficulties here. For instance, even if alteration is understood in terms of an underlying and persisting subject coming to participate in a form, what about generation and destruction? For example, it seems that form-particularizations undergo generation and destruction rather than alteration, a point I discuss in more detail in Chapter Five. When unfortunate-looking Jim undergoes a makeover and becomes beautiful, it seems that the-ugliness-in-Jim is destroyed and replaced by the-beauty-in-Jim. But then the-ugliness-in-Jim seems to go through a change (i.e., its destruction), and yet there does not appear to be something persisting through *this* change. Is it then right to claim that *all* change essentially involves rest as part of its nature? Another potential difficulty is what the account of change will be in a case in which Plato does not posit the existence of a form. What happens when something comes to be G in a case in which there is no form of G? Perhaps unlike the first difficulty, this one is easier to resolve. Although it seems the account of change here will not involve something underlying that comes to participate in the form of G, there will still be something underlying this change. While it is unclear as to exactly how Plato would describe such a change, for our purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that such changes would involve the persistence of an underlying subject. Being at rest would still be part of what it is for things to change in this way.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEMBLANCE WITHOUT SELF-PREDICATION

I. Introduction

We have seen that there is good reason to doubt all of the most influential interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. We have also been introduced to a new interpretation called the Explanatory Predication view (EP). According to EP, Plato uses his apparently self-predicational language to express claims to which he is clearly committed. EP also attributes to Plato a view that he "could have had in mind", since it does not involve any blatantly implausible underlying assumptions or consequences. EP is also consistent with the textual evidence that we have examined, and if we have truly found an acceptable interpretation of Plato's apparently self-predicational language, one would hope it is consistent will all of Plato or at least with all of middle Plato.[109]

Once again, EP holds that in contexts in which Plato intends his apparently self-predicational language to be generalizable to all forms, the statement "the form of F is F" only says that the form of F is F-explaining. In such statements, the predicate 'F' is just being used as shorthand to refer to the property of being F-explaining. One crucial thing to note here is that an important aspect of EP is that it avoids attributing a genuine Self-Predication Assumption (SP) to Plato—part of EP is the rejection of SP. EP holds that it is *not* true for Plato that for all forms, the form of F is itself an F thing.

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[109] Of course, it is possible that Plato changes his views from some dialogues to others. So it may be that EP correctly identifies Plato's intentions in some dialogues but not others. In fact, however, I think a case could be made that Plato's intention when using generalizable apparently self-predicational language is consistent throughout his dialogues. But throughout this work, I focus on evidence regarding Plato's view in the middle dialogues, and I argue that he intends EP at least throughout this period.

(Although EP does allow that there may be exceptional cases in which a certain form of F is an F thing.) So EP, like many other views that we have considered and brought into doubt, is a non-SP view.

It is important to recognize that EP is a non-SP view, because a number of commentators have argued that there is definitive textual evidence suggesting that Plato must be committed to some version of SP. If they are right, then EP cannot be correct, since it involves a denial of SP. So what is this textual evidence that has been used to show that Plato is committed to SP, and so not EP? The commentators have focused on a number of passages which, they argue, show that Plato thinks participants in forms are copies, images, or likenesses of the forms in which they participate. They argue that since Plato sees sensible Fs as copies, images, or likenesses of the form of F, and it is precisely in being F that there is a resemblance between sensible and form, then the form of F must itself be an F thing. If this is right, then it would seem that Plato is committed to some version of SP. Since Plato thinks, according to the argument, that for all forms, the form of F is an F thing, we ought to simply read Plato's apparently self-predicational language as making such claims. When Plato says that "the form of F is F" in a context in which he intends to generalize the claim, he simply wants to say that the form of F is an F thing. According to these commentators, Plato is committed to the view that the form of F is an F thing because of his commitment to the resemblance between the form and sensible Fs.

In this chapter, I will begin by examining this sort of argument as it has been presented by Norman Gulley, Bostock, and Malcolm. I will then discuss the textual evidence that has been thought to commit Plato to the view that participants are copies, images, or likenesses of forms. I will argue that even if it is correct to attribute to Plato the view that participants are resemblers of forms, they will be resemblers by

having form-particularizations which are more directly copies of forms. The complex resemblance relation between form and participant is grounded in the relation between form and the form-particularization in the participant. Because of this, I will argue that there is no good reason to think that resemblance entails SP. Finally, I will provide an account of the relation between form-particularizations and their corresponding forms of which they are resemblers. Once we spell out the exact relation, we will see that there are certain crucial ways in which the resemblers can approach forms, but only in a deficient way. My account of the relation between forms and their corresponding resemblers involves a clear specification of how resemblers strive, but are unable, to be fully like the paradigmatic forms.

II. The Resemblance Argument – Resemblance Entails Self-Predication

Gulley, Bostock, and Malcolm all argue that Plato is committed to there being a resemblance relation between forms and their participants, and that this resemblance relation entails that all forms genuinely self-predicate, or that, for all forms, the form of F is itself an F thing. Gulley argues that in the theory of forms as presented in the *Phaedo* and other middle dialogues, Plato conceives of forms as "ideal standards" or "archetypes" (32). Gulley outlines what he takes to be part of this theory of forms:

> [S]ensible characteristics are explained in terms of 'participation' of sensible objects in Forms, and…this 'participation' establishes a relation of resemblance between sensible objects, in respect of their characteristics, and Forms. (Gulley 1962, 32-3)

Gulley adds that "to conceive the Form as an archetype which its sensible instances resemble is to conceive it as a perfect particular object *possessing the same characteristic* as its sensible instances" (Gulley 1962, 33, my emphasis). So Gulley

here not only thinks that the form of F is conceived of as an F thing, but further that it is conceived of as a perfectly F thing. He attributes to Plato not merely SP but what might be called paradigmatic-SP. For our purposes, it is important to recognize that Gulley thinks participation is explained in terms of a relation of resemblance between participants and forms. And further, this relation of resemblance is precisely "in respect of their characteristics"—it is precisely in being F that the many Fs resemble the form of F. What follows from this, at least, is that the form of F is an F thing. And perhaps, as Gulley suggests, the form will not only be an F thing but will be a perfectly F thing.

In "Plato and Nominalism", Bostock suggests that the most serious objection to any non-SP view is that it is inconsistent with Plato's "frequent claim that sensible particulars *resemble* the Forms they are called after, and that they are *copies*, *images*, or *imitations* of these forms" (Bostock 1990, 262).[110] Bostock admits that Plato does not explicitly claim that the respect in which the many Fs resemble the form of F is in their being F, but Bostock asks rhetorically: "But if this is not the respect of resemblance between Forms and particulars, then what is?" (Bostock 1990, 262-3). Further, Bostock suggests that without a commitment to SP, "all this talk of resembling and copying is totally misleading" (Bostock 1990, 263). What the non-SP theorist "owes us [is] an account of why Plato himself should nevertheless find it an appropriate terminology" (Bostock 1990, 263). And Bostock seems to be hinting that no such account is possible. Plato's talk of participants as being resemblers or copies of forms would simply be entirely misleading and inappropriate, if Plato had not held that participants *resemble* the form of F *in being F*, and so Plato thinks that the form is itself really F. Because Plato frequently claims that the many Fs resemble the form of F, and this resemblance must be resemblance with respect to being F, the form of F

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[110] Also see Bostock 1986, 90-4, where Bostock argues that resemblance entails SP.

must be F. So, the argument goes, Plato's use of resemblance talk entails his commitment to SP.

In *Plato on the Self-Predication of Forms*, Malcolm argues against any non-SP theorist in a chapter called "The Rejection of the Doctrine that the Form is not an F Thing". Against the non-SP theorist, he argues that Plato thinks that for all forms, the form of F is an F thing, or that Plato is committed to SP. In fact, Malcolm goes further, like Gulley, to attribute paradigmatic-SP to Plato. Not only is the form of F itself an F thing, but it is a perfectly F thing.[111] Malcolm argues that the strongest evidence for attributing SP (and paradigmatic-SP) to Plato is the metaphysical theme of what he calls "Model/Copy". He sketches the argument as follows:

> The argument from Model/Copy maintains that, since the copies, the many Fs, must resemble the model, the model must resemble the copies. The respect in which this mutual resemblance must take place is in being F, and this makes the Form a (paradigmatically) F thing. (Malcolm 1991, 68)

Malcolm makes use of Plato's purported commitment to the claim that participants are copies of forms, copies which resemble forms as their models. Concerning Model/Copy, Malcolm argues: "On the most natural reading of this central part of Plato's ontology the Forms are F things which the copies resemble" (Malcolm 1991, 90). This resemblance consists precisely in both the copies' and the model's being F things. Obviously, then, the model, the form of F, is itself an F thing.

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[111] In fact, Malcolm often seems to fail to draw the distinction between SP and paradigmatic-SP, but these are crucially different. Paradigmatic-SP entails SP, but not the other way around. Malcolm suggests that he will establish the view that the form is a paradigm case by showing that the form of F must be an F thing (Malcolm 1991, 64)—and by 'paradigm case', Malcolm means being a perfectly F thing (Malcolm 1991, 68). But showing that the form of F is an F thing does not, on its own, show that it is a perfectly F thing. However, Malcolm claims that the form of F's being a paradigm case and so its being perfectly F is a necessary condition for "self-exemplification" (Malcolm 1991, 213, n. 23), which in his terminology means the form's being an F thing (Malcolm 1991, 1). But this seems wrong, as it at least seems possible for the form to be an F thing without being a perfectly F thing. Again, Malcolm claims that once we arrive at the conclusion that "F-ness is an F thing, …we get the entity which is the general property also being a paradigm instance thereof" (Malcolm 1991, 126). But a further argument would be required to move from SP to paradigmatic-SP. For similar apparent confusion concerning the distinction between SP and paradigmatic-SP, see Malcolm 1991, 63, 128, 134.

Malcolm suggests that any non-SP view (or any view that adopts what Malcolm calls "Thesis A")—any view which takes Plato *not* to be committed to the view that for all forms, the form of F is an F thing—does not take Model/Copy very seriously (Malcolm 1991, 92). More definitively, Malcolm argues that any non-SP view "cannot deal adequately with Model/Copy" (Malcolm 1991, 124). Model/Copy, Malcolm claims, is the "best evidence" for the claim that Plato saw forms as paradigm cases and so as genuinely self-predicating (Malcolm 1991, 99).

The bare essentials of the main argument from these three commentators[112] against non-SP and so for SP, which I will call the Resemblance Argument (RA), seems to be as follows:

1. The participants in the form of F are images-imitations-likenesses of the form.
2. Images-imitations-likenesses resemble that of which they are the image-imitation-likeness.
3. So, the participants in the form of F resemble the form of F (insofar as they are participants[113]). [1, 2]
4. If participants in the form of F resemble the form of F (insofar as they are participants), then the resemblance between the participants and the form of F consists in their both being F things.
5. So, the resemblance between the participants and the form of F consists in their both being F things. [3, 4]
6. So, the form of F is itself an F thing. [5]

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[112] Vlastos also argues that Plato's "Copy-Theory of the relation of things to Forms" implies SP, for "if the F particular is a copy of F-ness and resembles F-ness in respect of being F, then…F-ness is F" (Vlastos 1965, 248). In a note, Eck also sums up the argument that resemblance entails SP, and even paradigmatic-SP:

> In some passages of the dialogues it is said that sensible things resemble the forms they participate in. F things are resemblances, imitations or images of the F-ness; the form is a model the sensible things are copies of. Now it has been argued that a form F-ness can only function as a model if it is itself a standard, an exemplary specimen, exhibiting the property of being F perfectly, while the sensible F things have the property only in a deficient way. (Eck 2008, 114, n. 8)

[113] The point here is not simply that the participants happen to resemble the form in some way or another, but that their participating consists in their standing in a certain resemblance relation to the form.

What follows from the resemblance relation between forms and participants is that forms genuinely self-predicate. If this is right, then a view such as EP cannot be correct because it attributes to Plato the denial of SP. But is this Resemblance Argument (RA) successful? Have we found a devastating objection to EP?

III. The Text

Before presenting my response to RA, let us examine the textual evidence that purports to commit Plato to the view that participants are copies or in some way resemblers of forms.[114] We will refer back to this textual evidence below, when we discuss how to respond to the argument of Gulley, Bostock, and Malcolm.

Some of this evidence comes from the central books of the *Republic*. Toward the end of Book V, Plato contrasts the lover of sights and sounds with the philosopher. The lover of sights and sounds is someone who believes in beautiful things but not in the beautiful itself (*Republic* 476c2-3). Such a person, Plato suggests, is living in a dream rather than a waking state (*Republic* 476c4)—and he is dreaming insofar as he "believes that a likeness to something is not a likeness but rather is the thing itself

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[114] In this section, I examine evidence from the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and *Parmenides*. Noticeably absent here is a discussion of the text from the *Phaedo* 74-76, which is often thought to be relevant to the point that sensibles are resemblers of forms. I leave this out because I discuss that evidence in detail in Chapter Six. As I argue there, in this passage, Plato has a specific way in mind in which sensibles strive unsuccessfully to be such as forms—sensible properties and particulars fail to be like the forms in being explainers. Another noticeable omission is a discussion of the ascent up the rising stairs to the form of beauty, in the *Symposium* 210a-212a. One reason for its absence here is that we do not find there *explicit* use of the image-imitation-likeness terms, which we do find in the other passages. Perhaps more importantly, it is not clear that Plato intends the claims made there to be generalizable to all forms, whereas this is fairly certain in the other passages. As Vlastos argues, in the *Symposium*, Plato is emphasizing the connection between love and that which is beautiful—there are good contextual reasons for thinking that Plato is claiming that the form of beauty in particular is really a beautiful thing (Vlastos 1981, 262-3). So the form of beauty may really be a wonderfully beautiful thing, and perhaps the many beautifuls are resemblers of the form of beauty in this (additional) respect, but it is not clear that Plato intends *this* resemblance to be generalizable to all forms and their corresponding particulars.

which it is like" (τὸ ὀνειρώττειν ἆρα οὐ τόδε ἐστίν, ἐάντε ἐν ὕπνῳ τις ἐάντ' ἐγρηγορὼς τὸ ὅμοιόν τῳ μὴ ὅμοιον ἀλλ' αὐτὸ ἡγῆται εἶναι ᾧ ἔοικεν) (*Republic* 476c5-7). Plato suggests here that the lover of sights and sounds somehow mistakes the beautiful things (καλὰ πράγματα) for the form of beauty, or at the very least, the lover of sights and sounds fails to recognize that the beautiful things are merely likenesses of something else, the form of beauty. Unlike the lover of sights and sounds, the philosopher is awake and does not confuse the likenesses with the thing that they are likenesses of. The philosopher is able to distinguish between the things sharing in the form of beauty and the form of beauty itself (οὔτε τὰ μετέχοντα αὐτὸ οὔτε αὐτὸ τὰ μετέχοντα ἡγούμενος) (*Republic* 476d2-3). Plato seems to make clear here the view that the things sharing (τὰ μετέχοντα) in the form of beauty, the beautiful things (καλὰ πράγματα), are likenesses of the form of beauty.

Toward the end of Book VI of the *Republic*, when Plato introduces the Divided Line, he again seems to suggest that sensibles are somehow resemblers of forms. The first distinction drawn in the Line is between the visible and the intelligible. The visible portion of the Line is further divided into images (εἰκόνες—509e1) and that which the images resemble (ᾧ τοῦτο ἔοικεν) (*Republic* 510a5). Plato clarifies that by images, he has in mind things like shadows, reflections, and other things like that (*Republic* 509e1-510a3). And the things that these images resemble, the originals of these images, are animals, plants, and artifacts (*Republic* 510a5-6). These sensible objects are the originals that cast the shadows, reflections, and so on.

Plato then goes on to divide the intelligible portion of the Line into two parts. In the first part of the intelligible portion, "the soul uses as images the things that were being imitated before" (τοῖς τότε μιμηθεῖσιν ὡς εἰκόσιν χρωμένη ψυχὴ) (*Republic* 510b4-5). In the second part of the intelligible portion, the soul proceeds without making use of the images that were used in the first part (ἄνευ τῶν περὶ ἐκεῖνο εἰκόνων) (*Republic*

510b7-8). Plato suggests here that the things that were being imitated before in the visible portion, sensible objects like animals and plants, are now used by the soul as images of the intelligibles in the first part of the intelligible portion of the Line. But Plato does not merely suggest that these sensible objects are *used as images*, but he refers to them directly as images at 510b7-8. Plato provides an example to help illustrate the point. Geometers, for example, use visible figures but do not direct their thought to the visible figures but rather to the things that the visible figures are like (τοῖς ὁρωμένοις εἴδεσι προσχρῶνται καὶ τοὺς λόγους περὶ αὐτῶν ποιοῦνται, οὐ περὶ τούτων διανοούμενοι, ἀλλ' ἐκείνων πέρι οἷς ταῦτα ἔοικε) (*Republic* 510d5-7). And the things that the visible figures resemble are things like the square itself and the diagonal itself (*Republic* 510d7-8). The geometers use their drawn visible figures, of which shadows and reflections are images, in turn as images of those things themselves which are only graspable in thought (αὐτὰ μὲν ταῦτα ἃ πλάττουσίν τε καὶ γράφουσιν, ὧν καὶ σκιαὶ καὶ ἐν ὕδασιν εἰκόνες εἰσίν, τούτοις μὲν ὡς εἰκόσιν αὖ χρώμενοι, ζητοῦντες δὲ αὐτὰ ἐκεῖνα ἰδεῖν ἃ οὐκ ἂν ἄλλως ἴδοι τις ἢ τῇ διανοίᾳ) (*Republic* 510e1-511a1). Again, Plato generalizes the point: In the first section of the intelligible portion, the soul "uses the very images which had their own images in the section below" (εἰκόσι δὲ χρωμένην αὐτοῖς τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν κάτω ἀπεικασθεῖσιν) (*Republic* 511a-6). Through all of this, Plato suggests that while sensible objects such as animals, plants, and artifacts have their own images in the sensible realm, these sensible objects are also images of forms existing in the intelligible realm. And just as the drawings of geometers resemble their corresponding objects of thought, sensible objects in general resemble their corresponding intelligible forms.

In Book VII of the *Republic*, Plato again suggests that sensibles are images of forms. After introducing the Allegory of the Cave, Plato argues that the philosophers who have acquired knowledge of the good and other forms, while outside of the cave,

ought to return to the cave in order to guard and care for others. The philosophers

must go down to the common dwelling place in the cave and must grow accustomed to

seeing in the dark (*Republic* 520c1-3). Plato adds that once the philosophers become

accustomed to seeing in the dark, they will see much better than the people there and

they will "know what each image is and also of what it is the image, on account of

having seen the truth concerning beautifuls and justs and goods" (συνεθιζόμενοι γὰρ

μυρίῳ βέλτιον ὄψεσθε τῶν ἐκεῖ καὶ γνώσεσθε ἕκαστα τὰ εἴδωλα ἅττα ἐστὶ καὶ ὧν, διὰ τὸ

τἀληθῆ ἑωρακέναι καλῶν τε καὶ δικαίων καὶ ἀγαθῶν πέρι) (*Republic* 520c3-6). Plato

suggests here that the sensibles encountered in the cave are images (εἴδωλα), and

presumably they are images of those things that the philosopher has grasped outside of

the cave, the forms.

   We find more evidence for the view that there is a resemblance between

sensibles and forms in the *Phaedrus*. Plato describes "when someone sees the beauty

here and is reminded of true beauty" (*Phaedrus* 249d5-6). Those who have sufficient

memory are startled "when they see some likeness of the things there" (ὅταν τι τῶν ἐκεῖ

ὁμοίωμα ἴδωσιν) (*Phaedrus* 250a5-6). Plato adds at 250b1-5:

Justice and temperance and as many other things as are held in honor in souls, are in no way lit up in their likenesses here. But only a few people, through obscure organs, scarcely behold the kind of thing having images, when they encounter the images.	δικαιοσύνης μὲν οὖν καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τίμια ψυχαῖς οὐκ ἔνεστι φέγγος οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς τῇδε ὁμοιώμασιν, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀμυδρῶν ὀργάνων μόγις αὐτῶν καὶ ὀλίγοι ἐπὶ τὰς εἰκόνας ἰόντες θεῶνται τὸ τοῦ εἰκασθέντος γένος

Here, Plato seems to suggest that in our experience with sensibles we encounter

likenesses and images of forms. We grasp beauty using our sight down here,

presumably by seeing images of beauty in the sensible world (*Phaedrus* 250c8-d3).

Plato claims that we do not see images of wisdom through our vision, but we would be

in the grips of a terribly powerful love, if some clear image of wisdom itself came into

our sight (δεινοὺς γὰρ ἂν παρεῖχεν ἔρωτας, εἴ τι τοιοῦτον ἑαυτῆς ἐναργὲς εἴδωλον παρείχετο

εἰς ὄψιν ἰόν) (*Phaedrus* 250d4-6). Plato suggests that in the case of beauty, we do

happen to encounter clear images of the form in the sensible world, through the use of

our vision. Throughout this section, Plato seems committed to the view that we

encounter an array of likenesses or images of forms in the sensible world. These

likenesses or images may vary in clarity and may be present only to some one or other

of our senses. But the key point is that there seem to be sensibles that resemble the

forms and so are able to remind us of the forms that they resemble.

There are also numerous passages in the *Timaeus*[115] where Plato seems to

suggest that sensibles are images, imitations, or likenesses, which resemble forms.

After introducing the thing which receives all bodies, the receptacle, Plato makes the

following claim about it at 50c4-d2:

The things going into and out of it are imitations of the things which always are, imprinted from them in an amazing way that is hard to describe, which we will pursue at another time. But at the present time, it is necessary to have in mind three kinds: that which comes to be, that in which it comes to be, and that from which that which comes to be is likened and is produced.	τὰ δὲ εἰσιόντα καὶ ἐξιόντα τῶν ὄντων ἀεὶ μιμήματα, τυπωθέντα ἀπ' αὐτῶν τρόπον τινὰ δύσφραστον καὶ θαυμαστόν, ὃν εἰς αὖθις μέτιμεν. ἐν δ' οὖν τῷ παρόντι χρὴ γένη διανοηθῆναι τριττά, τὸ μὲν γιγνόμενον, τὸ δ' ἐν ᾧ γίγνεται, τὸ δ' ὅθεν ἀφομοιούμενον φύεται τὸ γιγνόμενον.

In this passage, Plato seems to claim that the things which come to be in the sensible

world are imitations of the forms and come to be so as to be like the forms. Soon after

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[115] It has been argued that the *Timaeus* is a late dialogue, in part because it involves the seemingly new roles of the receptacle and demiurge and a seemingly clear commitment to the existence of forms for predicates such as 'man' and 'fire' (for instance, see Cherniss 1957 and Sarah Waterlow 1982). One must be careful, then, to use it as evidence of Plato's views in the middle period. While I think the *Timaeus* may be a later dialogue and may involve numerous developments in Plato's views, I include a discussion of some key passages in which Plato uses explicit resemblance terms. Plato does still seem explicitly committed to there being a resemblance relation between forms and sensibles, although the account of exactly how that relation comes about may have changed. Also, as I go on to discuss, Plato's language in *Timaeus* 52b-c is especially reminiscent of his discussion of likenesses in *Republic* V.

this, Plato points out that the receptacle must be formless (ἄμορφον), at least with respect to what it is going to receive (*Timaeus* 50d7-e1). If it were not formless, it would only be able to poorly copy (κακῶς ἂν ἀφομοιοῖ) what it receives (*Timaeus* 50e1-3). The suggestion again is that it is the job of the receptacle to be that in which the forms are copied well. Again, Plato reaffirms the point that the receptacle is that which receives the copies (ἀφομοιώματα) of all the things which always are (*Timaeus* 51a1-3). For example, parts of the receptacle will appear as fire, water, earth, or air, "to the extent that it receives the imitations of these" (καθ' ὅσον ἂν μιμήματα τούτων δέχηται) (*Timaeus* 51b4-6). There are certainly difficult issues of interpretation throughout this section, but for our purposes up to this point, it is sufficient to recognize that Plato seems committed to the view that there will be resemblers of forms existing in the sensible world. I will return later to an ambiguity concerning exactly what things are supposed to be the likenesses or imitations of forms that enter the receptacle.

Plato continues in the *Timaeus* to distinguish the three kinds of things: the forms, that which comes to be, and the receptacle. After describing the forms, he moves on to characterize that which is "perceivable, begotten, and always being borne along, coming to be in some place and in turn being destroyed from there" (αἰσθητόν, γεννητόν, πεφορημένον ἀεί, γιγνόμενόν τε ἔν τινι τόπῳ καὶ πάλιν ἐκεῖθεν ἀπολλύμενον) (*Timaeus* 52a5-7). This second sort of thing, Plato claims, has the same name as the forms and is similar to them (τὸ δὲ ὁμώνυμον ὅμοιόν τε ἐκείνῳ δεύτερον) (*Timaeus* 52a4-5). Once again, Plato seems clearly committed to the view that things which come to be and are perceivable are resemblers of forms.

Using language reminiscent of the passage we discussed from Book V of the *Republic* 476c-d, Plato claims that people are usually unable to draw these distinctions between the three different kinds of things, because of their dreaming state (ὑπὸ ταύτης

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τῆς ὀνειρώξεως) (*Timaeus* 52b6-c2). Our dreaming state makes us unaware of the following fact (*Timaeus* 52c2-5):

Since the very thing in relation to which an image has come to be <as an image> is not <part> of the image itself, but the image is always borne along as an appearance of something else, on account of this it is fitting for an image to come to be in something else, somehow clinging to being or being nothing at all.	εἰκόνι μέν, ἐπείπερ οὐδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐφ' ᾧ γέγονεν ἑαυτῆς ἐστιν, ἑτέρου δέ τινος ἀεὶ φέρεται φάντασμα, διὰ ταῦτα ἐν ἑτέρῳ προσήκει τινὶ γίγνεσθαι, οὐσίας ἁμωσγέπως ἀντεχομένην, ἢ μηδὲν τὸ παράπαν αὐτὴν εἶναι

Because of our dreaming state, we fail to recognize that, since what comes to be are images of forms, they come to be in something else, namely the receptacle. Again, Plato seems to suggest that sensibles are images and appearances of forms, and so resemble them.

Finally, in the *Parmenides*, we find evidence of the view that sensibles are resemblers of forms. It is true, however, that we should be cautious when attempting to attribute a certain view to middle or late Plato based on textual evidence found in the first part of the *Parmenides*. As I explain in Chapter Seven on the Third Man Argument, Plato may be discussing views in this part of the dialogue that he thinks have often been *mistakenly* attributed to him based on his middle dialogues. However, we have seen a great deal of evidence from the middle dialogues suggesting that sensibles are in some way resemblers of forms, and Plato does present the view in the *Parmenides* favorably as what appears most right to Socrates (μάλιστα ἔμοιγε καταφαίνεται) (*Parmenides* 132d1). The view that appears most right is as follows (*Parmenides* 132d1-4):

These forms are just like models set in nature, and other things resemble these and are likenesses, and participation in forms for the other things is not any other thing than being made like them.	τὰ μὲν εἴδη ταῦτα ὥσπερ παραδείγματα ἑστάναι ἐν τῇ φύσει, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα τούτοις ἐοικέναι καὶ εἶναι ὁμοιώματα, καὶ ἡ μέθεξις αὕτη τοῖς ἄλλοις γίγνεσθαι τῶν εἰδῶν οὐκ ἄλλη τις ἢ εἰκασθῆναι αὐτοῖς.

Here, Plato suggests that what it is for something to participate in a form is for that thing to resemble and become a likeness of that form. Participants, then, would clearly be resemblers of forms. Now perhaps we should be reluctant to take this evidence to suggest that the Plato of the middle dialogues thought that participation was *just* for things to come to be like forms. However, given the amount of textual evidence, it seems safe to conclude that whatever view Plato has of exactly what the nature of participation is in the middle dialogues, it will turn out to at least involve participants' resembling forms. For Plato of the middle dialogues, if something participates in the form of F, then at the very least we can say that Plato thinks it will resemble the form. How exactly participants resemble forms is something we will return to shortly.

IV. The Response – Resemblance without Self-Predication

Based on the textual evidence that we have examined, we seem to have established Plato's commitment to the first three premises of the Resemblance Argument (RA) for SP relied on by Gulley, Bostock, and Malcolm. Once again, that argument is as follows:

1. The participants in the form of F are images-imitations-likenesses of the form.
2. Images-imitations-likenesses resemble that of which they are the image-imitation-likeness.
3. So, the participants in the form of F resemble the form of F (insofar as they are participants). [1, 2]
4. If participants in the form of F resemble the form of F (insofar as they are participants), then the resemblance between the participants and the form of F consists in their both being F things.
5. So, the resemblance between the participants and the form of F consists in their both being F things. [3, 4]
6. So, the form of F is itself an F thing. [5]

Many commentators agree with Gulley, Bostock, and Malcolm, that participants in the form of F, sensible (and perhaps non-sensible) Fs, are resemblers of the form.[116] And we have seen considerable textual evidence that seems to establish this point. However, a number of commentators have suggested that this traditional interpretation is incorrect. They contend that Plato does *not* think of sensible objects as resemblers of forms, but rather he attributes this role to form-particularizations alone. If these commentators are correct, this would constitute an adequate response to the main argument of Gulley, Bostock, and Malcolm. If the many Fs, the participants in the form of F, are not resemblers of the form of F, then we can reject RA right at the outset, since premise 1 would be false for Plato.

Some commentators have defended the view that form-particularizations are resemblers of forms. For instance, Silverman claims that form-particularizations are copies of forms and refers to them as "form-copies" (Silverman 2002, 18). John Brentlinger attributes to Plato the following view:

> [A] particular which is round…possesses, as a part, something which, not being roundness, represents or imitates it—stands to it as an image in water stands to the reality which is imaged. (Brentlinger 1972, 68 n. 9)

It is the form-particularizations or what Brentlinger calls the immanent properties that are representations, imitations, or images of forms. Ross claims that a form-particularization is "an imperfect copy of the Idea" and that it "imitates" the Idea

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[116] For instance, Ross claims that "the relation of sensible things to Ideas is thought of as imitation" (Ross 1951, 24). Taylor also defends the view that sensibles are resemblers of forms:

> [S]ensible things are being treated as "imitations" (μιμήματα) of the "form".… It is quite untrue to say that the "imitation" formula only appears in Plato's latest dialogues as an improvement on his earlier formula of "participation". In the *Phaedo* itself Socrates starts with the conception of things as 'imitating' forms.… (Taylor 1936, 188)

N. White also holds that "…Plato arrives at his well-known doctrine that sensible objects are in some sense copies, or poor imitations or replicas, of Forms" (N. White 1976, 68). Allen attributes the view to Plato that "the objects of opinion are the likenesses of Forms in the sensible world" (Allen 1961, 330). Burnet also expresses the view that the "objects of sense" are only "images" of forms (Burnet 1914, 317-8).

(Ross 1951, 30). Now, it must be admitted that what these commentators suggest is consistent with the view that the many Fs, the participants in the form of F, are *also* resemblers of the form. Perhaps these commentators want to attribute to Plato the view that form-particularizations *and* participants are resemblers. But seeing form-particularizations as resemblers in *addition* to participants does not seem to help us with RA.

However, some commentators go further to clearly argue that it is form-particularizations and *not* participants that are resemblers of forms. Raphael Demos argues that form-particularizations or what he calls "empirical" or "actual" forms "imperfectly imitate" "ideal" forms (Demos 1948, 457). Further, he claims that the terms of the imitation relation "are not: actual *thing* and ideal form, but: actual *form* and ideal form" (Demos 1948, 457-8). Particulars are not imitations of forms, but form-particularizations existing in the particulars are. Matthen argues likewise that form-particularizations are copies of forms, and claims that "Equality itself, for example, turns out to be a paradigm not of the bearers of equality, but of the equality relations immanent in sensible things" (Matthen 1984, 294). The suggestion here is that form-particularizations are copies of forms as their models, and particulars are not. McPherran claims that form-particularizations are images and likenesses of forms (McPherran 1988, 534), and adds that "it is *not* particulars but *only* immanent characters that are in fact images of Forms…" (McPherran 1988, 535, my emphasis).[117] He is clear in attributing to Plato the view that "it's not literally *particulars* which are likenesses of forms, but only immanent characters" (McPherran 1984, 31). Now, if these commentators are correct in attributing to Plato the view that

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[117] McPherran expresses the same view in numerous places: "[I]t is immanent characters and not particulars that are images of Forms…" (McPherran 1988, 533). Again, the "F-in-x (and…not the *particular x*) is an image of the Form the F-itself, of which it is a manifestation/particularization" (McPherran 1988, 536). For the same point repeated in another paper with slightly different wording, see McPherran 1984, 32.

form-particularizations and not participants are resemblers of forms, then we can reject premise 1 of RA.

I think these commentators may be right to suggest that sometimes, when Plato refers to resemblers of forms, he has form-particularizations in mind—for instance, perhaps a case could be made that this is what Plato intends in the textual evidence from the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*. However, for our purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that we have seen clear cut evidence of Plato's referring to *particulars* rather than form-particularizations as resemblers. As we saw from Book V of the *Republic* at 476c-d, Plato is clear in saying that the lover of sights and sounds fails to recognize beautiful things (καλὰ πράγματα) as likenesses of the form of beauty. There is no indication that form-particularizations are to be included as relevant "things" in this passage, and Plato has just referred to beautiful things such as "sounds, colors, shapes, and all the things fashioned out of things of this sort" (τάς τε καλὰς φωνὰς ἀσπάζονται καὶ χρόας καὶ σχήματα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργούμενα) (*Republic* 476b4-6). Further, Plato makes clear that it is the things sharing (τὰ μετέχοντα) in the form of beauty that are likenesses of the form. And crucially, F-ness-particularizations (in general) are not the things sharing in the form of F. It is the particular Fs, the things which have the F-ness-particularizations in them, that share or participate in the form of F. So Plato is clear here in referring to the many Fs that participate in the form of F as likenesses of the form.

We also saw a clear reference to particulars as opposed to form-particularizations as resemblers of forms in the Divided Line of Book VI of the *Republic* at 509e-511a. There, Plato suggests that sensible particulars such as animals, plants, and artifacts have their own images in the sensible world. But Plato continues to suggest that these sensible particulars will be used as, and are, images of forms in the intelligible world. Plato is clear in claiming that things like animals, plants, and

artifacts, and not merely the form-particularizations in these sensible particulars, are images of forms.

In the *Parmenides* at 132d, we saw the presentation of the view that participation in forms is merely being made like them, and that participants are likenesses of forms and resemble them. Again, it is not form-particularizations (in general) that participate in the forms of which they are particularizations. Instead, particulars participate in forms and thereby have the relevant form-particularizations in them. So the suggestion here in the *Parmenides* is that it is the many Fs, the participants in the form of F, that are likenesses and resemblers of the form of F.

Given this textual evidence, Demos, Matthen, and McPherran appear to be incorrect to claim that participants are simply not resemblers of forms. They may be right to claim that form-particularizations are *also* form-resemblers (and even that Plato is sometimes referring to form-particularizations in passages involving resemblance talk), but they must admit that Plato thinks participants are somehow resemblers as well. Therefore, there does not seem to be much hope in responding to RA by rejecting premise 1.

How, then, ought we respond to RA, or must we admit that it is definitive in establishing SP? Where RA goes wrong, I think, is in premise 4. Even if it is allowed that participants in the form of F somehow resemble forms insofar as they are its participants, it does not follow that this resemblance consists in both the form's and the participants' being F. How is it that participants are supposed to resemble the forms that they participate in? The first point to recognize about this resemblance is that it is not the participant *as a whole* that resembles the form of F—the participant resembles the form of F insofar as the participant is F. For instance, if the oak tree in my yard is large, the fact that it is large, Plato thinks, is explained by its participation in the form of largeness. What this will involve for Plato, I argued, is the oak tree

having a largeness-particularization in it. I have suggested that there is textual evidence showing that Plato considers *the oak tree*, and not merely *the largeness-particularization* in the oak tree, to be a resembler of the form of largeness. However, it is not the oak tree as a whole that makes it a resembler of the form. It is precisely the largeness of the oak tree that makes the oak tree a resembler of the form of largeness. What should be recognized here is that the resemblance between oak tree and the form of largeness is a complex and somewhat indirect relation—it is the oak tree's largeness that is more simply and directly a resembler of the form of largeness. And the oak tree's largeness is a direct resembler of the form of largeness itself, and not a direct resembler of the form of largeness' largeness. The direct resemblance relation is between the largeness-particularization in the oak tree and the form of largeness, and not between the largeness-particularization in the oak tree and what might be considered another largeness-particularization in the form of largeness itself.

So, the oak tree, the participant in the form of largeness, *is* a resembler of the form of largeness because of its particular largeness, which stands in a more direct resemblance relation to the form of largeness. In other words, the oak tree's being a resembler of the form consists in the oak tree's having within it the-largeness-in-the-oak-tree, which is a more direct resembler of the form. I do not want to suggest here that participants are not resemblers of forms—however, participants are resemblers precisely because they have form-particularizations in them that are direct form-resemblers. Participants, then, can really be thought of as resemblers of forms, but they are perhaps resemblers derivatively, because of the form-particularizations that they have within them.[118]

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[118] Although McPherran is often explicit about his view that participants are *not* resemblers of forms (McPherran 1984, 31, 32, and McPherran 1988, 533, 535, 536), at one point he does suggest the view that participants are resemblers derivatively. He writes that particulars "are only derivatively described as resembling forms" (McPherran 1984, 36). This suggests the view that participants might rightly be described as resembling forms, albeit derivatively, because of the form-particularizations that they have.

If it is because of the participant's F-ness that it is a resembler of the form, then why doesn't it follow that this resemblance involves the form of F's F-ness as well? In other words, why doesn't it follow that the resemblance between participant and form consists in their both being F (since the participant's being F is obviously the relevant feature of the participant)? As I have just argued, the resemblance relation between participant and form is a complex one that involves the simpler and more direct resemblance relation between the form-particularization in the participant and the form of F. It is the form-particularization that is more directly a resembler of the form. But it is crucial to note that (in general) the F-ness-particularization does not seem to be an F thing. It is the F-ness-particularization which, being in the participant, is a key part of what makes the *participant* an F thing. For instance, it seems the-largeness-in-the-oak-tree is not itself a large thing—it is the possession of the-largeness-in-the-oak-tree that makes *the oak tree* a large thing. Since F-ness-particularizations (in general) are not instances of their corresponding forms, are not included in the class of F things, the motivation is lost for thinking that the form must itself be an F thing. The participant that resembles the form of F is an F thing, but it is a resembler *because* of the F-ness-particularization that it has in it. And the F-ness-particularization, which is the direct resembler of the form and is the reason why the participant is a resembler in the first place, is (in general) not itself an F thing. So there is no inclination to say that, because participants are resemblers of forms, the forms must genuinely self-predicate. Once we understand what the resemblance between participant and form of F consists in, we see that their resemblance does not entail that they are both F things. At the very least, this analysis of the resemblance between form and participant allows us to reject premise 4 of RA. Even if participation is or involves a resemblance relation between form and participant, this alone does not *entail* that the resemblance consists in their both being F.

But, as one might anticipate Bostock asking: on the view we have outlined, if the respect of resemblance between the form of F and an *F-ness-particularization* is not in *their* both being F, then what is the respect of resemblance between them? What is it that makes the-largeness-in-the-oak-tree a direct resembler of the form of largeness, since we have suggested that their resemblance does not consist in their both being large things? It must be admitted that, as Plato does not say very much about the nature of form-particularizations, he says even less about how exactly form-particularizations are related to their corresponding forms. If we cannot find Plato explicitly saying what this relation consists in, can we at least anticipate what Plato is likely to have said about it?

McPherran is a strong proponent of the view that Plato posits form-particularizations that are resemblers of forms. But in his paper in which he discusses form-particularizations in the most detail, he claims: "It goes beyond the practical scope of this paper to offer a fully articulated account of the sense in which immanent characters are images of Forms" (McPherran 1988, 536). He goes on to explain the relation in the following sketchy way: "Let me simply characterize this relationship as a matter of immanent character Fs embodying many, but not all, of the properties of their Form the F-itself..." (McPherran 1988, 536).[119] Now this is certainly an unsatisfying account of the nature of the resemblance between form-particularization and form—what we would like is some account of how exactly, when x participates in the form of F, the-F-ness-in-x is a resembler of the form.

Here, I would like to suggest an account of the main ways in which it seems likely that Plato thinks, or ought to think, of form-particularizations as resemblers of forms. Form-particularizations seem to resemble their corresponding forms in the

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[119] He does go on to point to some features shared between forms and their corresponding form-particularizations, and also some features distinguishing them. I discuss these below.

following four respects: (a) essence, (b) logical relations, (c) immutability, and (d)

explanatory role. The first resemblance of essence is fairly straightforward. As I have

argued, an F-ness-particularization and the form of F are not (in general) both F

things, but there is a sense in which they are both "F-nesses". The-largeness-in-

Simmias and the form of largeness are both largenesses, in the sense that they have

analogous essences. For instance, if largeness is exceeding in measure, then the-

largeness-in-Simmias is Simmias' exceeding in measure. The-largeness-in-Simmias

will be a resembler of the form of largeness (i.e., the form of which it is a

particularization[120]) and not a resembler of the form of equality, since the essence of

the form-particularization mirrors the essence of the form of largeness and not that of

the form of equality—the-largeness-in-Simmias is Simmias' exceeding in measure and

not Simmias' sameness of measure. Obviously, the-largeness-in-Simmias is a

largeness-particularization because it is *an* exceeding in measure. Since the essence of

the form is exceeding in measure, the essence of the form-particularization will

resemble that of the form.[121]

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[120] When I say that the-largeness-in-Simmias is a particularization *of* the form of largeness, I just mean that it is one of the many largeness-particularizations that are in each of the many larges. Although the-largeness-in-Simmias is a particularization *of* the form of largeness, it is not a particularization *in* the form of largeness—this largeness-particularization is in Simmias, and not in the form. I do, however, leave open the possibility that forms (as well as form-particularizations) can have form-particularizations in them. In fact, on my interpretation of Plato, since forms and form-particularizations themselves display some features (for which forms exist), they will thereby have form-particularizations in them. In a note in Chapter Two, Section II, I suggest that form-particularizations in forms are examples of form-particularizations that will not be perishable. I discuss form-particularizations that escape generation and destruction shortly.

[121] This resemblance of essence seems to be what some commentators have in mind when they refer to "definition" as one respect of resemblance between form and form-particularization. For instance, Silverman claims that "…Forms are not definitionally separate from their form-copies" (Silverman 2002, 19). And McPherran appears to make a similar point about F-ness-particularizations and the form of F "satisfying" the same "definition" (McPherran 1988, 536). I prefer to refer to this similarity as a similarity of essence rather than definition. And Silverman does refer to it this way in another place when he says: "A Form and its form-copies are alike…in that their essence is the same" (Silverman 2002, 99). This appears to be more appropriate than saying that they have the same definition. For, it seems strange to claim that a form-particularization is even the sort of thing that can have a definition. Can something like Simmias have a definition? Form-particularizations are not exactly like things like Simmias—they are not particulars—but because of their particularity, it seems wrong to claim that they have definitions.

Closely tied to the resemblance of essence is the resemblance of logical relations. What I have in mind here is that F-ness-particularizations have opposites and entailments that correspond to those of the form of F. Plato suggests the point about opposites at *Phaedo* 102d-103b. The opposites in nature correspond to the opposites in us. Simmias is the sort of thing that can have within him, at the same time, opposite form-particularizations, because they are had in relation to different things. Just as the form of largeness is opposite to the form of smallness, the-largeness-in-Simmias is opposite to the-smallness-in-Simmias. Simmias is able to suffer the compresence of opposites, participate in opposite forms, and have the corresponding opposite form-particularizations in him. The key point for our purposes here is that, if the form of F is opposite to the form of G, then an F-ness-particularization will also be opposite to a G-ness-particularization.[122]

And forms and their form-particularizations also have corresponding entailments. For instance, if something participates in the form of largeness, it exceeds in measure, and so it follows that it must have a measure. Likewise, if something has a largeness-particularization in it, it also must have a measure. Let us suppose at least for the sake of our explanation that there is a form of humanity and a form of rationality. It follows that if something participates in the form of humanity, it will also participate in the form of rationality. Likewise, if something has a humanity-particularization, it will also have a rationality-particularization. As Plato points out in the *Phaedo* at 104d, if something is three in number it will also be odd. This fact is again mirrored for forms and form-particularizations (David Keyt 1963, 168). A participant in the form of threeness will also be a participant in the form of oddness,

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[122] McPherran briefly makes this point when he says "both the tallness-in-Simmias and Tallness-itself have 'opposites' (shortness-in-something and Shortness-itself)" (McPherran 1988, 536). And Keyt also proposes that "if two transcendent forms are opposites, the corresponding immanent forms are opposites" (Keyt 1963, 168).

and that which has a threeness-particularization in it will also have an oddness-particularization in it. So, the logical relations among form-particularizations resemble those among their corresponding form.

Above, I suggested that a third sort of resemblance between form-particularization and form is in their immutability. That is perhaps surprising, as the perishability of form-particularizations was one of the features that was used to distinguish them from forms in Chapter Two. But what I have in mind here is not that form-particularizations are, like forms, completely unchanging. Rather, form-particularizations seem to be unchanging like forms in one respect: they do not undergo alteration (Demos 1948, 458). Plato seems committed to the view that sensible particulars undergo both alteration and generation/destruction. These particulars alter when they come to participate or cease to participate in a form, and when they gain or lose form-particularizations. But form-particularizations seem to resemble forms at least insofar as they escape alteration. As Demos explains:

> Properly speaking, alteration is ascribed to the concrete thing only, in so far as it assumes different opposites. So long as empirical forms exist, they remain exactly what they are, without changing. (Demos 1948, 458)

For example, when a metal rod is heated sufficiently, it comes to participate in the form of hotness and to have a hotness-particularization in it. When the rod cools, the rod undergoes alteration, but the hotness-particularization does not. When the rod is no longer hot, the hotness-particularization is destroyed. So while form-particularizations are not entirely immutable like forms, they do seem to resemble forms (as opposed to sensible particulars) at least in being unalterable.

Notice that this third respect of resemblance is crucially distinguishable from the first two. First, this is a way in which form-particularizations *in general* seem to be resemblers of forms *in general*. While the first two respects of resemblance dealt

with how the specific *F*-ness-particularization is a resembler of the specific form of *F*, the feature of resistance to change is more general. Form-particularizations are like forms in general in escaping alteration. But notice also that, perhaps as opposed to the first two features, this is a respect of resemblance in which the form-particularization *seems* necessarily deficient. Perhaps a form-particularization and its corresponding form can non-deficiently mirror one another with respect to their essence and logical relations, but not so with respect to their immutability. While form-particularizations escape alteration like forms, they are not completely unchanging like forms because they undergo generation and destruction. In a sense, form-particularizations are more unchanging than sensibles, but always less unchanging than forms.

However, this is a bit too hasty. It seems there will be some cases of form-particularizations that are not deficient in their resemblance to forms in respect of immutability. For example, it seems that forms can themselves have form-particularizations in them, and these form-particularizations will be entirely unchanging, like the forms they are in. The form of beauty itself is unchanging and so participates in the form of rest. It would seem then that there is a rest-particularization in the form of beauty. But not only does this rest-particularization escape alteration, it also escapes generation and destruction. The rest-particularization-in-the-form-of-beauty does not seem at all deficient in its resemblance to the form of rest, with respect to immutability.[123] And as I suggested, it also seems non-deficient in its resemblance of essence and logical relations. But is there any way in which *all* rest-particularizations fall short in their resemblance to the form of rest?

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[123] Another example of a form-particularization that is perhaps not deficient in its resemblance to its corresponding form, with respect to immutability, is the-life-in-Socrates'-soul. Since Plato seems to think that the soul is immortal, it seems a case could be made that the-life-in-Socrates'-soul will never undergo alteration *or* generation and destruction. Perhaps one would have to assume here that the *Timaeus* story is not meant literally, otherwise souls (and their form-particularizations) would seem to undergo generation.

Now, there will certainly always be ways that form-particularizations are distinguished from their corresponding forms. One obvious way is that form-particularizations are *particularizations* and forms clearly are not. As Silverman notes, "…Forms and their form-copies are not identical; for no property is identical with an instance" (Silverman 2002, 19). And in another place he explains that the particularity of form-particularizations distinguishes them from forms: "Forms differ from form-copies because Forms are general or predicable of many, whereas the form-copy is singular and instantiable at only one place at one time…" (Silverman 2002, 99). There is no worry that some form-particularization, like the rest-particularization-in-the-form-of-beauty, will be completely indistinguishable from its corresponding form, the form of rest.

But even though the particularity of form-particularizations distinguishes them from forms, this distinguishing feature does not have to do with a respect of resemblance between them. What we would like to know is if there is any respect of resemblance between a specific form-particularization and its specific corresponding form, that will always be deficient in some way. Even if all form-particularizations were to undergo generation and destruction, this would not constitute a way in which an *F*-ness-particularization deficiently resembles the form of *F* in particular. Is there any way in which, in respect of resembling the *specific* form that it resembles, a form-particularization must fall short?

In fact, I think there is such a way, and it involves a respect of resemblance that we have seen is very important to Plato. A key feature of forms is their explanatory role. Plato accepts as his safe answer that what explains something's being a certain way is participation in the relevant form, and this participation will involve the possession of a corresponding form-particularization. Both the form and the form-particularization have a key role in the explanation of something's being the

way that it is. So while the form of F and the-F-ness-in-x will not both be F (in general), they will both always be F-explaining. The resemblance between the form of F and the-F-ness-in-x will then not consist in their both being F things, but in part in their both being F-explaining things. But here is a clear way in which the form-particularization will always be deficient in its resemblance to its corresponding form. In a sense, the form of F could be said to be perfectly F-explaining, in the sense that it plays a key role in the explanation of *all* F things' being F. However, while the-F-ness-in-x is F-explaining, it is not perfectly F-explaining in this sense, since it only plays a key role in the explanation of x's being F. The explanation of all large things' being large will involve the form of largeness, but the-largeness-in-Simmias is only relevant in the explanation of Simmias' being large. So form-particularizations will always be deficient in their resemblance to their corresponding forms in respect of their explanatory role, because of the explanatory breadth of forms, and the explanatory narrowness of form-particularizations.

As I have argued, Plato does use resemblance talk suggesting that participants in forms are resemblers of forms. But what Plato means to convey is that participants in forms are resemblers precisely because they have direct resemblers of forms within them, namely form-particularizations. And these form-particularizations are like the forms of which they are particularizations with regard to essence, logical relations, immutability, and explanatory role. As I noted above, Bostock claims that a non-SP theorist owes an account of why Plato finds resemblance talk to be appropriate terminology, and an account of what in the world the resemblance between the form of F and its participants could consist in if not in their both being F. In this chapter, I hope to have provided a sufficient and correct response to Bostock.

CHAPTER SIX

PLATO'S ARGUMENT FOR FORMS IN THE *PHAEDO*

I. Introduction

In the last chapter, we looked at Plato's commitment to there being a resemblance relation between forms and their participants, which commentators have taken as the strongest evidence of a commitment to SP. I argued there that this resemblance relation does not provide any such definitive evidence for attributing SP to Plato. EP then, which involves the denial of SP, is consistent with Plato's view in the middle dialogues that participants are resemblers of forms.

But in addition to relying on the resemblance between forms and participants, SP-theorists have often seen the passage of the Recollection Argument in the *Phaedo* from 72e-77a as containing clear evidence of Plato's commitment to SP.[124] In this passage, which I discussed briefly in Chapter One, Section III, Plato seems to claim that sensible Fs strive to be like the form of F but "fall short" and are "inferior". And in a key argument at *Phaedo* 74b7-c6, Plato seems to suggest that, unlike sensible Fs, the form of F "is F" and "is not opposite-F". Commentators argue that these claims show that in the *Phaedo*, Plato thinks that for all forms, the form of F is an F thing.

Much of this chapter will focus on the question of how we ought to interpret this key argument at 74b7-c6, and whether on a correct interpretation of it, it can rightly be used as evidence for SP and so against EP. This argument at 74b7-c6 is one of the few places in all of Plato's works where we find him presenting what appears to

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[124] For instance, see Taylor 1936, 187; Ross 1951, 23-4; Gulley 1962, 28-40; Owen 1965, 295, 310; Vlastos 1965, 248; Bostock 1986, 90-4; N. White 1987, 67-8; Malcolm 1991, 47, 106, 111-20, 144-5; Fine 1993, 167-8, 332 n. 28. And see Penner 1987, 99, where he discusses the "two locutions" within this passage of the *Phaedo* that "tempt interpreters" to attribute SP to Plato.

be an argument for the existence of forms, or at least an argument for the nonidentity of forms and sensibles. As Gallop stresses in his Notes on the *Phaedo*, "[t]his passage is of the utmost importance for understanding the Theory of Forms…" (Gallop 1975, 121). It is so important because, as Gallop suggests, it should shed light on Plato's underlying motives for positing the existence of nonsensible forms (Gallop 1975, 121). The trouble is that the text here is notoriously difficult to interpret, and commentators have suggested many different nuanced ways of understanding it. However, as far as I can tell, a satisfactory interpretation of the argument has not been provided.

      Now to be sure, the argument for forms that Plato intends here might not have been a good one, and so it seems wrong to rule out an interpretation on the basis of the fact that it makes the argument a poor one.[125] But according to a satisfactory interpretation of the argument, *at the very least*, the argument should involve premises to which Plato is committed in the *Phaedo* (and perhaps other middle dialogues), or at least it should not involve premises that he clearly rejects there. Further, in the spirit of charity, if we are considering two or more possible construals of the argument, we ought not to attribute a worse argument to Plato *without any reason* for doing so. So for instance, if the text can consistently be read in such a way that the argument is valid *or* such that it is invalid, we ought to favor the valid interpretation, if there is no evidence pushing us in the other direction. Ideally, what we are looking for is an interpretation of the argument that is consistent with the Greek text, according to which all of the premises are ones that Plato would accept, and, at the very least,

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[125] In fact, I think that the argument will not be very successful against the nominalist according to any interpretation of it, because it will simply beg the question. The argument involves premises that a nominalist would never accept. Rather than an argument intended to convince nonbelievers that forms do exist, I think Plato uses this argument to set out one of *his* main reasons for positing forms. Then later on in the *Phaedo*, he goes on to defend the controversial premises which are simply assumed in the argument.

according to which it is a valid argument. And as far as I can tell, no such interpretation has been offered. I will attempt to offer such an interpretation in this chapter.

Now, as Gallop puts it, this passage "has become a notorious philosophical crux" (Gallop 1975, 121). Many different interpretations of this argument have been offered by commentators, and it would be tedious and unfruitful to examine all of them here. What we will examine are especially good examples of the two most popular lines of interpretation. The many different interpretations of the argument are divided on whether they see Plato as arguing for forms on the basis of an epistemological *or* an ontological contrast between forms and sensibles. The epistemological interpretations take the argument to focus on a contrast between how forms and sensibles *appear*, while the ontological interpretations take the argument to focus on a contrast between how forms and sensibles *are*.

First, I will discuss the epistemological reading defended most recently by David Sedley in 2007 in a paper called "Equal Sticks and Stones" and by Svavar Svavarsson in 2009 in a paper called "Plato on Forms and Conflicting Appearances". Second, I will examine the ontological reading defended by Terence Irwin in 2000 in a paper called "The Theory of Forms" (Irwin 2000, esp. 154-163). I will argue that both the Sedley/Svavarsson and the Irwin interpretations are unsatisfactory because, at least in part, they involve premises that Plato clearly rejects in the *Phaedo* and other middle dialogues. I will go on to present my own interpretation of the argument. I will outline the benefits of my interpretation and discuss the possible costs, which, as I see it, are relatively minor. My hope is that we will finally have a satisfactory interpretation of this stubborn argument—and on the interpretation of the argument that I will defend, the text can be seen to provide no evidence for SP, and so no evidence against EP. Finally, I will end the chapter by arguing that we ought to

interpret Plato's claims at 74d4-75b9, that sensibles "fall short" of forms and are "inferior" to them, in light of our interpretation of the preceding argument at 74b7-c6. By doing so, we will see that these claims also fail to provide evidence for a commitment to SP, and so are consistent with EP.

II. Interpreting the Text

Let us look at the text in question including the main argument and the discussion that leads up to it, at *Phaedo* 74a9-c6:

Consider then, he said, whether this is the case. We say, I suppose, that there is some *equal*. I do not mean a stick to a stick nor a stone to a stone nor any other thing of the things of this sort, but there is something different beyond all these things, namely the equal itself: are we to say that it is something or nothing?

Indeed by Zeus, let us certainly say it is something, Simmias said.

Yes and do we know what it itself is?

Indeed, he said.

From where did we acquire the knowledge of it? Isn't it from the things we were saying just now, from seeing either sticks or stones or some other equal things, from these we have thought of that thing which is different from these? Or does it not appear different to you? But consider also in this way: don't equal stones and sticks sometimes, although being the same, appear equal to one, but not equal to another?

Certainly.

What then? Is there a time when the equals themselves ever appeared unequal to you, or equality inequality?

Never, Socrates.

Then these equals and the equal itself are not the same, he said.

They do not at all appear the same to me, Socrates.

Σκόπει δή, ἦ δ' ὅς, εἰ ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχει. φαμέν πού τι εἶναι ἴσον, οὐ ξύλον λέγω ξύλῳ οὐδὲ λίθον λίθῳ οὐδ' ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ ταῦτα πάντα ἕτερόν τι, αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον· φῶμέν τι εἶναι ἢ μηδέν;

Φῶμεν μέντοι νὴ Δί’, ἔφη ὁ Σιμμίας, θαυμαστῶς γε.

Ἦ καὶ ἐπιστάμεθα αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστιν;

Πάνυ γε, ἦ δ' ὅς.

Πόθεν λαβόντες αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐπιστήμην; ἆρ' οὐκ ἐξ ὧν νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, ἢ ξύλα ἢ λίθους ἢ ἄλλα ἄττα ἰδόντες ἴσα, ἐκ τούτων ἐκεῖνο ἐνενοήσαμεν, ἕτερον ὂν τούτων; ἢ οὐχ ἕτερόν σοι φαίνεται; σκόπει δὲ καὶ τῇδε. ἆρ' οὐ λίθοι μὲν ἴσοι καὶ ξύλα ἐνίοτε ταὐτὰ ὄντα τῷ μὲν ἴσα φαίνεται, τῷ δ' οὔ;

Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

Τί δέ; αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα ἔστιν ὅτε ἄνισά σοι ἐφάνη, ἢ ἡ ἰσότης ἀνισότης;

Οὐδεπώποτέ γε, ὦ Σώκρατες.

Οὐ ταὐτὸν ἄρα ἐστίν, ἦ δ' ὅς, ταῦτά τε τὰ ἴσα καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον.

Οὐδαμῶς μοι φαίνεται, ὦ Σώκρατες.

There are numerous difficult issues of interpretation in this argument, but here I will focus on the one issue that has consistently determined whether commentators see the argument as drawing an epistemological or an ontological contrast between forms and sensibles. The issue I have in mind here is how we should understand Plato's use of the verb φαίνεσθαι or "appear" within the argument.[126] The trouble is that there are two widely attested uses of this verb in the Greek, a nonveridical use and a veridical use.[127] According to the nonveridical use of φαίνεσθαι, the verb is usually accompanied by an infinitive, and it means that something *appears* or *seems* to be F, but may or may not actually be F. Perhaps two pieces of chalk *appear* to be equal in length, but they may or may not in fact be equal in length. According to the veridical use of φαίνεσθαι, on the other hand, the verb is usually accompanied by a participle, and it means that something is *manifestly* or *evidently* F, in a way that entails that it *is* F. If those two pieces of chalk are manifest as being equal in length or are manifestly equal in length, then it follows that they really are equal in length.

The difficulty is that in the passage at hand in the *Phaedo*, no infinitive or participle is supplied and so from the perspective of grammar, we do not have any sign of whether the veridical or nonveridical reading is intended. So how are we to decide between the two uses, and what affect will this have on the interpretation of the argument as a whole?

I will return below to the question of why we ought to favor, in my view, the nonveridical reading of φαίνεσθαι in the argument. As I suggested already, the issue of

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[126] Some other important questions of interpretation are whether the τῷ/τῷ are masculine or neuter or why Plato uses the expression αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα to refer to what it seems must be the form of equality. Briefly, I think there is good reason to read the τῷ/τῷ as masculine given that we find σοι with a form of φαίνεσθαι in the next step of the argument, and because a form of φαίνεσθαι is accompanied by ἡμῖν in the "resumption" of the argument at 74d5-7. And I think Plato uses αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα to refer to the form of equality just because of the fact that plurality is part of the essence of equality. Equal is a two-place predicate which (usually) relates two or more things. He also uses analogous plural expressions when referring to the form of similarity (*Parmenides* 129b), two, three and four (*Phaedo* 104a-c), ten (*Cratylus* 432a9-10), and five (*Theaetetus* 196a2), all forms that have plurality as part of their essence.
[127] See Irwin 1977, 318-9 n. 29; Bostock 1986, 73; and Sedley 2007, 80.

how we should take φαίνεσθαι has consistently determined whether commentators read the argument as drawing an epistemological or ontological contrast between forms and sensibles. Commentators who see φαίνεσθαι in its nonveridical use have favored the epistemological reading of the argument, while those who see φαίνεσθαι in its veridical use have favored the ontological reading. However, on the interpretation of the argument that I will argue for below, φαίνεσθαι is being used nonveridically and yet the argument is still drawing an *ontological* contrast between forms and sensibles. We will soon see how exactly that works in the argument.

III. The Epistemological Interpretation with Nonveridical φαίνεσθαι

For now, let us look at the *epistemological* interpretation of the argument favored by Sedley and Svavarsson, who do take Plato to use φαίνεσθαι *nonveridically* in the argument. (As we will see, I think they have good reason to take φαίνεσθαι this way, but they are wrong in thereby taking an epistemological reading of the argument.) According to them, what Plato is arguing is that forms and sensibles must be distinct because, while sensibles *appear* a certain way to observers, forms do not. In particular, sensible equals appear unequal to observers, while the form of equality never appears unequal to anyone. Loosely speaking, the form never appears to anyone to *have the property that is opposite to itself.* So for instance, the form of beauty never appears to anyone to be ugly. But sensible beautifuls, while appearing beautiful, also appear ugly. Because of this disparity in appearances, the form of equality and sensible equals must be distinct. Shortly after this argument, at *Phaedo* 75c10-d4,

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Plato makes it clear that his argument here is no more about equality than it is about any of the forms[128], and so the argument can be formalized more generally as follows:

<u>Sedley/Svavarsson</u> – <u>Argument from Conflicting Appearances</u>

(S1)   Sensible Fs appear F to one person and opposite-F to another person.
(S2)   The form of F never appears opposite-F to anyone.
(S3)   Therefore, the form of F and sensible Fs are not the same.

So what is wrong with this particular epistemological interpretation of the argument? One problem that commentators have noticed is that the argument seems to be fallacious on this sort of reading.[129] Even Sedley, who argues that this is the correct interpretation of Plato's argument, claims that the argument is fallacious because it "would turn on the different phenomenologies of sensible and intelligible equality" (Sedley 2007, 78). The verb 'appear' in its nonveridical use introduces an intentional context according to which x and y may be identical even though something is true of x and not of y (Sedley 2007, 78). An example might help make this point clearer. Consider the following argument:

(A)   Clark Kent appears to be Superman to (a few) people and not to be Superman to (most) people.
(B)   Superman never appears not to be Superman to anyone.
(C)   Therefore, Superman and Clark Kent are not the same.

This argument is invalid because Superman and Clark Kent can be identical even though it appears to some people that Clark Kent is not Superman. These are just the people who are unaware of the fact that Clark Kent and Superman are identical.[130]

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[128] The argument should apply at least to all those forms for which there is an opposite. The main point of the argument as I understand it, however, that forms and sensibles are distinct because forms are explainers and sensibles are not, applies in the case of *all* forms.
[129] See Irwin 1977, 319 n. 29.
[130] Here is another helpful example:

(1)   The highest mountain on Earth has appeared to some to be on the Nepal-Tibet border and has appeared to others to be in Alaska (to those who mistakenly take Mount McKinley to be the highest mountain on Earth).
(2)   Mount Everest has never appeared to anyone to be in Alaska.
(3)   Therefore, Mount Everest is not the highest mountain on Earth.

(Continued on next page…)

Likewise, according to Plato's argument as Sedley and Svavarsson understand it, the form of equality and sensible equals might be identical even though it appears to people that sensible equals are unequal and it never appears to anyone that the form of equality is unequal. Perhaps the fact that it never appears to anyone that the form of equality is unequal stems in some way from the fact that they are all unaware that the form is just identical to sensible equals (in some way). If they knew about this identity, then the form of equality *would* appear unequal to them.

So the point is that the argument is invalid according to the Sedley/Svavarsson interpretation because (S1) and (S2) are consistent with (S3) being false. However, as I have already noted, Sedley recognizes the invalidity and still thinks that this is the argument we ought to attribute to Plato. He argues that we should not assume that Plato was "fully alive to the nature of the particular fallacy involved" (Sedley 2007, 81). According to Sedley, we still should attribute this invalid argument to Plato.[131]

Again, it is just the people relying on a mistaken belief for whom the highest mountain on Earth appears to be in Alaska.

[131] Some commentators attempt to provide a *valid* epistemological interpretation with nonveridical φαίνεσθαι. Two of the best examples are from Penner and N. White. Penner sees the argument as drawing the following epistemological contrast between sensible equals like equal sticks and the form of equality: "confusability and unconfusability with the relevant opposite number—unequal sticks and the unequal itself respectively" (Penner 1987, 186; also see 13-4, 75, 85-7, 100, 105-6, 121, 185-6). Sensible equals are confusable with their relevant opposite number, sensible unequals, while the form of equality is not confusable with its relevant opposite number, the form of inequality. If sensibles are really such that they are confusable and forms are such that they are not, then the argument *seems* to involve a valid application of Leibniz's Law. However the argument may still be invalid, as 'relevant opposite number' seems to have a different meaning as applied to sensibles and to forms (Bostock 1986, 84; and N. White 1987, 202-3). The form of inequality is the relevant opposite number of the form of equality, in being its contrary, but sensible unequals (which Penner takes to refer to particulars) are not contraries of sensible equals. The premises of the argument seem to be that the form is unconfusable with its contrary, while sensible equals are confusable with sensibles exhibiting the property contrary to equality. And from these premises it does not seem one can validly conclude that forms and sensibles are distinct. Another weakness of this interpretation is that it involves premises that seem to be ones Plato rejects: does Plato think that sensibles are confusable with their relevant opposite number and forms are not? Might forms sometimes be confused with their opposites in cases in which they are only grasped hazily? Penner seems to anticipate this criticism by clarifying the argument by saying that forms are unconfusable "when they are presented clearly to the mind in the appropriate way", but sensibles are confusable "even when [they] are presented clearly to our mind in the appropriate way" (Penner 1987, 185). But it seems as if, in ideal conditions, both forms and sensibles may be unconfusable, and in less than ideal conditions, they may both be confusable—so the relevant epistemological contrast does not seem to hold. (*Continued on next page…*)

I do agree with Sedley that we cannot simply assume that Plato never presents a fallacious argument. Showing that this argument is fallacious is not sufficient to show that it was not Plato's own. However, I do think we have a stronger reason to reject the Sedley/Svavarsson interpretation, a reason that, as far as I can tell, has not been discussed in the extensive literature on the argument. Although Plato may have argued fallaciously at times, we ought not to attribute to Plato an argument that involves premises that he clearly rejects at the very time he is presenting the argument. But, I think, this is exactly what Sedley and Svavarsson do, because Plato rejects (S2). Plato thinks that there are some cases in which the form of F *will be* opposite-F, or in other words, will be an instance of its opposite form. Since these forms *are* opposite-F, and at least some people are aware of this, these forms *will appear* opposite-F to some people. *Some* of the examples of such forms are ones that are only discussed in dialogues other than the *Phaedo*, such as the forms of the same (ταὐτὸν) and the different (θάτερον), the forms of likeness (ὁμοιότης) and unlikeness (ἀνομοιότης), and the form of change (κίνησις). The form of the same will be *different* from other forms, and as this *Phaedo* argument would show in the case of the form of the same, the form of the same will also be nonidentical or different from sensible sames—sensible instances of the form of the same. The form of the different will be the same as itself.

N. White provides a related interpretation of the argument (N. White 1987, 203): The form of equality is "incapable of appearing, from any point of view, indistinguishable from inequality", but if it were identical to one (or more) sensible equals, it would be ("in the relevant way") indistinguishable from inequality. Therefore, the form and sensibles must be distinct. The argument *seems* to be valid, but faces a familiar objection. Does Plato really think that the form of F is incapable of appearing indistinguishable from the form of opposite-F? White clarifies that this holds at least when the form is "had in mind" (N. White 1987, 208), but this clarification does not seem to help. Plato seems committed to the view that even when the form of F is had in mind, it *can* appear indistinguishable from the form of opposite-F, to someone who has the form in mind but is confused about its nature. Further, the argument may be invalid on White's interpretation. The argument according to White suggests that if the form of equality were identical to sensible equals and the form of inequality were identical to sensible unequals, then the two forms *would appear indistinguishable* "in the relevant way". But how does this follow? Even if both forms appear equal and unequal (which is the relevant point that White takes to follow), it is unclear how they would be indistinguishable from one another in any relevant way. Even if they both appear equal and unequal, it could be the case that they always appear distinguishable when they are (sufficiently) had in mind.

The form of likeness will be *unlike* other things in numerous ways and the form of

unlikeness will be *like* other forms, for instance, in numerous ways. And the form of

change will be at rest and unchanging, because this is true of all forms (*Phaedo* 78e,

79d). These are all examples of forms for which (S2) will be false, but the argument is

intended to generalize to all forms.

One might respond that, since these are forms that Plato only discusses in later

dialogues, perhaps he is not committed to their existence in the *Phaedo*, or is not

aware of such a commitment. Perhaps (S2) will be true for all of the forms that Plato

explicitly recognizes at the time of the *Phaedo*. (Note however that it seems very

unlikely for Plato to posit the existence of the forms of equality and inequality and yet

not to recognize the existence of the closely related forms of sameness and difference.

Since equality is sameness of measure (*Parmenides* 140b7-8) and inequality is

difference of measure, it seems unlikely that Plato would posit the existence of one set

of forms and not the other.)

However, there are two forms discussed explicitly in the *Phaedo* itself that will

be instances of their opposite forms.[132] I have in mind here the form of the even[133] (ἡ

τοῦ ἀρτίου ἰδέα) and the form of plurality (τὸ πλῆθος).[134][135] In the middle dialogues,

and later as well, Plato holds that every form is one and a unity.[136] Vlastos argues that

every form in Plato's system must be "unitary" (Vlastos 1981, 259) and that Plato

would have found it absolutely unacceptable for a form not to have "unity" and so not

to be "*one* Form, *one* number, *one* being, and so forth" (Vlastos 1981, 337). In the

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[132] Much of what I say in this section is repeating points discussed in Chapter One, Section III.

[133] Plato clearly discusses this form in the *Phaedo* at 104b3-e9, 104d14, e1, and 105a6.

[134] The form of plurality is discussed at 101b6. Plato argues there that ten is more numerous than eight on account of numerousness or plurality.

[135] Plato discusses the form of the whole (τὴν τοῦ ὅλου) at *Phaedo* 105b2. If Plato accepts that all forms are wholes, then the opposite form, perhaps the form of parthood, would seem to be another example of a form posited at the time of the *Phaedo* that is an instance of its opposite form. If all forms are wholes, then the form of parthood will also be a whole.

[136] See *Republic* 476a3-7, 507b5-6, *Phaedo* 78c1-9, *Timaeus* 35a1-2, *Philebus* 15a1-b8.

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Phaedo, Plato argues that all forms are noncomposite (ἀσύνθετον) (*Phaedo* 78c1-9) and uniform (μονοειδὲς) (*Phaedo* 78d5). In the *Republic*, he asserts that the beautiful and the ugly are each one (ἓν), and he immediately generalizes this claim to all forms (πάντων τῶν εἰδῶν) adding that each of them is itself one (ἓν) (*Republic* 476a3-7). At another point later in the *Republic* at 507b5-6, Plato again claims that each form is one (μίαν).[137]

Now, there is some question as to what exactly Plato means when he claims that all forms are one. But for our purposes, we only need that Plato thinks every form is one in number—and he does appear to be committed to this claim in the middle dialogues, even if he thinks there are *additional* ways in which every form is "one". What follows from all this is that the form of the even will itself be one in number. Plato argues in the *Phaedo* at 101c2-7, that whatever is one must share in oneness (μονάδος). It follows that since the form of the even is one, it shares in oneness. Further, Plato claims that oneness (μονάς) is such that it always brings with it oddness (περιττὸς) (*Phaedo* 105c4-5).[138] So, since the form of the even shares in oneness and is one in number, it follows that the form of the even is odd in number. This result also follows from how Plato defines evenness and oddness in the *Euthyphro*. There he suggests that something is odd in number if it has a number that is not divisible into two equal parts or whole numbers (*Euthyphro* 12d). Anything that is one in number, like the form of the even, will therefore be odd in number because its number is not divisible into two equal whole numbers. Since the form of the even is odd in number, it is another counterexample to (S2), and one that Plato explicitly talks about and is committed to in the *Phaedo*.

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[137] Also see *Philebus* 15a1-b8, where Plato suggests that forms are unities (ἑνάδων and μονάδας) and repeatedly suggests that they are one (ἓν). And see *Timaeus* 35a1-2, where Plato suggests that forms are indivisible (ἀμερίστου).
[138] See O'Brien 1967, 224-5, on this point, who takes Plato to be asserting here that "oneness entails oddness".

This point is even more direct and obvious in the case of the form of plurality (or multitude or numerousness), which Plato contrasts with its opposite, the form of one (*Parmenides* 129d). Since Plato is committed to the claim that every form is one, the form of plurality will also be one. So the form of plurality will be an instance of its opposite form, is discussed explicitly in the *Phaedo* at 101b6, and is another counterexample to (S2). And it hardly seems possible for Plato to have explicitly posited the existence of the form of plurality and to have explicitly held that all forms are one, and yet not to have recognized that it would follow that the form of plurality is one. No, we should not attribute such carelessness to Plato, unless we are forced somehow to do so.

Since it is reasonable to claim that Plato rejects (S2) in the *Phaedo*, in the case of a number of forms, we ought not to attribute an argument to Plato that relies on (S2). Note that there seems to be evidence in the *Phaedo* that Plato also rejects (S1). Remember (S1) holds that sensible Fs appear F and opposite-F. But, for example, Plato holds that fire always brings with it the hot, and will never admit the cold, but will withdraw or perish at the approach of cold (*Phaedo* 103d). Plato seems committed to the view that sensible instances of fire will always be hot and will never be or even appear cold. Plato's argument in our passage is supposed to generalize to the forms of the hot and the cold, but not all sensible hots will be or appear cold (and not all sensible colds will be or appear hot). It seems Plato rejects (S1) as well as (S2) in the *Phaedo*, and we ought not to attribute them to him. So the Sedley/Svavarsson interpretation is unsatisfactory. Again, we should try to find an interpretation of the argument according to which it does not involve premises that Plato clearly rejects. Is such an interpretation possible that will be consistent with the text?

IV. The Ontological Interpretation with Veridical φαίνεσθαι

Irwin, partly in an effort to avoid uncharitably attributing a fallacious argument to Plato, argues for an interpretation that involves the veridical rather than the nonveridical use of the verb φαίνεσθαι or "appear", and an ontological contrast being drawn between forms and sensibles. This way, we will avoid the problems that follow from the introduction of an intentional context. So Plato's point in the argument is that sensible equals do not merely *appear* equal and unequal, but they are manifestly or evidently equal and unequal, and so they *are* equal and unequal. On the other hand, the form of equality is never manifestly or evidently unequal, because it is not unequal. But there are some further intricacies of Irwin's interpretation. He argues that Plato does not think that all *particular* sensible Fs are in fact both F and opposite-F (Irwin 2000, 156-63), and so the first premise of the argument is a bit more complicated than it might at first seem. For instance, there are particular cases of justice that are simply just—a *particular* case of someone returning what he has borrowed might simply be just and in no way unjust. And so, when Plato talks about sensible equals or sensible Fs in the first step of the argument, Irwin takes him to be referring not to particular F things, but to properties—and types and not tokens of these properties. *Returning what one has borrowed* is both just and unjust, while a particular case of this might simply be just. And bright color, for instance, is both beautiful and ugly. But there is one additional feature of Irwin's interpretation. He argues that Plato "seems to mean the same by saying" that bright color is both beautiful and ugly and that bright color *makes* things beautiful and ugly (Irwin 2000, 163). So Irwin seems to suggest that within the argument, Plato uses 'is F' in a special manner to *somehow* mean the same thing as "is F-making" or "makes things F". As we have seen, our EP provides an explanation of the way Plato may be doing just this.

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According to EP, Plato sometimes uses 'is F' simply as shorthand for "is F-explaining" or "is F-making".

So on Irwin's interpretation, Plato's point in his argument is that "sensible equals" or certain sensible properties are equal-making and unequal-making, whereas the form of equality is never unequal-making (and perhaps is always equal-making). For example, *being three inches in length* is a property that sometimes makes things equal, as in the case of two sticks that are both three inches in length, but sometimes makes things unequal, as in the case of one stick that is five inches in length and another that is three inches in length. Because of this distinction in their explanatory roles, the form of equality and the sensible properties are not identical. Once generalized, the argument on Irwin's interpretation can be formalized as follows:

Irwin – Argument from Explanatory Compresence of Opposites

(I1)   Sensible Fs (where this refers to sensible properties)[139] are F-making and opposite-F-making.
(I2)   The form of F is never opposite-F-making.
(I3)   Therefore, the form of F and sensible Fs are not the same.

Although this interpretation of the argument succeeds in avoiding the fallacy that we found in Sedley/Svavarsson, I think it is still not a correct interpretation of Plato's argument. The strongest reason for rejecting this interpretation is that Plato is clear in the *Phaedo* that he rejects premise (I1). In the *Phaedo*, Plato provides a sketch of his view of what it is that explains things' being F.[140] At least in those cases of an 'F' for which Plato posits a form, the unique explanation of things' being F is participation in the form of F. Plato argues that "if any other thing is beautiful except the beautiful itself, it is not beautiful on account of another single thing than because it shares in that beautiful" (*Phaedo* 100c4-6). And Plato quickly generalizes this claim

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[139] Examples of sensible beautifuls would be bright color and symmetry. What (I1) says is not that bright color is bright-color-making and dull-color-making for example, but that bright color is beautiful-making and ugly-making. Therefore, it is different from the form of beauty, which is never ugly-making.

[140] A more detailed discussion of what follows is in Chapter Three, Section V.

to all forms. In addition, he claims that beautiful things become beautiful *by* the beautiful (*Phaedo* 100e2-3), larger things are larger by and on account of largeness and smaller things are smaller by and on account of smallness (*Phaedo* 101a1-5). He argues that there is no other way of something becoming F than by participating in the particular reality (οὐσίας) corresponding to each, and so for instance, there is no other explanation (αἰτίαν) of something becoming two than by participation in the form of two (*Phaedo* 101c2-5). Finally, he claims that no other thing *makes* (ποιεῖ) something beautiful than participation in that beautiful (*Phaedo* 100d4-6). Plato simply does not think that sensible properties actually make things the way they are or explain their being that way.[141] *Being three inches in length* neither makes things equal nor does it make things unequal. *Having a bright color* neither makes things beautiful nor

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[141] It is absolutely crucial to note that I mean something special by "sensible properties", "sensible Fs", and "sensibles", here and throughout the rest of this chapter. I argued in Chapter Two, Section II, that some form-particularizations might be perceivable, and I used this as at least one reason for distinguishing form-particularizations from forms. But it was important to my arguments in Chapter Three, Section V, and Chapter Five, Section IV, that form-particularizations are explainers in addition to forms. It seems to follow that some sensibles *are* capable of being explainers, and I seem to be arguing the exact opposite in this chapter. The crucial thing to note is that I do not intend to be counting form-particularizations as what I am calling "sensibles" or "sensible property-tokens" here, even if they might be perceivable. What I mean by "sensible properties" here are things like *having a bright color* in relation to beauty, or *being three inches in length* in relation to equality. *Having a bright color* might be considered a "sensible beautiful" in the sense that it is a sensible property that sometimes constitutes beauty and sometimes constitutes ugliness. An F-ness-particularization, on the other hand, never constitutes opposite-F-ness, and so it would not be included as what I am calling a "sensible" throughout this chapter, even if it turns out to be perceivable. (Notice that by saying that an F-ness-particularization never constitutes opposite-F-ness, I am assuming that an F-ness-particularization-in-x is not identical to a "sensible property"-instance that might constitute F-ness in x. For instance, I assume that the-being-three-inches-in-length-in-that-stick is not identical to the-equality-in-that-stick, even if the-being-three-inches-in-length-in-that-stick (partly or even completely) constitutes equality in that stick. The stick's equality is always distinct from its being three inches in length. If the-being-three-inches-in-length-in-that-stick were taken to be identical to the-equality-in-that-stick, then the-equality-in-that-stick could also constitute inequality, since the-being-three-inches-in-length-in-that-stick does. But in my view, F-ness-particularizations themselves only constitute F-ness.) "Sensible property-tokens" will then be tokens of *these* kinds of properties, like *having a bright color*, and not perceivable tokens of *any* properties whatsoever. Tokens of forms themselves, even if they may be perceivable, are not included in the "sensibles" that are being distinguished from forms in the argument at 74b7-c6. The argument here is not intended to distinguish forms from their form-particularizations—that would require a different argument. Here Plato seems to be distinguishing the form of F from what might be some combination of F particulars, sensible properties that constitute F-ness and its opposite, and perhaps the property-instances of *these* properties.

ugly.[142] It is only the form of equality that makes thing equal and the form of inequality that makes thing unequal (and their corresponding form-particularizations).[143] And it is only the form of beauty and ugliness that make things beautiful or ugly (and their corresponding form-particularizations). So Plato rejects (I1) because he does not think that sensible properties can be F-making and opposite-F-making. Sensibles properties cannot be "makers" or explainers at all.

But perhaps there is a way to rescue Irwin's interpretation, by weakening the reading of "is F" in the argument such that (I1) will be true. Although Plato thinks that sensible properties such as *being three inches in length* do not *make* things equal or *explain* their being equal, he surely must think that the sensible property has *something* to do with the equality of two three-inch-long pieces of chalk. Although sensible properties will not *explain* things' being F, as Irwin points out, they certainly can be present in F things and can be *connected* with their being F (Irwin 2000, 161). *Being three inches in length* certainly appears to be connected to the fact that those two three-inch-long pieces of chalk are equal in length. But how exactly is *being three inches in length* connected to those pieces of chalk's being equal? It seems that in the case of two pieces of chalk that are both three inches in length, *being three inches in length* expresses, realizes, or constitutes the equality of the pieces of

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[142] Fine appears to recognize this point. Initially, she writes that "endurance is courageous and not courageous in so far as it explains why some things are courageous and why other things are not" (Fine 1993, 52). However, she clarifies in a note:

> More precisely, Socrates believes that endurance no more explains why one thing is courageous than why another thing is not. For in his view the only real—or, at least, the ultimate—explanation of anything's being F is the one thing by which all Fs are F. But it will be convenient to speak as I do in the text. (Fine 1993, 270 n. 36)

Admittedly, this leaves open the possibility that other things might be explainers and just not "real" or "ultimate" explainers. But Plato does seem to emphasize that participation in the form of F is the only adequate explanation of things' being F. Strictly speaking, sensible properties cannot be explainers at all.

[143] Forms and form-particularizations make things F because they play key roles in the explanation of things' being F, namely participation in the form of F, which involves the possession of form-particularizations (Chapter Three, Section V). They are suitable as makers or explainers, and sensible properties are not, because they nontrivially escape explanatory compresence.

chalk.[144] However, in a case in which we have one three inch and one five inch piece of chalk, *being three inches in length* (at least partly) seems to express, realize, or constitute the inequality of the two unequal pieces of chalk.

So we may have found a way of rescuing Irwin's interpretation. Perhaps we can read "is F" throughout the argument, not as "is F-making", but rather as "is F-constituting". The argument would be that, while a sensible property such as *being three inches in length* constitutes equality and constitutes inequality, the form of equality never constitutes inequality. Therefore, the sensible property and the form of equality must be distinct. Once generalized, the argument can be formalized as follows:

Argument from Compresence of Opposite Constituting

(I1')   Sensible Fs (where this refers to sensible properties) are F-constituting and opposite-F-constituting.

(I2')   The form of F is never opposite-F-constituting.

(I3')   Therefore, the form of F and sensible Fs are not the same.

It seems we have now resolved the difficulties faced by the original (I1). The first premise no longer asserts that sensible properties *make* things F or *explain* their being F, but just that they constitute F-ness in particular cases.

However, there is a new difficulty, now concerning the second premise. It is often thought that although Plato only explicitly makes the negative claim, in the second step of the argument, that the form of equality "*is not* unequal", he also intends a positive claim about the form. He means to point out that the form of equality also "*is* equal". And there is good evidence for this view, which I will examine in more detail shortly, right after the argument at 74d5-7: here Plato sums up the argument by saying that there is a difference between how sensible equals "are equal" and how the

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[144] Fine suggests such a view:

> Beauty, for example, is not identical or reducible to any sensible properties such as bright colouring or circular shape. Though such properties might *constitute* or *realize* beauty in a particular case, none is what beauty is. (Fine 2003, 283, my emphasis)

form of equality "*is equal*". Since Plato intends to say that the form of equality both

"is equal and is not unequal", these two claims need to receive "the same reading".

While (I2') seemed true, the reading in this premise is false when applied to the

positive claim about the form. The form of equality does not constitute equality in

particular cases of equal things—rather it *is* equality. This "constituting" reading then

cannot be correct because Plato would not accept the implied point in the second

premise.[145] The form of F is not the sort of thing that constitutes F-ness in particular

cases.[146]

     It is difficult to see how we could possibly tweak the Irwin-style interpretation

such that Plato would accept both of the premises. And in addition to the question of

whether Plato accepts the premises, there are some other reasons for doubting Irwin's

interpretation of the argument. First, it seems very unlikely to take "sensible Fs" in

the argument to be restricted only to sensible properties. If we look at Plato's text

itself, he claims that it is *stones* and *sticks* which are (or appear) equal and unequal,

and these seem to be clear cases of sensible particulars as opposed to properties such

as *being three inches in length* and *having a bright color*. It is very unlikely that Plato

is referring to the *properties* of *being a stone* or *being a stick*, since it would be strange

to say that the property of *being a stone* is equal or makes things equal. Instead, one

would expect the relevant sensible properties to be things like *being three inches in*

length or *weighing five pounds*. Second, the nonveridical interpretation of φαίνεσθαι

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[145] Perhaps it seems that the form of equality might constitute equality in particular cases? Maybe sameness of measure trivially constitutes equality in every instance, since it is equality. A further difficulty with the "constituting" interpretation is that Plato may reject (I1') in the case of some sensible properties. Would Plato accept that *being fire* is a sensible property that constitutes hotness in some cases? If so, then this will be a counterexample to (I1'), since Plato clearly thinks *being fire* will never constitute coldness. But presumably, *being fire* is not going to count as a sensible property at all.

[146] One might think that we should just weaken our reading even further to "connected with". Sensible properties are connected with things' being equal and connected with things' being unequal. This seems true, but then the second premise is rendered false. It seems that the form of equality will be *connected with* things' being unequal. The fact that those two pieces of chalk are equal in length is connected with the fact that they are unequal in length to some third piece of chalk.

seems more natural, especially given the fact that the "appearances" are indexed to observers. (However, I think Irwin and Fine are correct to point out that the masculine datives do not *entail* the nonveridical reading (Irwin 1995, 374 n. 13; and Fine 1993, 332 n. 26). Plato's point *could* be, for example, that equal sticks are manifestly equal to one person focusing on their length and are manifestly unequal to another person focusing on their width.) But there is also textual evidence right after this passage that strongly supports the nonveridical reading. Shortly after the argument, at *Phaedo* 74d5-8, in what Sedley calls the "resumption" of the argument (Sedley 2007, 81 n. 26), Plato reiterates that there is a difference between how the sensible equals "appear equal" to us and how the form of equality "appears equal" to us. But here Plato uses φαίνεσθαι with an infinitive (εἶναι) (along with a masculine dative ἡμῖν), which is strong evidence that he intends the nonveridical use of φαίνεσθαι here (ἆρα φαίνεται ἡμῖν οὕτως ἴσα εἶναι ὥσπερ αὐτὸ τὸ ὃ ἔστιν ἴσον, ἢ ἐνδεῖ τι ἐκείνου τῷ τοιοῦτον εἶναι οἷον τὸ ἴσον, ἢ οὐδέν; Καὶ πολύ γε, ἔφη, ἐνδεῖ). This is strong evidence that he intends the nonveridical use in the argument as well, when he talks about the sensible equals and the form of equality appearing equal and unequal. So apart from the fact that Plato seems to reject one or the other of the premises of the argument on the Irwin-style reading, we have some further reasons for rejecting this sort of interpretation: the argument does not seem to be only about sensible *properties*, and Plato does not seem to be using φαίνεσθαι according to its veridical use.

V. An Ontological Interpretation with Nonveridical φαίνεσθαι

So how should we take the argument? If we do favor the nonveridical reading of φαίνεσθαι, are we forced to understand the argument as being fallacious, as Sedley does? In fact, I do not think this is the case, as long as we understand some tacit points in the argument to which Plato is obviously committed in the *Phaedo*, and points which Plato does hint at in the argument. I do think Irwin is correct to take Plato to be using 'is F' in the argument in a special manner to refer to explanatory power, rather than simply to the feature of being F. And EP provides us with an account of this: Plato uses 'is F' in special contexts as shorthand for "is F-making" or "is F-explaining".

Now Plato rejects Irwin's first premise because sensible properties are not in fact explainers—they do not in fact make things F or opposite-F. However, Plato does think that lovers of sights and sounds and other non-Platonists *mistakenly believe* that these sensible properties are explainers. For instance, average folks who have not done Platonic philosophy do *believe* that bright color or symmetry can sometimes *make* things beautiful. So Plato will accept a premise very much like (I1), but according to the nonveridical reading of φαίνεσθαι. Sensible Fs *appear* to one average person to be F-making and appear to another average person to be opposite-F-making, because they do not realize that sensibles are not suitable for being makers or explainers at all. And Plato has spent a lot of time in the *Phaedo*, prior to this argument, claiming that truth and explanation cannot be found in sensibles (*Phaedo* 65a-ff, b1-2, c2-3, d4-e1, d7-66a8, 73a7-10), and he goes on to argue later in the *Phaedo why* it is that sensibles cannot be explainers (*Phaedo* 96a-101c).

Then Plato continues in the next step of the argument: The form of F, however, never appears opposite-F-making (and *obviously* always appears F-making) to *you*

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Simmias. Interpreters of this argument have not really been able to explain the shift

from generic perceivers at the outset of the argument to Simmias as the perceiver later

on in the case of the form. They have often treated Simmias as acting simply as a

representative of all humankind.[147] In my view, the shift to Simmias in particular as

perceiver is important, and it sheds light on how we ought to understand the argument.

Plato has just told us before the argument that Socrates and Simmias have

"knowledge" of equality (ἐπιστάμεθα αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστιν) (*Phaedo* 74b2).[148] It is because

Simmias has knowledge of the form of equality, which (for Plato) includes knowledge

of its explanatory role[149], that we are licensed to move from nonveridical appearance

to actuality in the argument. We can move from an intentional context to a

nonintentional context. Since the form of equality appears equal-explaining to

Simmias, and he has knowledge of the form, it follows that the form actually is equal-

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[147] For instance, see Mills 1958, 50; and Sedley 2007, 78, 79.

[148] One difficult issue of interpretation is whether Plato is actually attributing *knowledge* to Simmias here at 74b2. One reason for this difficulty is that Plato shortly goes on to argue that knowledge requires being able to give an account, and he suggests that after Socrates' death no one will be alive who is capable of doing this (*Phaedo* 76b5-c3). This might be taken to suggest that Simmias is unable to give an account of equality and therefore lacks knowledge of it. However, Plato has just noted that his argument about equality applies not merely to this form but to all forms including the beautiful, the good, the just, and the pious (*Phaedo* 75c10-d4). And then Plato suggests that only Socrates "is able to give an account concerning *the things we were mentioning just now*" (ἔχειν διδόναι λόγον περὶ τούτων ὧν νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν) (*Phaedo* 76b8-12). Plato's point, which he seems to make only hesitantly—see the 'πολὺ μᾶλλον φοβοῦμαι' at 76b10-2—is that Socrates may be the only one with knowledge of *all* these things. The possibility is left open that Simmias and others may have knowledge of perhaps some forms that are easier to know, such as equality.

With all that being said, note that I do not need 74b2 to be attributing *knowledge* to Simmias as opposed to true belief, (which may be fairly well-justified but which Plato thinks falls short of knowledge). Strictly speaking, Simmias may only have the true belief that equality is sameness of measure, and that it is having sameness of measure that makes things equal. These are fairly straightforward points in the case of equality, which I think is why Plato chooses this example as opposed to something like the beautiful, the good, the just, or the pious, which are certainly more difficult to grasp. True belief is sufficient for the argument on my interpretation, as we can move from the claim that Simmias has the *true* belief that the form of equality is equal-making to the claim that the form of equality is actually equal-making. The requirement is only that Simmias' mental state is a factive one. I use 'knowledge' terms in what follows, but these could be interpreted as (perhaps well-justified) true belief that is short of actual knowledge.

[149] See the *Euthyphro* 6d-e for example, where one of the most basic features of the form of F is that it is the one and the same thing in all cases of Fs that *makes* them F.

explaining.[150] Since sensible equals are not equal-explaining, we can validly conclude

that the form of equality and sensible equals are not the same. Let us look at a

formalization of the argument on this interpretation:

<u>Argument from Explanatory Role</u>

(R1)   Sensible Fs appear F-making and opposite-F-making to average
         folks.[151]

(R2)   But these average folks are unaware of the fact that sensible Fs
         are neither F-making nor opposite-F-making, since sensibles
         cannot be makers or explainers.

(R3)   The form of F never appears opposite-F-making and always
         appears F-making to you Simmias.

(R4)   So the form of F is F-making, since you Simmias have
         knowledge of the form of F and its explanatory role.

(R5)   Therefore, the form of F and sensible Fs are not the same.

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[150] If x knows that a stick is straight, it doesn't follow that how the stick appears to x is true. For
instance, if the stick appears bent to x (in water), it doesn't follow that it is bent. But I seem to be
moving here from the claim that the form appears F to someone with knowledge of it to the claim that it
is F. The case of the form is different from that of a stick (and the case of the property of being F-
making is different from the property of being bent), because the only way the form can "appear" (or
that something can "appear" to have the property of being F-making) to people is in thought. So if the
form appears F-making to Simmias, what this means is that Simmias thinks or believes that it is F-
making—since he has knowledge, his belief must be true.

[151] In my interpretation of lines 74b7-9 here, I appear to take Plato to use ἴσος in two different senses
within the same sentence. I take Plato to be using the predicate 'ἴσα' as shorthand to refer to the
property of being equal-making, but I do not think Plato intends the 'ἴσοι' of the ἴσοι λίθοι καὶ ξύλα
to refer to them as being equal-making. It is the "equal sticks and stones" which appear equal-making
and unequal-making, and not the "equal-*making* sticks and stones", since these sensibles are not truly
equal-making. Does the text here involve an intrasentential shift in the sense of 'ἴσος', in such a way
that would violate something like the B-requirement from Chapter Two? There I proposed that we
should avoid taking Plato to be shifting the sense of the predicate within a single statement, because
such a shift would be highly misleading. But is this what I am taking Plato to be doing here? In fact, I
do not think so. I have argued that we should not take Plato to be immediately switching the sense of
the *predicate* in a statement (without any indication of doing so). But, on my interpretation, this
sentence at 74b7-9 does not involve a shift in the sense of a *predicate*. Plato often uses adjectives
modifying subjects in special ways: for instance, 'ἴσον' in 'αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον' is being used in a special way
to refer to the nonsensible form of equality. Likewise, I take it that 'ἴσοι' in ἴσοι λίθοι καὶ ξύλα is being
used in a special way to refer to "sensible equals", which perhaps includes equal particulars, sensible
properties that constitute equality and its opposite, and property-instances of these sensible properties.
Plato can use, and does seem to use, an adjective modifying the subject of a sentence in a different way
from how he uses that adjective in the predicate of the sentence. This is different from a shift in the
sense of a *predicate*, which is what the B-requirement prohibits. In short, there does seem to be two
different uses of ἴσος in this sentence, but this does not violate something like the B-requirement, since
there is no shift in the sense of a predicate—the instance of ἴσος in the subject is being used to refer to a
special set of entities, while the instance of ἴσος in the predicate is being used to refer to the property of
being equal-explaining.

This interpretation of the argument has numerous strengths. Perhaps most importantly, unlike the other interpretations, according to this interpretation, the argument does not involve any premises that Plato clearly rejects—in fact, he is committed to all of the premises. He holds that many people *think* that sensibles are explainers, but that they are mistaken in their beliefs. And he holds that forms avoid a sort of compresence of opposites in that the form of F makes things F but never makes things opposite-F. Another strength of this interpretation is that, according to it, Plato's argument is a valid one, which is not the case as Sedley and Svavarsson understand the argument. Further, contrary to Irwin's interpretation, this interpretation involves understanding φαίνεσθαι according to its nonveridical use, which is the most natural reading of the verb in this context, and for which there is textual evidence shortly after the argument. Also, one weakness of Irwin's interpretation was that he takes "sensible Fs" in the argument *only* to refer to property-types, and not to property-tokens or to particulars. Another strength of my interpretation is that it allows for "sensible Fs" to be understood more broadly. The "sensible Fs" in the argument might include any combination of sensible property-types, sensible property-tokens, or sensible particulars, and the argument will still be valid and have premises that Plato accepts. Some people might mistakenly think that bright color makes things beautiful, or that the particular bright color of a particular Chagall painting makes the painting beautiful…or someone might even mistakenly think that the Chagall painting itself accounts for its own beauty.

A final strength of my interpretation is that it does a nice job of explaining the shift from the generic perceivers in the case of sensible Fs, to Simmias in the case of the form of F. The key point is that Simmias has the relevant knowledge about

explanation that average folks lack. As far as I can tell, no other interpretation that has been offered succeeds in explaining this shift in perceivers in the argument.[152]

What might be thought to be the main weakness of my interpretation is that it requires supplying certain points in the argument that are not explicit here in Plato's text. Plato does not explicitly say here that the appearances in (R1) are misleading. However, given that Plato has already discussed at length the fact that truth and explanation cannot be found among sensibles, it is reasonable to take this point as implied here in the text of the argument. Although sensible Fs appear to make things F and opposite-F to non-Platonists, Plato holds that these appearances are *obviously* misleading.

Plato also does not explicitly claim in the argument that the form of F *always appears F-making* to Simmias, which is the operative point in (R3). But Plato's point here that the form of F never appears opposite-F-making seems intended to bring to mind the positive point that the form always appears F-making. And Plato asserts, immediately after the argument, the operative point that the form of F appears to *us* (Platonic philosophers) *to be F-making* (*Phaedo* 74d5-7). So again it is reasonable to take this point as implied in the text of the argument.

Finally, Plato does not explicitly remind us within the argument that Simmias is in a privileged position with respect to the form of equality, but the point that Simmias knows the form is crucial to my interpretation. However, it is certainly

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[152] According to my interpretation, the shift in perceivers in the argument, between the third person at 74b8 (to refer to average folks) and the second person at 74c1 (to refer to Simmias), is very important. But in the "resumption" of the argument at 74d4-8, which I discussed above, Plato uses the first person plural when he says that there is a difference between how the sensible equals and the form of equality "appear equal" *to us*. How can we explain this shift to "us" as perceivers? It seems clear that "us" here refers at least to Simmias and Socrates, and perhaps to any other Platonists who have the requisite knowledge that the average folks lack. Plato's point here, in line with my interpretation of the argument at 74b7-c6, is that the sensible equals do not appear to us Platonists in the same way as the form of equality appears to us. Sensible equals never appear equal-making to us because we know that sensibles cannot be makers, while the form of equality does appear equal-making to us because we have knowledge of the form and its explanatory role.

reasonable to take this point as implied in the argument. Plato has just mentioned a few lines before the argument that Simmias has knowledge of the form. So while my interpretation does require reading into the argument important points that Plato does not make explicit within the very text of the argument itself, they are all obvious points with textual evidence for them surrounding the argument. It is no stretch to suppose that Plato is relying on these points in his condensed argument here.

One might consider it a weakness of my view that, according to my interpretation, one is required to read between the lines somewhat in order to understand the argument. However, relative to the other possible interpretations, mine seems by far to be the best alternative. At the very least, it is good to find an interpretation of the argument that is consistent with the text, that involves premises Plato accepts, and that takes the argument to be valid. Perhaps now we have found a satisfactory interpretation of Plato's notoriously opaque argument for forms at *Phaedo* 74b-c.

One may be inclined to ask whether, according to my construal of the argument, it is a *good* argument for the existence of forms. Well, the quick and perhaps obvious answer seems to be that it is *not*. And this is the case because it seems like no one who is not already a Platonist would accept the premises. Why would someone who is not a Platonist accept that sensibles cannot be explainers and that forms actually have this explanatory role? The argument seems to simply beg the question against the non-Platonist. But note that this is not a difficulty for my interpretation alone. The other interpretations also appear to beg the question, as it seems that a non-Platonist would never accept (S2) or (I2).[153] However, I think this is not problematic, once we understand what Plato is actually doing in this passage.

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[153] One point is that, as I have argued, the second premise involves the tacit point that the form of F "is always F", which the non-Platonist would reject. Also, a nominalist who thought that equality was

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I do not think the argument is as bad as it might appear. Plato's point in this quick argument itself is not really to convince the non-Platonist to believe in forms, but rather to set out one of the main reasons why *he* thinks that forms exist. In his view, sensibles cannot be explainers and forms can. These are controversial assumptions that require further argument, but this is exactly what Plato sets out to argue for later in the *Phaedo*, when he examines what is required for something to be an adequate explanation. If Plato's later arguments are successful in showing that sensibles cannot be explainers and that forms *could* be, then he has a pretty good argument for the existence of forms for anyone who thinks that explanation *is* possible. If one assumes that explanation is possible, then, Plato argues, one had better accept the existence of forms, since forms and not sensibles are capable of being explainers.

VI. The Inferiority of Sensibles at 74d4-75b9

Notice that, on the interpretation of the argument at 74b7-c6 that I have defended, the argument provides no evidence for SP. The argument relies on the view that, unlike sensible Fs, the form of F makes things F. However, the argument is silent with respect to self-predication. While it involves the claim that the form of F makes things F, it takes no stand on whether the form of F is itself an F thing. Therefore, if my interpretation of the argument is correct, it provides no evidence for attributing SP to Plato.

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somehow identical with sensibles, would not accept that there is this distinction between how forms and sensibles appear.

But in addition to taking this main argument as evidence for SP, commentators have often focused on Plato's claims concerning the inferiority of sensibles, throughout 74d4-75b9, as evidence for SP. In this passage, Plato argues that although sensible equals "want" (βούλεται—74d10, προθυμεῖται—75b7) and "strive" (ὀρέγεται—75a2, b1) to be "like" (οἷον—74d7, e1, 75a2, b8) the form of equality, they "fall short" (ἐνδεῖ—74d6, 74e1, ἔχει ἐνδεεστέρως—74e4, 75a2-3, b2) and are "inferior" (φαυλότερα—74e2, 75b8). Again, this passage comes right before Plato generalizes his claims to all forms (*Phaedo* 75c10-d4). So Plato seems emphatic in affirming that sensible Fs are deficient when compared with the form of F. But how are we to understand what is meant by the claims that sensibles fall short and are inferior? Plato has been taken to mean that sensible Fs are F deficiently while the form of F is F non-deficiently.[154] If this is a correct interpretation, then it would seem that the passage provides strong evidence for SP—if the form of F is F non-deficiently, then it would be an F thing.

Perhaps, taken in isolation, this passage would seem to provide convincing evidence for attributing SP to Plato.[155] However, as some commentators have noticed,

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[154] For instance, Sedley holds that "the equal sticks and stones do fall short of the Equal in terms of likeness, because, whereas the Equal itself is a model of pure unadulterated equality, they are only imperfectly or unstably equal" (Sedley 2006, 312). Sedley supposes that sensibles might then *not* fall short in the relevant way: "there might in principle be a participant in the Form which *in no way* fell short of it in terms of likeness" (Sedley 2006, 312). For instance, there might be two equal sticks (or one stick considered in relation to itself) that really are perfectly equal in length, (although perhaps we would not be able to *tell* as much with perfect accuracy). But then Sedley's interpretation of the relevant way in which sensibles "fall short" here seems incorrect (and not only for the reason I go on to emphasize, that the contrast drawn here is the same as the one in the argument at 74b7-c6). Plato is clear in this passage that, in the relevant way in which sensibles "fall short" they *cannot* fail to fall short (ἐνδεῖ δὲ καὶ οὐ δύναται τοιοῦτον εἶναι οἷον ἐκεῖνο) (*Phaedo* 74e1). In the relevant way, sensibles must always fall short. Since, as Sedley admits, sensible equals might not fall short in being perfectly equal, *being perfectly equal* cannot be the relevant property that the form of equality has and that sensible equals fall short in having.

[155] J. Gosling seems for the most part to consider the contrast drawn between sensibles and forms at 74d4-75b9 in isolation from the argument at 74b7-c6, and still thinks that the inferiority of sensibles here does *not* imply (although it is compatible with) the self-predication of forms (Gosling 1965, 160-1). On his view, the inferiority of sensibles here consists in the sensibles lacking "some further property which would be needed for total resemblance" to forms (Gosling 1965, 161). For instance, sensible equals "may, in the ordinary sense, be perfectly equal, but they must in some respect be unlike the

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this passage ought to be interpreted in light of its context. For instance, Penner expresses the point as follows:

> It seems to me that whatever falling short is at 74D6, D9-10, E1-4, 75A2-3, B1-2, 7-8, the shortcomings of equal sticks and stones by comparison with the Form of equality *cannot plausibly be represented as anything other than* the respects in which equal sticks and stones are said to differ from the equal itself at 74B6-C2…. In the present context, the *only* respect in which equal sticks and so forth are contrasted with the equal itself is what we see at 74B6-C2…. It is not clear to me how any other reading can be got from the actual text. (Penner 1987, 185-6)[156]

Now I disagree with Penner's interpretation of what the contrast involved in the argument actually is, but nevertheless Penner puts the point well that our interpretation of the inferiority of sensibles intended in this passage should be informed by the contrast drawn in the argument at 74b7-c6.

Bostock also makes the point about the importance of context for a determination of the respect in which sensibles are said to fall short here. He considers different possibilities of how one might interpret the claim that sensibles fall short of forms, but his response is as follows:

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forms: they are not, say, eternally and immutably equal" (Gosling 1965, 160). Sensibles will always fall short of forms and be inferior to them because they lack some property or properties that forms have but which sensibles must always lack, such as, Gosling suggests, having the properties that they have eternally or immutably. Gallop appears to favor a similar view, that sensible Fs fall short of the form of F simply because the form is distinct from sensible Fs and has properties that sensible Fs lack entirely (Gallop 1975, 128-9). In many ways, their interpretations are friendly to my own. I take sensible Fs to fall short because they always lack a property that the form of F has—but I think in the context of the passage from 74d4-75b9, right after the argument at 74b7-c6, Plato is not making the general point that there is *some property or other* of the form (or properties) that sensible Fs lack. Although there may be (and would seem to be) many properties that forms have and that sensibles must lack, Plato means to draw attention here to the property of being F-explaining in particular. His point is that sensibles must fall short of forms because forms have the property of being explainers and sensibles cannot have this property.

[156] And Penner writes elsewhere that "the 'falling short' in this passage can hardly be other than what differentiates equal sticks and stones from the equal itself in our argument at 74BC" (Penner 187, 54).

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But to any such suggestion we can always be sure that we have at least this objection: it is not in the text. Our text supplies no further argument to show that perceptible things always do fall short of forms, and it supplies no further elucidation of what this claim might mean. One looks in vain for any further hint of what the supposedly new point might be. The obvious moral to draw from this is that the point is not actually meant as a *new* point at all: it must be just a repetition of something we have had already, but now re-expressed in a more picturesque way. (Bostock 1986, 88)

And Bostock goes on to argue that Plato's point is to re-express the main premises of the argument at 74b7-c6 (Bostock 1986, 88-94), although, as with Penner, I disagree with his particular interpretation of what those main premises say. Regardless of their particular interpretations of the argument at 74b7-c6, Penner and Bostock seem correct that our interpretation of the inferiority of sensibles in the passage following the argument should be influenced by our interpretation of that argument. Although there may be other ways in which Plato thinks sensibles are inferior to forms, what Plato has in mind at 74d4-75b9 should be seen as the same contrast he has drawn in the argument that immediately preceded this passage.

So what is the contrast drawn in this argument, and what does the inferiority of sensibles consist in here? Well if my interpretation of the argument defended in Section V is correct, then Plato's point in this passage is to emphasize the failure of sensibles to be F-makers. When Plato writes in clearly metaphorical language that sensibles "strive" to be like forms but fall short and are inferior, what he means is that sensibles Fs are simply inadequate as explainers of things' being F. On the other hand, forms are non-deficient explainers. Sensible Fs might merely appear to some people to make things F, and perhaps they can be said to constitute F-ness in certain cases, but they will always fail to be true F-makers.

Again, the inferiority of sensibles and the corresponding non-deficiency of forms discussed repeatedly in this passage should be seen as referring back to the contrast drawn in the argument at 75b7-c6. And if my interpretation of the argument

is correct, the contrast involved in it is silent with respect to the self-predication of forms. Therefore, we should see the non-deficiency of forms at 74d4-75b9 as also having nothing to say concerning whether the form of F is an F thing. This passage then, like the important argument preceding it, seems to provide no evidence of a commitment to SP.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PLATO'S RESPONSE TO THE REGRESS PROBLEM OF THE TMA

I. Introduction

I have argued that commentators are wrong to find a commitment to SP in Plato's resemblance talk throughout numerous dialogues and in his discussion of a contrast between forms and sensibles in *Phaedo* 74-5. In addition to the passages that I have discussed, commentators have often seen the Third Man Argument (TMA) at 132a-b in the *Parmenides* as evidence of Plato's commitment to SP in the *middle* dialogues.[157][158] One might wonder how textual evidence from the *Parmenides*, an unmistakably late dialogue, can provide evidence of Plato's commitments in the middle dialogues. The reason for this is that, in the first part of the dialogue, Plato presents a discussion between Parmenides and a young Socrates, in which Parmenides challenges Socrates' views concerning forms. And these views of young Socrates at least *seem* to be ones expressed by Plato in the middle dialogues. As Meinwald writes:

> The utterances of Socrates are reminiscent of statements that are widely regarded as constituting Plato's theory of Forms, as presented in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*. (Meinwald 1992, 366)

> Because of the unmistakable resemblance of Socrates' views here to those expressed by the Socrates of the middle dialogues, this passage has traditionally been regarded as a comment by Plato on the status of the so-called middle theory…. (Meinwald 1992, 372)

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[157] Plato did not in fact refer to this argument as a or the "Third Man argument". This argument has often been called the Third Man Argument by commentators because Aristotle makes note of an argument which he calls the Third Man (Alexander, *Metaphysica*, 84.23-85.3, 93.1-7; also Aristotle *Metaphysics*, 990b17=1079a13, 1039a2, and *Sophistici Elenchi*, 178b36-ff.), and most commentators take this argument in the *Parmenides* at 132a-b to be (roughly) identical to Aristotle's Third Man argument (Fine 1993, 203).

[158] I will also briefly discuss the argument in the *Parmenides* from 132d-133a, which is often taken to be another version of the same argument. See e.g. Vlastos 1965, 242; and Fine 1993, 215.

In particular, commentators have seen the TMA at 132a-b as involving SP as a premise and therefore as evidence of Plato's commitment to SP in the middle period. Later in this chapter, I will argue that even if SP is involved as a premise in the TMA, this should not be taken as evidence of a commitment to SP in the middle dialogues. The TMA, I will argue, is consistent with the view that Plato is committed to EP in the middle dialogues and so not SP. First, however, I will examine the structure of the argument, the main difficulty it presents, and whether it truly involves SP as a premise.

The TMA has received considerable attention. There are two reasons for this. First, Plato does not make explicit what premises he relies on in the argument, which makes it difficult to determine its actual intended structure. More importantly, the conclusion of the TMA, which follows from premises which it at least at first *seems* Plato does accept, is problematic for the theory of forms. The TMA seems to show that if there is one form of F, then there are infinitely many forms of F. But Plato appears to be committed to the existence of forms and the view that in cases in which a form of F exists, there is only one unique form of F. [159][160] The conclusion that there are even two forms of F, let alone infinitely many, conflicts with the uniqueness assumption. And the conclusion that there are *infinitely* many forms of F seems to be problematic for Plato's epistemology. At least in many important cases of knowledge, such as the knowledge that x is just, Plato believes that one can only know that x is F if one knows the form of F. But it seems that one can only have knowledge of the

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[159] Here I adopt Fine's construal of the uniqueness assumption (Fine 1993, 205). I take uniqueness to be the view that, in those cases in which a form exists, there is only one form of F. Uniqueness itself does not take a stand on whether there are forms for all or only some predicates.

[160] Plato argues for uniqueness in the Third Bed Argument (TBA) in the *Republic*, which I briefly discuss below. Also, Plato sets out the TMA by suggesting that at least one of the underlying reasons for accepting uniqueness (along with other commitments) leads to the opposing conclusion that there are in fact infinitely many forms in each case in which a form exists. Here Plato seems to imply that at least prior to the TMA he was committed to uniqueness. In this case, we have the TBA as evidence that Plato was indeed committed to uniqueness. And there is other evidence which might suggest a commitment to uniqueness, e.g. *Euthyphro* 5d, 6d-e, *Meno* 72c, *Republic* 507b, *Symposium* 211b-212a.

form of F if one knows the form of F over it, which (according to the assumptions of the TMA that I will soon discuss) explains its being F. And knowledge of that form will require knowledge of the form over it, and so on. So according to the TMA, it seems impossible to know that x is F, at least in cases of knowledge in which knowledge of the form is required.[161][162]

In this chapter, I will first present a translation of the passage in the *Parmenides* in which we find the TMA. Then I will examine Vlastos' formulations of the TMA in his influential paper "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*". I will focus not on the premises which he claims are explicit in the text, but on two premises which he takes to be implicit in the argument. Vlastos argues that these two premises *must* be understood in the argument, if the argument is to be valid. I will argue, along with Fine and S. Marc Cohen, that while these premises are sufficient to bring about the regresses of the TMA, they are not necessary. There is good reason for altering at least one of the premises, and for adding an additional premise. One of these key premises which Vlastos presents is the Self-Predication Assumption (SPV[163]), and I agree that it or some premise very much like it is at work in the

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[161] See Fine for a longer account of why the TMA is problematic for the theory of forms (Fine 1993, 203-4), and Vlastos' discussion of these issues (Vlastos 1965, 240 n. 1).

[162] It seems that this problem about the possibility of knowledge might be skirted by Plato. Perhaps one can know the form of F without knowing the form of F above it which makes it F—for instance, being F might be an unimportant or accidental feature of the form. Roughly, I might know what justice is by knowing it is "doing one's own", even without knowing the thing which explains the fact that the form of justice is itself just. Whether the form of justice is itself just (and what makes it just if it is) might be irrelevant to the knowledge of what justice is, and this is what is required to know that something is just. Another possibility might be that one *could* have knowledge of all of the forms of F in the infinite string of forms of F. This might be possible because of the fact that the only difference between the form of F and the form of F over it seems to be that one is ontologically distinct from the other, and that the one which is above the other explains the lower one's being F. Although there is an infinite series of ontologically distinct forms of F, they are the same with respect to the features that are important for knowledge. So perhaps it would not be impossible to know them all. If this is right, then the infinite regress would not seem to pose a problem for knowledge. But the problem for uniqueness still remains, regardless of what we say here about knowledge.

[163] I use SPV throughout to refer to Vlastos' formulation of the self-predication assumption of the TMA, which I will soon present. I use SP in this chapter and throughout the rest of the dissertation to refer more generally to any universal genuine self-predication assumption. To ask whether Plato is committed to SP is to ask whether he is committed to the view that any form of F is an F thing. Even

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TMA.[164] But there are notoriously many different possible interpretations of Plato's

apparent statements of self-predication, his language suggesting that "the form of F is

F". If Plato does intend to rely on a genuine self-predication assumption (SP[165]) in the

TMA, what exactly is the nature of this assumption? I will discuss a few different

suggestions, but my goal in this chapter will not be to definitively establish which

version of SP Plato actually intends in the argument. Instead, I will argue for two

main claims: (1) Plato does not and cannot respond to the TMA by focusing on a

rejection of whatever SP assumption is involved in it, and (2) Plato responds to the

TMA by rejecting a different premise altogether, the Non-Self-Explanation (NSE)

premise.

To defend (1), I will argue that regardless of the particular interpretation of

self-predication that Plato intends in his presentation of the TMA, the *Regress

Problem of the TMA*, that *there is at least one form for which there is an infinite

regress*, cannot be avoided through a rejection of the self-predication assumption.[166]

This view is directly contrary to Owen, who suggests that it is the self-predication

though I use "SPV" here, not "SP", to refer to Vlastos' formulation, I see his formulation of the self-predication assumption of the TMA as a general statement of any universal genuine self-predication assumption. In other words, Vlastos' self-predication assumption just is SP. Fine does not take Vlastos' SPV in this way—she takes SPV to posit more than SP (Fine 1993, 206-7), but this does not seem to be Vlastos' intention. When Vlastos says that "Any form can be predicated of itself", he seems to mean that any form of F is itself an F thing, and this is just SP. In this chapter, I will discuss what I consider to be different versions of Vlastos' self-predication assumption which may be at work in the TMA, such as NSP and genuine self-predication assumptions involving Pauline and broad self-predication.

[164] I do examine whether there might be some premise at work in the argument which is similar to SPV but which is not itself a genuine self-predication assumption. While I suggest (contrary to some commentators) that such a premise *could* function in a valid TMA-style argument, I admit that in the TMA itself in the *Parmenides*, Plato seems to intend a genuine self-predication assumption of some sort.

[165] Again, a genuine self-predication assumption is the view that any form of F is indeed an F thing.

[166] Throughout this chapter, I call this result, that there is at least one infinite regress of forms, "the Regress Problem" of the TMA. As I admit below, this is not Plato's expressed conclusion of the TMA. However, I refer to this result as "the Regress Problem" of the TMA to emphasize a philosophical rather than textual point, that a serious problem will remain for Plato as long as there is even one infinite regress of this type. The fact that there is a regress for *all* of the forms and not just one or a few of them is not the crucial philosophical issue at hand. An adequate response to the TMA must rule out there being even one infinite regress of this type.

assumption itself that is Plato's mistake which leads to the regresses of the TMA, and

that Plato ought to respond to the TMA by rejecting SP. In "Notes on Ryle's Plato",

Owen writes that in this argument in the *Parmenides*:

> Plato brings out a fallacy that had pervaded his earlier statements of the theory of Forms…. [H]e now proves, *by ascribing largeness to itself*, that [this] generates a regress, in this case a regress of largenesses that turns the supposedly single Form into an unlimited class…. Plato was able to isolate the mistake which lies at the root of this and other troubles…. (Owen 2000, 320, my emphasis).

Owen highlights SP as the culprit that generates the regresses of the TMA. Similarly,

Meinwald argues that Plato can "say good-bye" to the TMA because of his rejection

of SP. According to Meinwald, because Plato does not hold that the form of F

"displays the feature" common to Fs, he is not subject to the regresses of the TMA

(Meinwald 1991, 155-7). Contrary to Owen and Meinwald, I will show that Plato

cannot hope to avoid the Regress Problem by rejecting SP. Plato will not avoid the

main problem presented in the TMA by rejecting some form of a self-predication

assumption, and instead he will reject some other premise or premises. I will go on to

argue for (2), that Plato does in fact respond to the TMA by rejecting NSE. Unlike

with SP, the rejection of NSE constitutes a successful response to the Regress

Problem, and there is ample textual evidence to show that Plato does reject this

premise.

II. Formalizing the Third Man Argument

Plato presents the TMA as follows at *Parmenides* 132a-b:

I suppose you think that each form is one because of something of this sort: whenever many things seem to you to be large, perhaps, when you have looked at them all, there appears to be some one and the same idea[167], from which you believe that the large is one.

True, he said.

What then about the large itself and the other large things? If you look at all of them in the same way with the soul, won't some one large appear again, by which all these appear large?

It seems so.

Then another form of largeness will make an appearance, having come about beside the large itself and the things sharing in it. And in addition to all these, there will be another in turn, by which all these will be large. And so each of the forms will no longer be one for you, but the number of each will be infinite.

Οἶμαί σε ἐκ τοῦ τοιοῦδε ἓν ἕκαστον εἶδος οἴεσθαι εἶναι· ὅταν πόλλ' ἄττα μεγάλα σοι δόξῃ εἶναι, μία τις ἴσως δοκεῖ ἰδέα[167] ἡ αὐτὴ εἶναι ἐπὶ πάντα ἰδόντι, ὅθεν ἓν τὸ μέγα ἡγῇ εἶναι.

Ἀληθῆ λέγεις, φάναι.

Τί δ' αὐτὸ τὸ μέγα καὶ τἆλλα τὰ μεγάλα, ἐὰν ὡσαύτως τῇ ψυχῇ ἐπὶ πάντα ἴδῃς, οὐχὶ ἕν τι αὖ μέγα φανεῖται, ᾧ ταῦτα πάντα μεγάλα φαίνεσθαι;

Ἔοικεν.

Ἄλλο ἄρα εἶδος μεγέθους ἀναφανήσεται, παρ' αὐτό τε τὸ μέγεθος γεγονὸς καὶ τὰ μετέχοντα αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐπὶ τούτοις αὖ πᾶσιν ἕτερον, ᾧ ταῦτα πάντα μεγάλα ἔσται· καὶ οὐκέτι δὴ ἓν ἕκαστόν σοι τῶν εἰδῶν ἔσται, ἀλλὰ ἄπειρα τὸ πλῆθος.

Vlastos begins his discussion of the argument by presenting formulations of two explicit steps (Vlastos 1965, 232-3):

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[167] Cornford takes ἰδέα here to refer to "the character supposed to be possessed both by the Form and by the things which partake of the Form", while he sees only εἶδος here as referring to the form itself (Cornford 1957, 88 n. 1). However, I take Plato in this passage to be using ἰδέα and εἶδος both to refer to the form. In the context of the argument, he seems to use the terms interchangeably. For instance, he refers to that which is "over all instances" (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν) as an ἰδέα (*Parmenides* 132c4), and then right away as an εἶδος (*Parmenides* 132c6). And in the argument that forms are unknowable, Plato seems to have forms in mind when he says that "the ideas (ὅσαι τῶν ἰδεῶν) which are what they are in relation to each other have their being in relation to themselves but not in relation to things that belong to us" (*Parmenides* 133c8-d1). Perhaps most clearly, right after Plato writes that the beautiful itself and the good (αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν ὃ ἔστι καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν) are unknowable, when obviously referring to forms, he generalizes that also unknowable are "all the things, indeed, which we take to be ideas themselves" (πάντα ἃ δὴ ὡς ἰδέας αὐτὰς οὔσας ὑπολαμβάνομεν) (*Parmenides* 134b14-c2). Here, in text following shortly after the TMA, it seems undoubtable that Plato is using the term 'ἰδέα' to refer to forms themselves.

(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.

(A2)   If *a*, *b*, *c*, and F-ness are all F, there must be another Form, F-ness$_1$, in virtue of which we apprehend *a*, *b*, *c*, and F-ness as all F.

As Vlastos points out, A2 does not follow from A1 alone (Vlastos 1965, 233-6). A1 is consistent with F-ness not being itself F, but A2 takes it for granted that F-ness is itself F. And even if it is assumed that F-ness is F, A2 adds that there must be a *distinct* form in virtue of which it is apprehended as F—this too does not follow from A1. So there must be some implicit premises in the argument to justify the move from A1 to A2.

Vlastos proposes that we consider, as implicit premises in the argument, those premises which are the "simplest" ones that "would have to be added" in order to make the argument valid (Vlastos 1965, 236). And Vlastos claims that we "need" the two following premises, the Self-Predication Assumption (SPV) and the Non-identity Assumption (NIV[168]) (Vlastos 1965, 236-7):

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

(NIV) 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.

Why does Vlastos think that these premises are required in order to make the TMA valid? First, in the antecedent of A2, Plato considers what follows if *a*, *b*, *c*, and F-ness are all F. If F-ness is not itself F, then there certainly is no need for there to be another form which emerges over and above the many Fs and F-ness. So it seems unavoidable that a self-predication assumption or something very much like one is understood in the argument. But, even if the form of F is F, it does not follow that there must be another form over and above the many Fs and the form of F, in virtue of

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[168] I use NIV throughout this chapter to refer to Vlastos' formulation of the Non-identity Assumption.

which they are all F. Merely from A1 and SPV, it could be the case that the form of F
and the many Fs are all F in virtue of the form of F itself. This is why Vlastos posits
NIV as another implicit premise which is required for validity. Since the form of F is
itself F, it cannot be identical to that form "in virtue of which we apprehend that
character". So, there must be some further form in virtue of which the many Fs and
the form of F are F.

Vlastos points out that a peculiar feature of these premises is that they are
inconsistent. According to Vlastos, the inconsistency of these implicit premises
reveals that Plato was not aware of these "necessary" premises (Vlastos 1965, 241).
However, as Cohen and Fine have argued, while these premises are sufficient to bring
about the regresses of the TMA, they are not necessary (Cohen 2000, 279-80; Fine
1993, 206). They are not the simplest premises which are *needed* for the TMA to be
valid. Certainly, the infinite regresses in the TMA do follow trivially from Vlastos'
premise set, because anything can be derived from a contradiction (Cohen 2000, 279;
Fine 1993, 206). Fine provides an account of how Vlastos thinks the regresses might
be produced in a non-trivial way from his premise set, or how Plato may have thought
the regresses were produced (Fine 1993, 205-6).

But there is good reason to hold that Vlastos is incorrect about the implicit
premises which are required for the TMA. First, Cohen points out that the conclusion
of the TMA is not itself a logical inconsistency and so it cannot be the case that it can
only be derivable from an inconsistent premise set (Cohen 2000, 279-80). Second,
Vlastos' NIV is not required for the regresses in the TMA. In the argument, once it is
assumed that the form of F is F, (and once a one-over-many premise, which I will
soon discuss, is added), the regresses follow *as long as the form of F is not F in virtue
of itself.* If the form of F cannot explain its own being F, then its being F must be
explained by a form of F distinct from it. (Again, this relies on the one-over-many

premise that I will soon discuss in detail.) That distinct form of F will itself be F and

will not be able to explain the fact that it is F, and so another form of F will be

required, and so on. So the regresses will be initiated even if we reject NIV and hold

that x can be F and can be identical to (an) F-ness. The key here is that NIV, the

premise which directly conflicts with SPV, is not necessary, but rather the following

premise, Non-Self-Explanation (NSE), will do:

> (NSE) If anything has a certain character, it does not have this
>   character in virtue of itself. If x is F, x is not F in virtue of
>   itself.[169]

First, NSE is clearly true for Plato in the cases in which a form of F exists and x ≠ the

form of F.[170] If something other than the form of F has the certain character F, it does

not have this character in virtue of itself, but in virtue of the form of F.[171] But NSE is

only sufficient (along with other premises) for generating the TMA regresses because

it applies to forms as well. By SPV we have that the form of F is F, and by NSE it

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[169] This formulation is the same as Peterson's non-self-explanation premise (Peterson 1973, 453) and
Fine's NI premise (Fine 1993, 206). It is similar to Sellars' NI', but his premise requires that each F
thing has such a thing as "*the* F-ness by which it is F", which will be insufficient to generate the exact
regresses found in the TMA (Cohen 2000, 281 n. 14). This is the case, for instance, because an F thing
turns out not to be F by virtue of sharing in *one* F-ness alone, but rather by virtue of sharing in an
infinite string of F-nesses. Peterson claims that her non-self-explanation premise "fills the gap in the
Parmenides argument which Vlastos' 'non-identity premiss' fills" (Peterson 1973, 453 n. 6). She does
not mention that the non-self-explanation premise is crucially different from NIV in that it is consistent
with the other premises in her formulation of the argument, and in particular with her self-predication
premise, whereas NIV conflicts with SPV and her own statement of the self-predication premise.
[170] It is controversial whether Plato is committed to there being forms corresponding to every property.
Perhaps there are some properties for which no form exists, and with regard to these properties, perhaps
non-forms (and even forms) can have them in virtue of themselves. For my purposes here, it is not
crucial to determine whether Plato does posit forms for all properties. I go on to argue that the TMA is
problematic for Plato even if there is one instance of an infinite regress. In addition, all of the
formulations of the premises of the TMA could be rewritten so as to account for there only being forms
concerning some limited range of properties. For instance, NSE could be rewritten as follows: If
anything has a certain character for which there exists a corresponding form, it does not have this
character in virtue of itself. If x is F and there exists a form of F, x is not F in virtue of itself. For the
sake of simplicity, I assume in my formulations that there are forms corresponding to every property or
predicate.
[171] Peterson takes NSE as obviously true in the case of non-forms (Peterson, 454 n. 6). She seems to be
correct, at least with regard to those properties for which there exists a form. If a non-form is F, and
there exists a form of F, the non-form is not F in virtue of itself, but rather in virtue of the form of F. As
I just noted, NSE could easily be amended to account for a limited range of forms such that it is true as
applied to non-forms.

follows that the form of F is not F in virtue of itself. There must (once a one-over-many premise is added) be some *further* thing in virtue of which the form of F is F. If NSE in place of NIV is sufficient (along with some other premises) to get the regresses of the TMA going, then it is preferable to NIV because it does not conflict with SPV.[172] NSE and SPV can consistently both be true.

As I have noted, NIV and SPV, even on their own, are sufficient for generating the regresses in the TMA (in a trivial way). But what about NSE and SPV? NSE has the advantage over NIV of being consistent with SPV[173], but are NSE and SPV sufficient for generating the regresses of the TMA? Suppose we assume that there are particular Fs and there is a form of F.[174] By SPV, we know that the form of F is F. By NSE, we know that the form of F is not F in virtue of itself, and that the particular Fs are not F in virtue of themselves. But according to these premises alone, we do not know what it is in virtue of which the particular Fs are F (or that there is any such thing). Let us take it as an obvious Platonic assumption that particular Fs are F in virtue of the form of F.[175] Still, according to these premises alone, we do not know what it is in virtue of which the form of F is F (or that there is any such thing), but we

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[172] NSE also seems to be simpler than NIV in that NIV may imply NSE while NSE does not imply NIV. It seems to follow from NIV that if x is F, then x is not identical to F-ness and so x does not explain *anything's* being F. (But note that this is not quite right in light of my discussion in Chapter Three, since form-particularizations are not identical to forms and yet are still explainers of things' being F.) And NSE is the view that if x is F, then x does not explain *its own* being F. But then NIV would entail NSE, but NSE would not entail NIV. If something does not explain anything's being F, then it does not explain its own being F. But if something does not explain its own being F, it might still explain some other things' being F.

[173] NSE leaves open the possibility that the (or a) form of F is F, while NIV rules this out. NIV says that if x is F, x cannot be identical with F-ness. NSE allows that F-ness can be F, just not in virtue of itself.

[174] These in themselves would count as additional premises to NSE and SPV, but they are minimal. Below, I argue that it is only necessary for the TMA to assume as an additional premise (to NSE, SPV, and OM-TMA-R) that there exists at least one F thing.

[175] This may not be true for every property F, if Plato believes that there are only forms for some limited range of properties. But I began here by assuming that there is a form of F, so I am considering a case in which Plato thinks a form does exist. And Plato is committed to the view that in the cases in which forms do exist, the particular Fs are F in virtue of the form of F.

only know that it is not F in virtue of itself. To initiate an infinite regress of higher

and higher forms, it is clear that at least one additional premise will be required.

What is required to engender the regresses of the TMA is some version of a

one-over-many premise. Although I will not rehearse the arguments for this version

here[176], I take it that the best candidate for the one-over-many premise in the TMA is

the following:

> (OM-TMA-R) For any maximal set of Fs at level n, there is exactly one
> form of F at level n+1 over it (where 'over' means
> "participated in by all the members of").[177][178]

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[176] Among other considerations, OM-TMA-R is preferable to other versions of a one-over-many assumption because it is consistent with SPV and NSE, and it is sufficient to generate the regresses of the TMA when it is taken together with SPV and NSE (and the assumption that there is at least one F thing). This formulation is also "an exactly one" assumption rather than "an at least one" assumption (Fine 1993, 211). OM-TMA-R posits exactly one form over a particular maximal set of Fs. One reason why this is preferable to an assumption which posits *at least one* form over some set of Fs, is that an exactly one assumption might incline one toward the acceptance of the uniqueness of forms. And Plato begins his discussion of the TMA by outlining a one-over-many premise which might make "you think that each form is one". (In my next note, I point out that my OM-TMA-R is different in an important respect from Fine's version of the one-over-many assumption involved in the TMA, OM-TMA, but all of *these* considerations I have just mentioned equally support both construals. In other words, my OM-TMA-R does not differ from Fine's OM-TMA with respect to consistency or the "exactly one" consideration. Below, I will discuss why I favor my OM-TMA-R over Fine's OM-TMA.)

[177] The formulation of the one-over-many assumption that I am using here is similar to Fine's OM-TMA (Fine 1993, 210), but my version says that 'over' means 'participated in by *all* the members of' as opposed to 'participated in by all *and only* the members of'. OM-TMA-R itself is consistent with the view that the form of F is F only in virtue of itself. But this is not the case with Fine's OM-TMA, because since the form of F at level 1 is "over" the maximal set of Fs at level 0, and this set does not contain the form of F at level 1, the form of F is participated in by all and *only* the members of that set, and so it cannot be participated in by itself. My OM-TMA-R itself says that *all* of the members of the maximal set of Fs at level n are F in virtue of participating in the form of F at level n+1, but the form of F at level n+1 might also be F in virtue of participating in itself, even if it is not in the set at level n. Fine also takes the "levels" referred to in her OM-TMA to be different levels of reality (Fine 1993, 210). She assumes that only sensibles can be at level 0 and that something at level n must be distinct from something at level n+1, because they are on different ontological levels. But OM-TMA-R itself leaves open the question of whether an object at level n+1 is distinct from every object at level n. OM-TMA-R does not entail NSE (or SPV, and it is in fact consistent with uniqueness), and so by rejecting NSE, one does not thereby reject OM-TMA-R. Below, I will discuss in more detail exactly how my OM-TMA-R differs from Fine's OM-TMA, and how the TMA can be avoided through a rejection of NSE while OM-TMA-R is retained.

[178] Some conditions for understanding OM-TMA-R and how it functions (Fine 1993, 210): Sensible F particulars (and all other Fs that are not a form of F) are assumed to be at level 0, and taken together compose a maximal set of Fs at level 0. A maximal set of Fs at level n is a *maximal* set of Fs because it contains all of the Fs at level n and below—it leaves no Fs at level n or below out. *All* the Fs in the maximal set at level n are F in virtue of the single form at level n+1. If SPV is assumed, then all the Fs in the maximal set at level n, together with the form at level n+1 in virtue of which they are F, compose

This one-over-many assumption, along with NSE and SPV and the assumption that there are some F things (or at least one F thing), are sufficient for generating the regresses in the TMA. Take the set of all sensible Fs (and all other Fs which are not a form of F). These together compose a maximal set of Fs at level 0. By OM-TMA-R, there is one form of F at level 1, in virtue of which the Fs at level 0 are F. By SPV, the form of F at level 1 is itself F. By NSE, the form of F at level 1 is not F in virtue of itself.[179] The set of Fs at level 0 along with the form of F at level 1 (which is itself F) compose a maximal set of Fs at level 1. Therefore, by OM-TMA-R, there is exactly one form of F at level 2, in virtue of which all of the Fs in the maximal set at level 1 are F. (What follows from this is that, for instance, Fs at level 0 are F in virtue of participating in the form of F at level 1, 2, 3, etc.) This reasoning can be carried out *ad infinitum*, so given these assumptions, there are infinitely many forms of F at higher and higher levels.

III. The Regress Problem of the TMA

So far I argued that NIV is not necessary for producing the regresses in the TMA, because NSE is sufficient along with SPV and OM-TMA-R, and NSE is preferable to NIV because it is consistent with SPV and OM-TMA-R.[180] But what

a maximal set of Fs at level n+1. A maximal set of Fs is itself at the level of the highest-level member of the set.

[179] I will explain below how, with my OM-TMA-R, this application of NSE is required for generating the regresses of the TMA. OM-TMA-R does not imply NSE, and OM-TMA-R and SPV alone are not sufficient for generating the regresses of the TMA.

[180] To be precise, another necessary premise of the TMA is that there exists at least one F thing, where F is any property for which Plato believes a form is necessary. For consider justice, which is a property for which Plato believes a form is required for explanation. If we do not assume the existence of one just thing, including the form of justice itself, then no regress in the case of justice will follow from NSE, SP, and OM-TMA-R. If there is no just thing, there will be no requirement for the existence of a form of justice over it, in which it will participate. However, if we assume that the form of justice exists (and so a just thing exists by SPV) *or* that one just thing other than the form of justice exists, then

about SPV itself? Is SPV necessary for bringing about the regresses in the TMA?

According to SPV, it is true of every form of F that it is genuinely an F thing. I have

not yet examined how exactly this premise ought to be understood. However, at this

point I want to suggest that, although a version of SP may be involved in the explicit

formulation of the TMA in the *Parmenides*, nothing as strong as SP is required for

Plato to be confronted with the *Regress Problem* of the TMA, that *at least one infinite*

regress of forms exists.

   According to Peterson, in the *Parmenides* at 132a-b, Plato claims that "the

third man argument will go through for any form…" (Peterson 1973, 456). Here she

is apparently relying on Plato's assertion that it will follow from the reasoning of the

TMA that *each* of the forms will be unlimited in number (*Parmenides* 132b1-2). So

the TMA *is* intended to apply to all forms. If this is correct, which appears reasonable

based on the text, then the TMA *as stated* does rely on some version of SP (or some

other similar universal premise). The point I want to make clear is that Plato would

still be presented with the Regress Problem if he merely rejected SP (according to any

particular interpretation of it). There will be problematic consequences for Plato as

long as there is an infinite regress in the case of at least one form. Suppose that Plato

rejects SPV, but instead holds a Minimal-Narrow-Self-Predication (MNSP) premise:

> (MNSP)   There is at least one form of F, such that the form of F is
> an F thing in the same way as the many sensible Fs.[181]

a regress will follow if we also assume NSE, SPV, and OM-TMA-R. If we assume that there exists at
least one F thing in the cases in which a form would be required, along with NSE, SPV, OM-TMA-R,
then regresses in the case of all existing forms will follow (regardless of whether or not Plato thinks that
there are some properties for which there are no forms). NSE is consistent with SPV, OM-TMA-R, and
this additional premise, while NIV is not, since it conflicts with SPV.

[181] Note that MNSP is not a version of SP, since I reserve SP to refer to a *universal* genuine self-
predication assumption, or one which makes a claim about *all* forms. MNSP is a restricted premise
based on the Narrow Self-Predication assumption (NSP), which is a version of SP that I discuss later in
this chapter and that I discussed in depth in Chapter One. NSP is the view that any form of F is an F
thing in the same way as sensible Fs. Now it is usually the case that one can specify many different
("narrow") ways in which sensible Fs are F. For example, sensible equals are equal in many different
ways, by having a certain length, width, weight, etc. But for Plato, as I argue in Chapter One, at a
higher level of abstraction it is possible to specify one way in which all sensible Fs are F, which covers

If Plato accepts even the more modest assumption MNSP and he rejects the particular

SP assumption which is at work in the TMA itself (which asserts genuine self-

predication in the case of all forms), then he will still face the *Regress Problem*. And

this is the case because there will be at least one form such that the regress is initiated

for that form. But as we see in the TMA itself, *any* infinite regress of this kind will be

disastrous to Plato.[182] *For Plato to avoid the Regress Problem of the TMA altogether,*

he needs to prevent there being even one case of an infinite regress of forms. An

adequate response to the TMA must deal with the Regress Problem and not merely the

expressed conclusion of the TMA in the *Parmenides*. And again, the *Regress Problem*

of the TMA is: There is at least one form for which there is an infinite regress. For an

adequate response to the TMA, the rejection of SP is not sufficient.[183] Plato *might* be

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all of the more specific ways. So for equal sensibles, there is *one way* (which I call "the general narrow way") in which they are all equal, namely by having sameness of measure. NSP in the case of equality would say that the form of equality is equal in this same way, by having sameness of measure. As I argue in Chapter One, we have good reason not to attribute NSP to Plato (in the middle dialogues).

[182] See the beginning of this chapter for an explanation of why an infinite regress of forms in general seems to be problematic for Plato, with respect to uniqueness and knowledge. If there are *any* forms for which there is an infinite regress, then the uniqueness assumption will be violated in those cases. Also, knowledge would seem to be impossible in cases of forms for which there is an infinite regress. For instance, if there is an infinite regress in the case of the form of beauty, it seems that knowledge that something is beautiful would be impossible, which is a result Plato would want to avoid.

[183] A similar point has been made independently by Bryan Frances, in "Plato's Response to the Third Man Argument in the Paradoxical Exercise of the *Parmenides*" (Frances 1996). Frances focuses on Meinwald's solution to the TMA, which, as I discussed in Chapter Four, holds that Plato responds to the TMA by distinguishing between two kinds of predication, *pros heauto* and *pros ta alla*, and thereupon rejects that forms self-predicate such that the regresses are generated. Frances accepts Meinwald's account of Plato's distinction of the two kinds of predication, but argues that this will not be a sufficient response to the TMA because *pros ta alla* self-predication must hold for Plato in the case of certain forms, and this self-predication is sufficient (along with other premises) to get the regresses going in these problematic cases. I agree with Frances that because of these special cases, which I examine in more detail shortly, an adequate response to the TMA cannot consist merely in the rejection of a universal self-predication assumption. But there are some important ways in which I differ from Frances: First, he thinks, along with Meinwald, that Plato does distinguish between these two *kinds* of predication, which I argue against in Chapter Four. Second, Frances claims that one of the necessary conditions for generating these regresses is that there is a *set of things other than the form of F* that participate in the form and are F (Frances 1996, 57). But as I explain shortly, on my construal of the argument, no such assumption is required. Third, while Frances suggests that Plato rejects NSE to adequately respond to the TMA, he provides absolutely no textual evidence for this claim. As I argue shortly, there is textual evidence from the *Republic* and *Sophist* to suggest that Plato does not accept NSE either before or after the TMA, and so we have good reason to think that Plato responds to the TMA by rejecting this premise to which he is never committed.

able to avoid the Regress Problem if he were to reject MNSP, but MNSP is quite plausible and follows from the barest assumptions about forms, assumptions to which Plato is deeply committed both before and after the *Parmenides*.[184] It is not reasonable to suppose that Plato responds to the Regress Problem by rejecting MNSP, because he can respond adequately by rejecting a different premise, one to which he is never committed (namely, NSE). Below, I will return to an explanation of why the rejection of MNSP is not a reasonable option for Plato. Briefly, a rejection of MNSP would be tantamount to the claim that forms have no properties which they all share, or if there are properties which they do share, there are no forms of those properties. I will argue that Plato is deeply committed to there being properties shared by all forms, and to there being forms in the cases of (at least some of) those properties. So to avoid the Regress Problem and to adequately respond to the TMA, Plato looks to reject some other premise than whatever SP assumption is involved.

IV. Versions of SP and Non-SP Premises in the TMA

Before I examine why I think Plato cannot reasonably reject MNSP, I will consider whether there might be some assumption, which is *not* a genuine self-predication assumption, involved in the TMA in place of a version of SP. I will argue that even though some non-SP premise could take the place of SP in a valid TMA-style argument, the TMA as stated does appear to rely on a version of SP. Next, I will consider some different ways of interpreting the specific self-predication assumption

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[184] For instance, if Plato believes that the form of being exists, which he appears to do in the *Republic* and *Sophist* for example, then MNSP will follow regardless of whatever other commitments Plato might have about the nature of forms. Plato seems to continue to hold in the *Sophist* that there is a form of being and that it is a being (see e.g. *Sophist* 249d, 254d, 256e). And this alone is sufficient to commit him to MNSP.

involved in the TMA, and I will question whether each of these different interpretations of self-predication might be the one intended by Plato in the TMA. I will show that although Plato may not be committed to these self-predication assumptions, he cannot reasonably respond to the TMA by rejecting any of them. More generally, Plato cannot adequately and reasonably respond to the TMA by solely rejecting *any* self-predication assumption whatsoever, because of his commitment to MNSP and because of MNSP's plausibility.

I have argued throughout this dissertation that Plato is not committed to any version of SP (in the middle dialogues), that is, any *universal genuine* self-predication assumption, or the view that for *all* forms, the form of F is itself *an F thing*. Instead, when Plato suggests that "the form of F is F" in a context in which he intends to generalize this claim to all forms, what he intends to express is merely that any form of F is F-explaining, or explains things' being F. In these contexts, he intends these apparent statements of self-predication to be understood as "explanatory predications". Again, by "explanatory predications", I do not mean to suggest here that Plato is using a different *kind* of predication. My point is that he is predicating something different of the form of F than that it is an F thing. Instead, he is predicating of it that it is an F-explaining thing. In my view, he intends these explanatory predications without being committed to the view that every form of F is actually an F thing (in any way).[185] But could Plato possibly intend a premise involving these explanatory predications in the TMA, instead of SP? Such a premise is as follows:

> (EP-TMA)   Any form of F is F-explaining (or explains things' being F).

Could EP-TMA be at work in the TMA in place of a version of SP?

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[185] Note that my view allows for exceptions. There may be—in fact there certainly are—some exceptional cases in which the form of F is an F thing (in the same way as sensible Fs).

Peterson argues that the one-over-many premise involved in the TMA "is supposed to generate a common form of Φ things only for a plurality of things *which are Φ in the same sense*" (Peterson 1973, 464, my emphasis). If the plurality of things are not Φ in the same sense, then the one-over-many premise would only be applied illegitimately and the regresses would not be initiated (Peterson 1973, 464). Fine makes a similar point when she argues that "both NSP and BSP are adequate as self-predication assumptions for the TMA" precisely because they "involve the claim that any form of F is a member of the class of F things" (Fine 1993, 207). EP-TMA, by contrast, does not involve this claim. According to EP-TMA, it does not follow that any form of F is a member of the class of F things (although it is consistent with EP-TMA that there may be some cases in which the form of F is such a member). Both Peterson and Fine seem to be arguing that the TMA will be invalid without a genuine self-predication assumption, because the one-over-many assumption only generates a form over a set containing only things which are F in the same sense. For example, take the maximal set of all large things at level 0, which contains all large things that are not a form of large. All these large things are large in the same sense of 'large'. OM-TMA-R can be applied to this maximal set, and so we have a form of large at level 1 over this set, in virtue of which all those things are large. Now by EP-TMA rather than SPV, we have that the form of large at level 1 is large-explaining. But now the many large things at level 0 and the form of large at level 1 cannot be taken together to compose a maximal set of large things at level 1, because we do not have that the form of large at level 1 is a large thing. A version of SP appears to be required in order to get the regress going. According to EP-TMA alone (and the EP view from which it is derived), (in general) the form of F and particular Fs will not form a maximal set of Fs, because (in general) the form of F is not an F thing (at all, and so not in the same sense as the many Fs). But if there is no maximal set of Fs containing

the form of F, then the infinite regress of forms will not be initiated, because OM-TMA-R cannot be applied to a set containing the form of F. So it seems as if the TMA cannot possibly be valid if one tries to take EP-TMA as the assumption at work here in place of SPV.

However, this is a bit too quick. It is correct that according to NSE and OM-TMA-R as stated above, the TMA will not be valid with the SPV assumption replaced with EP-TMA. But NSE and OM-TMA-R could be adjusted as follows to account for the use of EP-TMA[186]:

(NSE')	If x is F *or* x is F-explaining, then x is not F in virtue of itself, nor is x F-explaining in virtue of itself.
(OM-TMA-R')	For any maximal set at level n containing Fs *and* those things that are F-explaining, there is exactly one form of F at level n+1 in virtue of which all things in the maximal set at level n are F *or* are F-explaining.[187]

Now, EP-TMA, NSE' and OM-TMA-R' together are sufficient for validly leading to an infinite regress for all forms. SPV can be replaced with an assumption like EP-TMA, which does not hold that all forms are members of the class of F things, and the result can be a valid TMA-style argument, as long as NSE and OM-TMA-R are

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[186] Note that these are not *ad hoc* adjustments to NSE and OM-TMA-R. Instead, these adjustments are developed from an interpretation of the TMA according to EP. According to EP, Plato uses 'is F' sometimes to express that the subject is an F thing and sometimes to express that the subject is an F-explaining thing. If we attempt to take EP-TMA in place of SPV in the TMA and we try to see the premises of the TMA as consistent with EP, we can read NSE and OM-TMA-R such that they reflect that Plato sometimes uses 'F' as shorthand for 'F-explaining'. EP-TMA along with NSE and OM-TMA-R will validly entail the regress for all forms as long as one takes NSE and OM-TMA-R such that the 'F' in these very premises might be used as shorthand for 'F-explaining'. NSE' and OM-TMA-R' are formulations of NSE and OM-TMA-R in which this dual usage of 'F' is made explicit.

[187] The set at level n which contains Fs together with those things that are F-explaining might appear to be a gerrymandered set, and it might be unclear how it can be a maximal set. However, this is not a set composed of two sorts of random and unrelated things. The set contains all things which are related by a certain predicate 'F'—it contains those things which are Fs and those things which are explainers of things' being Fs. So the Fs and the explainers of F are related, and are reasonably considered together in a set. The set at level n containing these things is a *maximal* set, because it does not leave out any Fs or explainers of F which are at level n or below. The maximal set at level n containing Fs and those things that are F-explaining is *maximal*, because it contains every single F and F-explaining thing, which is at level n or below.

adjusted to account for the use of EP-TMA. And suppose that Plato intends EP-TMA, NSE' and OM-TMA-R' in his formulation of the TMA in the *Parmenides*. If these are his intended premises, then Plato cannot reasonably respond to the TMA by rejecting this assumption which is used in place of SPV, for two reasons: First, to reject EP-TMA, Plato would have to hold that the form of F does not explain things' being F, yet this is a deeply entrenched feature of the theory of forms. But of course, it is possible for Plato to reject a view to which he was at some time deeply committed. But Plato appears to be committed to EP-TMA both before and after the *Parmenides*[188], and I will explain later how Plato can adequately respond to the TMA by rejecting a premise to which he is never committed. As we will see, Plato rejects NSE because he holds (both before and after the *Parmenides*) that forms can be self-explainers. For the same reason (and perhaps others as well), Plato could easily respond to this new formulation of the TMA by rejecting NSE'. Second, even if Plato did reject EP-TMA, this would not constitute an adequate response to the TMA, because the Regress Problem would still follow as long as Plato accepts NSE', OM-TMA-R', and MNSP. Regresses would be validly generated from these premises in those cases in which MNSP is true. Since at least one problematic regress of forms would follow from NSE', OM-TMA-R', and MNSP, Plato cannot adequately respond to this formulation of the TMA by rejecting merely EP-TMA.

But even if it is true that EP-TMA could be used in place of the SP assumption in a valid TMA-*style* argument, there are some reasons to think that this is not Plato's intention in the TMA itself. First, it might be argued that OM-TMA-R' is much less plausible than OM-TMA-R. According to OM-TMA-R, there is some one explanation

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[188] For instance, he appears to be committed to EP-TMA at least in the *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, and *Sophist*. See e.g. *Euthyphro* 6d, *Meno* 72c, *Phaedo* 100c-102b, *Republic* 505a, 508e, *Symposium* 211b, and *Sophist* 256d-e, although some of these are perhaps controversial. I have discussed the *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo* passages in some detail in earlier chapters. See Section VI of this chapter for a discussion of the passage in the *Sophist*.

of things' being F. Things are F in virtue of participating in the form of F which is over them. But OM-TMA-R' asserts that there is some one explanation of both things' being F *and* of their being F-explaining. In other words, OM-TMA-R' (taken together with EP-TMA) assumes that there is some one explanation of the truth of the claims that "those two sticks are equal" and that "the form of equality is equal", where the first says that two things are equal and the second instead says that the form explains things' being equal. It seems reasonable to claim that contrary to this, there must be a different explanation of these very distinct claims.[189] Second, a quick look at what Plato actually asserts here in the *Parmenides* suggests that this reading is not a correct interpretation of Plato's intentions in the TMA. At 132a, Plato asserts that when one looks at the set of large things, they all have one and the *same* idea (ἰδέα) in common. Plato goes on to assert that one can look with the soul (τῇ ψυχῇ) and *in the same way* (ὡσαύτως) at the set containing the form of largeness and the other large things, and one will recognize another form of largeness that they all share. Here Plato seems to suggest that the way in which those particulars are large is the same as the way in which the form of large is large. This seems to rule out an interpretation of the passage involving OM-TMA-R' and EP-TMA, according to which there are very different accounts of how the particulars and the form "are large". And therefore, it seems that an interpretation of the TMA involving a genuine self-predication assumption is more likely to capture Plato's actual intention in the TMA. According to a genuine self-predication assumption, the particular Fs and the form of F are both F

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[189] Actually there is a reasonable response to this worry. According to OM-TMA-R' and EP-TMA, the fact that "those two sticks are equal" and the fact that "the form of equality is equal" are both true in virtue of the form of equality. OM-TMA-R' need *not* exactly say that the precise way in which the form of equality explains these facts is the same—all OM-TMA-R' asserts is that the form explains the truth of these facts. So OM-TMA-R' leaves open the possibility that there may be distinct accounts of the way in which the form of equality explains things' being equal and things' being equal-explaining. For instance, those two sticks might be equal in virtue of *participating* in the form of equality, while the form of equality might "be equal" (understood according to EP) in virtue of being related to the form in some other way. So OM-TMA-R' is not quite susceptible to the charge that it posits the *same exact explanation* for x's being F and for x's explaining things' being F.

things. So such a self-predication assumption is more consistent with Plato's claim

that the particular Fs and the form of F are F in the same way (ὡσαύτως).

I have suggested that *if* Plato did intend EP-TMA in the TMA then it is not

reasonable to think that Plato responds to the TMA by rejecting EP-TMA, since it is a

central feature of the theory of forms *and* there is at least one other premise to which

he is never committed. Also a rejection of EP-TMA would not constitute an adequate

response to the TMA because the Regress Problem would remain (as long as Plato

accepts MNSP). But I have argued that it seems unreasonable to claim that Plato did

intend EP-TMA in his formulation of the TMA.[190]

Does this show that I am wrong to maintain that in general Plato intends his

apparent statements of self-predication as explanatory predications and that Plato is

not committed to a universal genuine self-predication assumption? No it does not. It

is reasonable to see the TMA as Plato's presentation of a difficulty that follows from

one or more premises which he *is not* and perhaps *never was* committed to, premises

which one might easily mistakenly attribute to Plato and which have often been

mistakenly attributed to him.[191] So even if it is true that a genuine self-predication

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[190] It could also be noted that my arguments in this section concerning EP-TMA could also in general be
applied to readings of the TMA which see the apparent self-predications involved as identity statements
(whether tautologous or not). For instance, if the SP assumption in the TMA is replaced with a
tautologous identity assumption (i.e., the form of F is identical to the form of F) rather than a genuine
predication assumption, then Plato could not respond by rejecting this assumption, since it is trivially
and obviously true. But the arguments I have just suggested concerning EP-TMA would apply here as
well. Considerations of plausibility and textual evidence suggest that Plato did not intend the
tautologous identity interpretation, or any other interpretation which sees the apparent self-predications
as identity statements.
[191] Fine seems to favor the view that Plato did not present the TMA as an objection to his *actual*
commitments in the middle dialogues—therefore, one should not conclude that Plato was committed to
one of the premises of the TMA in the middle dialogues *solely* because it is one of the premises of the
TMA. Fine writes:

> [P]erhaps Plato does not offer the TMA either as a record of honest perplexity or as a
> fatal objection to his theory. Perhaps he offers it in order to force us to clarify what
> sort of self-predication, non-identity, and one over many assumptions he actually
> accepts. (Fine 1993, 237-8)

(*Continues on next page…*)

assumption is intended by Plato in the TMA, this alone does not show that he is or was ever committed to such an assumption. Even if a version of SP is involved as a premise in the TMA, this is not sufficient evidence to show that Plato was actually committed to such an assumption in the middle dialogues.

If Plato did intend a version of SP in the TMA, what exactly is the nature of this assumption? As I have explained in Chapter Four, both Peterson and Fine argue for attributing different non-narrow genuine self-predication assumptions to Plato. Both of them distinguish narrow ways in which a form might self-predicate, from other "broad" or "expansive" ways. Peterson introduces a Pauline way (Peterson 1973, 461-2), while Fine introduces a different "broad" way (Fine 1993, 62). Suppose that "the form of equality is equal" is understood as an instance of Narrow Self-Predication (NSP). What this means is that the form of equality is itself an equal thing in the same way as the many equals—by having sameness of measure. However, if the sentence is taken according to Peterson's view, it would mean that the form of equality is itself an equal thing *in the Pauline way*, namely by having its instances being equal in the narrow way (Peterson 1973, 461).[192] So Peterson holds that having one's instances being F (in the narrow way) is another way in which a thing can itself be F.[193] And if the sentence is interpreted according to Fine's view, it would mean that the form of equality is an equal thing *in a broad way*, namely by explaining why particular sensible things are equal (Fine 1993, 62). So Fine holds that explaining why things are F is another way (namely, a "broad" way) in which a thing can itself *be* F. Fine and Peterson argue that Plato's statements of the form "the form of F is F" can (in

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Also see Penner, who argues that we cannot assume that Plato was committed to a certain SP premise in the middle dialogues solely on the basis of its presence in the TMA (Penner 1987, 265-6, 298).

[192] Also see Peterson 1975, 96.

[193] Throughout this section, I am presenting Peterson's Pauline Predication view according to the "expansive reinterpretation" rather than the "conservative reinterpretation". It is only according to the former that Peterson thinks the TMA will be valid.

general) be read according to these interpretations. They both argue that in these cases, the form of F is genuinely an F thing, and F in the same *sense* as the many Fs. According to their views, forms (in general) differ from the many Fs in the *way* they are F, but not in the sense of 'F'. The form of F can be considered with the many Fs as forming a set of things which are genuinely F, in the same sense of 'F'.

Peterson argues that if the SP premise in the TMA is understood in terms of Pauline predications, then the regresses in the TMA are still brought about (Peterson 1973, 463-70). Fine argues, analogously, that if the SP premise in the TMA is taken to assert that forms self-predicate in a broad way, the regresses in the TMA still arise (Fine 1993, 207, 225). Both Peterson and Fine seem to think that Plato's commitment (in the middle dialogues) to SP according to their interpretations, is evidence that this is what Plato intends in the TMA. But I have argued in Chapter Four, Section II, that Plato's apparent statements of self-predication (in the middle dialogues) ought not to be understood according to either of their views. Plato never held that all forms self-predicate in Pauline or broad ways. If my arguments are successful, then Peterson and Fine would at least be wrong to use Plato's earlier commitments as evidence for *their* interpretations of the SP premise in the TMA.[194]

The textual evidence in the *Parmenides* itself might also count against their views. Again, Plato suggests that one can consider, with the soul, the form of F and the many Fs as being F "in the same way" (ὡσαύτως). This might be taken to show that Plato intends a self-predication assumption in the TMA according to which the form of F and the many Fs are F not merely in the same sense of F, but in the same

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[194] But remember that we ought to be very skeptical about claiming that Plato was at some point actually committed to whatever SP premise is at work in the TMA. Therefore, it must be admitted that even if Plato was never committed to the premises defended by Peterson or Fine, this on its own does not show that he did not intend their versions in the TMA. He might have used their versions in the TMA to show what follows from premises to which he was never committed, but which might be mistakenly attributed to him.

way as well. Since the many Fs are F in the narrow way, the form of F would be F in the narrow way as well (and not merely the Pauline or broad way). However, here I will not insist on the claim that Plato did not intend, in the TMA, a version of SP understood according to the interpretations of Peterson or Fine. If Plato did intend a version of SP involving Pauline predication, he might reject this SP on the basis of holding that not all forms are F things, but he could not reasonably deny this version of SP by claiming that there is any form of F for which the instances of the form are not F. Likewise, Plato might reject a version of SP derived from Fine's view, on the basis of holding that not all forms are F things, but he could not reasonably reject this SP by claiming there is some form of F that does not explain things' being F. This is the case because Plato is deeply committed to the view that for all forms, something which is an instance of the form of F and participates in it is F, and that the form of F explains' things being F. However, Plato might reject these versions of an SP assumption, if he denies that all forms are F things. But here is the key point: even if Plato rejects an SP assumption like Peterson's or Fine's, and such an assumption *is* at work in the formulation of the TMA, Plato will not avoid the Regress Problem through a rejection of this SP premise. And this is the case because of his relatively deep commitment to MNSP (both before and after the *Parmenides*) and because of its plausibility, which I will soon discuss.

Before moving on to a discussion of MNSP, let us consider whether Narrow Self-Predication (NSP), rather than Peterson's or Fine's version of SP, could be the intended version of SP in the formulation of the TMA. NSP is the view that every form of F is an F thing in the same way as sensible Fs.[195] Could NSP be the intended version of SP in the TMA? As Fine notes, "[i]t is sometimes thought that NSP is

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[195] Again, in Chapter One, I discuss this view in detail and argue that Plato was not committed to it in the middle dialogues and especially in the *Phaedo*.

necessary as the self-predication assumption of the TMA" (Fine 1993, 225). Even if this is incorrect, and NSP is not *necessary* as the SP premise, perhaps this was Plato's intention. Fine argues that if NSP were the intended SP premise in the TMA, then "Plato would not be vulnerable to the TMA, since he is not committed to NSP" (Fine 1993, 225). Because Plato explicitly asserts in the TMA that the argument is applicable to *each* of the forms, Fine is correct in this claim. However, as I have argued above, *Plato would still be susceptible to the Regress Problem of the TMA if there were an infinite regress of forms even in the case of one form*. If Plato intends NSP as the SP premise in the TMA, then he would not be faced with the TMA as it is stated here in the *Parmenides*, because since he rejects NSP, there are some forms for which the regress would not arise. And so there would not be infinitely many forms for *each* of the forms. However, even if we suppose that NSP is the intended SP premise in the TMA, the Regress Problem would remain for Plato as long as he held MNSP. Regardless of the intended SP premise in the TMA, if it is true that there is at least one form that is F in the same way as sensible Fs, then the argument in the TMA could be applied to engender a regress in the case of this form, and this would be sufficient to cause problems for Plato, at least with regard to uniqueness. Perhaps Plato can avoid the TMA as stated if he can reject the intended universal SP assumption, but if he holds MNSP along with OM-TMA-R and NSE (and that there exists one F thing in a case in which the form of F is F in the same way as sensible Fs), then he is susceptible to the Regress Problem. At least one instance of a disastrous regress will come about as long as Plato affirms these premises.

V. Plato's Commitment to MNSP

It might look like the best alternative for Plato is to reject MNSP. In fact, as I will argue, this is not the case. If Plato did want to possibly[196] avoid the Regress Problem, while retaining OM-TMA-R and NSE, he would have to reject MNSP. Focusing on a rejection of the SP assumption alone, Plato could only possibly avoid all instances of infinite regress if he rejected MNSP. To reject MNSP, Plato would have to claim that there is no form of F, such that it is an F thing in the same way as sensible Fs. And Plato *seems* to hint at a rejection of MNSP at 132e, in the midst of the Resemblance Regress.[197] He argues that in order to avoid the regresses we must assert that "nothing can be like the form, nor can the form be like anything". Now if we suppose, for instance, that there are many beautiful things, then Plato's assertion here suggests that, since the form "cannot be like anything", the form of beauty will not itself be like the beautifuls—it will not be beautiful. In this passage, Plato is not discussing any form in particular but is making a claim about all forms. As long as we assume that there are many Fs in each case, then it seems that Plato is claiming that the form in virtue of which an F thing is F, is not itself F (at least in the same way as

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[196] I say "possibly" here because I have left open the possibility that some non-narrow SP assumption, such as Peterson's or Fine's, along with OM-TMA-R and NSE, could be sufficient for generating the regresses of the TMA. If so, then a rejection of MNSP would not itself lead to the avoidance of the Regress Problem. My point is that as long as Plato accepts MNSP along with OM-TMA-R and NSE, he cannot avoid the Regress Problem of the TMA.

[197] Fine argues that the first presentation of the TMA in the *Parmenides* (P-TMA) and the Resemblance Regress are logically the same argument, but they highlight different premises of the argument which one might reject in order to avoid it (Fine 1993, 214-5). According to Fine, the P-TMA suggests that one could avoid the TMA by rejecting the one-over-many assumption involved and the Resemblance Regress suggests that one could avoid the TMA by rejecting the self-predication assumption involved. But in the "ἄρα" clause at 132e6 within the Resemblance Regress, Plato seems to assert the rejection of self-predication in a more explicit way than he suggests that one might reject the one-over-many assumption in the P-TMA. One might take this to hint at the fact that Plato is leaning towards avoiding the TMA by rejecting SP, here in the *Parmenides*. But as I argue, Plato cannot avoid the Regress Problem of the TMA by rejecting SP, and in the *Sophist*, Plato shows that he avoids the Regress Problem by rejecting NSE instead. Plato also suggests a commitment to a rejection of NSE in the TBA, when (unlike the *Parmenides*) he is more clearly presenting his own positive view.

the sensible Fs)—and so no form of F is F (in the same way as the sensible Fs). He

seems to be rejecting MNSP. And as I have argued, Plato would have to reject MNSP

if he wanted to possibly avoid the Regress Problem while retaining OM-TMA-R and

NSE.

However, instead of supposing that there are many beautifuls or many Fs,

perhaps Plato wants to assert that the form of F is F (in the narrow way), but since

"nothing can be like the form", particular Fs are not in fact F and there are no Fs other

than the form.[198] However, this is a quite implausible reading because it does not

seem that Plato would avoid the TMA if he posited NSP along with the claim that, for

any form of F, there is nothing other than the form of F which is F. For suppose that

there is nothing other than the form of F which is F, *but the form of F is indeed F*.[199][200]

Since there is nothing other than the form of F which is F, the form of F itself

composes a maximal set of Fs. Let us suppose that this form is at level 1. By NSE, it

is not F in virtue of itself. And so by OM-TMA-R, there will be one form of F at level

2, in virtue of which it is F. The form of F at level 1 along with the form of F at level

2 compose a maximal set at level 2, and by OM-TMA-R there will be a form of F at

level 3. This reasoning can continue *ad infinitum*.[201] Here Plato intends to suggest a

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[198] This move would conflict with what seems to be a central Platonic view, that there are many Fs other than the form of F which are F in virtue of participating in the form of F (at least for some range of properties). However, one who held the Approximation View would attribute to Plato the view that nothing other than the form of F is actually or really F, but other things only approach being F. However, I reject this view, as I think that Plato is committed to there being sensible Fs which are truly F, although these sensibles do (at least often) suffer the compresence of opposites. Plato is also committed to there being numerous cases in which forms other than the form of F can be truly F. For instance, all forms are really beings even though they are not all identical to the form of being. So things other than the form of being are really beings.

[199] Now in Plato's presentation of the TMA itself he *does* assert that there are many large things. My point here is just that even if Plato assumed NSP (along with NSE and OM-TMA-R) and held that for all forms, only the form of F is F, he would still face the regresses of the TMA for all forms.

[200] Here I assume that a form of F can exist even if there are no Fs other than the form of F. So I take it that forms are ontologically independent from any participants—they can exist regardless of whether they have any participants, which is perhaps a controversial view.

[201] If my suggestion here is correct, then Fine is not correct to argue that OM-TMA, NSE, and SP are sufficient to generate the regress of the TMA only if they are taken "together with the assumption that there are *some F things…*" (Fine 1993, 210, my emphasis). If there is *at least one* F thing, the form of

way out of the regresses of the TMA, so he cannot mean that the form is F but the particulars are not F, because then the regress will still be generated. It is more likely that he means to suggest that the regresses of the TMA could be avoided if, while particulars are F, *no* form is taken to be F. As I have argued, Plato can only possibly avoid *every instance* of the devastating TMA regresses if he rejects MNSP, OM-TMA-R, or NSE, or some combination of these.

Although Plato might be taken to hint at the rejection of MNSP in the Resemblance Regress, I do not think that it is reasonable to take this to be an option which he truly considers, given his other deep commitments and the plausibility of MNSP itself. I discuss Plato's commitment to MNSP (in Chapter Two, Section IV) when I argue against the views of Allen and Cherniss, who hold that all apparent statements of self-predication ought to be read as tautologous identity statements and that Plato is committed to the view that *no* forms genuinely self-predicate. I will only briefly review the point here. Plato is committed to the view that there are forms of formal properties (or at least explicitly forms of some of the formal properties). By 'formal properties', I mean those properties which are shared among all forms—these are meant to include some properties which are shared among non-forms as well. For instance, he seems committed to the view that there is, to name a few, a form of rest, unity, being, sameness, and intelligibility. All of these forms are forms of properties which Plato attributes to all forms. Since they are themselves forms, they also have these properties. The form of unity, for instance, is itself a unity (in the same way as sensible unities). So, whether or not Plato accepts NSP for all forms (which is unlikely), he is certainly committed to the view that narrow self-predication is true in the case of some forms. For, *narrow self-predication will be true in the case of all of*

F itself for instance, then the regress will be generated. Of course, once the regress is generated it will follow that there is more than one F thing, but the point is that this need not be assumed at the outset.

the forms of formal properties. Since Plato seems deeply committed to the relatively plausible MNSP assumption both before and after the *Parmenides*[202], it is unreasonable to think that he responds to the TMA by rejecting MNSP. And as long as there are some forms for which narrow self-predication is true, OM-TMA-R and NSE can be used to show that there will be an infinite regress in the cases of these forms. And this is true regardless of the universal SP (or similar) assumption that Plato actually intends in his formulation of the TMA in the *Parmenides*.

VI. Plato's Response – The Rejection of NSE

MNSP appears to be a plausible premise, and it is one that Plato could not reject without making radical changes to central features of his metaphysics. It is reasonable to suppose that Plato will seek to avoid the TMA by rejecting OM-TMA-R or NSE or both of them, rather than MNSP, especially if it turns out that at least one of these additional premises is never part of his metaphysics. It is more reasonable to suppose that Plato responds to the argument by rejecting a premise to which he is never committed, than by rejecting one which is central to the theory of forms. In my view, Plato *responds to the TMA* by rejecting NSE and *not by rejecting OM-TMA-R or SPV*[203], and there is textual evidence both before and after the TMA of Plato's rejection of NSE.

While Fine agrees that Plato ought to respond to the TMA by rejecting NSE, she claims that he would thereby reject OM-TMA as well, which is her version of the

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[202] As I noted earlier, Plato seems committed to MNSP in the *Sophist* simply because he holds that the form of being is a being (see e.g. *Sophist* 249d, 254d, 256e).

[203] It also seems to be the case that Plato rejects SPV, as I have argued in this dissertation. But this is not part of his response to the TMA. As I have shown in this chapter, a rejection of SPV does not constitute an *adequate* response to the TMA. Alternatively, a rejection of NSE does.

one-over-many assumption involved in the TMA (Fine 1993, 366 n. 62). This is the

case because, according to her OM-TMA, it seems to imply NSE (Fine 1993, 350 n.

40). However (as I noted above), my OM-TMA-R is distinct from Fine's in a subtle

but important way, such that it clearly does not imply NSE. Again, here is my

formalization of OM-TMA-R, followed by Fine's OM-TMA (Fine 1993, 210):

(OM-TMA-R) For any maximal set of Fs at level n, there is exactly one form of F at level n+1 over it (where 'over' means "participated in by all the members of").

(OM-TMA) For any maximal set of Fs and level n, there is exactly one form of F at level n+1 over it (where 'over' means "participated in by all and only the members of").

According to OM-TMA-R (and OM-TMA), there is exactly one form of F at *level*

n+1 over a maximal set of Fs at *level n*. For instance, suppose that the form of F at

level 1 is over a maximal set of Fs at level 0 which does not contain the form. Fine's

OM-TMA itself entails that the form of F at level 1 is not F in virtue of itself—this is

because her OM-TMA says that since the form of F at level 1 is "over" the set at level

0, all and *only* the members of that set are F in virtue of the form of F at level 1. Since

the form of F at level 1 is not in that set, it is not F in virtue of itself. But OM-TMA-

R, on the other hand, merely says that if the form of F at level n+1 is over the set of Fs

at level n, *all* of the Fs in that set are F in virtue of the form at level n+1. OM-TMA-R

itself leaves open the possibility that the form at level n+1 is also F in virtue of itself.

Another difference between our two interpretations of the one-over-many

assumption involved in the TMA is that, on my interpretation, it is left as an open

question as to whether an object at level n+1 is ontologically distinct from every

object in the set of Fs at level n which it is "over". According to both of our one-over-

many assumptions, the form of F at level n is F (by SPV) in virtue of the form of F at

level n+1 which is *over* the maximal set that contains the form of F at level n. But

Fine understands OM-TMA such that the different "levels" referred to must be

different ontological levels. Fine reads OM-TMA *itself* as involving the claim that:

the form of F at level n+1, which is over the maximal set containing the form of F at level n, must be ontologically distinct from the form of F at level n. NSE would then seem to follow directly from OM-TMA because if the form of F at level n is F in virtue of the form of F at level n+1, and the form of F at level n+1 cannot be identical to the form of F at level n, then the form of F at level n is not F in virtue of itself.[204]

However, according to my understanding of OM-TMA-R, the mere fact that the form at level n+1 is at level n+1 and is "*over*" the maximal set of Fs at level n does not imply that the form at level n+1 is ontologically distinct from the form at level n. What it means for the form of F at level n+1 to be "over" the maximal set of Fs at level n is *just* that all the members of this maximal set are F in virtue of (participating in) the form of F at level n+1. According to my OM-TMA-R, there is no reason *without NSE* why an object at level n+1 must be considered as ontologically distinct from every object at level n. Once NSE is added to OM-TMA-R, then it follows that the form of F at level n+1 is ontologically distinct from the form of F at level n, and the infinite regresses of forms are generated. This is the case because if the form of F at level n+1 were not ontologically distinct from the form of F at level n, then the form of F at level n would explain its own being F, which is ruled out by NSE. OM-TMA-

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[204] In fact, it seems wrong for Fine to claim that her OM-TMA entails NSE. Suppose that we only assume SPV and OM-TMA. It follows from OM-TMA alone that the Fs at level n are F by participating in the form of F at level n+1 which is ontologically distinct from any of the Fs at level n. It also follows from OM-TMA that (all and) *only* the members of the maximal set at level n are F by participating in the form of F at level n+1—since the form of F at level n+1 is not itself in this set, it is not F by participating in itself. What follows is that no form of F (and trivially no non-form F) is F by participation in itself. But this is not quite NSE, that nothing is F *in virtue of itself*. Even if it follows that *nothing is F by participation in itself*, the possibility remains open that a form of F is F on account of itself in some way other than by participation. On Fine's OM-TMA, the form of F at level n would be F by participating in the distinct form of F at level n+1, but it might *also* be F in virtue of itself (in some way other than by participation). If so, then Fine's OM-TMA does not imply NSE. Perhaps OM-TMA together with a rejection of overdetermination, would imply NSE—but Plato appears committed to the *possibility* of overdetermination in his formulation of the TMA.

R alone does not include the further claim that objects at level n+1 must be ontologically distinct from all objects at level n.

Instead, OM-TMA-R asserts in general that there is exactly one form of F at level n+1 in virtue of which all the members of the maximal set of Fs at level n are F, but OM-TMA-R *by itself* leaves it as an open question as to whether the form of F at level n is identical to the form of F at level n+1.[205] And so, according to OM-TMA-R, by itself it leaves open the possibility that the form of F at level n is F in virtue of itself. One benefit of this interpretation is that according to it, OM-TMA-R together with SPV is consistent with uniqueness. But Fine's OM-TMA together with SPV rules out uniqueness. OM-TMA-R has the advantage of being consistent with uniqueness, regardless of whether or not SPV is also assumed. Plato begins his presentation of the TMA by outlining a one-over-many assumption which might reasonably lead one to accept uniqueness. So it is preferable if we use a version of a one-over-many assumption which will be sufficient (along with SP and NSE) for generating the regresses of the TMA, but which is also consistent with uniqueness when taken together with SPV. My OM-TMA-R is such a version.

Another benefit of OM-TMA-R is that it helps to isolate and explain how it is crucially NSE that gets the regresses of the TMA going. For OM-TMA-R along with SPV are not sufficient for generating the TMA regresses. It is the addition of NSE to OM-TMA-R and SPV from which it follows that the form of F at level n+1 "over" the maximal set of Fs at level n cannot be identical to the form of F at level n. For suppose that the form of F at level n+1 were identical to the form of F at level n. The form of F at level n is in the maximal set of Fs at level n (by SPV), and so (by OM-

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[205] According to OM-TMA-R and OM-TMA, the Fs in the maximal set at level n are F in virtue of exactly one form of F at level n+1. But both OM-TMA-R and OM-TMA leave open the possibility that the members of this maximal set are also F in virtue of some distinct form or forms of F, which is required for the regresses of the TMA.

TMA-R) this form of F at level n is F in virtue of participating in the form of F at level n+1 "over" it. But by hypothesis, the form of F at level n+1 just is the form of F at level n, so the form of F at level n is F in virtue of itself. But this is explicitly ruled out, not by OM-TMA-R, but by NSE. And so it is NSE which precisely requires that the form of F at level n+1 over the maximal set of Fs at level n is ontologically distinct from the form of F at level n. In my view, we ought not to conceive of the one-over-many assumption involved in the TMA in such a way that it implies NSE, and we should see it and SPV as together consistent with uniqueness and insufficient to generate the regresses of the TMA without NSE.

Once the one-over-many assumption is construed in this way and is isolated from NSE, it is more plausibly considered as part of the theory of forms in the middle dialogues, at least insofar as it is consistent with uniqueness.[206] If there is evidence before and after the *Parmenides* that Plato is never committed to NSE, then it is reasonable to suggest that Plato would choose to adequately respond to the TMA by rejecting NSE rather than OM-TMA-R. And as I argued above, because of the plausibility of MNSP and Plato's apparent commitment to it both before and after the *Parmenides*, it is not reasonable to suggest that he will adequately respond to the TMA and deal with the Regress Problem by focusing solely on a rejection of a self-predication (or similar) assumption. So if Plato intends to provide an adequate response to the TMA, it is only reasonable to suppose that he does so through a rejection of NSE. Plato can avoid all instances of the TMA-style regresses by rejecting NSE and by claiming that if a form of F is F, it is F (only) in virtue of itself.

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[206] Note again that OM-TMA-R could be restricted such that it applies only to some limited range of predicates, and perhaps only according to this restricted formulation, would OM-TMA-R truly be part of the theory of forms. But from this restricted formulation of OM-TMA-R along with NSE and MNSP, at least one instance of an infinite regress would follow, and the Regress Problem of the TMA would remain. So Plato would respond adequately to the TMA and deal with the Regress Problem by rejecting NSE, a premise to which he is never committed, rather than some other premise.

And there is good reason to think that Plato rejects NSE both before and after the *Parmenides*. In the Third Bed Argument (TBA) at *Republic* 597c1-d3, which is found within Plato's expression of his own positive view in Book X, Plato relies on a rejection of NSE and holds that true forms have at least one of their properties in virtue of themselves. Plato argues that two "forms" of bed would not be the real form of bed because they would both have a certain property or εἶδος *of* the real form, which they have in virtue of that form and not in virtue of themselves. For my present purposes, it is not necessary to determine the exact nature of this εἶδος of the true form. The key point here is that the true form must have this εἶδος in virtue of itself and not in virtue of any further form. The two forms of bed are not the real form of bed because they have this εἶδος in virtue of some further form. The real form must explain its own possession of this εἶδος—it must have this εἶδος in virtue of itself. Since Plato relies on the claim that forms must have one of their properties *in virtue of themselves*, he rejects NSE and is at least open to the view that in those cases in which forms genuinely self-predicate, they do so in virtue of themselves.

The form of the good in the *Republic* also seems to provide a counterexample to NSE, as it explains its own possession of certain features. For example, in the analogy of the sun at 506e-509d, the sun is responsible for making things in the visible realm visible. Since the sun is itself in the visible realm and is a visible object, it is responsible for making itself visible. Likewise, the good is responsible for making things in the intelligible realm intelligible. But the good is in the intelligible realm and is an object of knowledge (*Republic* 508e). And the good is responsible for making the objects of knowledge knowable (*Republic* 509b). It follows that the form of the good is knowable in virtue of itself. And so Plato rejects NSE in his discussion of the good in the *Republic*. Plato holds that forms can be self-explainers of the properties that they have.

Plato is more explicit in the later dialogue of the *Sophist* in not merely rejecting NSE, but in affirming that the form of F can *be F* in virtue of itself. At *Sophist* 256d11-e4, Plato writes:

So it must be possible for that which is not to be, in the case of change and according to *all the kinds*. For according to *all* of them, the nature of the different makes each of them not be, making each of them different from being. And indeed, it is correct for us to say that *all* of them are not in this same way, and on the other hand, that they are beings, because they share in being.	Ἔστιν ἄρα ἐξ ἀνάγκης τὸ μὴ ὂν ἐπί τε κινήσεως εἶναι καὶ κατὰ πάντα τὰ γένη· κατὰ πάντα γὰρ ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ ὄντος ἕκαστον οὐκ ὂν ποιεῖ, καὶ σύμπαντα δὴ κατὰ ταὐτὰ οὕτως οὐκ ὄντα ὀρθῶς ἐροῦμεν, καὶ πάλιν, ὅτι μετέχει τοῦ ὄντος, εἶναί τε καὶ ὄντα.

Here Plato argues concerning all the kinds or forms (referring to those things which he has just called the most important forms or εἴδη at 254c-d), that it is the form of the different which is responsible for making *every* one of them different, and that *all* of the forms are beings because they share in the form of being. Both the form of the different and the form of being are clearly forms that Plato includes as two of the most important forms or εἴδη. So Plato suggests that the form of the different is different in virtue of itself and the form of being is a being in virtue of itself. Narrow self-predication is true of both the form of the different and the form of being, and they both self-predicate in virtue of sharing in themselves. So by the time that Plato has written the *Sophist*, he has expressly rejected NSE and has explicitly adopted the view that if a form self-predicates (at least in the narrow way), it does so (only) in virtue of itself. Although Plato may not have earlier asserted exactly what it is in virtue of which a form of F is F, in my view, he was never committed to NSE, and this is apparent at least in the rejection of NSE in the TBA and in the role of the good in the analogy of the sun. Plato uses the TMA to stress, to those willing to think through the issues involved, that NSE ought not to be accepted into the theory of forms.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, for Plato at least in the middle dialogues, it seems that all forms are such that "the form of F is F". But, as Allen warns, "this thesis does not, *by itself*, imply self-predication; for that, an auxiliary premiss is required" (Allen 1965, 44). I have argued that we should not take Plato to be committed to any such auxiliary premiss. For, on my interpretation, he simply is not committed to Self-Predication.

I have argued that we have good reason to doubt all of the most influential interpretations of Plato's apparently self-predicational language. Further, the textual evidence most often thought to commit Plato to Self-Predication in the middle dialogues does not seem to adequately reveal any such commitment. But what does Plato mean then by his view that for all forms "the form of F is F"? I have pointed to textual evidence, from the *Hippias Major* 286d-91d and *Phaedo* 74, suggesting that Plato sometimes writes "is F" when he means to convey that something "is F-explaining". Perhaps this is what he is doing in his generalizable apparently self-predicational language. But that alone is not yet the Explanatory Predication view. For this does not yet say *how* he uses 'is F' to *convey* "is F-explaining".

My solution to the puzzle of self-predication in Plato is to take Plato to be simply using, in special contexts within the middle dialogues, 'F' as shorthand for the property of *being F-explaining* rather than the property of *being F*. This interpretation ought to be favored, I think, because it is fairly straightforward and does not involve any weighty underlying philosophical assumptions, and because it is consistent with the textual evidence and Plato's expressed commitments in the middle dialogues.

When Plato suggests that for all forms, the form of F "is F", he *only* means that the form is an F-explainer and not that it is a self-exemplifier. While the form of equality is *equal-explaining*, it simply is not *equal*.

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