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THE "THIRD MAN ARGUMENT" AND THE TEXT OF PARMENIDES

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Gregory Vlastos' 1954 article[1] on the so-called "Third Man Argument" (henceforth, TMA) of Plato's Parmenides gave astonishing prominence to a short stretch of the text of that dialogue, namely 132A1-B2, and elicited an equally astonishing outpouring of sophisticated argument concerning self-predication and related issues.[2] It is my intention in this paper to place that bit of text in context in the dialogue, attempting to show (a) that, though there are similarities, it cannot easily be identified with anything which Aristotle would have recognized as the TMA and (b) that most of the Vlastos-inspired controversy is irrelevant to the interpretation of that text and its context. It is not my intention therefore to enter the controversy but rather simply to establish the irrelevance claim. On the way to establishing it, it will be helpful to pause briefly to inspect an implied argument at 130C which, when made fully explicit, is remarkably close to a TMA which Alexander attributes to Polyxenus[3] and which has the minor virtue of involving the (possible) form Man, not Large. Part I will set the stage for the argument at 132A1-B2. Part II will attempt careful statement of that argument, implicitly and explicitly criticizing the statement(s) of it by Vlastos and some of his critics. Part III will deal briefly with Aristotle's most extended statement of the TMA in Sophistical Refutations[4] in the interest of distinguishing it from that of Parmenides 132. In Part IV, the conclusion, I shall attempt brief and schematic summation of the first three parts.

Part I: PARMENIDES 127E-130E4, THE OPENING ARGUMENTS

After preliminaries, the dialogue proper begins with Socrates' restatement of an argument of Zeno which, by modus tollens, concludes that "it is impossible for the beings to be many" (127E7). In literal translation, the argument is as follows:

Z. If the beings [or those which are] are many, then they must be likes and unlikes.

But it is impossible for them to be both likes and unlikes.

So it is impossible for the beings to be many.

Assuring himself that the whole point of Zeno's treatise

(read aloud to an assembled company before the dialogue proper begins) was to establish the above conclusion, Socrates expresses surprise at discovering Zeno's book to be in defense of Parmenides' doctrine--a defense of "No Many" complementing Parmenides' "One". He then proceeds to a rebuttal of Z, giving a response which attempts (i) to immunize the Platonic forms from Z and (ii) to render harmless the application of Z to individuals or "visibles" which are said to "participate in" or "have shares of" the forms.

The immunization proceeds with the claim that there is no sense of 'is' in which a form is anything but simply, solely, and self-identically itself (cf. especially 129D3-E2). Though Likeness and Unlikeness, One and Multitude (Socrates' examples) are "opposites", each is separately and indivisibly what it is. Each is thus, as being the form it is, just that, and none "is" one or more of the others. So no argument of the Z-type can have application to the forms, for the protasis of Z's conditional premiss can have no application to a form or forms. In what Socrates takes to be any relevant sense, the forms are not many.

The application of Z to individuals or "visibles" is rendered harmless by Socrates' insistence that any given individual may be both like and unlike, one and many, etc. without contradiction or paradox. This is possible, he insists, because an individual "is" like and unlike, one and many, etc., only in virtue of having shares of (metechein) Likeness and Unlikeness, One and Multitude, etc. Thus, in his example, Socrates may have a share of One (as "being" one man) and also of Multitude (as "being" his parts) and thus "participationally" or "sharingly be" one and many. It is not the case that the individual is anything but itself, and there is no Zenonian restriction on having.

And so, if anyone undertakes with such examples to show that the the same things are many and also one--stones, sticks, and the like--we shall say that he demonstrates that a given thing can be both many and one, but not that One is Many nor that Many is One. What he says is not at all surprising, but only what we should all agree to (129D2-6).

So in this case the minor premiss of Z is denied application: It is perfectly possible for individuals to "be" both likes and unlikes by having shares of opposite forms.[5]

Neither Zeno nor Parmenides makes any attempt to challenge Socrates' logic. If Socrates can make good his distinction between forms which are what they are, on the one side, and participant individuals which have shares of forms, on the other side, and if he can supply an intelligible sense of 'have a share of' (metechein with the genitive of share), he can (a) agree that, if beings (in this case

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participant individuals) are many, then they must be likes and unlikes but (b) deny that it is impossible for them to be both likes and unlikes. Parmenides, who undertakes the questioning of Socrates, quite naturally begins by asking about the distinction and shortly turns to asking about the intelligible sense.

His first questions inquire whether Socrates will maintain the separation (chorismos) between participant individuals and their "shares" on the one side and the forms themselves on the other for several varieties of forms. In putting his first question, Parmenides assumes that the "shares" fall on the side of the participant individuals and are quite distinct and separated from the relevant forms.

And does it seem to you that there is Likeness Itself separate from the likeness we have, and One and Many and all of the others of which you just now heard Zeno speak? (130B 3-5)

Using schematic letters and subscripts for forms, shares of forms, and participant individuals, the pattern suggested by Parmenides' questions (as well as later questions and arguments) can be made to stand out. Let 'F₁', 'F₂', etc. be used for forms, 'f₁', 'f₂', etc. be used for shares, and 'x₁', 'x₂', etc. be used for participant individuals. So, in the above quotation, Parmenides is asking (for certain forms) whether, whenever there is some value of f which some value of x has, there is also a value of F which is separate from the value of f which the value of x has as a share. (Note: It will be assumed that values of F and values of f which have common subscripts are related as are, e.g., Likeness Itself and the likeness we have.)

Parmenides' first question concerns forms for likeness, one, many, and the others mentioned or highlighted by the Zeno treatise. It is difficult to give a definite characterization to these so as to expose the principle of their grouping. Since it is not strictly needed for the purposes of the present paper, I shall only hint at what I think is the proper way to state the principle and add some clarification in a footnote. The hint is that the forms in the list are forms which participant individuals have shares of only in virtue of their having shares of yet other forms, thus two participant individuals may have shares of Likeness Itself only in virtue of having shares of, say, Justice Itself or Largeness Itself. This is, of course, only a hint, and it needs refinement to take counter examples into account.[6] But the present purpose demands only the distinctions already made between forms, shares, and participant individuals. And Parmenides' question asks only about the assumption of a form separate from the share and/or the participant individual. And Socrates' answer is affirmative for the forms highlighted in Zeno's treatise.

Parmenides' second question asks about Just Itself,

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Noble Itself (Kalon), Good Itself, "and the like", separated from justice, nobility, and goodness "in us". So that for these, as well as the Zenonian examples, whenever there is a value of f which some value of x has, there is always a value of F which the value of x has a share of and, by so having a share, has the value of f.

Parmenides' third question changes the pattern remarkably and offers a serious challenge to Socrates' response to Zeno. The question is:

And what about a form of man, separate from us and from all others like us--a form of man, or of fire, or of water? (130C 1-2).

Here the question is not: Is there a value of F, separate from the value of f which a value of x has? It is rather: Is there a value of F separate from a given value of x? Socrates responds to this question by saying that he has been "often in an aporia [straits, puzzlement, no way out] concerning these whether one must speak of them in the same way or in some different way." And, of course, for the assumptions made in his response to Zeno, there is an aporia.

DIGRESSION: PARMENIDES' THIRD QUESTION AND THE TMA

This third question of Parmenides obviously concerns sortal, "substance", or thing-kind forms (ignoring fire and water for a moment), and the rationale for Socrates' reply to Zeno is hardly appropriate for them. I think that there is reason to believe that the reply to Zeno and the doctrine of Phaedo which that reply echoes is grounded in Plato's attempt to give an intelligible sense to sentences of the form 'x is f'. The problem of giving such a sense arises from the difficulties of 'is'. If one takes the 'is' in 'x is f' as requiring that both 'x' and 'f' name the same thing, [7] it is hard to avoid construing all such sentences as stating some sort of identity and thus falling into the hands of Zeno and Parmenides. As we have noted, the idea of Phaedo and Socrates' reply to Zeno seems clearly to be the construal of 'x is f' as 'x has f', thus avoiding the identity problem. With this construal, the treatment of values of f as shares of F (The F Itself) is natural enough, especially with the verb, 'metechein', with its genitive of share ready at hand.

Before directly engaging Parmenides' third question, it will help to say something about values of 'F' and their predications. It has been often noted that Plato, in Phaedo, not only allows but insists upon the truth of sentences having the form of 'The Beautiful Itself is beautiful'. And he insists that The Beautiful Itself is really beautiful, whereas Helen, say, is only humdrumly beautiful, indeed is both beautiful and not beautiful. The problems of coping with this insistence are notorious, and we shall advert to

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them again later. I shall, however, ignore the large literature on it and simply claim that, even for the Plato of Phaedo and Socrates' reply to Zeno, the proper way to construe sentences of the form 'F is F (or f)' is 'F is What it is to be F'. So understood, The Beautiful Itself is taken out of the beauty contest with Helen and is really beautiful in the sense that, as what it is to be beautiful, it is the very essence of the beautiful, whereas Helen is only a beautiful thing, i.e., a participant individual which has a share of The Beautiful Itself.[8]

The problem raised by Parmenides' third question is: How shall we construe, e.g., 'Jones is a man'? (Attic Greek, having no indefinite article, makes the point slightly more difficult to see, for it would give us 'Jones is man' and thus the form of 'x is f'.) As we have seen, the genius of the Phaedo doctrine and that of Socrates' reply to Zeno is that it construes sentences of the form 'x is f' as 'x has f', but this will hardly do for 'Jones is a man'. For the sentence would then be construed as 'Jones has (a) man'. But Jones may have a likeness or a wise in him, but he can hardly have a man in him. Indeed, he is a man.[9] But, if one forsakes the has construal of predication for participant individuals (in the case of sortals), the identity problems of Zeno and Parmenides loom large again. As Parmenides puts the question: Is Socrates prepared to accept a form Man in addition to us and others like us not in addition to the man we have (the parallel to the likeness we have)? The doctrine of Phaedo and Socrates' reply seems reasonably well suited to characterizing forms but ill suited indeed to sortal forms.

Fleshing out the implied argument which leads Socrates into aporia on this matter appears to give us a TMA:

If x₁ is a man by virtue of having a share of The Man Itself, then it must have a share (i.e., a man) in it. But it would seem that x₁, to be a value of x at all, must be a man (or a horse, cow, tree, or whatever). Given this and given that The Man Itself is man in the sense of What it is to be a Man, then the having a share account requires a redundant and unnecessary third man (viz., the share of The Man Itself).

So put, the argument looks remarkably similar to one attributed to the Sophist Polyxenus and quoted by Alexander Aphrodisias in the latter's comment on an Aristotelian allusion to the TMA at Metaphysics 990b 15:

If a man is by partaking of or having a share of the form or The Man Itself, there must be some man who will have being in relation to the form. But neither The Man Itself, which is a form, nor any given man is by partaking of a form. Some other

is left to be a third man having being in relation to the form.

Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, 62,29-33

As we shall see in Part III, this is not Aristotle's TMA as found in Sophistical Refutations 178b37-179a11. Though laying great stress on the individual or the tode ti, Aristotle's TMA generates an infinite regress. The Polyxenus argument does not, though it is directly relevant to this portion of Parmenides. It should suffice here to point out that the implied argument of Parmenides' third question introduces the difference between sortal and other forms, brings on a Socratic expression of bewilderment, and invites a formulation like that of the Polyxenus quotation from Alexander.

It is difficult to comment on the fire and water portion of Parmenides' third question. That they are listed rather simply with man suggests that Plato links together what Strawson calls "bulk" or "stuff" terms with sortals. Their presence in the list suggests that Plato does not think of the "shares" of the forms doctrine as physical parts or pieces of participant individuals. Both fire and water admit in Attic Greek of sortal-style use as subject terms with the definite article in either the singular or the plural. One might, with that in mind, think of Third Fire or Third Water arguments. But any extended comment on the passage would be idling for the present paper.

THE UPSHOT OF THE EARLY ARGUMENTS

Parmenides' fourth question concerns forms for "hair, mud, dirt, or any other vile and worthless thing." Is Socrates in straits (aporia) about them too? Despite their offering, as sortal-like things the same problem as fire and water, Socrates professes no difficulty with them. There are no forms for them; "they are just such as we see (horomen) them to be" (130D 3). It's difficult to make out this comment, and it is tempting to think of it as giving such things the status given to colors, sounds, etc. in Theaetetus and Timaeus, i.e., as existing only relative to the interaction of our sensory organs and the "outside" physical world.[10] Parmenides' immediately following comment, however, suggests only that Socrates' ought not to despise such things and that they ought to have the same status as water and fire.

Before turning to the arguments in the immediate context of what is commonly taken to be the TMA, I wish to underline the major features of the account so far. First, Socrates' response to Zeno provides the obvious context for understanding the first part of Parmenides. And that reply, as we have seen, requires distinguishing what I have been calling participant individuals, shares, and forms. Second,

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the response requires thinking of 'x is f' as 'x has f' and thinking of such having as having a share of a form. Third, since having is not the same as being (in a strict sense), participant individuals may have any number of shares of quite different forms without those individuals having to be likes and unlikes in any damaging way. Fourth, Socrates' reply does not allow any form to have a share of any other form and, by virtue of this insulation from having shares, construes each form as selfsame or as a single and, if you please, isolated "being".

THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF THE SO-CALLED TMA

At 130E6, Parmenides shifts from inquiry about what sorts of things there are forms for to inquiry about having a share or shares (metechein or metalambanein). The focus of his inquiry seems obviously to be the difficulty of supplying a sense to 'having a share' which preserves the claim that each form is selfsame or single. Several senses are considered, all of which result in denial of that claim. And, if Socrates is forced to accept the conclusion that each form is not single or selfsame, he must recognize that his forms are entangled by Zeno's argument and that he has not given a satisfactory reply. To paraphrase Zeno's argument: if a form is many, then it must be (in an invidious sense) like and unlike. What I earlier called the 'immunization' of the forms will have failed. What is more, if no unobjectionable sense can be given to 'have a share or shares', the application of Z to individuals will not be harmless, i.e., their being likes and unlikes will trigger Zeno's conclusion of "no many".

Parmenides starts by noting that Socrates' participant individuals have the names of the forms which they have shares of, thus what has a share of Likeness is a like and what has a share of Largeness is a large (130E9-131A3). And then he proceeds immediately to point out that the ordinary meaning of 'have a share or shares' would seem to require that anything which has a share either has the whole or a part of that of which it has a share. And the standard or, if you please, literal meanings of 'metechein' and 'metalambanein' [11] have that same requirement. If two different things each have the whole of something as their shares, then it would seem obvious either that they don't really have it or that what they have shares of is somehow divided and thus not single and selfsame.

Socrates suggests that several different things may all share in the same day. Despite a number of commentators' taking this seriously, I think they obviously misunderstand the context. That 'metechein' or 'metalambanein' may be so used metaphorically is obvious. The point is, however, that Parmenides is here concentrating on an ordinary or standard meaning, and the metaphorical meaning is simply out of place. He turns shortly to metaphorical meanings, but still

encounters the difficulty of the form's being many.

Despite the impression created by this and several arguments to follow, it should be noted that Plato takes this first part of the dialogue as initiating a search for a clear sense of 'have a share or shares of' which will save some version of Plato's doctrine of forms and having shares from the "no many" consequence of Z. Parmenides' remark at 135B4-C2 is indication of that intent:

But, if on the other hand anyone, fixing on these and other similar arguments, were to deny that there are forms of the beings, not marking out a form for each one of them, he will have nowhere to turn his thought, since he does not lay down a constantly selfsame form for each of the beings, and he will thus utterly destroy our ability to carry on discussion.

And the context of this statement is that of the negative results of the search noted above. The suggestion is, of course, that further search or a differently organized search will result in a defensible response to Z.

The next move made by Parmenides at 131C is not really a move at all, for it suggests that participant individuals have parts of the form(s) as shares. It is not a move, for the idea that a form is divided into parts is admission from the start, as it were, that the form is many and not single and selfsame. Parmenides ends this little section by saying:

Then, in what way, Socrates, will other things come to have shares of these forms of yours, if they cannot have shares either as parts or wholes?

And so the stage is set for what Vlastos and others identify as the TMA, and I now turn to that argument.

Part II: Parmenides 132A1-B2, THE SO-CALLED TMA

I shall first give an extremely literal translation of the passage, then comment briefly on some features of the translation, and then give what seems a natural interpretation of it in its context. Only after having completed these shall I turn to Vlastos and his critics.

132 Parmenides I think that it is for some such reason as this that you believe that each form is one. Whenever many things seem to you to be larges, in like manner there seems some single idea (appearance, look) which, to you as you look at (idonti) them, is the same in all of them. Hence, you take the large to be one.

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5 Socrates That's true.

Parmenides What of the large itself and the other larges? If in exactly the same way you were in your mind's eye [literally, by means of your soul] to look at them all, would not yet another large appear to be one, by which all of these appear to be larges?

Socrates So it seems.

10 Parmenides Then another form of largeness will make its appearance, coming to be in addition to largeness and those having shares of it. And yet another besides all of these, by which they will all be larges. And thus each of your forms will be by no means one, but rather an unlimited multitude.

COMMENTS ON THE TRANSLATION

At 132A1, I translate the text as 'believe each form is one'. This is the literal reading of 'hen hekaston eidos oiesthai einai'. Cornford translates it as 'believing in a single Form in each case'. [12] Vlastos translates it as 'to hold that there exists one Form in each case'. In both of these, the reading of 'hekaston' as 'in each case' is egregious, for 'hekaston' obviously qualifies 'eidos'. The matter is as such of little moment, except that the Cornford/Vlastos reading suggests that the point in question is rather more "How can there be a form whenever there is a collection of like things?" than "Granted that there are forms, how can a form be one or single?"

132A contains the first use of 'idea' in the dialogue. The standard word for form up to this point in the dialogue has been 'eidos'. And this first use of 'idea' occurs in immediate connection with 'idonti'--a dative participle meaning (in context) 'to you as you look at'. 'Idea', which is a form of the same verb, 'idein', has the primary meaning of 'semblance', 'appearance', or 'look'. This connection between 'idea' and 'idonti' suggests what might account for the singularity of the form in the case of many like participant individuals is that they all look the same or have the "same look". In this same connection, it should be noted that a form of 'idein' is used again in line 132A7 for expressing the "look" one might have with his "soul" or "mind's eye".

I have used 'larges' to translate 'ta megala'. This is in accordance with Parmenides' agreement at 130E9-131A3, allowing participant individuals to have the names of the forms of which they have shares. Thus any x which has a share of F may be called an 'f'; here, any participant

individual which has a share of The Large Itself may be called a 'large'.

INTERPRETATION

As noted earlier, the issue raised by Parmenides in the section immediately preceding this one is that of a form's being one or single while many participant individuals have either the whole or parts of the form as shares. And 132 begins with another approach to the same issue. Perhaps there may be another way--if you please, a metaphorical way--in which several participant individuals can intelligibly be said to have shares of a form without making the form many. What Parmenides suggests is that, whenever one looks at many larges, he/she is presented with a single look which is the same for all of the larges. Thus this suggestion is that, for a number of participant individuals, all larges, to have shares of one and the same Large is for each of them to present one and the same idea (appearance or look). This, at first blush at least, seems to get around the problem brought on by having several participant individuals either having the whole or parts of the form as their shares. And it does not quickly transform into the "part" account as did Socrates' earlier suggestion of the day.

The problem Parmenides finds with this suggestion lies, if you will, in the logical grammar of the language of looking and appearing which permeates the passage. Appearances or looks would seem to lie on the side of what appears to one or what is looked at and not on the side of the seeing or looking at. Appearances or looks are, at least linguistically, objects of seeings and lookings at. It ought to make sense, therefore, for them to be seen or looked at. Indeed, even in English, it is grammatically possible to see a look, e.g., "Did you see the look on his face?". Parmenides exploits this bit of logical grammar.

After the initial formulation, with its to you as you look at and the look, he proceeds at 132A6 to invoke the same logical grammar for mind's eye looking. The looking this time is on the part of the soul (tei psychei). It could hardly be a standard looking (i.e., visual), for one obviously cannot look at an appearance or look in the same way in which he/she looks at larges (large things). But, if that appearance or look is construed as an object, it is possible to exploit the logical grammar of looking and looks in Parmenides' way. So Socrates is invited to have a "by-means-of-his-soul" or "mind's eye" look at the several larges and the large look (the large idea--the purported form). They are, by hypothesis, many, all of them "larges". And, by the same reasoning which got us the first look or idea which is the same in all, we shall get another look or idea which is the same in all of these. Applying the same exploitation of the logical grammar of looks and appearance talk, this process can be made to go on over and over again,

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so the form as look or idea turns out to be "for you by no means one, but an unlimited multitude".

The form is an "unlimited multitude", if the argument is sound, in that there is an indefinite number of entities, all different from each other, which can be named by 'The Large Itself'. And thus the form-name does not name a single entity, as Socrates' reply to Zeno requires.

It is worth reiterating that the ostensible purpose of Parmenides' questions right from the start is to get clear about the notion of having a share of a form. The reason for the questions about having the whole or part of the form as a share is to point out that participant individuals cannot literally have shares of forms, i.e., in the way that several people might have shares of a fortune or a pumpkin pie. With that in mind, one may well read the ideas or "looks" argument as an attempt to understand having a share of a form by attending to the ordinary sense of 'idea' as appearance or look. Indeed, the shift in the dialogue from the use of 'eidos' to the use of 'idea', marking the first occasion of the latter's use in the text, invites that reading.

Socrates' next attempt is to suggest that the form may be a noema, a thought, which, properly, can be "nowhere else than in souls" (132B4). Socrates connects this with the earlier suggestion of the idea by claiming that "that way [i.e., by taking the form as a noema] each would be one and would longer be open to the objections which you have just now made" (132B5-6). I take this to mean that forms as thoughts do not allow for the indefinitely replicative production of ideas or appearances which the logical grammar of looks and appears talk invites. Parmenides disposes of the noema suggestion by drawing a disjunctive distinction, each disjunct of which is objectionable. Taking noemata strictly as thoughts-of-x (whatever x may be) and assuming that participant individuals have shares of these, he concludes that every such individual must, as participating or having a share, think. And that simply won't do. Assuming that every thought must be of something "which is one, which that thought thinks placed in all, some idea [appearance, look] which is one" (132C3-4), the form will turn out to be this thought-of and not the thought. This disjunct requires that there are thoughts (noemata) which are not thought, and, with the reappearance of idea, there is the suggestion that this disjunct gets us back to the replicative problems of the "looks" account.

That these two attempts (i.e., idea and noema) at supplying a sense to 'having a share' and, perhaps, 'form' are related to one another is beyond question. Aside from Socrates' claim that the noema account would avoid the problem of indefinite replication (which one disjunct of the noema account fails to do), both the idea and the noema

accounts are psychological or soul-related. A look or an appearance is invariably to someone (as the text insists) who is looking or seeing. Indeed, it is just this which generates the indefinite replication. On the noema account[13], once we separate the confusion of thought and thought-of which gives the account a specious plausibility, we are left either with the unacceptable conclusion that all things think or with, in effect, the problems of the idea account. I believe that these psychological accounts serve the same purpose as the wholes and parts as literal shares account, namely that of clearing away underbrush before allowing Socrates to give the account which permeates the middle dialogues, namely, the "pattern/copy" account of 132C12-133A6. Since there is no indication from earlier dialogues that Plato had seriously attempted to examine the intelligibility of the notion of having a share of a form, there is nothing demeaning or odd about putting these underbrush-clearing attempts into the mouth of a very young Socrates.

VLASTOS AND HIS CRITICS

In his own reformulation of the argument (in "Plato's "Third Man" Argument: Text and Logic," Philosophical Quarterly, 1969, 289ff.) of his 1954 paper, Vlastos boils the 132A1-B2 argument down to the following steps

1. If a certain set of things share a given character then there exists a unique Form corresponding to that character; and each of these things has that character by participating in that Form. (p.290)

From this and the assumption that

1a. a, b, and c are F,

he derives

- 1b. There exists a unique Form (which we may call "F-ness") corresponding to the character, F, and a, b, and c are F by participating in F-ness. (p. 291).

He reformulates the second step of the argument as:

2. If a, b, and c, and F-ness are F, then there exists a unique form (which we may call "F-ness II") corresponding to F, but not identical with F-ness; and a, b, c, and F-ness are F by participating in F-ness II. (p. 291)

In order to affirm the antecedent of 2., Vlastos claims to need, in addition to 1a. and 1b., what he calls "Self-Predication", viz.,

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SPA Form by participation in which anything has a certain character must itself have that character. (p. 291)

But it is clearly not enough to be able to assert that a, b, c, and F-ness are F, for one may agree to that and also to 1. without admitting to the need for yet another form, F-ness II. So Vlastos adds what he calls "Non-Identity", viz.,

NIIf anything has a given character by participating in a Form, it cannot be identical with that Form. (p. 291)

And so there follows the consequent of 2. and with it the denial of 1. Vlastos' claim about the argument comes down to the insistence that one may not consistently hold to 1., SP, and NI. And this is clearly true.

Leaving many niceties of their accounts aside, Wilfrid Sellars and later Colin Strang[14] remove the inconsistency by substituting 'at least one form' for 'a unique form' in Vlastos' 1. This makes possible the generation of the required regress along with SP and NI without the inconsistency. Vlastos, in his 1969 reply to them,[15] rejoins (and I think correctly) that the text will not support the 'at least one Form' reading. Others, notably R.E. Allen, Peter Geach, and Julius Moravcsik, have entered the Vlastos controversy, more or less on Vlastos' own terms.[16] As I indicated at the outset, I shall not enter it, but rather deny that Vlastos' formulation states the argument of Parmenides 132A1-B2. Given the TRANSLATION COMMENTS and INTERPRETATION above, my reasons for so doing should be patent, but it is worthwhile, I think to make some comments on the Vlastos formulation, especially since they purport to give the sense of the actual text.

First, there is nothing in the text which requires or justifies the talk of things "sharing a given character" and of "a unique Form corresponding to that character." There is indeed talk of "many larges" and of an idea (look, appearance) which is one and "the same in all of them." Vlastos appears to construe the 'idea' of the argument as naming or indicating what he calls a character and not as naming or indicating the form. The earlier arguments (concerning having the whole or part of the form as a share) do allow for participant individuals which have shares of a form to have the name of the form. But the notion of a "shared character" over and above the form of which the participant individuals are said to have shares is an ontological importation which, if subjected to scrutiny, adds a gratuitous problem to the already vexing one of giving some intelligible sense to 'having shares of a form'.

Cornford[17] used the term 'immanent character' as a

way of talking about the "shares" which participant individuals are supposed to have when "having shares of a form." Such immanent characters--needed for the final argument of the Phaedo--are individuals (not "shared characters") which may be or have "share opposites" just as the forms of which they are shares may be or have "form opposites". Thus, in the Phaedo argument, the hot in this fire (an immanent character) will "flee or perish" rather than allow "a cold" in its location. The issue in the present argument of Parmenides is one about having shares of a form. If one follows Vlastos in assuming that there may also be such a thing as having shares of a "character" (his 1., above), there would then seem to be yet another one-many problem to confront, namely that of how many participant individuals may be said to have shares of a "character." There is not the slightest hint in the text of this gratuitous problem.

Though I think that the "immanent characters" of Phaedo are best thought of as individuals in the sense that the hot in this fire cannot be identical with the hot in that fire, it is compatible with the Phaedo text to thin of immanent characters as entities which more than one participant individual may "have". Thus a hot of a certain degree may be "had" by more than one thing. What would add the gratuitous problem would be thinking of a hot as something which several participant individuals may have shares of. But the present text in no way invites any talk about the shares of immanent characters which participant individuals may have. Its point is simply to consider a possible account of what having a share of a form may be.

Second, the immediate context of the Parmenides argument is, as we have seen, concern about how a form can be one or single. If it is not one or single, then Socrates' reply to Zeno is in jeopardy. Given that the attempt of the present argument is to try once more to defend the claim that individuals may have shares of the form without requiring the form to be multiform, the idea of rescuing Plato from Vlastos' charge of inconsistency by changing 'a unique Form' to 'at least one Form' is unsettling. I sympathize, of course, with the desire to construe the argument which Plato puts in Parmenides' mouth as at least a reasonably good one and have tried so to construe it. But the construction of the argument as giving away at the outset what Socrates is trying hard to defend scarcely gives Plato more credit than Vlastos' inconsistent premiss set.

It is difficult, in this connection, to understand why Vlastos follows Cornford in translating 'hekaston' as 'in each case' rather than the more natural and straightforward 'each form to be one'. Cornford misconstrues the argument as one concerned with the "existence" of forms as such and not with the problem of non-multiplicity or oneness of the form. Vlastos follows Cornford in so translating, though my guess is that his reason for doing so is his having the

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"character/form" distinction in the back of his mind. Thus, in paraphrase (of Vlastos' 1.): "Whenever a certain set of things share a given character, then there exists a single or unique form for each such case."

Third, Vlastos' re-statement of the argument completely ignores the "to you as you look at" and "look at with your soul" (or "in your mind's eye") parts of the text. In his 1956 paper, [18] Vlastos speaks of an "epistemological" version of the argument, paralleling the "ontological" formulation given in his 1954 paper. While this talk of an "epistemological" version speaks somewhat to my concern, the treatment of "look at", etc. as incidental to the "logic" of the argument requires that the text--and Plato--be patronized. For Parmenides plainly uses these terms as though they were crucial to the introduction of, at least, the second "large". And the juxtaposition of 'idea' and 'idonti' at the beginning is prima facie at least as crucial to the introduction of the first "large". It is, of course, philologically undesirable and, perhaps, detrimental to discerning Plato's intentions to choose an interpretation which patronizes the text unless the text is, in itself and in context, impenetrable.

Fourth, I agree that something akin to "self-predication" is required by the argument. The Large Itself (qua look or idea) must be the sort of thing which you could "look at with your soul"--along with the other larges. In turn, the large which "appears to be one" in that egregious glimpse must also be "lookable-at" along with the other larges. And so on. As I would read the argument, however, the moral is not to be found in exploiting any of the standard worries about self-predication. It is rather to be found in recognizing that, if one thinks of a Socratic form as the "look" or "appearance" of things looked at, he/she will have to think of the form as psychological and, linguistically, caught up in the associations of 'looks', 'appears', and their kin. There is no evidence in the text of any attempt to arrive at or exhibit a contradiction or inconsistency--as Vlastos says that it does in finding his 1., SP, and NI an inconsistent set. Obviously, however, it is part of Parmenides' point to claim that Socrates' cannot, without inconsistency, maintain that each form is one or single and also that the form is the look (idea) of things looked at.

The Parmenides 132 passage has, on the face of it, the following form:

- a. $x_1, x_2, \text{ etc.}$ all have shares of $F_1 = \text{df.}$ There is a certain single idea or look, namely, F_1 which is in or of all of them.
- b. $x_1, x_2, \text{ etc.}$, and F_1 are all fs (the former being "named after" F_1 , the latter being what they are

"named after").

c. Since they are all fs, there must be another idea or look, namely, F₂ which is in or of x₁, x₂, etc. and in or of F₁.

d. And so on through F₃, etc.

a. does the work of Vlastos' 1., 1a., and 1b. b. does the work of Vlastos' 2. But b. does not require SP as Vlastos states it in order to get the argument going. It requires only the assumption that x₁, x₂, etc. all have F₁ in or of them and that the participant individuals and the form are all fs. c. does, in its way, incorporate NI, i.e., it requires another idea for x₁, x₂, etc., and F₁, namely, F₂.

Vlastos' statement of the argument, as we have noted, takes the argument as leading to contradiction or inconsistency. In context, however, the only inconsistency noted is that of maintaining the form to be one while construing having a share as having a single idea or look and allowing the idea to be itself looked at (and thus itself having an idea or look). The problem with the Vlastos' formulation is, I believe, the intrusion of the common "character". As I noted earlier, this requires a double sharing--once in the character and once in the form. All that the text requires is that the initial larges and the idea which is in or of them be all construed as larges with yet another idea which is in or of them. The upshot of Parmenides' actual argument is the inconsistency of (i) maintaining that having a share of a certain form is having a certain idea or look, (ii) maintaining that than any given idea or look can also have a share of a form though not of itself, and (iii) maintaining that the form is one or single.

Part III: ARISTOTLE AND THE TMA

Aristotle's only extended statement of the Third Man Argument is in Sophistical Refutations 178b37-179a11. In presenting it, I have translated 'tode ti' by 'this thing here' and intend its finding application in the juxtaposition of the demonstrative, the token reflexive, and various "thing" or "substance" terms, as in 'this man here', 'this horse here', etc.

There is also the argument that there is a third man over and above man and the individuals. For neither man nor any other common signifies a this thing here but rather how qualified, with respect to what, in what manner, or other such. Likewise in the case of Coriscus and cultured Coriscus--are they the same or different? For the one signifies a this thing here, the other how qualified--but the latter in such a way that it is not

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[grammatically] set apart. It is not the setting apart which makes the third man, but the joining together as the this thing here. For the very thing which Callias is and also the very thing which man is will not both be this thing here. Even if one were to say that the set apart is not the very thing which this thing here is but is rather the very thing which how qualified is, it would make no difference. For there would still be a one in addition to the many, for example, man. It is clear therefore that it must not be granted that what is predicated commonly of many is a this thing here, but rather that it signifies how qualified, or with respect to, or how much or many, or some such.

The structure and the point of the argument are, despite some textual obscurity, fairly clear. The passage assumes that there are basic individuals, which Aristotle gets at most characteristically by means of 'this thing here' (tode ti) both here and in Metaphysics Zeta. And the passage denies that a common term as such (whether in predicate position or juxtaposed with a proper name) gets at or signifies a this thing here. The argument of this and other passages is of a piece with Aristotle's doctrine of pros hen ambiguity, i.e., that the various "being" terms in the accident categories do not signify in their own right but only as indirectly signifying this thing here's. Aristotle needs both common terms, e.g., man, and individual terms, e.g., Coriscus. Let the individual term be the first man and the common term the second man. What Aristotle denies is that the common term is a special individual and that there is needed yet a third man to be predicated of both it and the individual. In his accounting, there is really only the individual; the second man is simply a picturesque way of talking about the function of a common term. The third man puzzle arises when one confuses the function of a common term with that of an individual term, thus taking man or cultured to be a this thing here. Obviously one needs individual and common terms to get on with discourse, but taking the latter as also individual terms adds a perplexing one in addition to the many.

Aristotle's comment about a third man at Metaphysics 1038b35-1039a3 is obviously of a piece with the passage from Sophistical Refutations. It occurs in Zeta in connection with a series of arguments to show that the universal (to katholou) cannot be ousia (substance, tode ti):

From these [arguments, considerations] it is quite clear that none of those holding universally is ousia and that none of those predicated commonly signifies this thing here, but rather how qualified. Otherwise, there are many other consequences including the third man.

Even as the two passages just cited hang together, so also does another from Metaphysics (990b16-18) and Alexander's comment on it, the latter allegedly taken from Aristotle's (lost) On the Forms. The Metaphysics passage is:

Of the more precise arguments, some make forms of relatives to [pros ti's] for which we say there is no kind [genos] just by itself, others formulate the third man.

The arguments, of course, are arguments for Platonic forms. Alexander's alleged quotation makes clear, I believe, what sort of "precise argument" may be in question.

The third man proof is as follows. If a term is truly predicated of many, and if it is other than those of which it is predicated, then it is separate from them. (This is what those who lay down the forms believe they show. The reason given for there being Man Itself over and against the men is: That a man is really predicated of the individual men who are man, and it is other than the individual men.) But if this is so, there will be a third man. For if a man predicated of them is other than those of which it is predicated, and if it stands alone, and if man is predicated both of the individuals and of the form, there will be a third man in addition to the individuals and the form. And thus a fourth, predicated of this and of the form and of the individuals, and likewise also a fifth, and so on indefinitely.

Alexander Aphrodisias, Commentary on Metaphysics, 62(1.33)-63(1.9)

The second sentence of the above states what appears to be a "precise" argument for forms (i.e., for "separate" forms). Aristotle's claim is that, if Man Itself is separated from the individual men, then, since the individuals and Man Itself are both men, a "third" man will be predicable (and thus separate from them) of both--a "fourth" of those three, a "fifth" of the resulting four, and so on. I think that Aristotle (and Alexander) grants that the "second" is other than the "first", but he denies that it follows from this that the "second" is separate from the "first". If we think it is separate--as do those who "lay down the forms"--we have the third man regress on our hands.

The pattern of these Aristotelian references is clear enough. Start with an individual, a tode ti, say, this man here or, if you please, Coriscus. Let a term be predicated of that individual, say, Man. If Man is construed as a common term, and is in no way taken as signifying an individual, then Aristotle finds no problem. But, if Man is

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taken as somehow signifying an individual (in the relevant case, a form), then, since both Coriscus and Man are individuals, it must be possible to predicate Man of them both. And the Man predicated of both of them will, of course, be a third Man. If it, in turn, signifies an individual, we will need yet a fourth Man to be predicated of it and the other "men". And so on.

As I noted earlier, this argument is similar in some respects to the Parmenides "Large" argument. Both arguments depend upon somehow construing a common term as an individual and then counting it and the individuals to which it is common as in need of yet another term to be common to them, and so on.

But the similarity is no more than skin-deep, and the Aristotelian argument offers no real clue to the interpretation of the Parmenides "Large" argument. In particular, it offers no clue to the "looking" (idein) features of the "Large" argument and thus to the principle which generates the regress. In the Metaphysics Zeta passage and, I think, in the Sophistical Refutations passage, Aristotle is at pains to argue that the universal (to katholou) cannot be this thing here (tode ti). The upshot is patent in the very definition of the universal as what holds for many and the requirement that this thing here be individual. The regress of Aristotle's argument is generated by violating the definitional requirement and by the demand for another universal to hold for the individual and the product of the violation.

There is as more reason to identify the pattern/copy argument of Parmenides 132D-133A with the Aristotelian TMA. In the pattern/copy argument, however, the problem comes with requiring pattern and copy to be likes and then treating likeness as having a share of a common form. Once again, there is indefinite generation of forms. In this case the formal similarity to Aristotle's TMA is closer, for the generation of fresh forms is straightforwardly analogous to generation by the need of fresh common terms.

What one suspects, of course, is that the arguments of Parmenides were lying about for handy appropriation by Aristotle (and, perhaps, others). Given his coming up with the conceptions of individual and common terms which lie behind parts (at least) of the Organon, the adaptation of such arguments seems very likely indeed.[19] As there is no special reason to think of him as interested in finding a sense for 'metechein' which provides a satisfactory response to Zeno, the TMA becomes a polemical weapon rather than a means of sophisticating a basic Platonic doctrine.[20] Interestingly enough, the tortured pages of Zeta not only evoke the TMA; they also attempt to meet the demand for form in the thing. In that attempt, I believe, Aristotle comes perilously close to the Platonism of the late dialogues.[21] But that invites another story and another pa-

per.

I can hint at that story by pointing out that Aristotle's doctrine of universals is kin to Socrates' suggestion in Parmenides that forms might be construed as noemata. Once one gets Aristotle away from the ambiguity of individual and common terms (words? thoughts? things?), the problem of what the universals or noemata are of requires something like that form/matter doctrine of Metaphysics. And a case can be made for taking that doctrine as one way of coping with the basic problem of Parmenides. [22]

Part IV: SUMMATION

I have attempted to show that the "Large" argument of Parmenides 132 must be understood as part of the attempt to clarify Socrates' response to Zeno. As such, the threat to that response is to the requirement that each form be one and not many. But it is also, of course, a threat to the very idea of having a share of a form. In context, the argument is underbrush clearing, getting an unworkable idea out of the way. Indeed, the first part of Parmenides gets several such unworkable ideas out of the way, the idea thesis being only one. Formally, Parmenides starts with the Zeno challenge (what I have called 'Z', goes on to Socrates' response, then moves to Parmenides' criticism of that response. The upshot of that criticism is not the abandonment of the Forms. Indeed, as we have noted, even Parmenides is made to insist that, without them, "our ability to carry on discussion" will be destroyed. What one is naturally led to expect from the first part of Parmenides is sophistication of the doctrine of forms and having shares to meet Z and the arguments put in the mouth of Parmenides. And, when Socrates, at the end of the first part, expresses bewilderment as to where he is to go from here, Parmenides informs him that he needs exercise (gymnastike) in the method practiced by Zeno and proceeds to give him a lengthy example with "his own" supposition, "If One is". [23]

The placement of the 132 "Large" argument in the full text of Parmenides depends very much upon one's understanding of the objective(s) of the whole dialogue. If one thinks, as I do, that the effort is to sophisticate the doctrine of forms to meet the predication problems posed by Zeno, he/she will indeed think of the "Large" argument as rejection of a prima facie possibility for meeting those problems on the way to a successful meeting of the problems. [24] If one thinks that Plato is prepared to defend Socrates' response to Zeno to the death, he/she is likely to look for the errors in Parmenides' arguments in the first part. But even in the latter case, one is obliged to fit the "Large" argument into the context of Parmenides' questioning of Socrates and to pay close attention to details of the text.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Gregory Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in The Parmenides," Philosophical Review 63 (1954), 319-49.

2. See Vlastos, Platonic Studies (Princeton: University Press, 1973), 361-2, for a partial but useful listing.

3. Alexander of Aphrodisias, Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysic, 62,29-33. Translated and quoted in the "DIGRESSION" of Part I, below.

4. Sophistical Refutations 178b37-179a11. Translated and quoted at the beginning of Part III, below.

5. One might restate Z somewhat as follows. Suppose there to be just three things, A, B, and C. Suppose further that, using them, one attempts predication. Thus one might assert that A is B. But, of course, A is A. Unless one trivializes by taking the terms to be different names for a single thing (contrary to hypothesis), he/she will have to say something like "Insofar as A is B it is unlike itself and like B; but insofar as A is A it is like itself and unlike B." If this procedure is repeated for the combinations of A, B, and C, we may think of it as involving the assumption that many are and as leading to the conclusion that they are likes and unlikes (both themselves and the others). If this procedure is protested as not properly being predication but rather identity, the response is a challenge to come up with an intelligible account of predication. Socrates attempts one by saying that, for example and schematically, A could have a share of B without its being B. With this construal of predication, things could be "sharingly" likes and unlikes without any such impossibility as that the same thing must be both like and unlike itself and another.

6. See R.E. Allen, Plato's PARMENIDES (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 106-7. It is worth noting, as Allen does, that the forms in question figure as the forms repeatedly used in the several versions of the "One Supposition" in the second part of the dialogue. One can think of these as the forms to be investigated by dialectic as suggested by the account of noesis in the analogy of the line in Republic VI.

7. See fn. 5 above. I have argued [in "Zeno's Stricture and Predication in Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus," forthcoming in How Things Are, ed. J. Bogen and J. McGuire (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1983)] that the later dialogues of Plato suggest that Plato takes seriously the idea that, in predication, the two terms name the same thing. What saves this idea from triviality is (a) the recognition of names having wider or narrower scope and (b) the recognition that things in the world of becoming can, in virtue of their complex structure, be subject to different (form) names. The making of this argument is a bit involved and assumes that Plato solves the problems raised in Parmenides in a particular way.

8. See Alexander Nehamas, "Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms," American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1979, 93-103.

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9. The difference here being highlighted is, of course, that exploited by Aristotle in Categories by distinguishing "predicated of" from "present in". English, unlike Attic Greek, uses the indefinite article to mark the former usage, as in 'Jones is a man'. The doctrine of "having a share" simply will not work at all for "is a(n)" predication. Thus Plato's examples in earlier dialogues are almost uniformly of what Strawson would call "characterizing" predications (if you wish, "is" predications).

10. As I understand the doctrines of Theaetetus and Timaeus, the physical world is made up of the Platonic regular solids configured in various ways. These have, individually and in configuration, shape, size, motion, position, etc.--the "mathematical qualities". But they do not in themselves have the "sense qualities". The objects of aisthesis--the aestheta--are actually physical qualities, but qualities which exist only as the result of interaction of sense organs (which are themselves physical) and the surrounding physical environment. The suggestion that there are no forms for dirt, hair, etc. is, I think, the suggestion that there is no regular form configuration which their physical counterparts embody. It is pretty clear that the Plato of Timaeus and Philebus is prepared to recognize forms for all manner configurations, and that may be the point of Parmenides' patronizing remark about Socrates' later sophistication.

11. Both terms are used frequently by Plato, 'metalambanein' having more the sense of coming to have a share of. Plato's metaphorical usage was not original to him. It was common, e.g., to say of a courageous man that he has a share of (metechei) courage.

12. F.M. Cornford, Plato and Parmenides (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1936), 87.

13. It is interesting to note that the noema account is formally similar to Aristotle's account of "universals" (ta katholou). Aristotle is prepared to treating universals that those holding for many and to deny, more or less on that ground, that the universal can be ousia or tode ti. This, of course, gives him the problem of saying what it is in things which makes possible the applicability of universals. And meeting this problem fills some of the most tortured pages of Metaphysics.

14. Wilfrid S. Sellars, "Vlastos and 'The Third Man,'" Philosophical Review 64 (1955), 405-37; "Vlastos and 'The Third Man': A Rejoinder," Philosophical Perspectives (Springfield, IL, 1967), 55-72. Colin Strang, "Plato and the Third Man," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supp. Volume 37 (1963), 147-64.

15. G. Vlastos, "Plato's "Third Man" Argument (Parm. 132A1-B2): Text and Logic," Philosophical Quarterly 19 (1969), 289-301. Reprinted in G. Vlastos, Platonic Studies (Princeton: University Press, 1973), 342-61.

16. R.E. Allen, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues," Philosophical Review 69 (1960), 147-64; P. Geach, "The Third Man Again," Philosophical Review 65 (1956), 72-8; Julius Morav-

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csik, "The 'Third Man' Argument and Plato's Theory of Forms," Phronesis 8 (1963), 50-62.

17. Cornford, op. cit., 78ff.

18. G. Vlastos, "Postscript to the TMA: A Reply to Mr. Geach," Philosophical Review 65 (1956), 83-94.

19. This is, of course, highly speculative. But Aristotle's distinction between individual and common terms is not, and the insistence upon individuals as ontological bedrock is not. Posterior Analytics II, for example, is especially insistent on the redundancy of forms as principles of explanation once one has clearly grasped the difference between individual and common terms and the use of definitory formulae as middles. The straightforward use of the difference in the TMA formulation in Sophistical Refutations is highly significant.

20. Cf. Metaphysics 987b11-15, "[Plato] simply changed the name to participation [methexis]. For, whereas the Pythagoreans say that the beings are by imitation [mimesis] of the numbers, Plato says by participation [methexis], changing the name. As to what either participation or imitation may be, they jointly neglected to search out." Since Aristotle is fairly scathing in such comments as this one, and since he has what he takes to be a successful and alternative account of predication, he betrays no interest in sophisticating methexis to meet obvious objections.

21. As I read those later dialogues, they take forms to be, as suggested earlier in the paper, principles of structure and participant individuals to be structured things, though they continue to recognize the separation of principles of structure. (See R.G. Turnbull, "Knowledge and the Forms in the Later Platonic Dialogues," Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 1978, 735-58.) I say that Aristotle comes "perilously close" in that he is obviously prepared to recognize form as shared by many things and allows for human beings to take on the forms of things without their matter.

22. See fns. 21 and 13 above.

23. As I read the so-called "second part" of Parmenides, the "exercise" (gymnastike) which Socrates is alleged to need is primarily in the adumbration of the logical space of all of the forms, thus rather like the task of dialectic in the doubly-divided line of Republic. The necessary frame (or logical space) of inquiry must make provision for the interrelationships of forms, their source in the one which is, and the possibility of both forms and individuals sharing structure(s) with forms. With some such frame in place, a rationale can be provided for the sort of research which Plato puts under the heading of collection (synagoge) and division (diairesis) and illustrates profusely in, e.g., Statesman.

24. See fn. 23. What must be added, though the defense of it far exceeds the scope of this paper, is the idea that to have a share of a form is (a), in the case of forms, to be a specification of a principle of structure or (b), in the case of individuals, to embody a principle

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of structure. For a start on the task of explaining and defending this idea, see my "Knowledge and the Forms in the Later Platonic Dialogues," cited in fn. 21.