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Participation in Plato’s Dialogues: Phaedo, Parmenides, Sophist and Timaeus

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From the time of its first technical use by Plato, "participation" has recurred in every period of the history of Western thought. One can gather that fact simply from checking a bibliography on participation. The one I consulted consists of 81 entries and is five typed pages in length. Besides eight general studies on participation—regarding its nature and history—and one on scholasticism in general—it lists studies on the following individual philosophers: Plato (eight studies), Aristotle, Plotinus (d. 270 A.D.), Augustine (d. 430 A.D.), Proclus (d. 485), Psuedo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. 485-533), Boethius (d. 523), Bcnaventure (d. 1274), Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274; thirty-three studies), Henry of Ghent (d. after 1292), Malebranche, Blondel, Louis Lavelle (five studies), Husserl and other phenomenologists, Gabriel Marcel.

Yet despite its frequent recurrence in the history of ideas it is no easy matter to determine and understand what participation genuinely means, if I may judge by myself. In 1965—after studying philosophy for twenty-five years, and teaching it for ten—I published a book of 365 pages entitled A Metaphysics of Authentic Existentialism, in which I deliberately did not mention the word "participation" even once, even though the book often touched on problems which other authors had solved by introducing the notion of participation. But beginning with 1965 I decided I had to come to grips with participation by at least trying to understand what other authors meant by it and, hence, I started a yearly series of seminars on the topic in Greek authors (especially Plato) and in medieval authors, which has issued into this present paper. It will concentrate on Plato's conception of methexis in the Phaedo, Parmenides, Sophist and Timaeus. Let me share with you my interpretation of these four dialogues (one must remember, though, that Plato also uses the notion and the word in his Symposium, Republic and Philebus) and profit from your questions and suggestions.

But before the paper itself, let me make two comments on terminology. The English word "participation" is more directly not a translation of the Greek noun methexis, derived from the verb metechein, but a translation/transliteration of the Latin
noun "participatio," derived from "participare," which connotes "partem capere" or "to take a part," an expression which in philosophical contexts can be very misleading. The Greek verb metechein (and its derivatives) does not have that misleading connotation, since meta with the genitive means: in the midst of, among, in common with, along with. The verb metechein would, then, mean: to have along with, to have in common with, (by inference) to be dependent on, to be in relationship with. Thus, the noun methexis indicates a state of having in common with, of dependence upon, of being related to. (The verb metalambanein is sometimes used as a synonym for metechein and differs mainly by suggesting an ongoing process: to come to have along with, etc.)

Secondly, be aitia and to aition in technical contexts I take to mean "cause" in the sense of "that which produces something in some sort of direct way." That producer can be an agent (= efficient cause), which directs his artistic activity (= exemplary cause), his goal (= telic or final cause), the ingredients or components which make up the effect (= intrinsic causes—"intrinsic" as constitutive parts vs. agent, model and goal, which are other than the effect and, hence, its "extrinsic" causes).

This interpretation of aitia and aition is in opposition to that of Gregory Vlastos, "Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo," Platonian Studies (Princeton: University Press, 1973), pp. 76-110, for whom aitia in Phaedo, 100B sqq., does not mean "cause," which in ordinary speech points to the temporal antecedent that is the sufficient condition of an event and thus allows the event to be predicted (ibid., p. 79) and which is restricted to agency, to efficacy. What, then, is an aitia? It is at once logical and metaphysical. It has to do with logical explanation and classification of realities and points to their metaphysical necessity. For instance, in the sentence "This figure on the blackboard is a square because it has four equal sides and four equal angles," the clause beginning with because explains not the occurrence itself of square-shaped chalkmarks on the blackboard but the essence of squareness in those marks, the logical conditions for their being square (PS, pp. 90-91). And the reason why we can "speak significantly and truly of things being square" is "that there exists an incorporeal, immutable, intelligible object named 'Squareness,' which is the metaphysical foundation of our logical explanation" (ibid., pp. 91-92). Thus, an aitia is the logical function of a metaphysical entity (ibid., p. 92).

But has an aitia no link with causality? Although no aitia is a cause, those involved in physical situations (e.g., "Jones is sick because he has a fever," "A burning log is hot because it is on fire," "The white stuff on the ground is cold because it is snow") do have causal implications. Thus, "when Socrates maintains that the Form, Snow, is the aitia of cold," what he asserts is "firmly tied to the causal structure of the world, e.g., to the fact that if we raise the temperature beyond a certain point..."
snow must change to water. This "must" is a causal one. And since in Plato's theory it is grounded in relations of entailment between Forms, it would have to be a fantastically strong "must": it would have to express a physical law that has logical necessity" (ibid., pp. 104-105). This causal implication in an aitia discloses that nature exhibits rational necessity because its laws mirror the interrelations of the Forms explored in logico-mathematical reasoning (ibid., p. 107).

Vlastos' provocative and eloquent interpretation deserves serious and detailed consideration, which however must be postponed to another occasion. Let me state for now that I do not find it entirely convincing. "Cause" need be defined as "a temporal antecedent which is the . . . sufficient condition of the occurrence of an event" (p. 79) only if one accepts Hume's interpretation of cause as that which is temporally prior to the effect. Escaping his influence, Plato is much more likely to have conceived of efficient cause as temporally simultaneous and spatially contiguous to the event it causes (by reflecting, for example, upon the fact that any paragraph in the Phaedo itself was effected only by his actually applying a stylus to the wax surface and thereby writing: the application and the appearance of the Greek characters in meaningful sequence were simultaneous). By reflection upon other concrete causes (e.g., Phidias chisels a block of marble into a statue of Athena so as to gain the goddess' good will, the marble and resultant shape make up the statue) he could very well have, in fact, extended the notion of "cause" until it was applicable to the other factors directly helping to produce something: the goal (the good-as-known) motivating the agent, the exemplar directing his activity, the ingredients which directly constitute the end-product.

From everyday experience, then, he could have realized that a cause is that which produces something, whether by activity (efficient cause), by motivating the agent in his efficiency (final cause), by directing his activity (exemplary cause), by being present within the product as constituents (intrinsic causes).

As the Timaeus makes clear (see 46B sqq., for example), Plato's actual position is a bit more complicated. Forms serving as goals and models, plus the intelligent agent they influence, are "authentic" causes, whereas fire, air, water and earth, as elements and in their various compounds also, are "accessory" causes (synaitia) used by the craftsman in fashioning individual things and the physical universe (see also Phaedo, 99B: physical stuffs are "that without which an authentic cause would not be a cause"). The receptacle itself, wherein that fashioning takes place, is an "errant cause" (48A: tês planomenês aitias) in that universe (see below, n. 15).
in some sort of direct way." That is, I submit, the notion of "cause" which Plato had in mind when describing the Form of Beauty as the aitia which makes things beautiful by its presence somehow within them: it is that which produces their beauty. Accordingly, the aitiae mentioned in Phaedo, 100B sqq., are genuine causes.

Let us turn, then, to the Phaedo, in which Plato first speaks of methexis. Individual things are caused to be what they are (e.g., beautiful, just, tall) by the presence (parousia) in them of the Forms of Beauty, Justice, Tallness and by their having beauty, justice and tallness somehow in common (koinonia) with such Forms. These latter make individuals be beautiful, just and tall (Phaedo, 100D sqq.). But how can the single Form of (say) Beauty be in multiple beautiful existents? How can such a Form have something in common with them? The closest Plato comes to replying to such inquiries is his distinction of three factors in a participational situation: the Form itself (e.g., Beauty), which is unique and separate from things; the participated perfection (beauty), which must be as multiple as the individual beautiful things; and the participant, which is the individual rose or person or race horse and which receives the participated perfection and is thereby caused to be beautiful (102B-D). Rather obviously, the second factor is crucial if the Form is itself to remain transcendent and yet be the immanent source of perfection in multiple participants. The participated perfection alone inheres directly in each participant and yet is the medium through which the Form makes the many individuals participating it be what they are. The integrity and causality of the Form are both preserved, and the original problem of how a single Form can be in multiple participations and have something in common with them is solved.

But a new question arises now and it concerns the multiple participations, which are distinct from Form and from participants. What produces them? the Form itself? by itself or with some other cause?

We look in vain for a discussion of those issues in the Phaedo but are more successful in the Parmenides. While studying objections against the existence and nature of the Forms, Plato speaks through Parmenides to explicate the problem already met in the Phaedo: participation in a single Form by multiple participants appears impossible since the Form would then be present in each thing either entirely or partially, and neither alternative is acceptable (Parm., 131A-D). But a couple of pages later he returns to participation with another statement (through Socrates this time):

Let Forms be patterns in nature and let things resemble them and be their likeness. In fact, let participation of things in a Form be itself nothing else than their being-made-as-images of Forms--132D1-4: τὰ μὴν εἰδὴ ταῖσαν.
The aorist passive infinite in line four (eikasthenai) reveals what Plato has in mind. Things are not merely like the Form: they are made to be like it, they are caused to be images of it. And this causality arises necessarily from two sources, one of which is the Form (already disclosed in the Phaedo), the other an agent working not through his natural but mental powers. This intelligent agent brings things about by his activity and thus is an efficient cause. The Form directs that activity and thus is an exemplary cause.

In positing this double sort of causality Plato is replying to the question of how participated perfections originate. The Form produces them exemplarily by directing the artistic activity of the intelligent agent, who also produces them efficiently in the participants. Since an intellectual agent can (all things being equal) engage repeatedly in artistic activity, which the Form can constantly direct as pattern, agent and Form can be the source of many participated perfectons. These last are other than both sources. They make the participants be what they are (e.g., beautiful, just, tall). They are that by which the Form is present in its participants. They are that which the Form has in common with the participants. They are that by which these latter are like one another and the Form. And in its paradigmatic direction the Form is neither divided nor changed nor lessened. Beauty (for example) remains completely what it is and yet it is shared in wholly by many participants through the participations of beauty, which are as many as are the participants worked upon by the agent and exemplarily influenced by the Form.

In our reading of the Parmenides, then, the issue of how participated perfections originate has been successfully met by Plato's joining efficient causality to exemplarity.

In the Sophist he attends to each of those causalities even more diligently and in greater detail. If an agent working through knowledge is as essential to participation as a Form functioning as model, then intelligence must be explicitly raised to as high a level of reality as the Forms occupy. This elevation Plato achieves at the end of the battle he stages (246A-248E) between the Giants and Gods (=Friends of the Forms) on what ousia itself is. In our reading of the Parmenides, then, the issue of how participated perfections originate has been successfully met by Plato's joining efficient causality to exemplarity.

For heaven's sake! surely we won't let ourselves be so easily convinced that change, life, soul, understanding are not present in what is really real (tō pantelōs onti)—that it has neither life nor thought but, awesome and holy, it stands immutable and devoid of intelligence. And if it has intelligence, it cannot be
without life; if with intelligence and life, it must possess them in a soul; if it has intelligence, life and soul, it can hardly be completely immutable and yet ensouled. Hence, one must admit that what changes and change itself are beings (248E-249B).

Because intelligence is so obviously worthwhile (see 249C10), it must be really real, and the factors which it entails (soul, life, kinesis) must also be equally real. With this conclusion Plato by implication puts high value on the efficient causality stemming from a cognitive agent qua cognitive and, thus, considers him a worthy partner of Forms in achieving participation of things in Forms. Accordingly, we do not depart from his authentic thought if we take the final sentence in his validation of intelligence (249D3-4: a philosopher "must say that being and its sum total [to on kai to pan] are at once both whatever is changeless [the Forms] and whatever changes [intelligence]") to mean also: a philosopher must hold that the sum-total of reality embraces as causal forces both exemplarity and efficiency.

Furthermore, when he is discussing in the Sophist productive art (219B sng.) and divine and human artists (264D-266D), he also furnishes data from which one may more clearly understand exemplarity.

To begin with, then, what is a productive art (poietike technē)? An art is the ability a cognitive existent employs when acting precisely as cognitive. It is productive if he is acting thus in order to produce rather than to acquire something. To produce is to bring something into being which previously was not (219B4-6). Although no mention is made of the producer's contemplating a design or model, such contemplation is surely presupposed. He produces through his knowledge of what is to be made, which accordingly serves as an exemplar to direct his activity. His product is exactly what has been made through that awareness, the objective content of which it accordingly participates in. Productive art, then, suggests and even requires participation.

Such art is (Plato resumes after a long digression) possessed by both god and men (see 266A8 sng.). These latter employ it to cause an artifact such as a house by putting together wood, stones and other suitable materials furnished by divine craftsmanship; God, the master artist, uses his productive art to cause the stuff human artists utilize for their artifacts but also even the artists themselves, as well as "all mortal animals and all things that grow--whether these be plants that grow above the earth from seeds and roots or all the inanimate bodies, fusible or infusible, formed within the earth" (265C1-3).

Absolutely every existent in our All is, then, a divine artifact. None of them "has come into being (as is commonly believed and expressed) from nature giving birth to them as the result of some spontaneous cause that generates without intelli-
gence" (265C7-8). No, "what before was not comes now into being through divine craftsmanship and nothing else." They come "from a cause which, working with reason and knowledge, is divine" (265C3-5 and 8-9). Hence, each of them had resulted from god's working through knowledge of what was to be made, which accordingly served as a pattern. Thus each of them has been made to be a likeness of and, thereby, participates in that pattern. Therefore participation everywhere permeates the divine artifact which is the entire visible universe, no less than it does the houses, beds and other products of human ingenuity within it.

CONCLUSIONS

Having witnessed Plato's upgrading intelligence (and thereafter the efficient causality it exercises) and his disclosing the extent and nature of divine artistry, let us now, before moving to the Timaeus, bring the Sophist into focus with the Phaedo and Parmenides. This we shall do first by momentarily putting aside Plato's dialogues altogether so as to consider some cause-effect situations which occur in everyday life, whether it be in America of the twentieth century or in Greece of the fourth century B.C.

A man and a woman, let us suppose, have begotten a newborn daughter. They have acted naturally—that is, through their biological powers of reproduction. The effect (the daughter) is the same sort of being as is the cause (the parents): both are human existents. In nature and essential properties the effect is equal to the cause. This sort of efficient causality let us call (in anticipation of the next case) "univocal."

Some years later the mother paints a portrait of the child. The mother is now acting not biologically but through cognition: taking the child as model, she translates what she sees in flesh and blood into variously colored pigments spread upon canvas. The effect (the portrait of the daughter) is similar to the cause (the daughter as model): it is, after all, a portrait of the child. But there is also dissimilarity insofar as the effect (the child-as-painted-upon-flat-porous-surface) is not identically the same sort as the cause (the living child herself as exemplar). The effect is unequal to the cause; the portrait is of less value than the daughter herself. This kind of efficient cause (an agent working through knowledge, through art) let us term "analogous."

One should note carefully what this last causal situation involves. The activity of the cognitive agent (the mother as artist) under the directive influence of the model (the child posing before her) has produced in the effect (the portrait) a perfection (the child represented in pigments on canvas) which makes it like the exemplary cause, which it has in common with the exemplar, which enables the exemplar to be present to it but
which is less than the perfection as found in the exemplar. These factors make analogous causality distinctive and unique. It is to express and stress this uniqueness that the term "participation" is applied to it. Such an effect participates in the exemplary cause. It is its participant.¹¹

Before turning again to Plato's texts, let us add a couple more comments. Although participation directly explicated the relationship a product has to its exemplary cause, it also involves efficient cause. A cognitive agent is the channel through which a model influences the effect.¹² To use again our previous illustration: even though the model (the child) directs and thus exemplarily causes the activity of painting, the mother herself efficiently produces it. In fact, her activity is the very paradigmatic direction itself.¹³

Secondly, God efficiently causes all material existents through knowledge and thus he is their analogous cause and they are his artifacts. They are similar to him insofar as both they and he exist; they are dissimilar inasmuch as they exist in a limited way (they have existence) but he in an unrestricted way (he is existence). No creature measures up to the divine perfections: each is less than God. Accordingly, each participates in God, and participation permeates the entire created universe.¹⁴

Such is the Weltanschauung which can disclose itself to anyone observing natural and cognitive agents at work in everyday life. In it awareness of efficient and exemplary causality precedes that of participation.

In initially formulating his philosophical theories, however, Plato did not walk that path. Of course he knew from experience that sexual intercourse can lead to pregnancy, that an animal's eating and digesting food brings about its growth, that the bones and sinews in his body help explain how he is sitting or standing or walking (Phaedo, 98C-E). But in that same dialogue such activity was not significant: physical agents were not genuine causes.¹⁵ Moreover, gods were not a first principle in his philosophy, however often he might mention them.¹⁶

What was of primal importance to him was formal causality. From his experiencing that many existents are (say) beautiful,¹⁷ he realized that there is a Form of Essence of Beauty.¹⁸ And this causes the beauty in things by its presence somehow in them. The Form of Beauty is steadfast and perfect, whereas beauty in things is inconstant and imperfect. Yet beauty is what the Form and things somehow have in common (koinōnia). To express this situation Plato spoke of things as participating in the Form causing them to be what they are by its presence. Such is his initial insight into participation in the Phaedo. The Forms are extrinsic formal causes of what sensible existents are by being present in and associated with them. These last share in the Forms through the participated perfections they receive. Formal causality and participation are two sides of the same coin.¹⁹
But gradually Plato came to realize that his view of participation was incomplete. In order to succeed, the three-factor theory of the *Phaedo* (the Form itself, the participated perfections, participants) needed further causes to explain how the participated perfections themselves were produced in the participants without the Form itself being changed, multiplied, divided. His answer can be found in the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*, where he joined participation explicitly with exemplarity and efficiency. More adequately, then, participation consists in things being-made-as-images of the Forms (*Parm.*, 132D3-4), which thereby are present in their participants through the participated perfections they cause by paradigmatically directing the artistic activity of cognitive agents (*Sophist*, 248E sqq. and 264 sqq.).

The advantages of this more adequate conception are obvious. By their activity agents are genuine causes that sensible existents are what they are. By their indirect presence through participated perfections the Forms are genuine causes of what things are. Yet they are not divided or multiplied or changed or lessened by their causality. Simply by being what it is, a Form can constantly direct as model whatever artistic activity the cognitive agent wishes to engage in. Sensible existents themselves are actually produced and yet they remain imperfect: they are only images of the Forms, upon which they depend constantly for being what they are.

Plato's procedure in formulating his philosophy was, then, to start with participation and end with efficient and exemplary causalities. But these latter do not replace the former: they complement and enrich it. A thing's participation in Forms results from the divine agent producing it while acting under their paradigmatic guidance.

**TIMAEUS**

Finally, we come to the *Timaeus*. This dialogue shows itself to have preserved the theory of participation inherited from the other dialogues in all its salient points: things are made by the divine craftsman to be images (and thus participations) of Forms serving as models (28B sqq.). But it has increased that inheritance by adding many new insights. For example, fire, air, water and earth are caused to be like their homonymous Forms by god's fashioning them, under paradigmatic direction of the Forms, from right-angled scalene and isosceles triangles into the four basic geometrical solids (53C-55C), all of which come and go so constantly in space that none of them is a tode but only a toiou-ton (48D7-E7).

But Plato is not content with speaking of things only in themselves, each made to resemble its own complexus of Forms: he also exposes how the divine artist constructs from them the visi-
ble universe as an exact image (and, hence, participation) of the Form of the Living Being, which embraces the Forms of all other living Beings as its parts. The result is that the visible All, which contains "ourselves and all other living existents" (30C), is "supremely good and beautiful and perfect" (see 92C4-9). I should think so! The god who crafted it is himself good and totally without envy and, therefore, desired that "everything should be good and, so far as it might be, nothing be imperfect" (29E-30A). The Form of the Living Being, which served as goal to initiate his activity and as model to direct it, is "that intelligible reality which is best and in every possible way complete" (30D). The very fact that our All shares in such an all-perfect Form through the mediation of such an all-loving agent and father (28C3 and 29E1 sqq.) guarantees a maximal degree of goodness and beauty for it as a whole and for each of its constitutive parts.

The setting up of that All is an interesting accomplishment in itself and is also informative on participation since in the Timaeus Plato speaks in some detail and for the first time of what functions as the basic participant throughout the physical universe: the receptacle. In Phaedo, 102B-D, and Parmenides, 130B, he had used a proper name (Simias) or a personal pronoun (we) to refer to a participant and had done little more to explain it then to contrast it both with the Form (e.g., Tallness, Likeness) and the participated perfection (tallness, likeness). But in the Timaeus he spends considerable time on it under the guise of receptacle (hypodochê).

It is the physis which receives fire and the other bodies (50B6). It is the space (52A4) through which they constantly pass in and out of the eternal and intelligible beings (50C4-5). It is their mother (50D2-3) and nurse (49A6). It is the impressionable stuff (ekmageion) from which they are all molded and which is thus made to appear different at different times, although it never departs from its own character but always retains its own name and nature as the sole permanent and determinate being (tode) in the physical universe. In order to receive earth, water and the rest, as well as their compounds, it must itself be non-earthen, non-aquaceous, etc. (49E7-51B6). Its reality or function is, then, to be a receptacle—the participant of participated perfections (images) of Forms through the artistry of god fashioning the visible All.

But it still has a further mark which colors its participa-
tional role: it is necessity (anankê). It is, if left to it-
self, the errant cause (têς planômenêς aitias) from which natu-
really issues disorderly motion (47E-48A). Existent before the
god constructed the cosmos from it and the Forms, it transferred
that chaotic motion to the traces (ichné) and dynameis within it
of fire, air, water and earth, which also pre-existed in the
chaos, which erratically rocked the receptacle in turn and which
were without any proportion and measure in their masses and mo-
tions save by chance (35A and 69B). The task of the divine art-
ist was twofold: to make fire and so forth be genuine images (and thus participations) of the Forms of Fire etc. and, secondly, suitably to proportion and arrange their volume, movement and other qualities so as to form a cosmos which would resemble as closely as possible (and thus participate in) the goodness and beauty of the Forms serving as goals and models (53B4-C1 and 69B2-C3).

As presented by Plato in the Timaeus, the divine workman did complete that task: he achieved "this world with a full complement of living existents, mortal and immortal—a visible living All, an image of the intelligible, a perceptible god, supreme in greatness and excellence, in beauty and perfection" (see 92C). Yet one must not underestimate its difficulty since he had to cope with the receptacle: a recalcitrant and errant factor functioning nonetheless as the omni-present participant of the transcendent Forms.

Finally, here in capsule is the information on participation from the four dialogues studied. (a) Phaedo explains how things are caused to be what they are by their participation in Forms present in and associated with them through multiple participated perfections. (b) The Parmenides discloses how those multiple participations arise by Plato’s adding efficient causality to exemplarity. (c) The Sophist deals with the participation of things in Forms by attributing as much genuine reality to intelligence as ascribed to Forms and, then, by illuminating exemplarity through divine and human artistry. (d) In the Timaeus Forms function not only as models (individual things are images through participation) but also as goals (they are made to constitute a visible universe which is supremely good and beautiful), even though the basic participant in our world is the hypodoche or chora, through which fire and other bodies constantly pass as images but which also affects them with its own disorderly motion.

The bibliography on participation which I mentioned in the first paragraph of this paper was drawn up by William J. Carroll, Professor of Philosophy, Coppin State College, in connection with his dissertation, "Participation in Selected Texts of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's The Divine Names": (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1981), pp. 184-95.
FOOTNOTES


2 Plato hesitates to call ingredients or constituents authentic causes but terms them "that without which a genuine cause would not be a cause," "necessary conditions" or "accessory causes." For references see below, n. 15. Aristotle experiences no such hesitation and calls them "material and formal causes."


3 In the sentence, "Forms make individuals be beautiful, just and tall," "make" is equivalent to "cause." Such statements as these are not unusual in everyday life and are readily understood: "Adding scotch rather than gin makes the drink be a Rob Roy rather than a martini" or "his love of money makes him work night and day" or "The seamstress is making a dress from taffeta and the pattern she's following makes it be a formal." In all such sentences we easily recognize that "causes" can be substituted for "makes" without change of meaning.

In that respect the English word "makes" is similar to poieo, which often express causality. For example, see *Phaedo*, 100D5; *Theaetetus*, 156A6-7, 160A1-2, 160C4, 182A5-6; *Timaeus*, 33A6, 37D5. For a different interpretation see G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: University Press, 1973), p. 90, n. 43; p. 93, n. 46.

4 This second factor can also be referred to as "the participation" or "immanent form." "The participated perfection," used in the paper, should consistently be "the participated-in perfection" since the verb from which the participle comes is "to participate in." But for convenience I shall drop the preposition in the participle. What is being expressed is clear: the perfection of the Form precisely as found in a participant, which it completes and perfects.

5 In what sense is a Form a "cause"? By "cause" (aitia) I mean: "that which produces something in some sort of direct fashion." One should keep in mind that cause is not equated with agent: an agent is a cause but so too, each in its own way, is a goal, an exemplar, a thing's intrinsic constituents. A platonic Form, then, can be a cause without being an agent.

More precisely, what kind of cause is a Form? In the *Timaeus*
To make his point Plato here compares a Form with daylight and a sail—a comparison so crudely physical and so alien to his conception of the Forms elsewhere as bodiless, transcendent, other than physical reality that obviously the comparison is only a technique to help his reader understand more authentically what Forms really are and how things and other Forms actually do participate in them.

My argumentation is this: if εἰκάζω in the active means "I make (something) an image of," then in the passive it can mean not only "something resembles another" (Liddell-Scott, s.v.) but also "something is made an image of." If so, being-made-an-image-of can come about in two ways: both by the influence of the Form as model and then it points to exemplary causality; secondly, by the influence of an agent, and then it designates efficient causality. Granted that this unpacking of meaning from the passive voice may be more philosophical than philological and that it may be prompted by the information which the Sophist, Timaeus and Philebus give on exemplary causality of the Forms and the efficient causality of Mind. Nonetheless, it seems valid.

While staging that battle Plato also makes the important point that being is the power to act or to be acted upon and, by inference, to cause or to be caused and to be participated in or to participate in (see 247D8-E4; 248B5-6). Being is, then, that by which the Forms can participate among themselves and that by which things can participate in Forms.

"What before was not comes now into being" might sound as though divine causality were creative, but the Timaeus will show this not to be true: god, as well as men, works upon already existing stuff: the chaotic primal bodies and their disorderly movements.

On univocal and analogous causes, see L. Sweeney, AMAE, pp. 232-34.

On the other hand, the effect of an univocal cause working according to its nature does not participate in its cause: the offspring is similar to his parents because both are human, but humanity in the offspring is essentially not less than but equal to that in the parents. Participation requires, then, that the
effect be basically less perfect than its cause; the perfection which they have in common is present in the effect in a limited and imperfect manner. As Aquinas points out: "est autem participare quasi partem capere; et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinent universaliter dicitur partici­pare illud" (In Librum Poetii de Hebdomadibus Expositio [Marietti edition], II, 396-97). For the full text plus commen­tary, see L. Sweeney, "Existence/Essence in Thomas Aquinas' Early Writings," Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical As­sociation, 37 (1963), 120-21.

Without the mother's wielding the brush, there would be no portrait, even though all the other factors might be present: the child posing, the canvas, the palette.

On direction, taken technically, see L. Sweeney, AMAE, pp. 295-300, especially p. 295: The beautiful-as-known is a cause because it helps produce "the agent's activity by which he en­deavors to project that exemplar into matter. But how does it produce that activity? By the direction it exerts upon the agent. This is not, however, to be understood in a physical sense (in which, for example, a jockey directs a horse race): it is not an efficient cause. The beautiful-as-known sets the art­ist into a state of absorbing and ecstatic contemplation so that the ensuing efficiency by which he tries to externalize the con­tents of that contemplation is itself colored, influenced, specified, and directed by that very contemplation." Hence, one and the same set of activities is "simultaneously caused in a twofold way: exemplarily by the beautiful-as-contemplated, efficiently by the agent through his operative powers and art habits. . . . A single line of efficiency is both the direction which the beau­tiful-as-known exerts upon the artist and simultaneously the re­sponse of the artist to the beautiful" and, in addition, the ef­fect's participation in the cause since no artistic activity can communicate the entire perfection of an exemplar. On the rela­tionship between exemplarity and finality, see ibid., n. 91.

On creatures as co-workers with God, see L. Sweeney, ibid., pp. 235-39. All creatures are divine artifacts since God makes them all through knowledge. But many of them are also produced by other creatures, which can be called "secondary" causes (God is "primary" cause) and which produce them either naturally (e.g., parents generate offspring) or artistically (a sculptor carves a statue). God uses these secondary causes, whether act­ing naturally or artistically, as instruments in his productivi­ty.

At least physical agents were only "that without which the genuine cause would not be a cause" (Phaedr., 99B) -- see above, for the Greek text. Also see W. K. C. Guthrie, HGP, IV, 349-52, where he speaks of such agents as "necessary conditions" and not causes (p. 350, n. 2). In Timaeus, 46C-E, physical factors are not the main causes (= final and exemplary) of things but merely "accessory causes" (synaitia) and a "lover of intelligence and
knowledge must necessarily seek first for the causation that belongs to the intelligent nature." See P. Friedländer, *Plato*, III, 359-63.

16 For studies published between 1950 and 1957, see H. Cherniss, *Lustrum*, V (1961), 425-48: "Religion and Theology." See especially his comments on the following authors: D. Ross, #1491; A. Diès, #1499; van Camp and Canart, #1502; Soleri, #1506, #1511, #1517; van Litsenberg, #1253. Even though this last author would like to identify Plato's god with the idea of the Good and to pantelös on, since they form the apex of Plato's system, he admits that Plato does not explicitly identify them. His final conclusion seems accurate: "The main questions concerning Plato's theology do not as yet admit of any decisive answer.


17 *Symposium*, 210A-D and 211C, sketches the stages in that growing awareness of beauty in bodies, souls, laws and institutions, sciences.

18 See ibid., 210E-211B, where the realization is described as a sudden and amazing vision of immutable, everlasting, transcendent, subsistent, impassible Beauty, in which all comely things participate. In *Phaedo*, 76D-E, and *Phaedrus*, 247C-E and 249C, the awareness of Forms comes to the soul prior to its entrance into the body, after which it depends upon recollection to renew its knowledge of the Forms. On recollection see N. Gulley, *Plato's Theory*, pp. 1-47, 108-120; on the *Symposium* see ibid., pp. 49-53.

19 See above, n. 5, last paragraph.

20 Their visible compounds (see 58C-61C) would, we infer, similarly be images of Forms of compounds.

21 Thus a flame is not fire but fiery, and likewise with the other stuffs. Fire, air and water engage in a constant cycle of changing into one another (49A sqq.). Even though earth cannot be transformed into the other three or they into it (56D sqq.), still it is continuously undergoing changes on its own level through straining, drying, compressing, dissolving, compounding, etc. so as to form stone, earthware, soda, salt, glass and so on
All four of the elements ceaselessly are caused to pass in and out of the receptacle, which thereby takes on their diverse appearances (50B5 sgq.).


23 Besides "receptacle" (hypodoche), he also calls it "nurse" (tithēnē; 49A5-6), "pliable stuff" (ekmageion; 50C2), "mother" (50D2 and 51A4) and "space" (chora; 52A8).

24 Precosmic fire, air, etc., were "traces" and not authentic natures (and, thereby, not yet images and participations) because presumably Plato conceived them after the fashion of Presocratic primal opposites, which had no cause and needed none. See G. R. Morrow, "Necessity and Persuasion in Plato's Timaeus," in R. E. Allen (ed.), Studies in Plato's Metaphysics (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), p. 426: the "traces" of fire, earth, air and water in Timaeus, 48A, are "the primary bodies out of which Plato's predecessors had constructed their worlds... Plato accepts them provisionally and attributes to them certain inherent qualities or powers, as his predecessors had done." Indeed, "to one who knows the speculations of Plato's predecessors, it is a familiar world that presents itself to the demiurge when he begins his ordering activity." See also L. Sweeney, Infinity in the Presocratics (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), pp. 5 sgq.

25 Since Plato does not explicate how precisely goals cause the cosmos, one must elaborate that causality from examples of human artistry. Take the case of Phidias' chiseling marble into a statue of Athena so as to make money. The profit is what he mainly wants from his activity, whereas his knowledge of Athena directs his artistry exemplarily. Goal and model are distinct. But let the case be that Phidias produces the statue because he is so inspired by love of the goddess as to wish to express his inspiration and love in stone. Then Athena would both cause his desire to produce her image and also direct that production. She would be both goal and model.

The situation regarding the craftsman's production of this cosmos matches this second instance. The Form of the Living Being is both goal and model. Its beauty and goodness so attract him that he wishes to reproduce its image, and it guides him as to what he makes: a visible All of living beings, which is as beautiful and good as an image can be. On exemplarity and finality, see L. Sweeney, AMAE, Ch. IX, pp. 253-301.