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Plato's Reply to the 'Worst Difficulty' Argument
of the Parmenides: Sophist 248a-249d

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In a previous paper I have argued that the theory of relations Hector-Neri Castañeda has discovered in the Phaedo is clarified and extended in the Parmenides.¹ In particular, the paper contains an interpretation of the 'worst difficulty' argument (Parm.133a-135a), an argument purporting to establish that human knowledge of the Forms is impossible.² That interpretation showed the argument to utilize the extended theory of relations in its premises, and contrary to previous interpretations, to be logically valid.³ Thus, one consideration in favor of my interpretation is that it allows the argument at last to live up to its description as the most formidable challenge to the early theory of Forms (in a series of tough arguments), requiring a "long and remote train of argument" by "a man of wide experience and natural ability" for its unsoundness to be exposed (Parm.133b4-c1).

Unfortunately, the Parmenides does not contain such a reply, even though the text at Parm.133b seems to hint that Plato had already formulated one. The question then naturally arises whether he ever entertained and recorded a reply, and if so, whether that reply could rescue some version of the theory of Forms from the devastating consequences of the 'worst difficulty'. In the following, I present my previous reconstruction of that argument and the most plausible lines of response open to a defender of a theory of Forms. In the second section I argue that the reply Plato should have chosen--and possibly did choose--is to be found in the Sophist, and I show how that reply would save the theory of Forms.

I

In brief, my reconstruction of the 'worst difficulty' argument is this:

A. Take the following general principles to be constitutive of the theory of Forms and its treatment of relational properties:⁴

- PH1. There are three distinct ontological items: (a) Forms, (b) forms-in-particulars (hereafter, immanent characters), and (c) sensible particulars.⁵
- PH2. Sensible particulars have the properties (immanent characters) they have by participation in Forms.
- PH3. All Forms are monadic, i.e., each Form is instantiated only by one particular in each fact it is involved in: no Form is ever instantiated by pairs or other n-tuples, whether ordered or not.
- PH4. Some facts consist of a particular participating in a Form: they are single-pronged. Other facts are multiple-pronged: they consist of an array of Forms each instantiated by one particular, where these instantiations do not by themselves constitute facts.
- PH5. Forms that can enter into multiple-pronged facts cannot enter into single-pronged facts. This is the law of factual enchainment. Forms governed by this law constitute Form-chains or relations.
- PA6. A Form ϕ is governed by the law of factual enchainment for two-pronged facts⁶ if and only if there is a correct answer to the question 'What is ϕ ?' which has the form ' ϕ is what it is (is ϕ) (in respect) of ψ (a Form)', where the converse of this (' ψ is what it is of ϕ ') is also true.
- PA7. Single-pronged facts are the possession by sensible particulars of immanent characters, where such possession is the result of a particular's participating in the single Form responsible for its immanent character. Multiple-pronged facts are the possession by n sensible particulars of n immanent characters which are members of an immanent character chain, where such possession is the result of each particular participating in a₈ Form which is a member of the appropriate Form-chain.
- PA8. An immanent character F is a member of a dyadic immanent character chain if and only if F is what it is (F) (in respect) of G and G is what it is (G) (in respect) of F, where G is an immanent character and where F and G are, respectively, manifestations of ϕ and ψ , Forms constituting a dyadic Form-chain.

B. Forms cannot possess immanent characters.¹⁰

C. From the preceding premises, the following general principle is derived:

PA9. Sensible particulars (x, y) which possess immanent characters (F-in-x, G-in-y) which are members of an immanent character chain (F-G) are, together with F-G and $\phi\text{-}\psi$, constituents of a two-pronged fact. Such sensible particulars (x, y) are related to each other via an immanent character chain as follows: (1) x bears F-in-x toward G-in-y, y bears G-in-y toward F-in-x; (2) x cannot bear F-in-x toward ψ or any other Form, y cannot bear G-in-y toward ϕ or any other Form. There are no chains $x\text{-}\psi$, $F\text{-in-}x\text{-}\psi$, $\phi\text{-}y$, or $\phi\text{-}G\text{-in-}y$. This is the law of factual separation.

Besides its derivation from A and B, PA9 is also amply substantiated and exemplified by general experience. Parmenides appeals to this by noting that, for example, if some sensible particular has the asymmetrical correlative property of being a master, then that particular is only a master of some other sensible particular slave, not the Form Slavery--itself (or any other Form) (Parm.133d7-e3).¹²

D. Consider, then, any person x who is a knower. X, "being a man" (Parm.133e2), is a sensible particular possessing the asymmetrical correlative property of being a knower, and thus qua particular must possess the immanent character knowledge-in-x (and some kind of it; e.g., geometrical knowledge-in-x; Parm.134a9-b1) and not Knowledge-itself or any other Form (by PH1 and PH2) (Parm.134a9-b1, 134b3-10).¹³ This immanent character is possessed only with respect to the character known-in-y (and some kind of it; e.g., known figure-in-y) (134a9-b1)¹⁴ (by PA7) possessed by some subject y, and since Forms cannot possess immanent characters (by B), y cannot be any Form and so must be a sensible particular object of knowledge (as demanded by PA9) (Parm.134b11-c3). Human knowledge, a relation wherein one relata is a particular, can thus only be of other particulars, never Forms.¹⁵ On this argument, the theory of Forms as an account employing unchanging objects of knowledge is a failure.

In response to this argument there are several rejoinders one might initially think would be open to Plato which would save the bulk of his theory.¹⁶ The more plausible of these are: (1) eliminate immanent characters from the ontology of the theory of Forms¹⁷, (2) contend that PA9 is somehow illegitimately applied to the case of knowledge, and/or (3) deny (B) that Forms may not possess immanent characters. I will now contend that Plato ought to choose - and probably would (or did) choose - only the last of these alternatives, and that the evidence that he at least recognizes the existence of this sort of response is to be found in the Sophist.

II

It is most probable that the Timaeus was composed significantly later than the first part of the Parmenides.¹⁸ If this is true (and I think it is), then Plato did not attempt to solve the 'worst difficulty' by (1) banishing immanent characters from his theory, since immanent characters are part of the Timaeus' ontological inventory.¹⁹ To see the similarity of the Phaedo-Parmenides ontology with that of the Timaeus, consider the summary description of the universe found in the middle of the text (Tim.51e9-52c10):

We must agree that there is, first, the unchanging Form, ungenerated and indestructible, which neither receives anything else into itself from elsewhere nor itself enters into anything else anywhere, invisible and otherwise imperceptible; that, in fact, which thinking has for its object.

Second is that which bears the same name and is like that Form; is sensible; is brought into existence; is perpetually in motion, coming to be in a certain place and again vanishing out of it; and is to be apprehended by belief involving perception.

Third is Space, which is everlasting, not admitting destruction; providing a situation for all things that come into being, but itself apprehended without the senses by a sort of bastard reasoning, and hardly an object of belief.

This, indeed, is that which we must look upon as in a dream and say that anything that is must needs be in some place and occupy some room, and that what is not somewhere in earth or heaven is nothing. Because of this dreaming state, we prove unable to rouse ourselves and to draw all these distinctions and others akin to them, even in the case of the waking and truly existing nature, and so to state the truth: namely that, whereas for an image, since not even the very principle on which it has come into being belongs to the image itself, but it is the ever moving semblance of something else, clinging in some sort to existence on pain of being nothing at all, on the other hand that which has²⁰ real being has the support of the exactly true account.

This first sort of members of this ontology are clearly Forms. Furthermore, these Forms cannot "enter into anything else anywhere." Hence, these Forms should be identified with those of the Parmenides and Phaedo which, according to my interpretation, cannot themselves be possessed by or be in particular subjects (see, e.g., Parm.133a9-b4; cf. n. 5). This then raises the question of what can enter into and be possessed by 'anything else anywhere'. The answer to this is that there are things 'like' Forms ('copies' of them, μιμήματα: Tim.50c6), which bear the name of the Form they are like, which come to be in places and can be out of - vanishing from - those places, and which are "apprehended by belief involving perception." Finally, it is said prior to this passage that these qualities which come to be 'in' are 'natures' (φύσιν) that 'arise between' the Forms and the subject which their likenesses are in (the Receptacle, ὑποδοχή: Tim.50d1-5). There it is further pointed out that these qualities 'cling' to their existence "on pain of being nothing" by being in something else. These qualities would thus seem to be identifiable with immanent characters as they are found in the Phaedo and the 'worst difficulty' argument of the Parmenides.

Immanent characters, like the μιμήματα, are characterized as being likenesses of Forms.²¹ They are named after the Forms, are said to be

'in' subjects, and can cease to be in, hence 'out of', subjects.²² Immanent characters are also often sensible manifestations of Forms, and thus, are apprehended through the employment of perception. Their existence is dependent upon two things: the Form of which they are a likeness and the subject they are found in, for if Socrates perished so would the largeness in Socrates, as well as all his other immanent characters. This is a claim parallel to the one above that the qualities 'arise between' the Forms and that which the qualities are in, such that the qualities can vanish; that is, cease to exist. These qualities, like immanent characters, depend for their existence upon being in some subject.

There is also a third element in the ontology of the Timaeus, termed 'space' (χώρα) in the passage above, and elsewhere in the text called the 'receptacle' (ὑποδοχή), 'matrix' (ἐμμεγεῖον), 'mother' (μήτηρ) and 'nurse' (τιθήνη) of becoming. It is characterized as follows:

- (a) It is always the same, for it never departs from its own character, since it is always receiving all things and never takes on any character that is like any of the things that enter into it (50b9-c3).
- (b) by nature it is there as a matrix for everything, changed and diversified by the things that enter it, and on their account it appears to have different qualities at different times (50c3-5).
- (c) that which is to receive in itself all kinds must be free from all characters...we shall not be deceived if we call it a nature invisible and characterless, all receiving,...the most correct account of it would be this: that part of it which has been made fiery appears at any time as fire; the part that is liquified as water; and as earth or air such parts as receive likenesses of these (50e4051b4).
- (d) [it] is everlasting, not admitting destruction, providing a situation for all things that come into being,...apprehended without the senses (52b1-3).

Considering (a) through (d), it is fairly clear that the Receptacle can be regarded as satisfying several of the important criteria for what it is to be a 'bare particular' (that which possesses immanent characters) in the ontology of the Phaedo and Parmenides (on the hypothesis that such entities are so present; see Ph.103a11-c2 for evidence that Plato distinguished subjects as distinct ontological entities from both Forms and immanent characters). The Receptacle is, like a bare particular, something which has particularizations of the Forms 'in' it (a, c), but which is itself not a particularization of some Form, since it is itself unchanging (a, d). Since neither the receptacle nor a bare particular are particularizations of some Form, they are characterless (c) and cannot be apprehended by the senses (d). Since both provide a site for change to occur by means of the appearance and disappearance of immanent characters, both are, in and of themselves, changeless (a, b, d). Finally, just as immanent characters in the Phaedo require there to be at least one subject for them to exist (being things which must be 'in' something to exist), so the Receptacle provides a subject for immanent characters to exist 'in'. Given all this, the warrant is very strong for claiming that the Timaeus advocates an ontology of immanent characters.²³ Hence, Plato did not envision a solution to the 'worst difficulty' which involved the elimination of immanent characters from his ontological inventory.

Next, I do not see that Plato can escape the generality of the law of factual separation (PA9) by (2) pointing to dissimilarities between the property of being a knower and other relational properties clearly governed by PA9 (e.g., being a master) without involving himself in question-begging. For instance, a popular reply to the 'worst difficulty' is the claim that the doctrine of *ἀνάμνησις* saves Plato from PA9, since on that account of knowledge

it is not sensible particulars that know Forms, but souls.²⁴ However, Plato's arguments for and explanations of ~~ἀντινομία~~ presuppose that we do in fact know Forms, which is precisely what is at issue here. Furthermore, souls are particular, and possess characteristics (e.g., justice), and so may be governed by PA9 and our other principles, since those principles in fact only distinguish particular possessors of immanent characters (subjects of any sort, sensible or not) from Forms and immanent characters.²⁵ As far as can be determined, Plato never gave up conceiving of knowledge as relational, and hence, of knowers having a relational property.²⁶ Thus, knowers and their knowledge are subject to the generality of PA9.

A crucial premise of the 'worst difficulty' that prevents us from being in the relation of knowledge to Forms is B. If Forms could possess some immanent characters - by (3) denying full generality to B - then we could be in some asymmetrical relations to Forms, where they would then possess one element of an immanent character chain constitutive of some particular relation; e.g., the relation of knower to known thing. But there are several obstacles to our qualifying B. First, (i) immanent characters are possessed, apparently, in virtue of their possessor participating in some Form, and so Forms would have to participate in Forms to have immanent characters. But up through the Parmenides it is only particulars which are said to participate in Forms. Second, (ii) for a subject x to possess an immanent character manifestation F-in-x of the Form ϕ is for x to be said to resemble ϕ imperfectly; but the Forms are not imperfect and so would again seem incapable of possessing immanent characters.²⁷

The last and most persuasive consideration is this: (iii) immanent characters are constitutive of the changes particulars go through by appearing

in or disappearing from ('advancing' or 'retreating'; Phaedo 102d6-103a2) subjects. For example, 'the pot became hot' is to be ontologically analyzed as 'the cold-in-the-pot left (and so ceased to exist) and the hot-in-the-pot came to be in the pot'. Thus, if Forms could possess immanent characters, those characters might also come to appear in them or leave, thereby making it false that the Forms are completely changeless.²⁸ Although it could be replied that some of those characters could be permanently in Forms such that they never appeared in or left Forms, the whole motivation of allowing Forms to possess immanent characters in the first place would be to make knowledge of Forms possible; but in the case of knowledge, characters would appear and disappear in Forms. On the Parmenides theory of relations, after all, if (per impossibile) a Form passed from being unknown by some particular knower, say Socrates, to being known by Socrates at time t_1 , ϕ would have to come to possess an immanent character it lacked prior to t_1 : ϕ would pass from lacking 'known (pros Socrates)' prior to t_1 to possessing 'known (pros Socrates)' at t_1 , making it false that the Forms are completely changeless. Despite this and other obstacles (i and ii above), Plato ought to have replied to the 'worst difficulty' by adopting this course (3), since it is the most plausible and textually compatible alternative left. The record that Plato himself at least recognized - and possibly adopted - this response is contained in the text of Sophist 248a-249d.

The argument at Sophist 248a-249d addresses the doctrine of 'the friends of the Forms', a doctrine which may be reasonably identified as the theory of Forms found in the middle dialogues and attacked in the first part of the Parmenides. For instance, the Eleatic Stranger attributes the friends of the Forms with the belief that being and becoming are separate ($\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$; 248a7)

and that whereas we have intercourse with becoming by means of the senses, we have intercourse with the "nature of being" (ὄντως οὐσίαν) through the mind by reflection. This is so because becoming is variable, whereas being "always remains constant in itself" (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ὡσαύτως ἔχειν; 248a12). These beliefs are the hallmarks of the early theory of Forms, including the version attacked by the 'worst difficulty' argument.²⁹

The strategy of the argument of the Sophist is to force a paradox on the theory of Forms, one solution to which would be the denial of the tenet that being (viz., any Form) is completely changeless: (1) the friends of the Forms maintain that the Forms are [completely] changeless (248a12, 248e5-6), but (2) they also insist that minds and Forms "have intercourse through reflection" (κοινωνεῖν. . . διὰ λογισμοῦ; 248a10-11), and (3) this intercourse of knower with known involves acting upon something (τὸ γιγνώσκειν. . . ἔσται ποιεῖν τι; 248d10-21) which therefore means that (4) being known is "being acted upon" (πάσχειν; 248e1-2) (248d10-e2).³⁰ (5) To the extent, then, that a Form is known by an act of knowledge, that Form changes in being acted on (248e2-4);³¹ but if so, then it (1) would be false that Forms are [completely] changeless (248e4-5). However, the major reason for positing the Forms as changeless is the early theory was to render them suitable objects of knowledge, and (6) we do have such knowledge (of Forms) (248e-8-249b1). Now either (7) no change is real, or (8) some changes are real and others not (i.e., some changes of Forms are possible), or (9) all change is real (i.e., any change is possible, even for Forms; implicit in 249b2-249d5). But (10) we must deny that (7) no change is real because (by 5, and contrary to 6) that would make knowledge impossible (249b5-6). We must also deny that (9) all change is real, because Forms must be unchanging in some respects at least in order for

them to serve as the objects of our knowledge (as in 6) (249b8-c9).

Therefore, (8) some changes are real and others not (249c10-d5), and this means (contra 1) that Forms may gain and lose some properties, and are thus not completely changeless.³²

If Plato were to accept (8) as I read it, he would not in any way have to abandon the ontological distinction of Forms from particular subjects and immanent characters. Although Forms would then no longer be completely what they are independent of everything else (completely $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$), unlike particulars and immanent characters they would continue to unchangingly be what they are by themselves (still $\kappa\alpha\theta'\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}$) with respect to their formal and proper attributes.³³ All the argument requires is that Forms be capable of the change involved in gaining and losing the property (-ies) of being 'known (by x)' (where 'x' names some knower), and this would be change of an accidental sort, not one of nature (one concerning either formal or proper attributes).³⁴ The acceptance of this requirement - unlike other possible solutions³⁵ - conserves all the important aspects of the theory of Forms, and so is then the response Plato ought to have adopted.

At this point it is very tempting to conclude that not only ought Plato to have adopted this response, but that he did adopt it, and that here in the Sophist we see him acknowledge (8) and the consequent rejection of his theory's tenet that Forms are completely changeless. I myself am inclined to believe this is the correct reading of the argument. Unfortunately, and as David Keyt has forcefully pointed out, there are no clear textual indications anywhere in the Platonic corpus of an explicit Platonic commitment to the proposition that Forms change in any respect, and at least one citation which supports the view that he never did accept such a claim.³⁶ My reading of Sophist 249d

as (8) above, for instance, is not forced by the text, which can be interpreted as a claim that

being is "as many things as are unchanged and as many as are changed." The things that are unchanged are the objects of knowledge, the Forms; the things that are changed are things that are ensouled, living bodies.³⁷

Additionally, the view that Forms undergo any changes at all would appear to be in conflict with the claim of the Timaeus (37e1-38a8) that the Forms are timeless entities.³⁸

Nonetheless, the argument of Sophist 248a-249d is significant in that it is here that Plato at least exhibits his recognition of one solution to the 'worst difficulty' argument of the Parmenides: the most palatable it would seem, given my previous elimination of other possible solutions (1 and 2). That is why I am inclined to believe that Plato did adopt as a solution to the paradox of the Sophist the view that Forms may undergo accidental change; viz., that it also provided him with the simplest and least disruptive solution to an argument he clearly recognized to pose a grave problem for his theory.³⁹

The rebuttal the adoption of (8) provides to the 'worst difficulty' is this. It allows us to claim that assumption B (that Forms cannot possess immanent characters, since that would render the Forms changeable) is false. Although it remains generally true that Forms may not possess immanent characters (and, thus, that I cannot be a master of Slavery-itself), any Form may possess any possible set of immanent characters of the Form 'known (by x)', where 'x' names some particular knower. Hence, the law of factual separation (PA9) is also overly general; because of B's qualification, it may then make a justifiable exception to the relation of knowledge.⁴⁰ For instance, if Socrates comes to know, and so knows what it is, for anything to be a circle

(knows the Circle-itself), that is a relation consisting of Socrates possessing the character knowledge-of-Circle in him, a character which is (by PA7) possessed with respect to (πρός) the character known (by Socrates) which the Form Circle-itself now possesses.

As we saw above, the primary justification for B in the 'worst difficulty', and primary objection to its qualification (iii), was that the possession by Forms of immanent characters (by their being known) would render the Forms changeable; and that claim is nothing other than the crucial premise (5) of the Sophist's argument. Sophist 248a-249d thus makes relatively explicit the implicit presupposition at work in the 'worst difficulty' argument, that (B) the Forms may not possess immanent characters. By accepting the sort of change in Forms necessary for the preservation of their status as the objects of human knowledge (8), Plato in the Sophist can expose and destroy the crucial premise (B) of the 'worst difficulty' argument by moderating its overly-general formulation. Plato may thereby save himself from the skeptical consequences of the 'worst difficulty' without giving up either a theory of Forms, its theory of relations, or the general truth of the law of factual separation (PA9).⁴¹

The Sophist, finally, also shows us how Plato could respond to the other two obstacles (i, ii) raised earlier against the possibility of qualifying premise B. First, (i) although up through the Parmenides it is true that immanent characters are only possessed by subjects in virtue of their participation in a Form, Plato does not give this principle up by allowing Forms to possess immanent characters of the form 'known (by x)'. A major accomplishment of the Sophist is its introduction of the concept of Forms combining with one another, that is, participating in one another. Thus, the Sophist contains

the conceptual sophistication to account for some Form coming to possess a character of the Form 'known (by x)' in it; namely, Plato may claim that if some Form ϕ is known by x, and so possesses known (by x) in it (where 'x' names a particular knower of ϕ), then ϕ participates in the Form the Known (the Form correlative to the Form Knowledge-itself).

Second, (ii) though for some sensible particular to possess an immanent character F is for that particular to be said to imperfectly resemble a Form ϕ , it needn't follow that Forms are no longer perfect in any important sense by possessing immanent characters. To serve their primary role as the objects of knowledge, Forms only need to be perfectly - that is, unqualified and unchangingly - what they are in respect of their formal and proper attributes. Whether or not Forms possess one or more immanent characters of the form 'known (by x)' does not affect their perfection in that requisite sense.

The reading of Sophist 248a-249d I have offered and the relation of it to Parmenides 133a-135a I have claimed, are both eminently plausible. Additionally compelling is the consideration that my thesis supports the reconstruction of the 'worst difficulty' as a valid argument, thus allowing it to live up to its description in the text. Finally, this view contributes to the portrait of a Plato who developed a sophisticated theory of relations, who then had the honesty and insight to see and record the 'worst difficulty' that theory had for the hard-won theory of Forms, and who then tenaciously worked out a viable and integrated solution to that difficulty. It should come as no surprise to us - and is the overriding virtue of this thesis - that the "man of wide experience and natural ability" of the Parmenides should turn out to be Plato himself.⁴²

NOTES

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1. Mark McPherran, "Plato's Parmenides Theory of Relations," in Pelletier and King-Farlow (ed.), New Essays on Plato, Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Volume IX (1983): 149-164.

2. My interpretation only explicitly dealt with the first half of the argument found in the text. The second half attempts to establish that just as men cannot know Forms, the gods cannot be knowers or masters of particulars, but only Forms.

3. F. M. Cornford, for instance, found the argument "almost grossly fallacious," Plato and Parmenides (London, 1939), p. 98. More recently two commentators have argued for interpretations of the argument under which it would be formally invalid: James Forrester, "Arguments and (sic) Able Man Colud (sic) Refute: Parmenides 133b-134e," Phronesis 3 (1974): 233-237; and Frank Lewis, "Parmenides on Separation and the Knowability of the Forms: Plato Parmenides 133a ff.," Philosophical Studies 2 (1979): 1-27. I reply to Cornford in section II. For replies to Forrester and Lewis, see my paper on the Parmenides, op. cit., p. 154, n. 10, and p. 161, n. 18.

Sandra Peterson, "The Greatest Difficulty for Plato's Theory of Forms: the Unknowability Argument of Parmenides 133c-134c," Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 63 (1981): 1-16, has produced a reconstruction of the 'worst difficulty' according to which, she claims, "the inferential moves in the argument are reasonable" (p. 16). As I will later note, the driving principle of her reconstruction is similar to mine (though both our reconstructions were arrived at independently). Ian Mueller, "Parmenides 133a-134e: Some Suggestions," Ancient Philosophy 3 (1983): 3-7, seems to endorse Peterson's reconstruction. For reasons too involved to go into here, I do not find the inferential moves of her reconstruction as reasonable as they could be (for instance, I find that she neglects the role of my principle B below which underlies her premise 4A. (p. 7)).

4. Of the following principles, PH1 through PH5 are the principles Castañeda has attributed to the Phaedo (see [1] "Plato's Phaedo Theory of Relations," Journal of Philosophical Logic I, 304, (1972): 467-480; [2] "Plato's Relations, Not Essences or Accidents, at Phaedo 102b-d2," Canadian Journal of Philosophy 1 (1978): 39-53; and [3] "Leibniz and Plato's Phaedo Theory of Relations and Predication," in Leibniz Critical and Interpretive Essays, Michael Hooker (ed.), (Minneapolis, 1982)): 124-159. Principles PA6 to PA9 are from my Parmenides paper, op. cit., pp. 153-157. Cf. Mohan Matthen, "Plato's Treatment of Relational Statements in the Phaedo," Phronesis 1 (1982): 90-100; and McPherran, "Matthen on Castañeda and Plato's Treatment of Relational Statements in the Phaedo," Phronesis 3 (1983): 298-306.

5. PH1 is derived from Parm.133a9, 133c2-5, and 134b3-4. This, together with PH2, represents the tenet of radical separation (χωρίς) between Forms on the one hand, and immanent characters and particular subjects on the other, which is generally recognized as a major principle of the argument. On this principle (as the text indicates) what particular subjects possess by participation in Forms are 'likenesses' (ὁμοιώματα; 133c9-d2) of the Forms and never the Forms themselves (cf. Parm.130b). This is so, because the Forms are 'by themselves' (καθ'αυτό). Such immanent characters are the individual manifestations of the Forms we find 'in' subjects; e.g., the blue of my coat or the tallness in Simmias; see Ph.102a-103a.

6. In the following, all I am concerned with are dyadic relations.

7. This principle is derived from Parm.133c8-9, and roughly corresponds to Peterson's premise IV P., op. cit., p. 7. Cf. Parm.133e3-134a, 134d4-7.

8. This principle is derived from Parm.133e4-134a1. It should make it clear that participation is not a multiple-pronged fact (and is thus not subject to PA9 following). This is so because participation is not a relation of particulars to Forms mediated by an immanent character chain. On my account, the participation of some subject x in Form ϕ amounts to x's possession of the F-in-x, which bears a relation of resemblance to ϕ . This, then, is not a dyadic fact covered by PA9, because neither relata are particulars, nor can they possess immanent characters. When the F-in-x bears the relation of resemblance to ϕ , it does so without its possessing another character of its own to constitute that relation (otherwise, there would be a 'downward' 'third-man' type of argument generated).

9. This principle is derived from Parm.133e4-134a1, and corresponds to Peterson's premise IV A., op. cit., p. 7, that "if x is what it is pros y, then y is in or alongside us," (and so y cannot be a Form). Cf. Mueller, op. cit., p. 4 for his corresponding principle P (ii).

10. This seems true by definition, since Plato's usual formula for them is '(property term) ἐν ἡμῖν' and also in virtue of the notion of the separation (PH1) of Forms from particulars in the early theory of Forms. Further considerations in favor of a Platonic commitment to B follow in the main text.

11. This principle is an interpretation of Parm.133d1-e2. Together with PA8 it corresponds by application to the case of knowledge with Peterson's premise 4A (p. 7).

12. Both Peterson (p. 16) and Mueller (p. 5) will locate one defect in the 'worst difficulty' here in PA9. Peterson's claim I discuss below in n.40. Mueller's objection to my law of factual separation will be that it

looks to be an overhasty generalization from the relations of mastery and slavery Since the point about mastery does not generalize to every relation, there is no reason to think it generalizes to knowledge (p. 5).

But in reply, I maintain that PA9 is not arrived at inductively (mastery and slavery serve as explanatory examples), but rather, derives from a general theory of relations (A). Furthermore, it will be seen that although "the point about mastery does not generalize to every relation (e.g., "Philokleon does bear the relation of difference . . . to Difference itself and every other Form" (p. 5)), " it would at least seem to generalize to knowledge. Being a knower, like being a master, involves the possession of an asymmetrical relational character which tells you what its possessor is; whereas 'difference' is true of any particular, and any particular may be plausibly thought to be different from a Form not in virtue of possessing a symmetrical character 'difference', but by possessing characters which themselves are intrinsically different from Forms (cf. n.8): Not every many-place predicate denotes a genuine relation, just as not every one-place predicate denotes a genuine property. Restricting PA9 so as to cover mastery but exclude knowledge requires some sort of argument, given PA9's common-sense generality and the many similarities between being a master and being a knower.

13. I am assuming that Plato intends no distinction between things 'in us' (ἐν ἡμῖν; 133c5) and things 'alongside us' (παρὸ ἡμῖν; 133c9-d1 ff.). As Peterson argues

133c8-d5, "things alongside us . . . having which," tells us that some of the things alongside us are the same as what is had by us, i.e., in us. At 134a10 Plato speaks of "Knowledge alongside us," yet knowledge is naturally said to be possessed by us or in us.

14. According to the text, the object of geometrical knowledge should be 'truth about figure' or 'what is a figure'. But since any figure is not what it is (a figure) pros a particular knower's having geometrical knowledge of figure (in violation of PA8), I supply 'known' to the text; 'known truth about figure' and 'what is a known figure' are what they are pros a particular knower's knowledge of them.

15. Thus, in Plato's terms what we call 'knowledge' is at best only opinion.

16. "Plato's Parmenides Theory of Relations," pp. 159-160.

17. What would remain would be a bipartite theory of Forms and particulars, where it is particular subjects, rather than immanent characters, which resemble Forms.

18. The ancient interpretive tradition, including Aristotle, regarded the Timaeus as a source of mature Platonic thought. Additionally, every stylometric

study (to my knowledge) has supported the view that the Timaeus was written after the Parmenides; cf. W. D. Ross, Plato's Theory of Ideas (Oxford, 1951): 2-10; L. Brandwood, A Word Index to Plato (Leeds, 1976): xvi-xviii; K. Sayre, Plato's Late Ontology (Princeton, 1983): 256-267.

W. Prior, "Timaeus 48e-52d and the Third Man Argument," in New Essays on Plato, Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Volume IX (1983): 123-147, has recently contended that G.E.L. Owen's argument against regarding the Timaeus as late is flawed, since the ontology of the Timaeus is such that it "makes the Third Man idle," (p. 124) (cf. Owen, "The Place of the Timaeus in Plato's Dialogues," in R. E. Allen (ed.), Studies in Plato's Metaphysics (London, 1965): 313-338).

19. This would also not seem the solution of preference for the reason that a 'worst difficulty' sort of argument can be manufactured to address a bipartite theory of Forms as well, using a modified version of PA9:

(PA9') Sensible particulars may not bear asymmetrical correlative relations (such as mastery) toward either the Form correlative to the Form which is the aitia of its relational property (e.g., Slavery itself), or any other Form.

Since a knower, like a master, is in an asymmetrical relation to some object, by PA9' that object cannot be any Form.

Alternative (1) may also be attacked on the grounds that Plato had philosophical reasons for preferring an ontology including immanent characters to one without. These arguments are the subject of an unpublished paper, "Immanent Characters."

20. The translation here and below is F.M. Cornford's, Plato's Cosmology (London, 1937): 192-3.

21. Parm.133c9-d2; cf. Parm.134c6-8; Ph.74a-75b.

22. See Phaedo 102d5-103a2; Parm.134a9-b4.

23. Prior, op. cit., pp. 127-131, presents an argument for the presence of immanent characters in the ontology of the Timaeus on the basis of Tim.49c7-e7, a passage I have not considered here.

24. Cornford, Plato and Parmenides (London, 1939), p. 99; N. Gulley, Plato's Theory of Knowledge (London, 1961), p. 118; G. Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides," in Allen, op. cit., p. 258.

25. For responses to other objections - including the argument that since PA9 is compatible with the relation of participation it is also compatible with our having knowledge of Forms (William Prior's objection) - see my paper, op. cit., especially note 17.

Peterson's comments, op. cit., p. 14, on her own principle IIIA may be read as a criticism of the generality of my PA9: "Plato cannot use, for a large group of relations, the pattern of argument here" since, for example, it is false that "If Socrates is less stable than justice, Socrates is what he is pros justice." But notice that on my account this is a problem for Plato's own view of relations. He can reply here that 'Socrates' names a possessor of immanent characters, which is not in itself less stable than justice. His account of "Socrates' justice is less stable than justice" will in turn be that such immanent characters are simply resemblances of Forms without need of their possessing further immanent characters to account for the properties which are constitutive of their being immanent characters; i.e. Socrates' justice is nothing other than a resemblance of Justice which can cease to exist (is less stable) (see n.12).

26. At Sophist 248d10-e4 knowledge is at least hypothesized to be relational. Furthermore, the conception of knowledge as an intercourse between the soul and real objects of knowledge is maintained in dialogues plausibly thought to be later than the Parmenides; see, e.g., Tim.51d.

27. Another objection might be that since immanent characters seem to be nothing but the sensible exemplifications of Forms, Forms cannot possess them since that would make them sensible. But clearly some immanent characters are not simply sensible characteristics, e.g. the justice in Socrates' soul is not strictly sensible.

Notice that the second half of the 'worst difficulty' at Parm.134c10-11 contains evidence for the view that Forms are in some sense perfect immanent characters. If this is so, then it may be argued that (prior to the Sophist) just as the immanent characters of this world - qua characters - may not themselves possess immanent characters (see n.8), so perfect immanent characters - qua characters - also do not possess characters.

28. And this is what they are in the middle dialogues. Beginning at Phaedo 78d, for instance, the Forms are contrasted with sensible things by the attribution to them of those properties which make them suitable objects of knowledge: among other things, any Form is going to have to be just by itself (αὐτο καὶ αὐτό; PH1 (Parm.133a9)), eternal (ἀεὶ ὄν; ἀθάνατον), always the same in relation to the same things (ᾧσαύτως ἀεὶ ἔχει κατὰ ταῦτά), and never admitting of any change (ἀλλοίωσις; μεταβολή). This doctrine is also found in the Symposium (210e2-211b5), the Republic (479a1-3, e7-8; 484b4; cf. 380e-381d), the Timaeus (27d6-28a4, 38a3, 52a104), and the Philebus (57e6-59d9, 61e1-3).

29. Compare, for instance, these claims of the Sophist with the characteristics of Forms from the Phaedo noted above (n.28). Both Sayre, op. cit., p. 224, and Cornford, op. cit., (1935), p. 249 - among many others - have observed that the theory of the 'friends of the Forms' is nothing other than the theory of Forms of the middle dialogues.

30. As David Keyt has noted in his excellent paper on this topic, "Plato's Paradox That the Immutable Is Unknowable," The Philosophical Quarterly 74 (1969): 1-14, the premise (3) that to know is to act on something "emerges from the passage [248d10-e4] as a whole, for the proposition that being is changed cannot be validly inferred without it," (p. 2).

W. D. Ross, Plato's Theory of Ideas (Oxford, 1951), pp. 105-111, has argued that Plato's solution to the paradox is the denial of this premise. But his arguments are hardly conclusive, and in any case, it would be hard to make the denial of (3) compatible with Plato's conception of knowledge as an intercourse between souls and objects of knowledge. See n.26 and Keyt's response to Ross' arguments (pp. 3-4).

31. H.F. Cherniss, Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy I (Baltimore, 1944), p. 439, n.376, argued that Plato resolved the paradox by rejecting one of the two principles implicit here (he does not distinguish them) that "if to know is to act on something, then that which is known is acted upon," and "to be acted upon is to be changed," (Keyt, op. cit., p. 2). But as Keyt argues (p. 7), the first principle is an instance of an obvious logical principle, and so Cherniss is best understood to be making the claim that Plato rejects the second principle. Unfortunately, there is not the slightest evidence that Plato chose or would have chosen this option. Moreover, such a solution to the paradox is in prima facie conflict with the principle of Theaetetus 155b1-2 that, "... it is impossible without becoming and the process of becoming for a thing to be later what it was not earlier," (see Keyt, pp. 7-9).

32. This interpretation - where the paradox is taken as an argument whose conclusion is the rejection of the principle that the Forms are completely changeless - has been maintained by J.M.E. Moravcsik, "Being and Meaning in the Sophist," Acta Philosophica Fennica, Fasc. XIV (1962): 37-41; I.M. Crombie, An examination of Plato's Doctrines II (London, 1963): 419-421; and G.E.L. Owen, "Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present," The Monist 3 (1966): 336-340.

No one, apparently, has attempted to interpret this paradox in such a way as to argue that its resolution is accomplished by denying (2) that the Forms are known. This, of course, would be compatible with the (implausible) view that Plato took the 'worst difficulty' argument so seriously that he gave up thinking of Forms as objects of knowledge, or gave them up entirely.

33. The 'formal attributes' of Forms are those properties that belong to them qua Forms; e.g., the properties of rest and intelligibility. Their 'proper attributes' are those properties "whose absence from a thing entails that the thing is not an instance of the given Form," (Keyt, op. cit., p. 13); e.g., heat is a proper attribute of the Form Fire (see Keyt, pp. 11-14; Sayre, op. cit., pp. 227-228). There is no argument to be found in Plato which would support the strong thesis that the Forms must be completely changeless in order to serve as objects of knowledge. Cratylus 439c6-440c1, for instance, does not demand this. For a lucid discussion of this point, see Keyt, pp. 9-11.

Of course, later in the Sophist it looks as though the formal attributes of Forms are not had by Forms independently - i.e. without being in relation to something - but by participation in other Forms. Furthermore, bare particulars may be said to be what they are independently of everything else. Nevertheless, Forms remain distinct from particulars and immanent characters by having intrinsic proper attributes (and, additionally, are distinct from immanent characters by being eternal, and are distinct from particulars by being objects of knowledge (among other things)).

34. The evidence that Plato has the conceptual sophistication to recognize and make this distinction can (arguably) be found at Ph.102b-d and 103c-105c. Plato there seems to see the difference between accidental predications (e.g., 'Simmias is taller than Socrates') and those 'true by nature' (e.g., 'Five is an odd number').

35. See nn. 30, 31, 32.

36. Keyt, *ibid.*, pp. 5-9.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

39. An additional reason for supposing that he did adopt this solution is the previously mentioned principle (n.31) of Theaetetus 155b1-2. However, as Keyt convincingly argues (*ibid.*, pp. 8-9), although this principle is entertained by Plato at this point in the dialogue, he does not clearly assert it.

40. Cf. Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 16, "I would ... hope to locate somewhere in the premises the defect Plato saw. IV A, stated [corresponding to my PA9], and III P, supplied, seem weaker than the other premises," (my brackets). I similarly locate the difficulty in a weakness of PA9: that it relies on an unqualified version of B. However, B may be qualified, though on a case-by-case basis; that is, even granting that Forms may come to possess immanent characters, it is still a fact about the particular relation mastery-slavery that no Form may come to possess slave-in-it (so that any person could be a master of Slavery-itself). This fact about mastery-slavery derives from more fundamental principles concerning the nature of Forms and particulars: Forms are not the kind of things that can clean my office or that can be purchased, and I am not the kind of thing that could order them about. So despite its similarity to mastery-slavery, there is nothing about knowledge-known and the nature of Forms (given an emended B) and particulars which would forbid a Form from coming to possess known-in-it (so that it would be known by some person).

41. Another piece of evidence suggesting the connection of the 'worst difficulty' to Sophist 248a-249d is their similar use of the term 'δύναμις'. In the Sophist the Stranger may be taken to argue that both contenders in the 'battle of the giants' accept δύναμις as a mark of being (247d8-e4). The

'friends of the Forms' would be forced to accept it if they acknowledge either that the Forms are acted on in being known (248d-e) or that Forms have the capacity ($\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\mu\iota\nu$: 251e9, 252d2, passim) to combine with each other. Likewise, in the Parmenides Forms (and immanent characters as well) have $\delta\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$, and have it in respect of each other (Parm.133e4-134a1). Cf. Sayre, op. cit., pp. 225-7.

42. Although my reconstruction of Plato's solution is perhaps not the 'long and drawn-out' argument promised by the Parmenides (133b4-c1), it seems subtle enough to warrant that description by Plato prior to its full recognition in the Sophist.