

# Plotinus on Matter's Participation in the Forms<sup>1</sup>

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In my paper dealing with Bréhier's hypothesis of Indian influence on Plotinus, I critically examined J.S. Lee's position that Plotinus' elucidation of the omnipresence of the intelligible being in VI 4–5 (22–23) could serve as a solution to “the paradox of participation” raised in *Parm.* 130e4–131c11. But I left unexplained my own position that Plotinus' possible response to it could be reconstructed from VI 5 (23),8 in which he explicates “matter's participation in the Forms (τὴν τῆς ὕλης τῶν εἰδῶν υετάληψιν)” (8,1–2).<sup>2</sup>

The caption of “matter's participation in the Forms” may sound strange, if not aberrant, to contemporary students of Plato, because in his causal theory of Forms the participant in the Form is always the sensible particular rather than the Space or Receptacle of the *Timaeus* which Plotinus identifies with matter. “If anything else is beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, the sole reason for its being so is that it participates in the Beautiful” (*Phd.* 100c4–6).<sup>3</sup> As Hackforth points out, the Forms in the *Phaedo* serve as the cause of qualities of concrete things, but not things themselves.<sup>4</sup> This point leads to such a view that the reality of sensible particulars does not depend on their participation in the Forms.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the participant particular

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, which was held at the University of Liverpool on June 27, 2004.

2. Atsushi Sumi, “The Omnipresence of Being, the Intellect-Intelligible Identity and the Undescending Part of the Soul: An Essay on the Dispute about Indian Influences on Plotinus,” in *Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy*, ed. Paulos M. Gregorios (Albany: State U of New York Press, 2002) 65–66, note 40. See also Sumi, “The Psyche, the Forms and the Creative One: Toward Reconstruction of Neoplatonic Metaphysics,” in *Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought*, Part One, ed. Ransom B. Harris (Albany: State U of New York Press, 2002) 261, note 48.

3. See also *Symp.* 211b2–5. I regard this passage as Plato's definition of “the minimum requirement for the way of participation” (“Omnipresence of Being,” 48). Alcimus takes the particular as the participant (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 3,13).

4. R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1955) 144.

5. N.R. Murphy, *The Interpretation of Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1951) 141. John Burnet maintains that “participation in an εἶδος, which belongs φύσει to the subjects” and “participation in an εἶδος, which belong to the subject as a matter of fact but not essentially”

in the *Phaedo*, say, Simmias, is conceived as “no more than a container of forms” which is itself “devoid of all attributes,”<sup>6</sup> or “a substrate, a bearer of characters distinct from the characters he bears.”<sup>7</sup> Hence Natorp is justified in maintaining that the Space of the *Timaeus* is already anticipated in the *Phaedo*.<sup>8</sup> Y. Matsunaga, a Japanese systematic interpreter, believes that the participant particular conceived as a sheer substrate leads to the Space of the *Timaeus*,<sup>9</sup> employing even the locution “the Space (logically) prior to its participation in the Form.”<sup>10</sup> The Space’s participation in the Form, though nowhere warranted in Plato’s dialogues, certainly resolves the aforementioned difficulty that the reality of the participant particular is left unexplained in the causal theory of Forms in the *Phaedo*, with the proviso that the substantial Forms and their images must be treated on the same footing as the qualitative Forms and their images.<sup>11</sup>

In early treatises Plotinus *prima facie* faithfully abides by Plato’s basic formula of the causal theory of participation by stating that “some things, bodies for instance, ... are beautiful by participation” (I 6 [1], 1, 12–13).<sup>12</sup> Scrutiny reveals Plotinus’ serious departure from Plato. When he says that “the sensible objects receive their existence for ever by participating in the intelligible entities (τὰ δὲ μετοχῇ τούτων τὸ εἶναι εἰσαεὶ λαβόντα)” (IV 8 [6], 6, 27), the Forms really serve as the causes of concrete things themselves rather than their qualities.<sup>13</sup> While Plotinus’ statement that “the sensible

are marked respectively by the words πεφυκέναι and τυγχάνει ἔχων in *Phd.* 102cff. (*Plato’s Phaedo* [Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1911] 115). This distinction does not entail the one between participation in a substantial or substantial Form and that in a qualitative or adjectival Form, but at best the one between possession of an immanent character of essential attribute and that of an immanent character of accidental attribute. See also David Gallop, *Phaedo*, translated with Note (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 192. But Hackforth considers the distinction between essential and accidental predicates to be irrelevant to the argument in the dialogue (*Plato’s Phaedo*, 155).

6. Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedo*, 154–55.

7. Reginald E. Allen, *Plato’s Parmenides* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1983) 105.

8. Paul Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre: Eine Einführung in den Idealismus* (Leipzig: Dürr, 1903; reprint, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1961) 160–61, 323, 368.

9. Yuji Matsunaga, *Knowing and Not-Knowing: An Introduction to the Study of Plato’s Philosophy* [in Japanese] (Tokyo: U of Tokyo Press, 1993) 59, note 31.

10. Matsunaga, *Knowing and Not-Knowing*, 60, note 33 and 106, note 30.

11. For this proviso, see Sumi, “Psyche,” 260, note 45.

12. See also V 9 (5), 2, 15–16. But the participation terminology is confused in the fifth chapter of this treatise which “gives the impression of having been rather hurriedly written” (Arthur H. Armstrong, *Plotinus, Text with an English Translation*, 7 vols. [Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Press, 1966–1988] 5: 284). In 5, 42 we are told that this All participates in images of Forms rather than separate Forms themselves.

13. See also IV 7 (2), 8<sup>2</sup>, 47–50, where everything corporeal is said to be preserved by participation in real being, insofar as the former participate in the latter.

objects are what they are called by participation” is faithful to *Phd.* 102b1–2, the following clause that “the underlying nature receives its shape from elsewhere” certainly implies the role of matter, rather than the particular, as the participant in the Forms (V 9 [5], 5,36–38), because it is redundant to say that the hylo-morphic compound receives its shape. In order to avoid the difficulty that the Platonic theory of participation is prone to leave the reality of the participant particular ungrounded, Plotinus seems to be naturally led to systematize these fragmentary ideas in the early treatises into a more coherent conception of matter’s participation in the Forms in early-middle treatises like VI 5 (23) and III 6 (26).<sup>14</sup>

We can readily evaluate Plotinus’ theory of matter’s participation in the Forms as an outcome of his systematic reading of Plato’s dialogues which does not take the development of his thought into account. The causal theory of participation in the Forms in the middle dialogues cannot do away with “this thing (x)” as its subject: “This thing (x) is beautiful (F) because it participates in the Beautiful itself (Φ).”<sup>15</sup> But the participation terminology disappears from passages dealing with the Forms in the late dialogues.<sup>16</sup> In

14. In one of the late-middle treatises, Plotinus *prima facie* moves back to Plato’s formulation of participation, by saying that “the particular human is human by participation in Humanity” (VI 3 [44], 9,29–30). But he here does not develop his own theory of participation but argues against the Aristotelian distinction between the primary and the secondary substances. With an objection to *Met.* 1071a20–21, “the particular human’s participation in Humanity” simply expresses the primacy of the universal over the particular. Since the particular human is defined as form in matter (9,32–33), namely an immanent character, Plotinus, who has already entertained matter’s participation in the Forms, seems to be aware of his *ad hoc* divergence from the standard usage of “participation.” For the view that the issue here is not the irreducibility of instance and universal but their relative priority, see Lloyd P. Gerson, “Plotinus against Aristotle’s Essentialism,” in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus’ Enneads*, ed. Michael F. Wagner (Albany: State U of New York Press, 2002) 221. An objection to the theory of Forms which is similar to *Met.* 1071a20–21 is seen also in Stilpo of Megara (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 2,118). For the participation terminology as not properly used of the relation between the immanent character and the separate Form, see Norio Fujisawa, “*Echein, Metechein*, and Idioms of ‘Paradigmatism’ in Plato’s Theory of Forms,” *Phronesis* 19 (1974): 51. Diogenes Laertius rightly follows this terminology in distinguishing that which can be partaken of from that which can be possessed and stating that the Good itself cannot be possessed but partaken of (*Vitae Philosophorum* 3,105).

15. By the symbols, Φ, F, and X, I respectively refer to the separate Form, the immanent character, and the individual thing which *participates in* the Form and *has* the character, following the example of Vlastos. See Gregory Vlastos, “Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*,” in *Plato*, ed. Gregory Vlastos, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1970) 1:132–136. The symbol “F” will be used indiscriminately for both the character and the corresponding predicate.

16. For the list of the supporters of this view, see Sumi, “Psyche,” 259, note 45. For my position that *Tim.* 51a7–b1 μεταλαμβάνον δὲ ... τοῦ νοητοῦ does not pertain to “participation in the Form,” see Sumi, “Psyche,” 260, note 48. According to Fujisawa, the disappearance of the participation terminology is due to the indispensability or even apparent priority of “this

the late dialogues the logic of “paradigmatism” recommends us to describe phenomena in terms of  $\Phi$  and  $F$ , without referring to  $x$ : “In this part of the Receptacle the Form of the Beautiful ( $\Phi$ ) is imaged ( $F$ ),” or “An image ( $F$ ) of the Form of the Beautiful ( $\Phi$ ) has now come into this part of the Receptacle.” Therefore the ultimate and fundamental distinction in Plato’s theory of Forms is the one between the immanent character and the separate Form.<sup>17</sup> As we shall see, the participation terminology cohabits with the idioms of paradigmaticism in VI 5 (23),<sup>8</sup> and III 6 (26), 11–12 where Plotinus elucidates matter’s participation in the Forms. In these chapters, however, the logic of paradigmaticism has primacy over the participation terminology insofar as the relevant universe of discourse includes the separate Forms ( $\Phi$ ’s) and their images ( $F$ ’s) and excludes the particular things ( $x$ ’s) as the participants in the Forms.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the difficulty about matter’s participation in the Forms is called “well-known ( $\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\omicron$ )” (III 6 [26], 11, 5–6) would indicate the osmosis, among Plotinus’ contemporaries, of the idea that the participant in the Form was unquestionably matter rather than the sensible particular.

Aristotle identifies Plato’s Receptacle with matter and applies the term “participant ( $\tau\acute{o}$  μεταληπτικόν,  $\tau\acute{o}$  μεθεκτικόν)” to it in *Phys.* 209b11–13 and 35.<sup>19</sup> According to Fujisawa, this application shows that Aristotle is led, by his basic metaphysics, to reintroduce into Plato’s conception of the Receptacle “this some-thing” as the subject-substrate, and so the statement, “The Receptacle participates in the Form,” is an unwarranted, non-Platonic locution.<sup>20</sup> Is this critical remark applicable to Plotinus’ theory of matter’s participation in the Forms? Does Plotinus introduce the Aristotelian self-subsisting entity into his conception of matter?

some-thing ( $x$ )” as the subject in that terminology. This indispensability not only leaves the reality of the participant particular ungrounded but causes the assimilation, of the proposition “The Form of the Beautiful ( $\Pi$ ) is beautiful” with the proposition “This particular thing ( $x$ ) is beautiful ( $F$ ),” which involves the theory of Forms in the difficulty of the Third Man Argument, and the erroneous synonymy of the locution “ $x$  participates in  $\Phi$ ” with the locution “ $x$  has  $F$ ” (“*Echein, Metechein, and Paradeigmatism*,” 51). Some interpreters believe that the thing’s participation in the Form is still viable in the *Timaeus*. See Allen, *Plato’s Parmenides*, 239; Kenneth M. Sayre, *Plato’s Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved* (Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1983) 238–55. In his note on *Tim.* 52a5, A.E. Taylor inadvertently refers to “participation of the  $\gamma\iota\gamma\nu\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$  in the Forms” (*A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928] 342; see also Allen, *Plato’s Parmenides*, 112, 169).

17. Fujisawa, “*Echein, Metechein, and Paradeigmatism*,” 53.

18. For more details about the logic of paradigmaticism, see Sumi, “Psyche,” 231–32.

19. G.S. Claghorn regards this paraphrase as fair (*Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato’s Timaeus* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954] 6). The identification of the Receptacle with matter is also seen in Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 3,69 and 3,76.

20. Fujisawa, “*Echein, Metechein, and Paradeigmatism*,” 55–56.

Hence this paper has two aims. The first is to reconstruct Plotinus' possible reply to the paradox of participation in terms of his conception of matter's participation in the Forms in VI 5 (23),8. The second is to defend this conception from the possible charge that it may be unwarranted and non-Platonic.

### 1. *The Paradox of Participation in Parmenides 130e4–131c11*

Let us survey the paradox of participation in the *Parmenides* and examine a few attempts to reconstruct Plotinus' possible reply to it before presenting my own.<sup>21</sup>

In the *Parmenides*, the difficulty concerning the notion of participation takes the form of a dilemma; either the Form as a whole is in each of many sensible particulars that partake of it, in which case the Form will be separate from itself (131a4–b2), or only a part of the Form is in each of the participant particulars, in which case the Form will be divisible (131c5–11). The second horn of the dilemma is apparently invalid for Plato's own theory of Forms since it entails the Form's divisibility. The first horn is not valid because it violates Plato's own formula of participation laid down at 130b2–4. In this formula participation (μετέχειν) is applied to the relation between the sensible particular and the Form, while possession (ἔχειν) is applied to the relation between the particular and the immanent character. Once it is seen that εἶναι ἐν is a cognate of ἔχειν in Plato's theory of Forms, it turns out that Parmenides in the first horn misinterprets participation in terms of immanence or possession. This misinterpretation causes the confusion between the separate Form and its immanent character. This confusion further entails the Form's being separate from itself, insofar as it has been established at 130b4 that the Form itself is separate from its immanent character.<sup>22</sup> The metaphor of the day proposed by Socrates (131b3–6) is not free from the misconstruction in the first horn, so that it does not suggest any possibility of avoiding the dilemma.

### 2. *Critical Examination of Three Attempts to Reconstruct Plotinus' Reply*

A few scholars—Lee, Fielder, and D'Ancona-Costa—try to reconstruct Plotinus' response to the paradox of participation. We shall move to exami-

21. The following delineation of the issue is based on Sumi, "Omnipresence of Being," 49–51.

22. Francis M. Cornford maintains that the immanent characters are distinguished from the separate Forms in the *Phaedo* (*Plato's Theory of Knowledge* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1935] 284). Henry Teloh, also, points out a clear distinction between immanence and transcendence in his discussion about the Form's transcendence in the *Symposium* (*The Development of Plato's Metaphysics* [University Park, London: The Pennsylvania State U Press, 1981] 97).

nation of their endeavors. As for Lee's discussion<sup>23</sup> which I treated fully in my article included in *Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy*, a summary of its related part suffices for our purpose.<sup>24</sup>

Lee maintains that Plotinus replies to the paradox of participation by following the metaphor of the day. Plotinus accepts the first horn of the dilemma with the refusal of its consequence that the Form will be separate from itself. In VI 5 (23),3,1–21 which Lee regards as the key text, Plotinus gives a detailed account of the intelligible world. Since the intelligible world must remain an integral whole, participation requires the omnipresence of being. Therefore the paradox of participation turns out to stem from Parmenides' failure to understand the nature of true being. According to Lee, Plotinus is here acting on the principle that "the best defense is attack," instead of working on an argued response to the problem.

Lee's approach is not convincing enough on four points. First, he is not aware that the first horn of the dilemma, as well as the second one, is not valid for Plato's own theory of Forms and therefore that the metaphor of the day does not hint at any possibility of avoiding the dilemma. Second, he confuses omnipresence and immanence. In the key text mentioned above, Plotinus rejects the immanence of real being in sensible things. Third, Lee does not succeed in explaining how Plotinus' elucidation of the intelligible world as a whole is relevant to the problem concerning the individual Form. Finally, he fails to explain how a clarification of the nature of the intelligible being can be an appropriate response to the problem concerning participation which is essentially a causal relation of that being to the sensible particular.

Fielder's approach does not largely differ from Lee's.<sup>25</sup> He observes that Parmenides' argument is based on assumptions proper to material existence. Therefore a possible reply to the paradox of participation needs a non-materialistic conception of participation, which is hinted by the metaphor of the day because it would render the first horn of the dilemma harmless. This conception of participation depends on the non-spatiality of intelligible beings and the omnipresence of being. Fielder particularizes Plotinus' idea, in VI 4 (22),13,14–26, that any participation must be the result of the immanent presence of a higher reality in a lower and reconstructs his reply that the Forms themselves are omnipresent in identity within their sensible copies.

23. Jonathan S. Lee, "Omnipresence, Participation and Eidetic Causation in Plotinus," in *The Structure of Being: A Neoplatonic Approach*, ed. Ransom B. Harris (Albany: State U of New York Press, 1982) 90–103.

24. The following summary is based on Sumi, "Omnipresence of Being," 49–53.

25. The following sketch is based on John Fielder, "Plotinus' Reply to the Argument of Parmenides 130a–131d," *Apeiron* 12 (1978): 1–5.

My critical remarks on Lee's position are almost entirely applicable to Fielder's discussion. The metaphor of the day cannot save the first horn of the dilemma, and the omnipresence of being does not fit the problem of participation in the individual Form. Fielder's confusion between immanence and omnipresence seems to result from his understanding of participation as immanence. Insofar as the sensible particular partakes of the *separate* Form, transcendence must be associated with participation.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned above, it is the confusion between participation and immanence that preys on the first horn.

Finally, D'Ancona-Costa believes that the paradox of participation is a real difficulty, since Parmenides' equation of the metaphor of the day with that of the sail makes Socrates have no choice but to admit the second horn of the dilemma.<sup>27</sup> Contemporary scholarship acknowledges that VI 4-5 (22-23) concerns this difficulty about Forms. Plotinus points out that our difficulties in understanding the omnipresence of intelligible beings result from the conception of true being as having the same nature as the sensible world. By accepting the Aristotelian description of the relation between soul and body, Plotinus establishes the point that true being does not share the localization of bodies and can be present in an extended body without subdivision. He concludes that the indivisible being participated in by some individual "will remain whole itself and whole in visible things" (VI 4 [22], 8, 42-43). With this conclusion, Plotinus is not making a choice between the first horn of the dilemma and the second one.

D'Ancona-Costa does not get to the heart of the paradox of participation. In this paradox the way of participation which may illegitimately cause the Form's self-separation, namely the loss of its ontological status, is questioned. If Plotinus attempted to reply to the paradox of participation in terms of the non-spatial nature of real being, he would be open to criticism for committing a vicious circle. D'Ancona-Costa's remark that both of the horns are "conceived as features shared by the participated Form and the participant individual in one and the same manner"<sup>28</sup> is totally obscure. In exploring Plotinus' solution, she relies on VI 4 (22), 8, 34ff.. But this passage does not unequivocally deal with the individual Form.

Moreover, D'Ancona-Costa claims that the Form is endowed with the double status of transcendence and immanence, namely the Form as "a property of an individual participant" and the Form as "rational paradigm

26. For this separateness, see Sumi, "Omnipresence of Being," 64, note 26.

27. The following sketch is based on Cristina D'Ancona-Costa, "Plotinus and Later Platonic Philosophers on the Causality of the First Principle," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1996) 357-59.

28. D'Ancona-Costa, "Causality of the First Principle," 359.

of all particular instantiation.” According to her, this double status not only explains the omnipresence of intelligible beings but prepares for Plotinus’ answer to the Aristotelian criticism of the uselessness of the separate Forms, by means of their causality.<sup>29</sup> But it is not the Form itself but its image or the immanent character that serves as a property of an individual participant. The double status of transcendence and immanence is nothing more than the confusion between the separate Form and its immanent character. In VI 5 (23),6,11–12 to which D’Ancona-Costa refers for this double status, we cannot find Plotinus’ distinction between the immanent Form as a particular’s property and the transcendent one.

The above examination indicates two guidelines which our reconstruction must follow. First, Plotinus’ possible reply must be reconstructed from a passage or passages dealing with the individual Form in an unequivocal manner. Second, this reply must concern the very way of participation rather than the nature of intelligible beings.

### 3. *Reconstruction of Plotinus’ Possible Reply to the Paradox of Participation in the Parmenides (VI 5 [23],8)*

In the beginning of VI 5 (23),8 Plotinus urges us to consider “matter’s participation in the Forms,” for the purpose of corroborating our confidence in the omnipresence of true being as a whole which has been discussed from the outset of the treatise. He warns us not to compare matter’s participation to the visible illumination in which the Forms are portrayed as spatially separate from matter (8,1–8).<sup>30</sup>

Plotinus declares that the accessibility of his theory of matter’s participation (τὸ τῆς μεταλήψεως λεψόμενον) would be superlative in virtue of the examples (8,8–10).<sup>31</sup> He speaks of illumination as one of those examples; but he associates only the metaphysical separateness between the Forms as the archetypes and the things in matter as their images with the sense of

29. D’Ancona-Costa, “Causality of the First Principle,” 359–60.

30. Henry and Schwyzer recognize the reference to *Parm.* 130b2 in 8,4–5 (*Plotini Opera*, ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer, 3 vols. [Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1964–1982] 3:143). In *Parm.* 130b2–3 Plato poses the separateness between the Forms (Φ’s) and the sensible particulars partaking of them (x’s) (see also Sumi, “Omnipresence of Being,” 50). In 8,4–5, however, Plotinus denies the *spatial* separateness between the Forms and matter. In 8,12–15 he mentions the *metaphysical* separateness between the Forms as the archetypes (Φ’s) and the things in matter as their images (F’s). This separateness is not equivalent to the aforementioned separateness in *Parm.* 130bb2–3, but to another kind of separateness between the Form and its immanent character in 130b3–4 (see Sumi, “Omnipresence of Being,” 64, note 26).

31. D’Ancona-Costa claims that in 8,1–10 Plotinus “states explicitly that the idea of the omnipresence of being rules out the main difficulties of the doctrine of participation in the Ideas (“Causality of the First Principle,” 381, note 10). But it is the accessibility of matter’s participation in the Forms that he here explicitly states.



illumination and dissociates the spatial separateness from it.<sup>32</sup> The more accurate explanation of matter's participation in the Forms is that the Form remains in itself<sup>33</sup> and matter receives all that it can receive from the Form, by its approach to the Form, with nothing between (8,10–12).<sup>34</sup> The Form of Fire neither is in matter (μη ἐν τῇ ὕλῃ ἐστίν) nor comes to be in matter (τῇ ὕλῃ οὐκ ἐγγενομένον), but provides the character (μορφήν) of fire to the matter made fiery. Spatiality first comes to pertain to the immanent character in matter (8,22–28). The theory of matter's participation is restated such that one Fire as the Form gives an image of itself to matter not as being spatially separate like in the visible illumination (8,28–30).

Before moving to 8,30–42, the passage crucial to our reconstruction of Plotinus' possible reply, we may summarize the basic scheme of his theory. First, the sensible particular as the participant in the Form is absent from the present universe of discourse; there is no Plotinian counterpart to Simmias in the *Phaedo*. Second, the logic of paradigmaticism, fully compatible with matter's participation in the Forms, dominates the entire passage. The distinction between the Form as an archetype (Φ) and the immanent character as its image (F) is essential to the present scheme of metaphysics; it is impossible to speak of the distinction between the particular (x) and the Form (Φ) because of the absence of the former. Third, the immutability of the Form marked by its remaining in itself is carefully defended by the denial of its immanence (εἶναι ἐν, ἐγγίγνεσθαι) in matter partaking of it.<sup>35</sup> Implying that transcendence, rather than immanence, must be associated with participation, this point is crucial to our strategy for reconstruction of Plotinus' reply.<sup>36</sup> Finally, spatiality pertains only to the images of the Forms,

32. For this metaphysical separateness, see note 30.

33. D'Ancona-Costa maintains that in Plotinus the Platonic verb μένειν conveys a double set of meanings, immutability and freedom from the failures to be efficient causes of sensibles, and that Plotinus stresses the first sense of the verb in 8,20–22 as well as in other passages dealing with the omnipresence of intelligible being in general ("Causality of the First Principle," 360).

34. For the absence of the intermediary from the causal relation between the noetic world and matter, see V 8 (31), 7,12–16. J.S. Lee holds that the theory of reception according to the recipient's capacity "seems to attribute to matter a role in the causation of the sensible world," and "appears to be in blatant contradiction to the thesis of the impassibility of matter" treated in III 6 (26), 6–19 ("Omnipresence," 101). But, as we shall see later, Plotinus explicitly attributes the causal role to matter in III 6 (26), 14 where he defends the very unaffectedness of matter.

35. For the necessity of defending the Form's immutability as the fundamental thesis in the theory of Forms, see Sumi, "Omnipresence of Being," 48. Being a cognate of εἶναι and εἶναι ἐν, the verb ἐγγίγνεσθαι expresses immanence of the image of the Form (Fujisawa, "Echein, Metechein, and Paradeigmatism," 40; William D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951] 228).

36. For my criticism of the view that the participation terminology describes the Form's immanence, see Sumi, "Omnipresence of Being," 63–64, note 25. For Plato's own rejection of the Form's immanence and the historical evidence that its immanence was discussed at the

while the Form, as we shall see later at 8,32, is non-spatial.<sup>37</sup> Hence the spatial separateness between the Form and its image does not make sense at all, but only their metaphysical separateness does. From these points is seen the superlative accessibility of Plotinus' theory. Our key passage ensues:

For all of this fire in the sensible world would already exist somewhere,<sup>38</sup> if all of the fire is many in the sphere of itself,<sup>39</sup> while its Form remains in the placeless, it generates places out of itself ... (a lacuna) ... since in fact it was necessary for the same (Form), having become many, to escape from itself (ἔδει τὸ αὐτὸ πολὺ γενόμενον φυγεῖν ἄθ' ἑαυτοῦ) in order that it might be many in this way and participate often in the same (Form). (8,30–35, trans. A.H. Armstrong, adapted)

The unity and non-spatiality of the Form is sharply contrasted with the plurality and spatiality of its images, just as at the paradox of participation in the *Parmenides*. Although the second half is not well connected to the first because of a lacuna at 8,33,<sup>40</sup> it can be easily understood that the second half is the consequence of the rejection of the aforementioned scheme of matter's participation in the Forms. The alleged escape of the Form from itself (8,33–34) is the striking reminiscence of the Form's separation from itself (καὶ οὕτως αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ χωρὶς ἄν εἴη) in *Parm.* 131b2, the consequence of the first horn of the dilemma. I cannot help but wonder why so many scholars have been unaware of this parallel. The sense of this escape is defined by the Form's non-spatiality such that it is not spatial but metaphysical, meaning the Form's losing its own ontological status.

From the key passage above and the basic scheme of Plotinus' theory, we can reconstruct his possible reply to the first horn of the dilemma in the paradox of participation, as follows. The absurdity of the Form's being separate from itself can be evaded,<sup>41</sup> if the confusion between the Form and its image

Academy, see Francis M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937) 86–87.

37. The idea that the dimensions are determined along with the form is entertained in II 4 (12), 8,24–30. Teloh maintains that *Symp.* 211a8 where the Form is said to be not within the heaven provides a textual warrant for its non-spatiality (*The Development*, 98). On the other hand, Anders Wedberg claims that the Form's non-spatiality is suggested in *Phdr.* 247c1–4 where they are said to be located “in the region above the heaven” (“Theory of Ideas,” in *Plato*, 1: 48).

38. I read πᾶν τοῦτο τὸ πῦρ as the subject, τὸ ἐν αἰσθήσει as its appositive, and εἴη as existential. In terms of the contrast between the Form's non-spatiality (ἐν ἄτοπῳ, 8,32) and its image's spatiality (αὐτὸ τόπους γεννήσαν ἐξ αὐτοῦ, 8,32–33), it is sufficiently informative to say that the latter “exists somewhere.”

39. I read ἑαυτοῦ as designating the sphere of the noun in question.

40. Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera*, 3: 145.

41. For Plato's rejection of the Form's self-separation, see *Tim.* 52a3 οὔτε αὐτὸ εἰς ἄλλο πιο ἰόν. R.D. Archer-Hind not only regards this passage as “a perfectly unmistakable assertion of the solely transcendent existence of ideas,” but cross-refers it to “the difficulties raised against the doctrine of immanent ideas in *Parmenides* 131A” (*The Timaeus of Plato*, edited

is avoided in the way that one, non-spatial Form is clearly distinguished from many, spatial immanent characters as an archetype is demarcated from its images. The confusion between participation and possession or immanence, which causes the confusion between the Form and its image, is evaded by the consistency between matter's participation in the Form and the denial of "being-in-matter" and "coming-to-be-in-matter" to the Form. But the first horn of the dilemma commits this confusion and therefore is invalid for Plato's theory of Forms.<sup>42</sup>

The advantage of matter's participation in the Forms becomes intelligible when it is compared with the thing's participation in the Forms. Insofar as that which is in matter as the participant is not the Form itself but its image, there is no room for the confusion between participation and possession or immanence. On the other hand, when the participant is not matter but the particular, this confusion is liable to occur.

The ensuing passage is relevant to the second horn of the dilemma:

And the Form, not being scattered (ἀσκέδαστος),<sup>43</sup> gave nothing of itself to matter, but was certainly not incapable, being one thing, of forming what is not one by its one and being present to all of it in the way that it is not this piece of it which forms one part and that other another, but it forms each part with the whole of it and as a whole. (8,35–39, trans. A.H. Armstrong, adapted)

It is easily seen that the Form's non-spatiality invalidates the metaphor of the sail (*Parm.* 131c2–3) and its indivisibility the second horn of the dilemma with regard to its erroneous divisibility.<sup>44</sup> With regard to the inter-

with Introduction and Notes [New York: Macmillan, 1888; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1973] 182). This remark is consonant with our interpretation that the alleged self-separation of the Form in *Parm.* 131b1–2 is the consequence of its being confused with the immanent character and thereby losing its own ontological status. Cornford cross-refers *Tim.* 52a3 to *Symp.* 211a8–b2 where Plato denies the Form's immanence (*Plato's Cosmology* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937] 194). Plotinus paraphrases the former passage in VI 5 (23), 2,15 οὐδ' ἐξίον ποθεν οὐδ' αὖ εἰσιόν εἰς ὅτιόν.

42. The subject of μεταλάβη at 8,34 is the Form which has been confusedly identified with and pluralized to its images. The alleged participation of the immanent character in the Form in this absurdity, of course, cannot be attributed to Plotinus' own position.

43. For Intellect and Being as not scattered, see VI 6 (34), 9,40; VI 9 (9), 5,27.

44. Associating spatiality with the notion of participation, Allen claims that "analysis of participation in terms of wholes and parts provides a foundation for a locative reading of the Dilemma of Participation" (*Plato's Parmenides*, 124). He explains this "locative reading": "If Simmias is located in place, and Largeness in whole or in part is part of Simmias, there is added reason to suppose that Largeness is located in place or space. For Largeness either is or has parts that are part of a located whole" (*Plato's Parmenides*, 124). This construction seems unfortunate because in the paradox of participation Plato does not say that the locution that either the whole Form or its part is present in the participant thing is equivalent to the locution that either the whole Form or its part present in that thing is a part of that thing. The analysis

pretation of participation in terms of immanence, the reconstructed reply invalidates the second horn. Henry and Schwyzer recognize the references to *Parm.* 131a8–9 and 131a4–5 respectively in 8,35–36 and 8,38–39.<sup>45</sup> The former text corresponds to the protasis of the first horn of the dilemma, that the Form as a whole is in each of its many participants, and the latter to the disjunction of whether each participant thing partakes of the Form as a whole or a part of it. Unfortunately, these references are far less obvious than the Form's self-separation in 131b2 of which the Form's self-escape in 8,33–34 reminds us.

Plotinus continues:

For it would be absurd to introduce many Forms of Fire in order that each individual fire might be formed by a different one; for in this way the Forms will be infinite in number. (8,39–42, trans. A.H. Armstrong, adapted)

Henry and Schwyzer again point out the reference to *Parm.* 132b2 where the so-called “Third Man Argument” involving an infinite regress is concluded, in 8,41–42.<sup>46</sup> But the present case and the Third Man Argument widely differ. The former naively introduces an unlimited number of paradigmatic Forms corresponding to seemingly infinite characters one by one. The latter involves the infinite regress caused by the endless introduction of a novel Form seen conceptually over the totality conflated of the Form and its participants. And again, the present case is also distinct from another infinite regress based on the misconception about the similarity between the Form and its participant in *Parm.* 132e4–133a3. Therefore Plotinus' possible reply to the Third Man Argument cannot be reconstructed from the present passage. There is no room for these infinite regresses in the scheme of his clear distinction between the archetypal Form and its images.<sup>47</sup>

of participation is not related to the whole-part structure of the participant thing. The locative reading of the dilemma presupposes the presence of the Form in a spatially located participant. Therefore the foundation for the locative reading seems to involve an idiomatic confusion between participation and immanence.

45. Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera*, 3: 145.

46. Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera*, 3: 145. Some Third Man Arguments involve no infinite regress (Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, 88–89).

47. Armstrong comments on the present passage: “Plotinus ... maintains firmly that the number of the Idea was finite” (*Plotinus*, 6:344, note 1). It is the infinity of the individual essences of the Forms that Plotinus rejects. But this rejection does not apply to the present passage in which he discusses the absurdity of introducing infinite Forms of the *same* individual essence, namely Fire.

The uniqueness or singularity of the Form stated in *Rep.* 596a6–7 is formulated by Wedberg as follows: “There are no two distinct Ideas such that a thing is Y if and only if it participates in the one, as well as if and only if it participates in the other” (“Theory of Ideas,” 1: 33). Wedberg envisages that when the mutual implication between being Y and participating in the Form of

The above is not Plotinus' own answer to the paradox of participation, but my reconstruction of his possible reply. My reconstruction has the two advantages of being based on the passage dealing with the very notion of participation in individual Forms rather than the intelligible world as a whole, and of finding a key in the striking synonymy between the Form's self-escape in 8,33–34 and its self-separation in *Parm.* 131b2. Although its weakness, if any, is its being based on the passage with a lacuna, it hardly hinders my reconstruction. Someone may not accept the terseness of the reconstructed reply. But its brevity is a sign that Plotinus might regard the paradox of participation as invalid. If the paradox were a sound attack against the theory of Forms, Plotinus would develop a long, elaborate argument. In fact, as Cornford notes, Plato himself does not consider the paradox of participation to damage the theory seriously.<sup>48</sup> The opening question in VI 4 (22) is based on *Tim.* 35a1–6 (1,23), and the greater part of VI 4–5 (22–23) is devoted to the analysis of intelligible realities as a whole, in which "Plotinus does not make ... much of the distinction between the divine hypostases, Soul, Intellect and the One or Good."<sup>49</sup> Hence it must be methodologically difficult to reconstruct Plotinus' possible reply from the entire treatises. We must not be misled by the title of VI 4–5 (22–23), "On the Simultaneous Omnipresence of Being, One and the Same, as a Whole." Therefore we need to reconsider contemporary scholarship which acknowledges that the entire treatises are designed as the answer to the paradox of participation.

Y-ness in this formulation is necessary, it "does not exclude the possibility of two distinct Ideas which, by a factual coincidence, have exactly the same participants" ("Theory of Ideas," 1: 34). Nothing prevents this "possibility of two distinct Ideas" from amounting to that of infinite distinct Forms of the same individual essence. But the present case is distinct from this consequence of the mutual implication in that it naively correlates a new archetypal Form to its newly emergent image one after another. Henry J. Blumenthal refers to the present passage as Plotinus' argument against "the existence of individual Ideas of fire" (*Plotinus' Psychology: His Doctrines of the Embodied Soul* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971] 122). It is true that the paradigmatic Form which corresponds to one individual fire alone is "individual" rather than universal, because it is not the one standing over the many. But the Forms of Fire in question are supposed to be of the same individual essence. It is therefore questioned whether or not they deserve to be called "individual Ideas of fire" which must be of mutually different essences. In other words, the relevance of the present passage to the issue of the Forms of individuals is challenged.

48. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, 95.

49. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, 6: 270. See also Henry J. Blumenthal, "Nous and Soul in Plotinus: Some Problems of Demarcation," in *Plotino e il Neoplatonismo in Oriente e in Occidente* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974) 211–12; Armstrong, "Eternity, Life and Movement in Plotinus' Accounts of Nous," in *Le Néoplatonisme*, ed. Pierre Hadot (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971) 69. This obscurity in the distinction would force Leo Sweeney to regard the subject in VI 5 (23) 12, 1ff. as Soul in "Are *Apeiria* and *Aoristia* Synonyms" (*Modern Schoolman* 33 [1956]: 275, note 1), but as Intellect in "Infinity in Plotinus" (*Gregorianum* 38 [1957]: 727, note 115).

We cannot dismiss the possible charge that Plotinus' theory of matter's participation in the Forms may be unwarranted and non-Platonic, by merely showing that his reply reconstructed in light of that theory indicates the invalidity of the paradox of participation in Plato's theory of Forms. In the first place, this charge is made from the standpoint of the view that the distinction between the immanent character and the separate Form is ultimate and fundamental in Plato's late dialogues where the logic of paradigmatism is dominant.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, the further inquiry into the linkage between matter's participation in the Forms and the logic of paradigmatism forces us to move to another key text, III 6 (26), 11–12.

#### 4. *Ingenuity of Matter's Unaffectedness (III 6 [26], 11–12)*

The theory of matter's participation in the Forms recurs in III 6 (26), written slightly after VI 5 (23); Plotinus devotes two-thirds of this treatise to the argument for matter's unaffectedness (ἀπαθεία). In the beginning of the eleventh chapter he addresses the exegesis of *Tim.* 50c4–5 and clarifies the genuine issue in his theory:

This I think was Plato's opinion, which led him to say, correctly, "The things that enter and leave it are copies of the real things"; he spoke of entering and leaving with deliberate purpose, wishing us to understand and apply our minds to the manner of the participation; and it seems that the well-known difficulty about how matter participates in Forms is not what most of our predecessors thought it was, how the Forms come into (ἔρχεται εἰς) matter, but rather how they are in (ἔστίιν ἐν) matter. For it really does appear remarkable how, when these forms are present to it, matter remains the same and is unaffected by them, and still more so since the very forms which enter it are affected by each other. (11, 1–11, trans. A.H. Armstrong, adapted)

Paradigmatism is here apparently operative; "the forms present to it" (11, 9) and "the forms which enter matter" (11, 10–11) are not the separate Forms, but their images or immanent characters.<sup>51</sup> These images are affected by each other, while matter is not affected by them. The crux of the theory of matter's participation is not the causal mode of the Forms' coming into matter, but the mode of matter's being unaffected by the immanent characters.

The way of participation proposed by Plotinus is that matter as ugliness and badness is not affected at all, but *seems to* be affected by beauty, order and good; we can resolve, by this way of participation, the difficulty of how matter participates in the good without losing what it was before, namely its being ugliness and badness (11, 29–36). He then concisely summarizes his theory:

50. Fujisawa, "Echein, Metechein, and Paradeigmatism," 53.

51. This point is fully treated in 7, 23ff.

For matter does not abandon itself but, since it must participate, it participates in a kind of way as long as it is there; but as the manner of participation keeps it what it is, it receives no damage which extends to its being from that which gives it in this way, and because of this it is not in danger of being less evil because it always remains what it is. (11,36–41, trans. A.H. Armstrong, adapted)

Plotinus believes that Plato, also, entertains the same idea about matter's participation and wants to show how matter could remain unaffected and receive the form, looking for an example of "participation without affection" (12,1–7).

Matter's unaffectedness is the thesis introduced for the first time in III 6 (26).<sup>52</sup> Why does it play an important role in Plotinus' theory of participation? First of all, we must keep it in mind that there are two antitheses to his view. They are the Stoic doctrine that matter is a body without qualities, subject to affections and pliable in every way (6,5), and the view of Platonists who rely on the *Timaeus* as an authority for their view that matter is subject to affections.<sup>53</sup> By appealing to Aristotle's doctrine in *De Generatione et Corruptione* 323b6ff., Plotinus defines that which is affected as being possessed of powers and qualities opposed to those of the things which come upon it and produce affection in it (8,1–3). But matter in which there is no opposition is not affected by any opposite (9,34–35). And again, if matter were affected, it could not receive all the images of the Forms (10,1–10). On the other hand, the images of the Forms are affected, because affection occurs only in that which has a need for a form to come to it or go away from it, and which has a defect in its composition if the form is not there, but is complete if it is present (11,12–15). Hence matter as unaffected must be sharply distinguished from the image of the Form as affected, and so Platonists who make matter subject to affections are liable to blur the necessary distinction between them.<sup>54</sup>

52. Denis O'Brien associates "matter's participation in the Form without affection" with Plotinus' identification of matter with privation ("Plotinus on Matter and Evil," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 180). In II 4 (12),16,14–16 where matter is identified with privation, Plotinus stresses that privation is not destroyed by that of which it is privation and that the limit keeps the unlimited. This idea unmistakably leads to matter's unaffectedness. The interrogative sentence at 16,16–17 ("Is matter also evil because it participates in good?") has no bearing on our present issue, because the term "participation" is not used technically and Plotinus' answer to it is negative (16,17).

53. For the Stoic notion of matter, see also II 4 (12),1,6–14. Plotinus criticizes these Platonists by pointing out that they must eventually admit that matter is corporeal (12,56–57). Armstrong maintains that Plotinus argues here and the thirteenth chapter against them rather than Stoics (*Plotinus*, 3: 260–261, note 2).

54. O'Brien maintains that the immanent form and matter "do not have a common substrate ... and do therefore count as contraries" ("Matter and Evil," 177). An objection would be made that this contrariety might imply mutual affections between matter and the image of the Form. But Plotinus' specification of affection in the composite thing in 11,12–15 rules out the possibility of matter's affectedness.

Notice that if there were no matter, there would be no image of the Form, since the nature of an image is being-in something else (14,1–4). Therefore, if matter were made subject to affections, the distinction between matter and the image of the Form would be prone to be blurred. But to assimilate the ontological status of matter as non-being to that of the image of the Form as quasi-being or becoming results in annihilation of those images themselves, because they require matter in order to be physically instantiated.<sup>55</sup> And again, if there were no immanent character, the ultimate distinction between the Form and its image could not hold any more. In this way, an important implication of matter's unaffectedness is that the defense of the distinction between matter and the immanent character is essential to the defense of the distinction between the Form and its immanent character.

Plotinus' theory of matter's unaffectedness is systematically related to his rejection of the natural interpretation of the *Timaeus* identifying matter with space.<sup>56</sup> Since spatiality is entailed by the physical instantiation of the immanent character, space is neither matter nor the void. A seemingly vacuous region of space is filled with some physical element and so is on the same footing as the immanent character, which is distinguished from matter in terms of affectedness and unaffectedness. Genuinely vacuous space is inconceivable because spatiality is a consequence of the eidetic causation.<sup>57</sup> In this way Plotinus seems to entertain a coherent, logical nexus interweaving (1) the unaffectedness and non-spatiality of matter, (2) the impossibility of the void, (3) spatiality as entailed by the eidetic causation, and (4) the inconsistency of the natural exegesis of the *Timaeus*. This supposed nexus is more comprehensive than the Platonic one interweaving (1) the coextensiveness of space with the spherical universe, (2) the immateriality of space, and (3) the distinctness of space from the void.<sup>58</sup> There is no twilight zone between the immanent character and matter.

The above consideration prepares us the ground on which the criticism that matter's participation in the Forms may be unwarranted and non-Platonic can be dismissed as inapplicable to Plotinus. In his theory of matter's participation he does not reintroduce "this some-thing" or the self-identically enduring substance to matter; this alleged reintroduction is untenable because matter is essentially unaffected, while "this some-thing," as a hylo-morphic compound, is affected by other substances. In the final analysis,

55. In II 4 (12),12,1–7 Plotinus explains the contribution of matter to the formation of bodies. If corporeal forms did not come into being in matter, there would not be bodies, but only rational forming principles in soul.

56. Richard T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972) 49.

57. For Plotinus' rejection of the void, see II 4 (12),11,28–29; VI 3 (44),25,34; VI 4 (22),2,9.

58. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 188.



the sensible particular, as the participant in the Form in Plato's theory, is clearly demarcated from matter, since it is a hylo-morphic compound subject to affection. On the other hand, Platonists who make matter subject to affections unfortunately subject themselves to this charge, if they entertain matter's participation in the Forms. Moreover, the force of paradigmaticism exactly excludes the Aristotelian substance from the universe of discourse relevant to matter's participation. It is true that matter's participation in the Forms is not explicitly warranted by any Platonic text. But this fact does not necessarily entitle the theory to be non-Platonic.

The ground on which matter can be the subject of participation seems to be its immutability (τὸ μένον), by which Plotinus believes that Plato has made us accessible to its unaffectedness (12,12–16). It is postulated in Plato that the participant particular remains virtually self-identical through its participation in diverse Forms (*Parm.* 129d2–3; *Phd.* 102e3–5).<sup>59</sup> And again, we are allowed to use the words “this” or “that” for a circumscribed part of the receptacle (*Tim.* 49e7–50a2), which is constant (52a8–b1).<sup>60</sup> Plotinus' view of matter as the participant in the Forms seems to be warranted by these two points in conjunction. The charge that Plotinus might have reintroduced the Aristotelian, self-identically enduring substance into his notion of matter certainly snipes at the very immutability of matter, by forcing its way through the fixed demarcation of matter as unaffected from the particular as affected. But if he were forced to abandon the self-identity of matter, the theory of matter's participation could not hold any longer. As stated above, the very unaffectedness of the participant matter constitutes the basso continuo of the genuinely Platonic scheme of metaphysics in which the distinction between the separate Form and its image remains fundamental and ultimate. By virtue of this logic of paradigmaticism, Plotinus stands in a position to dismiss the difficulties which the introduction of the Aristotelian substance-attribute metaphysics into the Platonic theory of the thing's participation in the Forms must entangle; they are (1) misinterpretation of participation in terms of immanence or possession, and (2) illegitimate assimilation of the meaning of the predicate of the proposition “This thing (x) is F” to that of the predicate of the proposition “The Form of F-ness (Φ) is F,”

59. Otherwise, Plato's theory could not dismiss Zeno's assumption that the same thing cannot have two contrary characters (*Parm.* 127e1–4), because the validity of the thesis that the *same* thing can have two contrary characters by partaking of their Forms depends on the self-identity of the participant thing in question. See also Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, 79–80: “There is also the person who undergoes the change and remains the same all the time”; Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo*, 154: “Simmius is conceived as no more than ... a container which remains what it is ...”

60. For the immutability of the receptacle, see Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 181, 193.

which causes the Third Man Argument.<sup>61</sup> Indeed Plotinus defends Aristotle's identification of the Platonic receptacle with matter and application of the term "the participant" to it. But this defense forces him to reject the natural interpretation of the *Timaeus* identifying the receptacle with space in order to attain matter in complete abstraction. The self-identity of matter thus defended does not necessarily imply the introduction or reintroduction of the Aristotelian notion of substance into it, since the self-identity of matter and that of the enduring substance differ in the grades of abstraction. The former is attained by a thorough process of abstraction, while the latter is the product of misplaced concreteness. Therefore the charge invited by matter's self-identity is not only inapplicable to Plotinus' conception of matter as the participant, but is countercharged with the remark that it may confuse the self-identity of matter and that of the enduring substance.

##### 5. *Non-Being's "Participation" in Being (III 6 [26], 14)*

We need to pay attention to another passage in which Plotinus criticizes the attribution of some actuality to matter. In the fourteenth chapter of III 6 (26) Plotinus identifies the beggar-woman Poverty, in Plato's myth of the birth of Eros, with matter (14,7–15). He then discusses Poverty's union with Resource:

For, since it is impossible for anything whatever, which in any sort of way exists outside being, to have altogether no share in being (τοῦ ὄντος πάντη μὴ μετέχειν)—for this is the nature of being, to work on beings—and since, on the other hand, the altogether non-existent cannot combine with being, what happens is a wonder; how does the non-participant participate (πῶς μὴ μετέχον μετέχει) ...?" (14,18–22, trans. A.H. Armstrong)

We cannot regard this passage as dealing with matter's participation in the Forms.<sup>62</sup> It is not the Form but being in general as contrasted with non-being that matter is said to "participate in without participating in it." This use of the term "participation" is not technical.

But some Platonists might envisage matter's participation in being in its literal sense. Insofar as acting-on belongs to the nature of being (14,19–20), this view is to attribute some agency to matter. Plotinus' metaphysical imagination shows that the alleged combination of agency with indefiniteness may transform matter into an omnivorous vortex:

61. For this view of the basis of the Third Man Argument, see Fujisawa, "Echein, Metechein, and Paradeigmatism," 38–39, 49. See also note 16.

62. O'Brien maintains that Plotinus here speaks of matter's participation in the Forms ("Matter and Evil," 183). A similar use of "participation" is seen in II 4 (12), 7,6–7 where Plotinus criticizes the simultaneity of intellect and mixture in Anaxagoras.

But if matter really was participant (μετασχοῦσα) and received being in the way one thinks it does, what came to it would be swallowed and sink into it. (14,26–28, trans. A.H. Armstrong)

Needless to say, we cannot count this passage as relevant to our present issue, because the use of the term is non-technical. Therefore Plotinus' argument in III 6 (26),14 must not be included in our scope of inquiry into matter's participation in the Forms. His answer to the aforementioned wonder is that matter does not participate in being because it, remaining the same, checks the approach of the immanent characters as a repellent base, and at the same time does participate in being in the sense that it is a receptacle for the things which come to the same point and there mingle (14,29–31).<sup>63</sup>

63. In the present chapter Plotinus defines matter as “the cause of becoming” (14,34–35). According to William J. Carroll, this definition indicates that “in some sense matter ‘is’ before these (generated) things come to be” and that matter is “the cause of things as a repellent base” (“Plotinus on the Origin of Matter,” in *Neoplatonism and Nature: Studies in Plotinus' Enneads*, 188–89). In light of οὐψω at 14,35, however, the causal role of matter seems to be better explicated by the statement at 14,29–31 that it is not only a repellent base but a receptacle for the things to be generated. As the repellent base matter is said to “remain the same and receive nothing” (14,29), which certainly implies its unaffectedness. Therefore Lee's remark, mentioned in note 34, that the role of matter in the causation of the sensible world may be in contradiction to its unaffectedness is not convincing. On the contrary, matter must be unaffected in order to serve as the cause of becoming. If it were affected in some way or other, the distinction between matter and the generated things would be obscured so that it could no longer be the independent cause of them. In the aforementioned way, the sense of the causal role of matter is fairly restricted. Hence we must not consider Plotinus' query at 14,1, “If there were not matter, would nothing come into being?” to indicate that it is *entirely* responsible for the generated things. The causal role of matter seems to be akin to the accessory cause in *Tim.* 46c7–d1 or the necessary cause in 68e6–7 rather than the material cause of Aristotle. It is not the thesis of matter's unaffectedness but the notion of matter, based on *Tim.* 51a7, as “that which can receive everything” (III 6 [26],10,9), “potentially all beings” (II 5 [25],4,3–6), and “potentially everything” (5,5), that is seemingly subtle, if not “blatant,” contradiction to the doctrine of reception according to the capacity of the recipient. It is because the clause ὅσον δύναται λαβεῖν in VI 5 (23),8,20 implies that matter's capacity may be limited somehow. We can here appeal to Alfred N. Whitehead's distinction between pure and real potentialities in order to resolve this contradiction. The former is a general potentiality unrestricted by any particular state of affairs, while the latter is the limited natural potentiality, relative to some particular state of affairs, which is permitted by the circumstance of the actual world (*Process and Reality*, ed. David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne [New York: The Free Press, 1978] 65). If we are allowed to rely on this distinction, the seemingly subtle contradiction is resolved in the way that that which is able to receive everything represents matter as pure potentiality, whereas the limited capacity of the recipient represents it as real potentiality. But Plotinus does not seem to fully analyze the metaphysical situation in which the pure potentiality of matter undergoes limitation. The eidetic causality of intelligible beings is intrinsic to this situation. Plotinus does not accept what Arthur O. Lovejoy calls “the principle of plenitude,” the fullness of the physical realization of conceptual possibilities. In other words, the sensible world is not

## 6. Conclusion

Armstrong comments on the sheer negativity of matter explicated in III 6 (26):

Some readers may feel, by the time they reach the end of the treatise, that Plotinus has made matter not only impassible but impossible; that is, that his elimination of even the idea of passive potency has left the concept without any content at all, has made “matter” only a meaningless word.<sup>64</sup>

But, as already seen, Plotinus’ theory of matter’s impassibility is so ingenious as to prevent the impossibility of the Forms’ images being physically realized. Shortly after he wrote III 6 (26), Plotinus is forced to defend, against the Gnostics, his thesis that the sensible cosmos is the necessary replica of the intelligible world, by appealing to the double actuality theory (II 9 [33], 8, 20–24). But, since the failure in the distinction between matter and the immanent character must ruin this explanation, the theory of matter’s unaffectedness seems to constitute the implicit, final phase in this defense.

The logic of paradigmaticism is adamantly dominant in the passages dealing with matter’s participation in the Forms. In fact, since the sensible particular is not included in the relevant universe of discourse, someone may suppose that paradigmaticism alone suffices to describe the physical realization of the Form. The thinking economy concerning the formula of explaining the eidetic causality would urge us to centralize “the exemplar causation of the Form

the totality which is the harmony of all perfections. For more details about this issue, see Sumi, “Psyche,” 239–41. Moreover, the impossibility of unbounded space pertains to this metaphysical situation. Plotinus does not specify the difficulties which Plato raised in showing the great area occupied by the copy of the intelligible world (III 6 [26], 12, 9–11). Nevertheless, if we were justified in jumping from the alleged infinite space to the conclusion that no limitation was imposed on matter’s receptivity, matter would always remain in pure potentiality. But, insofar as matter as pure potentiality has no reference to the causality of intelligible entities, the images of the Forms are physically unrealized for ever. The very existence of the sensible world is not conceivable until matter enters into the metaphysical situation in which its potentiality is circumscribed somehow. We must notice that the coextensiveness of the Platonic receptacle with the spherical universe (Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology*, 188) can be regarded as representing its being real potentiality. (Evidence supporting this point is that the extensive continuum which is the Whiteheadian counterpart to the Platonic receptacle is a real potentiality [*Process and Reality*, 62, 66–67, 76].)

64. Armstrong, *Plotinus*, 3:207. The objection that matter without size is an empty name is made in II 4 (12), 11, 12–13 and Plotinus replies to it in 12, 22–23. Armstrong supposes that it is made by “Platonists who interpreted *Timaeus* 52A8ff. (probably correctly) as meaning that Plato identified the ‘receptacle’ with space” (*Plotinus*, 2:130, note 1). In terms of the distinction, between pure and real potentialities, made at note 63, these Platonists fail to consider the receptacle in abstraction from its reference to the actual world. In short, “ingenuity of matter’s unaffectedness” is another name of Plotinus’ complete abstraction which sustains the coherence of his metaphysical system.

without the receptacle's affection" by abandoning "matter's participation in the Form without affection."<sup>65</sup> Then how is Plotinus justified in bringing forth the latter as his motto? Such a tentative answer would be possible that the preservation of the participation terminology in Plato's middle dialogues was necessary for Plotinus' systematic reading of Plato; Plotinus would have regarded the comprehensive unity of his exegesis of Plato as having primacy over the thinking economy. He does not seem to have been motivated to record Plato's legacy in his own writings, but to incorporate into his metaphysics the basic formula of the causal theory of Forms, which is so accessible as to be said to be "in a simple, naive and maybe foolish fashion" (*Phd.* 100d3–4), in order to build up his own theory of participation that is perfectly consonant with paradigmaticism. But we have to inquire into the details of this consonance. Since the physical instantiation of the immanent character necessitates matter, the abrogation of its participation in the Form must eliminate one of the relata of the archetype-image relation and therefore result in the collapse of paradigmaticism. Indeed the metaphysical distinction between the Form and its immanent character which underlies paradigmaticism remains fundamental and ultimate, insofar as the general distinction between being and becoming is more relevant to Plotinus' scheme of metaphysics than those between being and non-being and between becoming and non-being. Yet the causal relation expressed as matter's participation in the Forms is definitely more basic than paradigmaticism because of the reason mentioned above. In this way we can defend Plotinus' theory itself against an inattentive use of Ockham's razor.

65. The participation locution and the "paradeigma" idiom are used together in *Rep.* 476c–d. J. Adam rightly equates "the thing itself to which a likeness is like" in 476c6 with a paradigm (*The Republic of Plato*, ed. with critical notes, commentaries, and appendices, 2 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1963] 1: 337). The following remark by Harold F. Cherniss would nicely apply to this passage: "The occurrence of idioms of participation, then, is never in itself evidence that the ideas were not at the same time held to be paradigms; far from being felt as incompatible, the two kinds of idiom could even be used together to describe the single conception, as in fact they not infrequently are" ("The Relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's Later Dialogues," in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, ed. Reginald E. Allen [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965] 363–64). But it is impossible to identify the ontological status of manifold "manifestations" of the Form in this passage of the *Republic*, because any privilege is not given to either of two kinds of idiom. It is therefore likely that an assimilation of those idioms occurs and entails a confusion between the participant thing and the image of the Form. Plotinus' theory of matter's participation in the Forms has an advantage of evading this assimilation and confusion even when it is coupled with the idiom of paradigmaticism.

