

## Two Arguments for Forms in Plato: Conflicting Appearances and One over Many<sup>1</sup>

Kozi Asano

### 1. Introduction

There are two arguments that Plato offers for the existence of Forms: the Argument from Conflicting Appearances (ACA),<sup>2</sup> and the One over Many Argument (OMA).<sup>3</sup> I shall quote ACA and OMA from the passages in the *Republic* that I take to be the principal sources of ACA and OMA. The first one is ACA:

The same thing is sensed by it [the sight] as both large and small. . . . in such cases the soul is at a loss as to what this sensation indicates by the large, if it [this sensation] says that the same thing is also small. . . . from here it first occurs to us to ask what the large and the small are.<sup>4</sup> (*Republic* Book VII 524a3-c11)

The second one is OMA:

For we are, presumably, accustomed to set down some one form for each of the “manys” to which we apply the same name. (*Republic* Book X 596a6-7)

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of my Ph. D. dissertation to be submitted to the University of Texas at Austin. A shorter Japanese version was read at the Tokyo Association for Greek Philosophy at Sophia University, Tokyo, in Mar. 1996. Among the many people who have read the manuscript of the paper, I am particularly grateful to Sherry Blum and Deborah Nichols at the University of Texas at Austin for their very helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> The Argument from Conflicting Appearances shall be hereafter abbreviated to ACA. ACA is found in the *Phaedo* 74b7-c6 and the *Republic* 479a5-c5, 523b9-524c12.

<sup>3</sup> The One over Many Argument shall be hereafter abbreviated to OMA. OMA is found in the *Republic* 475e9-476a8, 507b2-8, 596a6-7, and the *Parmenides* 132a2-4.

<sup>4</sup> I shall use Bloom’s translation of the *Republic*, with minor changes necessary to fit the context of my paper.

Both ACA and OMA seem to introduce Plato's Forms. If, however, both ACA and OMA are arguments that prove the existence of the same Forms, why are there two arguments? Are they equivalent to each other? If not, how are they different from, and related to, each other? These are the questions I shall try to answer in this paper. As I believe that Plato's theory of Forms is not any simple theory but contains different strands of thought, which are represented by different arguments, it is important to carefully distinguish such strands of thought. Further, since Forms are theoretical entities that are generated by arguments, it is indispensable to know how Forms are generated by what arguments in order to understand what Forms are.

First of all, let us see some evidence from Plato's text as to what objects are introduced by ACA and OMA. Since the question we are led to ask in ACA is a what-is-X question (*Republic* 524c11), ACA introduces the objects of definition. Those objects are also characterized as intelligible (*noēton*), in contrast to visible, and as being (*ousia, on*), in contrast to becoming (*Republic* 524c13, 523a3, 521d3-4). Further, in the *Republic* Book V, what is introduced by ACA is called "fair itself and an idea of the beautiful itself, which always stays the same and unchanged"<sup>5</sup> (*Republic* 479a1-3). In the *Phaedo*, what is introduced by ACA is called the equal itself, and this is an object of recollection (*Phaedo* 74c5, 74b4-5). OMA explicitly calls what it introduces "form" (*eidos*) (*Republic* 476a5, 596a6; *Parmenides* 132a1) and "idea" (*idea*) (*Republic* 507b6; *Parmenides* 132a3), and an idea is said to be intellected (*noeisthai*) (*Republic* 507b9-10). All this apparently suggests that Plato is concerned with Forms and that both ACA and OMA introduce the same Forms.

Even if, however, Plato is concerned with Forms in both ACA and OMA, does it follow that ACA and OMA prove the existence of the same Forms? In the following, I shall argue that ACA and OMA are different arguments with different premises and

---

<sup>5</sup> The last part "the same and unchanged" is Shorey's translation, which is found in Hamilton and Cairns, of the Greek *kata tauta hōsautōs*. Bloom's translation "the same in all respects" does not seem right to me.

different conclusions; and I shall do this by way of examining Allen's analysis of ACA, White's interpretation of ACA, and Fine's reconstruction of OMA (Sections 2, 3, and 4). After examining Allen's, White's, and Fine's views, I shall show that ACA and OMA do not imply each other, and argue that jointly ACA and OMA can generate Plato's Forms but taken separately each generates something different from Forms (Section 5). At the end of the paper, I shall add two supporting arguments for my claim in relation to mathematical objects (Section 6). A good starting-point for my discussion is the problem of the range of Forms. So I shall start with it.

## 2. Allen's Analysis of ACA

In this section, I shall present Allen's analysis of ACA and his view on the range of Forms, reserving my criticism till the next section. In a way it is well known that ACA and OMA are different. At least they seem different arguments, and the difference between them is customarily found in the range of Forms they introduce.<sup>6</sup> In the *Republic* 523b9-524c12, our principal source of ACA, terms like "large" and "small" are distinguished from terms like "finger". "Finger" is said to belong to the class of things that do not lead the soul to intellection whereas "large" and "small" are said to belong to the class of things that lead the soul to intellection. Let us take the smallest, the second, and the middle fingers as examples. Each of them equally looks like a finger, and sight is adequate to tell us that each is a finger because sight never tells us that a finger is the opposite of a finger. But the second finger looks large as well as small. Since sight presents the two opposite qualities, telling us that one and the same thing is large and small, sight is not adequate and summons the intellect to investigate what the large and the small are. Thus Plato makes a distinction between "large" and "small" on the one hand and "finger" on the other, and ACA seems to say that there

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Owen, "A Proof in the *Peri Ideōn*," 172-6; Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, 228-9; and Gosling, *Plato*, 169-75, 188-92.

are Forms corresponding to the things that lead the soul to intellection but no Forms corresponding to things that do not lead the soul to intellection.

But the above distinction is not visible anywhere in OMA. Indeed the only qualification OMA imposes on the “manys” that would require Forms is that we apply the same names to them. So OMA seems to assert that there is a Form corresponding to every general term.<sup>7</sup>

Let us consider more closely the distinction made in ACA. Why do some things lead the soul to intellection while others do not? It is exactly because some things present conflicting appearances while others do not. Then what kind of things present conflicting appearances, and what kind of things do not? The examples of the things that lead the soul to intellection are large, small, thick, thin, hard, soft, light, and heavy (*Republic* 523e3-524a4), and the other examples Plato gives us elsewhere for ACA are beautiful, ugly, just, unjust, holy, unholy, double, half (*Republic* 479a6-b4), and equal (*Phaedo* 74b8-9). According to Allen, those are relational predicates,<sup>8</sup> and that is why they present opposite qualities. That is, what looks, for example, large in comparison with one thing, also looks small, in comparison with something else.

What is the logic of ACA then? The point of ACA, as Allen states, is that “there is a logical distinction between the intension and the extension of comparative or relational terms.”<sup>9</sup> Suppose that F and G are mutually opposite, relational predicates. Since whatever is F is also G,<sup>10</sup> things that are F and G cannot be identified with the meaning of either F or G. Then, if “the meaning of a term is what it refers to,”<sup>11</sup> for F

---

<sup>7</sup> Although this is not quite accurate, it is at least what OMA seems to say. As to how it is not accurate, see note 35 below.

<sup>8</sup> Allen, “The Argument from Opposites in *Republic*,” 167. For a critical interpretation of ACA limited to relational or incomplete, as Owen calls them, predicates, see Owen, “A Proof.”

<sup>9</sup> Allen, “The Argument,” 168.

<sup>10</sup> And whatever is G is also F.

<sup>11</sup> Allen, “The Argument,” 168. According to Allen, Plato in the middle dialogues assumes such a “Fido”-Fido theory of meaning.

to be meaningful, there must be the F itself besides the things that are F and G. That, according to Allen, is the logic of ACA's proof of the existence of Forms for relational terms.

The example of the things that do not lead the soul to intellection is finger (*Republic* 523d6). This is not a relational term, according to Allen, but a substantive term.<sup>12</sup> Unlike relational terms, substantive terms "have no contraries,"<sup>13</sup> and do not present opposite appearances: what looks like a finger is just a finger. So substantive terms do not trouble the soul with opposite appearances, and ACA does not apply to them. Hence Allen thinks "that, in the middle dialogues, there are no Forms of substances."<sup>14</sup>

But the examples Plato gives us as requiring Forms in OMA include bed and table (*Republic* 596b2), which are not relational but substantive terms. So OMA, at least in the *Republic* Book X, seems to assert that there are Forms of substantive terms as well as relational ones.

If Allen's analysis of ACA is correct, ACA and OMA are not only different but also inconsistent.<sup>15</sup> Allen solves the inconsistency in favor of ACA by saying that the OMA passage in the *Republic* Book X "is perhaps no more than a prescription for philosophical method, not an ontological claim at all."<sup>16</sup> Allen's solution may be supported by the following considerations. First, most of the examples of Forms Plato gives us, including those for OMA as well as ACA, are adjectives,<sup>17</sup> and the examples

---

<sup>12</sup> Allen, "The Argument," 168.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, "The Argument," 168.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, "The Argument," 168.

<sup>15</sup> This represents a fairly common way of viewing the difference between ACA and OMA. Since this is also a natural way, it should be enough to give us an initial warning that we cannot simply assume that ACA and OMA are equivalent without asking if they are really so.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, "The Argument," 168.

<sup>17</sup> The examples of Forms for OMA include beautiful, ugly, just, unjust, good, bad (*Republic* 475e9-476a4), and large (*Parmenides* 132a3).

of substantive terms are rare.<sup>18</sup> Second, Socrates in the *Parmenides*, when asked about the range of Forms to be introduced, is confident that there are Forms such as the Like, the Right, the Beautiful, and the Good; but he is not so sure about Forms of man, fire, and water, and he is sceptical about Forms of hair, mud, and dirt (*Parmenides* 130b3-d7).

If, however, OMA does not apply to substantive terms, why in the world does Plato apply it to them, for whatever reasons, in the *Republic* Book X?

### 3. White's Interpretation of ACA

I shall begin this section with my criticism of Allen's view, then I shall present White's interpretation of ACA and end by stating the premise and conclusion of ACA. Against the above considerations in support of Allen's solution, the following objections can be raised. First, the mere rarity of substantive terms among the examples of Forms does not by itself imply that OMA does not apply to substantive terms. Second, Parmenides in the *Parmenides*, commenting on Socrates' hesitation to admit Forms of man, fire, water, etc., says:

That is because you are still young, Socrates, and philosophy has not yet taken hold of you so firmly as I believe it will someday. You will not despise any of these objects then, but at present your youth makes you still pay attention to what the world will think.<sup>19</sup> (*Parmenides* 130e1-4)

Parmenides' remarks suggest that Plato is willing to admit Forms of substantive terms as well as adjectives. So I think that OMA is applied to substantive terms such as "bed" and "table" in the *Republic* Book X because it applies to them.

---

<sup>18</sup> They include shuttle (*Cratylus* 389b), bed, table (*Republic* 596b4), snow, fire, and three (*Phaedo* 103d5-12, 104a5-b2), though it can be disputed whether snow and fire are Forms in the *Phaedo*.

<sup>19</sup> The translation of the *Parmenides* is Cornford's translation, which is found in Hamilton and Cairns.

Another way of solving the inconsistency between ACA and OMA is to admit the same range of Forms for ACA as for OMA.<sup>20</sup> According to White, the trouble Plato finds with perceptible objects is that whatever is F is also not-F, where F and not-F do not need to be contraries.<sup>21</sup> And the reason for the conflicting appearances of perceptible objects is not the relationality of certain terms but the relativity of perceptual judgments; that is, whether a judgment that something is F is acceptable or not depends on the particular perspective from which the judgment is made.<sup>22</sup> So for example, it would be acceptable to judge that a loaf of bread is hard just after having pressed a feather pillow, but it would not be acceptable to judge that it is hard after pressing a block of steel.

The perspectives of perceptual judgments include factors such as the direction from which the judge sees the perceptible object, the object of comparison, the judge's

---

<sup>20</sup> There is still another way; that is, one may explain the inconsistency in a developmentalist way by saying that Plato introduced Forms of adjectives only in his middle period but later changed his mind to introduce Forms of substantive terms as well. See Owen, "A Proof," 175-6. This explanation, however, is not convincing, as I shall argue below.

<sup>21</sup> White, "Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology," 307, note 21. Plato is not concerned with a distinction between something's not being F and something's being the contrary of F. For example, Plato freely moves from something's being ugly to its not being beautiful (*Republic* 479a5-b10). Certainly if something is the contrary of F, it is not F; and the latter is what Plato is really interested in when he speaks of the former.

<sup>22</sup> White, "Perceptual and Objective Properties," 51-2, and also "Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology," 289-90. A very interesting feature of White's interpretation is that he thinks that in Plato's view, the notions expressed by the terms such as "large" and "beautiful", which Allen calls relational, are nonrelational ("Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology," 286-7), and that the positive terms cannot be reduced into comparatives such as "larger than --" and "more beautiful than --" ("Perceptual and Objective Properties," 48-50, and "Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology," 285-6). The acceptability/nonacceptability of perceptual judgments is White's peculiar language. Since perceptible objects are neither F, nor not-F, nor both F and not-F, nor neither F nor not-F (*Republic* 479c3-5), F is not applicable to them ("Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology," 296). That is why, I think, White talks about the acceptability/nonacceptability of perceptual judgments instead of the truth/falsity of them.

interests, and the time.<sup>23</sup> The temporal factor is particularly important for Plato.<sup>24</sup> For example, the ACA in the *Republic* Book V says that every perceptible beautiful object *will* appear not beautiful someday (*Republic* 479a5-7),<sup>25</sup> and similarly every perceptible object that is a house now “will later cease to be so.”<sup>26</sup> Since the conflicting appearances (F and not F) of perceptible objects cited in ACA do not depend on the relationality of specific terms, ACA is not limited to the adjectives which Allen calls relational. But since a perceptual judgment that something is F is dependent on the perspective from which it is made, whether F is an adjective or a substantive term, ACA applies to substantive terms as well as to adjectives.<sup>27</sup>

Why, then, are adjectives and substantive terms distinguished by ACA in the *Republic* Book VII? According to White, the distinction ACA makes in the *Republic*

---

<sup>23</sup> The *Symposium* 211a2-5 mentions the five perspectival factors on which a judgment that some perceptual object is F depends: F in one way but not F in another (viewpoint), F at one time but not F at another (time), F in relation to one thing but not F in relation to another (comparison), F here but not F there (aspect), and F to one person but not F to another (judge).

<sup>24</sup> At this point, the following things can be said against a developmentalist view that Plato did not postulate Forms of substantive terms in his middle period. First, examples of Forms of substantive terms such as snow and fire do occur in the *Phaedo* (103d5-12); and Forms of substantive terms are recognized, though not mentioned by name, in the simile of the Line of the *Republic* Book VI (509d1-510a10). Second, Plato is quite concerned with the changeability (mutability) of the phenomenal world in such middle dialogues as the *Phaedo* 70d-71d, 78d-79a, 79c, 80b, the middle books of the *Republic* 476c2-8, 485b2-3, 527b, and the *Symposium* 206-8 (White, “Perceptual and Objective Properties,” 57-8, and “Plato’s Metaphysical Epistemology,” 288). So there is no motivation to limit the conflicting appearances to adjectives.

<sup>25</sup> The perceptible beautiful objects are contrasted to the Beautiful itself which *always* stays the same and unchanged (*Republic* 479a1-3), though “always” here needs some explanation, which shall be given below.

<sup>26</sup> White, “Perceptual and Objective Properties,” 57, and “Plato’s Metaphysical Epistemology,” 288.

<sup>27</sup> ACA’s logic as stated by Allen, that there is a logical distinction between the intension and the extension, will apply to substantive terms, too.



Book VII is merely a distinction between predicates which are the most apt to lead the soul to intellection and those which are less apt to do so, especially for beginners, and it does not imply that there are no Forms corresponding to the less apt predicates.<sup>28</sup>

The ACA in the *Republic* Book VII makes the distinction between adjectives and substantive terms in order to draw attention to a distinction between things that appear F and not F and things that are incapable of presenting conflicting appearances. If perceptible objects which are F were truly incapable of appearing not F, then they would not need a Form, because they could be identified with the F itself.<sup>29</sup> But as a matter of fact perceptible objects which are F will appear not F. So the distinction ACA makes between adjectives and substantive terms is in fact indicative only of the kind of distinction Plato wants to draw between perceptible objects and Forms. This is confirmed by the other ACA passages in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. Drawing a contrast to perceptible objects which appear F and not F, the ACA in the *Phaedo* says:

the equals themselves never seem not equal (*Phaedo* 74c1-3),<sup>30</sup>

and the ACA in the *Republic* Book V says:

an idea of the beautiful itself, which always stays the same and unchanged (*Republic* 479a1-3).<sup>31</sup>

The last passage needs some explanation. The phrase “always” does not mean everlasting temporal continuity. Just as the reason why perceptible objects appear F and

---

<sup>28</sup> White, “Plato’s Metaphysical Epistemology,” 282 and 305, note 6. Plato says: “the soul of *the many* (general public) are not compelled to ask the intellect what a finger is” (*Republic* 523d3-5); and “from here it *first* occurs to us to ask what the large and the small are” (*Republic* 524c10-11). Plato’s words suggest that the distinction ACA makes here is intended only for the many (general public), and only at the initial stage of philosophical education.

<sup>29</sup> And the F might be defined in terms of perceptible F things.

<sup>30</sup> This is my free translation. Why “the equals themselves” is plural is a difficult question, on which, I hope, my interpretation of ACA and OMA will throw some light.

<sup>31</sup> See note 5 above.

not F is that their appearances depend on perspectives from which they are seen, the reason why the F itself never appears not F is that it is independent of any such perspective. So to say that the F itself is F through all time is not quite accurate, because the F itself is F outside of time.<sup>32</sup> Thus “always” means something like: whenever we see the F itself with our mind’s eye.

From the discussion so far, we can state the following are the premise (a) and conclusion (b) of ACA:

- (a) Perceptible objects which appear F also appear not F.
- (b) There must be the F itself which is incapable of appearing not F.

#### 4. Fine’s Reconstruction of OMA

In this section, I shall present Fine’s reconstruction of OMA and modify it as I find appropriate. According to Fine, ACA “is quite different from anything to be found in the OMA.”<sup>33</sup> First of all, she distinguishes two Aristotelian versions of OMA, and she calls one version simply OMA and the other version accurate-OMA. According to her, OMA consists of the following three premises:

- (1) Whenever a group of particulars are F, some one thing, the F, is predicated of them.  
(Univocity Assumption)
- (2) The F is not the same as any of the F particulars of which it is predicated. (Non-Identity Assumption)

---

<sup>32</sup> White, “Perceptual and Objective Properties,” 60, and “Plato’s Metaphysical Epistemology,” 289.

<sup>33</sup> Fine, “The One over Many,” 231. Fine’s understanding of ACA is not the same as mine. For one thing, she, like Allen, limits the scope of ACA to relational terms or disputed predicates (as she calls them). After, however, the problem of the range of Forms is discounted, the logic of ACA as she understands it is still quite different from that of OMA, whether OMA is understood in its less accurate or more accurate version. I shall explain Fine’s distinction between the less accurate and more accurate versions of OMA shortly.

(3) The F is always predicated in the same way of the F particulars.

In the Aristotelian version of OMA, (1)-(3) are taken to license two intermediate conclusions:

(4) The F is separate from the F particulars of which it is predicated.

(5) The F is eternal.

From (1), (4), and (5), the general conclusion of OMA is drawn:

(6) There is a separate and eternal form, the F.<sup>34</sup>

(1) expresses the univocity assumption that when a group of particulars are F, some *one* thing is predicated of them.<sup>35</sup> And OMA, unlike ACA, does not proceed from a group of things being F and not F but from a group of things being F *tout court*.<sup>36</sup>

(2) states that the F cannot be identified with any one of the F particulars of

---

<sup>34</sup> Fine, "Aristotle and the More Accurate Arguments," 159-60, and also "The One," 200. The Aristotelian versions of OMA are preserved in Alexander's commentary on *Metaphysics* A9, the relevant portions of which are translated in Barnes. To simplify the argument, I have omitted one step, which states the defining characteristics of a Platonic form, but I have incorporated them into the general conclusion.

<sup>35</sup> Fine, "The One," 204 and 236. Plato insists that where there is a form F, which is predicated of many F things, there is just one form, the F (*Republic* 596b3-4). The univocity assumption may suggest that there is a Form corresponding to every general term. According to Fine, however, there is an important restriction which comes from Plato's scientific concerns. "F" must not be any arbitrary name but must be a property-name, and F must be a property in the sense of a real feature of the world. See Fine, "The One," 203-20.

<sup>36</sup> Fine, "The One," 231. Fine identifies the working principle of ACA as the Imperfection Assumption (IA):

(IA) Whenever a group of particulars are, in the appropriate way, imperfectly F, there is a separated form, the F, over them.

She defines the imperfection of F as the failure of observational accounts of F; that is, a group of things are imperfectly F just in case sense is unable to provide an account of F. And compresence of opposites (F and not F) is necessary and sufficient for the failure of observational accounts. Thus the imperfection of F amounts to the compresence of F and not F. See Fine, "The One," 230-31.

which it is predicated. The logic of (2) seems something like this: if the F were identical to one of the F particulars, then that particular one would be predicated of the other F particulars, which would be absurd. For example, if Man were identical to Socrates, since Callias is also a man, we would have to say that Socrates is predicated of Callias, which would be absurd. Further, if Callias were also identical to Man, then by the transitivity of identity Callias would be identical to Socrates, which would be absurd again. Thus Man cannot be identical to any of the particular men of whom it is predicated.<sup>37</sup>

(4) is the most important step since it introduces separation, which is a hallmark of Platonic Forms. Separation is commonly understood as meaning that something's "existence is independent from that of any or all sensible particulars."<sup>38</sup> So for example, to say that justice is separate is to say that justice exists even if there is nothing just in this world. On that point, Aristotle criticizes OMA, and his criticism is that (4) does not follow from (2). (2) certainly says that the F is different from any of the F particulars. But difference does not entail separation. For the F, which is different from any of the F particulars, may still be dependent on them. Certainly the F may be independent from any single F particular, but it may not be so from all the F particulars.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Aristotle believes that the F cannot be independent from all the F particulars, in other words, that if there is no F particular, there cannot be the F.<sup>40</sup>

According to Fine, however, Plato does not infer (4) from (2).<sup>41</sup> One major difference Fine sees between ACA and OMA is that ACA generates separated forms whereas OMA generates only nonseparated forms. Fine writes, "where Plato relies on the one over many, only nonseparated forms are in evidence,"<sup>42</sup> and "where Plato

---

<sup>37</sup> Fine, "The One," 204.

<sup>38</sup> Fine, "The One," 205.

<sup>39</sup> Fine, "The One," 205-6.

<sup>40</sup> Fine, "The One," 209-11.

<sup>41</sup> Fine, "The One," 235 and 238-40. That is, Fine thinks that Aristotle is wrong in attributing to Plato the inference of (4) from (2).

wishes to argue for separated forms, (IA) [ACA] carries the burden.”<sup>43</sup> Fine’s reasons for her interpretation are the following. First, Plato in the OMA passage of the *Republic* Book X does not say that the forms are separated.<sup>44</sup> Second, neither (1) the univocity assumption nor (2) implies separation.<sup>45</sup>

Further, according to Fine, Plato takes ACA to generate separated forms.<sup>46</sup> For in ACA the F particulars are imperfectly F while the F itself is perfectly F, and this distinction indicates that the F itself and the F particulars belong to different degrees of reality.

(5) introduces another characteristic of a Platonic Form, eternity, which, however, means only everlastingness in the Aristotelian version of OMA.<sup>47</sup> Fine says that (3) entails (5) if we add an Aristotelian assumption that there always exists at least one F particular throughout time.<sup>48</sup>

Fine attributes OMA, more specifically (1) and (2), to Plato in the *Republic* Book X.<sup>49</sup> According to her interpretation, however, Plato infers from (1) and (2) only that there is a nonseparated form, the F. I disagree. First, although Plato does not say in the OMA passage of the *Republic* Book X that the forms are separated,<sup>50</sup> neither

---

<sup>42</sup> Fine, “The One,” 235.

<sup>43</sup> Fine, “The One,” 240. For (IA), see note 36 above.

<sup>44</sup> Fine, “The One,” 236 and 238. Nor in the *Sophist*, *Timaeus*, *Meno*, and *Cratylus*, does Plato say that the forms generated by OMA are separated, according to Fine.

<sup>45</sup> Fine, “The One,” 236 and 238.

<sup>46</sup> Fine, “The One,” 231-2. Here Fine seems to equate separation to different degrees of reality. Does she only mean that if A belongs to a higher degree of reality than B, A is separate from B? If so, the implication in the opposite direction may not be the case; that is, even if A is separate from B, it does not follow that A belongs to a higher degree of reality than B. This point will become important for my interpretation of ACA and OMA.

<sup>47</sup> Repeating (5), Aristotle says only that the F “persists forever.” See Fine, “The One,” 205. This is natural because “always” in (3), which is concerned with the F particulars, can mean only everlastingness but not eternity in the sense of existing outside time.

<sup>48</sup> Fine, “The One,” 205.

<sup>49</sup> Fine, “The One,” 236-40.

does he say that they are nonseparated. Second, certainly (1)-(2) do not imply separation. But this fact rather suggests that (1)-(2) are wrong as an interpretation of Plato's OMA.

According to Fine, "accurate-OMA reveals the underlying reasoning behind the OMA."<sup>51</sup> Accurate-OMA contains the following slightly different premises instead of (1) and (2):

(1a) Whenever many things are F, some one thing, the F, is predicated of them.  
(Univocity Assumption)

(2a) The F is separate from any of the F things of which it is predicated.<sup>52</sup> (Separation Assumption)

(1a) differs from (1) in that the many things said to be F in the protasis do not need to be particulars, and so (1a) is stronger than (1) in that (1a) entails (1) but not the other way around.<sup>53</sup> (2a) differs from (2) in two respects.<sup>54</sup> First, (2a) like (1a) does not restrict the things, of which the F is predicated, to particulars. Second, (2a) says that the F is *separate* from what it is predicated of, whereas (2) says only that the F is *different* from the particulars it is predicated of. (2a) obviously entails (4). Thus the major difference between OMA and accurate-OMA is that accurate-OMA, but not OMA, generates separated forms.<sup>55</sup>

Another important difference between OMA and accurate-OMA is that accurate-OMA, but not OMA, is vulnerable to the third man argument (TMA).<sup>56</sup> TMA is an

---

<sup>50</sup> Actually, a little later in *Republic* Book X (597a ff.) Plato does say that the forms are separated. Fine disregards that by saying that "it [separation] is not argued for on the basis of any one over many assumption" ("The One," 238). But I think that Plato does not argue there for separation on the basis of OMA because it is part of the premises of OMA.

<sup>51</sup> Fine, "Aristotle," 165.

<sup>52</sup> Fine, "Aristotle," 162.

<sup>53</sup> Fine, "Aristotle," 163-4.

<sup>54</sup> Fine, "Aristotle," 164.

<sup>55</sup> Fine, "Aristotle," 165.

objection raised to the OMA in the *Parmenides* (132a2-b2), and it shows that the OMA leads to an infinite regress of forms. The gist of TMA is: if the existence of a separate form, the F, is inferred from the fact that a group of F particulars are all F, then by the same logic the existence of another separate form, the F2, may be inferred from the fact that a new group of the F particulars and the F, are all F; and if so, then the existence of still another separate form, the F3, may be inferred from the fact that another new group of the F particulars, the F, and the F2, are all F, and so on *ad infinitum*. If (1a) or (2a) is replaced by (1) or (2), TMA fails. First, if (1a) is replaced by (1), the second step of TMA does not get started. (1) does not apply to the fact that the F particulars and the F are all F, because (1) does not allow the F particulars and the F to form a new group of F things. If (2a) is replaced by (2), the second form, the F2, generated by the second step of TMA, can be identical to the first form, the F, thus creating no regress of new forms. For (2) only requires a new form, the F2, to be different from the F particulars, and not from the F. So the OMA in the *Parmenides*, against which TMA is directed, is accurate-OMA. There is nothing in Plato's text, either in the *Republic* or the *Parmenides*, that suggests any difference between the OMA in the *Republic* Book X and the OMA in the *Parmenides*. So, I think, accurate-OMA is the correct reconstruction of Plato's OMA.

## 5. The Difference between ACA and OMA

In the above discussions I have made clear the following points. ACA, just like OMA, applies to substantive terms as well as adjectives. ACA is an argument that infers from the conflicting appearances (F and not F) of perceptible objects the existence of the F itself which is incapable of appearing not F, and ACA's concern is focused on the imperfection of perceptible objects. OMA is an argument that infers from the univocity

---

<sup>56</sup> Fine, "Aristotle," 166-9. The Third Man Argument shall be abbreviated to TMA.

assumption about many F things the existence of a separated form, the F, and OMA's concern is focused on the oneness and separateness of the F.

In this section, I shall argue that ACA and OMA are different in the sense that they do not imply each other. Certainly both ACA and OMA apply to the same range of terms, and seem to introduce the same range of forms. Plato, too, often uses ACA and OMA together. For example, OMA is operating in the ACA passage of the *Republic* Book V, where Plato says with emphasis that the beautiful itself is one in contrast to many beautiful things (*Republic* 479a3-4). ACA seems to be operating in the OMA passages of the *Republic* Books V-VI, where Plato says that the one F is the object of knowledge whereas the many F things are the objects of opinion (*Republic* 476c9-d6, 507b9-10).<sup>57</sup> As a matter of fact, ACA and OMA seem to be inseparably mixed in Plato's metaphysics of the *Republic* Books V-VI.

But the premises of ACA and OMA are quite different, and their conclusions are different, too. So, even when ACA and OMA are applied to the same many F particulars, the characteristics of the objects they generate are fairly different. Further, OMA is not in evidence in the ACA passages of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* Book VII,<sup>58</sup> nor ACA in the OMA passages of the *Republic* Book X and the *Parmenides*.<sup>59</sup> So I think that ACA and OMA do not need to be accompanied by each other; that is to say, one

---

<sup>57</sup> In that context, the one F and the many F things are said to belong to different degrees of reality.

<sup>58</sup> In the *Republic* Book VII 524b6-9, the large is said to be one, but that is not said in contrast to the many large things, but in the sense that the large and the small are distinct.

<sup>59</sup> The OMA in the *Republic* Book X is followed by something that can suggest the degrees-of-reality metaphysics, that is, by the distinction of the three kinds of beds (*Republic* 597a1 ff.). But even there the imperfection of actual beds for sleeping on is not in evidence. One may see ACA behind the OMA passage in the *Parmenides*, because the OMA there is preceded by a passage containing some reasoning like ACA (*Parmenides* 128e5-130a2). But although OMA follows the ACA-like passage, OMA is introduced as a quite different argument, which would require a quite different kind of objection, from the preceding ACA-like reasoning.



can use one argument without using the other<sup>60</sup> though one can use both of them at the same time, too.

First of all, let us suppose that there is in the world only one perceptible object which appears F and not F, for example, which looks like a triangle and not a triangle. Would ACA apply to such an object? I believe it would. For, even though in this case the extension of the triangle is limited to one object, that particular triangular object is good enough for troubling our soul as to what the triangle is, because sight also tells us that the same object is not a triangle.<sup>61</sup> Second, ACA does not say that the F which it introduces must be one. The defining characteristic of the F which ACA generates is its inability to appear not F. If there is more than one object that satisfies this characteristic of the F, they would all satisfy Platonic philosophers as to the meaning of the F, just as many fingers would satisfy the beginners of Platonic philosophy as to the meaning of “finger” in the *Republic* Book VII. For just as many fingers do not trouble the beginners of Platonic philosophy with conflicting appearances, many objects that satisfy the defining characteristic of the F do not trouble Platonic philosophers with conflicting appearances.<sup>62</sup>

Third, the F which OMA introduces does not need to be perfect, though it is separate from the F particulars of which it is predicated. By separation I mean that the existence of the F is independent from that of any or all F particulars of which it is predicated; in other words, the F can exist even if the F particulars of which it is predicated do not.<sup>63</sup> Suppose that there are many statues, all of which we call Clinton in

---

<sup>60</sup> One can do this because ACA and OMA do not imply each other.

<sup>61</sup> In terms of recollection as discussed in the *Phaedo*, an experience of just one F object can be good enough for reminding us of the F itself, and if there is only one perceptible F object, its conflicting appearances (F and not F) will be good enough for making us realize that the perceptible F object and the F itself are quite different.

<sup>62</sup> In the *Republic* Book VII, many fingers do not trouble the beginners of Platonic philosophy not because they are one, but because they do not appear not to be fingers.

<sup>63</sup> I believe this is what Fine, too, means by separation. See Fine, “The One,” 205, and more importantly “Aristotle,” 160-61 and 163-5.

the same way. OMA, when applied to those many “Clinton” statues, would assert that there is the one, Clinton himself, who can exist even when his statues do not.<sup>64</sup> But Clinton is not perfect in the sense of never appearing not Clinton, because what looks like Clinton now will not do so 50 years from now.<sup>65</sup> Both Clinton and his statues are imperfect in ACA’s scheme. Fourth, even if the many F things to which OMA applies happen to be incapable of appearing not F, OMA does not fail. We saw in the last paragraph that ACA can generate many perfect objects that satisfy the defining characteristic of the F. Those perfect F objects would certainly not be particulars around us. But OMA applies to many F things where F things are not limited to F particulars. So OMA would duly generate from those many perfect F things the one F, which is predicated of all of them.

Thus we can conceive both a case where ACA, but not OMA, applies and a case where OMA, but not ACA, applies. When there is only one perceptible object that looks like a triangle and not a triangle, ACA, but not OMA, can be applied. When there are many perfect F objects that never appear not F, OMA, but not ACA, can be applied. While ACA generates from many imperfect F things many perfect F things, OMA cannot generate the same objects. While OMA infers from many “Clinton” statues Clinton himself, ACA cannot generate the same Clinton. Therefore, ACA and OMA are logically different.

Moreover, the characteristics of the objects ACA and OMA generate are different. The defining characteristic of the objects ACA generates is perfection (F and never not F), which implies separation from perceptible objects, whereas that of the

---

<sup>64</sup> This is the kind of example Plato uses to explain the relationship between the many F things and the F. For he sees the same kind of relationship between many paintings of a bed and the bed on one hand and between many beds and the bed itself on the other (*Republic* Book X 596b6-598c4).

<sup>65</sup> We do not need to enter into the metaphysics of personal identity. All that is necessary for my discussion is that Clinton’s body, which is in some sense the source of all of his statues being called Clinton, will not look like Clinton 50 years from now.

objects OMA generates is uniqueness and separateness. If Plato's Forms are to have both of these characteristics, both ACA and OMA are needed. When both ACA and OMA are applied to the same many F perceptible objects, the F generated will have gotten perfection from ACA, uniqueness from OMA, and separation from both. In the *Republic* Books V-VI, where ACA and OMA are inseparably mixed, the F itself is one, perfect, and separate; and that is what we understand by "Form". But when only one of the two, ACA or OMA, operates and the other is missing, the F generated is something different from the Form F. More specifically, in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* Book VII, where OMA is not in evidence, we cannot assume that the F is one; and in the *Republic* Book X and the *Parmenides*, where ACA is not in evidence, we cannot assume that the F is perfect unless OMA is applied to many perfect F objects.

Thus my answer to the questions I raised in the first section of this paper is: ACA and OMA are different; jointly they can generate Plato's Forms, but taken separately each generates something different from Forms.

## 6. The Mathematical Objects

In this last section, I shall add very briefly two supporting arguments for my claim. Of special interest for us is a case where ACA, but not OMA, is applied to perceptible objects that look like triangles and not triangles. In this case, ACA would generate many objects which are triangles and never appear not triangles. These triangles are perfect, independent from perspectives, and "always stay the same and unchanged" (*Republic* 479a2-3).<sup>66</sup> Such objects would be required naturally by Plato's philosophy if my claim that ACA and OMA are different is correct.<sup>67</sup> The two

<sup>66</sup> For the precise meaning of "always", see the penultimate paragraph of section 3.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Annas, "On the 'Intermediates'," 160-65. She argues that in the *Republic* Book VII 525c-526b Plato posited mathematical numbers on the basis of what she calls "the arbitrariness of number-ascription," which I think is a special case of conflicting appearances. As to her claim that for Plato mathematical objects are not a solution to

supporting arguments I present here for my claim are concerned with mathematical objects, and they are first Aristotle's report and second the context of ACA in the *Republic* Book VII.

First, Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics*:

besides sensible things and Forms he [Plato] says there are the objects of mathematics, which occupy an intermediate position, differing from sensible things in being eternal and unchangeable, from Forms in that there are many alike, while the Form itself is in each case unique.<sup>68</sup> (*Metaphysics* 987b14-18)

According to this report, Plato introduced mathematical objects as well as mathematical Forms, in addition to the sensible objects of which mathematical terms are predicated; for example, mathematical triangles as well as the Form of Triangle, in addition to visible triangles drawn on paper. Aristotle characterizes mathematical objects by contrasting them with sensible objects on the one hand and Forms on the other hand; mathematical objects share plurality with sensible objects, and perfection with Forms. Why is anyone tempted to assert that there are mathematical objects?

Certainly, visible triangles are imperfect. They are, for example, lead scratches or ink stains on paper, and since they are material existences, they will perish someday. But the Pythagorean theorem will still be true even if all visible triangles vanish. So there should be perfect triangles. The Form of Triangle, however, does not seem appropriate for mathematical propositions, because the Form is unique while some mathematical propositions require more than one triangle. For example, one isosceles right triangle A is divided into two equal isosceles right triangles B and C. This proposition would be nonsense unless there are three triangles. So the objects of mathematics are

---

“the Uniqueness Problem” that a unique Form cannot be a plurality of entities mathematical statements refer to, however, I think that the point is not so much that mathematical objects are distinguished from Forms by the concern with “the Uniqueness Problem” as that mathematical Forms are distinguished from mathematical objects by the univocity assumption (OMA).

<sup>68</sup> The translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* I shall use is Ross's translation in Barnes.

something other than Forms.

Explaining a Platonic doctrine that mathematical numbers are combinable, Aristotle further says:

in mathematical number no unit is in any way different from another.  
(*Metaphysics* 1080a22-3)

According to that report, each mathematical number consists of units that are equal to each other, and that is why addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of numbers are possible. Here again, numerical Forms, which are each simple and do not consist of parts, would not be subject to the arithmetical processes; or if they are, their processes would be very different from what we intuitively conceive as arithmetical processes. Thus the doctrine of mathematical numbers, as Aristotle reports it, implies that there are many equal units, which are not Forms, but of which numbers consist. My claim that ACA and OMA are different has the advantage of making Aristotle's report intelligible.

Second, in the educational program of future philosophers in the *Republic* Book VII, Plato distinguishes mathematics from philosophy, setting mathematics as a preliminary study for philosophy. The major role of mathematics as a preliminary study is to turn a student's soul from becoming to being. ACA is presented in the context of explaining how mathematics turns one's soul from becoming to being. This shows that the objects of mathematics are beings as much as Forms are. Yet Plato says that mathematics is concerned with:

numbers . . . in which the one is as your axiom claims it to be . . . each one equal to every other one, without the slightest difference between them, and containing no parts within itself. (*Republic* 526a2-4)

This means that mathematical numbers consist of equal units, and further suggests that there are many mathematical twos, threes, etc. If there are many mathematical objects corresponding to every mathematical Form, mathematical objects and Forms are different, and mathematics and philosophy should be different subjects. This, too, is

made intelligible by my claim that ACA and OMA are different. Thus my claim has a double advantage of making intelligible both Plato's remarks on the nature of mathematical units and Aristotle's report on Plato's doctrine of mathematical objects.

### Bibliography

- 浅野幸治「プラトンのイデア論の不完全述語解釈その後——中畑とホワイト」, 阪南大学学会『阪南論集 人文・自然科学篇』第31巻第1号, 1995年6月, 1-11ページ。
- 「プラトン『国家』篇における数学の対象」, 東北大学哲学研究会『思索』第28号, 1995年, 103-125ページ。
- Allen, R. E. "The Argument from Opposites in *Republic V*." *Review of Metaphysics* 15 (1961): 325-35. Reprinted in Anton & Kustas, 165-75. (Cited in the latter pagination.)
- , ed. *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.
- Annas, Julia. "On the 'Intermediates'." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 57 (1975): 146-66.
- . *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Anton, J. P., and Kustas, G. L., eds. *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, Vol. I. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1971.
- Barnes, Jonathan. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Bloom, Allan. *The Republic of Plato*. New York: Basic Books, 1968.
- Fine, Gail. "The One over Many." *Philosophical Review* 89 (1980): 197-240.
- . "Aristotle and the More Accurate Arguments." In Schofield & Nussbaum: 155-77.
- Gosling, J. C. B. *Plato*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.
- Hamilton, E., and Cairns, H., eds. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Kraut, Richard, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Owen, G. E. L. "A Proof in the *Peri Ideōn*." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77 (1957), 103-11. Reprinted in Allen, *Studies*, 293-312, and Owen, *Logic, Science and*

Kozi Asano, June 1996

*Dialectic*, 165-79. (Cited in the last pagination.)

———. *Logic, Science and Dialectic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Penner, T., and Kraut, R., eds. *Nature, Knowledge, and Virtue: Essays in Memory of Joan Kung*. Edmonton, Alberta: Academic Printing and Publishing, 1989.

Schofield, M., and Nussbaum, M., eds. *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy Presented to G. E. L. Owen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

White, Nicholas P. "Perceptual and Objective Properties in Plato." In Penner and Kraut, 45-65.

———. "Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology." In Kraut, 277-310.

(This paper appeared in *Hannan Ronshu: Humanities and Natural Science* (Hannan University) 32, No. 1 (1996): 79-96.)