

Parmenides 127d–133a

Boris Hennig

May 14, 2005

These are notes that I assembled for my own use. I do not recommend quoting or using it as it stands. There would have been no need for a new commentary on the *Parmenides*, and the best thing to do will be to follow the references to existing commentaries.

One should not interpret the two parts of the *Parmenides* in separation. This is common opinion, and I agree with it. I have done it here nonetheless, since I am interested in 127d–133a for my own, particular reasons.

Anyway, in order to be able to understand the second part, one will have understand the first.

Contents

1	127d–130a	2
1.1	127d–e: Zeno’s Paradox	2
1.2	128a4–b6	3
1.3	128e5–129a6	4
1.4	129a6–b6	7
2	130a–133a	11
2.1	Overview	11
2.2	130a–e: Ideas of hair, mud, and dirt	12
2.3	130e4–131b2	14
2.4	131b–c The Day and the Sail	15

2.5	131c–e: Dividing Largeness	16
2.6	131e–132b	16
2.7	132b–c: Forms as thoughts	20
2.8	132d–133a: Forms as Paradigms	23

1 127d–130a

1.1 127d–e: Zeno’s Paradox

Zeno has given a talk and Socrates asks:

How do you mean this, Zeno? If the things that are¹ are many, they must therefore be both like and unlike; but this is impossible, for neither can the unlike² be like, nor the like be unlike? Don’t you say so?

— I do, said Zeno.

— And this, if it is possible both that unlikes³ be like and that likes be unlike, it is also impossible that they be many;⁴ since if many things existed, they would undergo the impossible?⁵ (127e1–8)

Compare Zeno, fragment 3. Zeno’s argument is the following: Assume there is more than one thing. Then there will be at least two things *A* and *B* such that $A \neq B$. Hence, *A* and *B* are both like and unlike. Each of the following implicit assumption would make the argument valid.

1. As a rule, for any two different things *A* and *B*, there must be a respect in which they are not different.
2. Everything is like itself, i.e. *A* is like *A* and *B* is like *B*.

¹τὰ ὄντα.

²Scolnicov’s choice for τὰ ἀνόμοια. Cornford and Allen: “unlike things”.

³Turnbull and Coxon for τὰ τε ἀνόμοια. Cornford, Allen, Scolnicov: “unlike things”.

⁴Cornford, Allen, Scolnicov. Turnbull and Coxon: for there to be many.

⁵πάσχοι ἂν τὰ ἀδύνατα. Cornford, Allen, Turnbull speak of impossible attributes, qualifications, or characteristics. That, however, would already presuppose the notion of *predication* that Socrates is now going to introduce.

3. Both *A* and *B* are unlike. Hence, they are *like* in being unlike.
4. *A* and *B* must be alike in that they both exist.

Since (1) makes use of the notion of respects it does not appear to be what Zeno needs. As for respects, see the Principle of Non-Contradiction as stated in Republic IV, 436b8–c1 (and below). If (2) or (3) is the premise that Zeno implicitly assumed, then his argument rests on dropping one term of a relation (Allen 1997:86f.). That *A* is like *A* and unlike *B* is not contradictory, that *A* is like and unlike merely *sounds* contradictory. I would opt for (4), which does involve respects of likeness, but without explicitly introducing that notion.

1.2 128a4–b6

Socrates now remarks that Zeno really wanted to say the same as Parmenides, but by different means.

I see, Parmenides, said Socrates, that Zeno here wants to enjoy a relationship with you not only in love but also in his book. For in a certain way he wrote the same thing as you did, but but by changing tactics he tries to mislead us into thinking he is saying something different (128a).

Zeno gives indirect proofs of the claims that Parmenides had stated directly. (The explicit reflection on this method may serve a purpose here.) It is not clear, however, why Socrates finds this misleading.

The initial speech of Socrates should perhaps rather be read as a pun on plurality in Zeno's own talk. Socrates says that Zeno wants to prove the one claim that there is only *one* being by *many* words (128a8: λόγοι), the *one* (Parmenides) saying 'one', the *other* saying 'not many'.¹ It is indeed odd to deliver more than one proof of the claim that there cannot be more than one thing.

¹Τὸ οὖν τὸν μὲν ἕν φάναι, τὸν δὲ μὴ πολλά, 128b3–4.

Indirect Proof

Socrates refutes Zeno’s negative claim that things cannot be many, but at the same time, he leaves the original claim by Parmenides untouched, that things are one. Both can be the case: for instance, a man may be called “one” and “seven” (Scolnicov 2003:50).

That a refutation of a claim is not automatically the defense of the opposite claim seems to be some of the import of the first remarks of Socrates about the relation of Zeno’s argument to Parmenides. (Scolnicov 2003:47: “But Socrates is implying that Zeno’s position is not necessarily a simple negative formulation of Parmenides’ ”.)

1.3 128e5–129a6

In response to Zeno’s argument, Socrates refers to forms.

Don’t you think that a form of likeness is something in and by itself¹ and that opposite to such a form, *what unlike is* is again something else,² and that in these two, I and you, and all that we call ‘many’ come to take part?³

And those coming to take part in likeness become like both by it and to the extent that they would come to take part in it, and those coming to take part in unlikeness become unlike, and those coming to take part in both become both? (128e6–129a6)

Socrates introduces the form of F under two names: $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \kappa\alpha\theta’\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\iota\ F$ and $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\xi\sigma\tau\iota\nu\ F$. (Regarding the former, see (1) below. As for $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\xi\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ see Peipers 1883:38–49 and Coxon 1999, Appendix I.)

Note that things are *not* many by taking part in the form of ‘Manyness’, but by taking part in likeness and unlikeness.

¹Coxon for $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \kappa\alpha\theta’\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\iota\ \acute{o}\mu\iota\acute{o}\tau\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$. Cornford: “that there exists, just by itself, a Form of Likeness”.

²Coxon for $\kappa\alpha\acute{\iota}\ \tau\tilde{\omega}\ \tau\omicron\iota\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\ \alpha\tilde{\upsilon}\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\ \tau\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$, $\acute{o}\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\acute{o}\mu\omicron\varsigma$. Allen: “another character [exists] opposite to it, what it is to be unlike”.

³μεταλαμβάνειν. See Cornford 1939:69 fn.

The notion of a form is taken as already known by all participants.

Zenon wird eher vorgeworfen, einen wichtigen Aspekt vernachlässigt zu haben, als daß seine Sicht des Seienden nun plötzlich um einen ganz neuen Bereich erweitert würde. (Schudoma 2001:20; cf. Coxon 1999:3 and 99)

There are three features that seem to be new nonetheless. (1) Socrates uses “form” to refer to attributes that can be defined. (2) He distinguishes between two senses of ‘is’: a sense in which forms ‘are’, and another sense in which something ‘is *F*’, that is, participates in *F*. (3) He is able to speak of respects in which an empirical thing is like another.

(1) Forms are Something

Coxon 1999:27–32 emphasizes that Plato consistently uses the particle $\tau\iota$ in connection with forms.

It has been insufficiently noticed that in ascribing “being” to a particular Form or group of Forms Plato’s expression regularly includes the indefinite pronoun $\tau\iota$ or its plural $\alpha\tau\tau\alpha$, even when these in the usual renderings contribute little or nothing to the meaning. (Coxon 1999:27)

See, for instance, *Phaedo* 102a. The point seems to be that a form is something definable. When Socrates inquires about the definition of justice or beauty, he does not only assume that *there is* some form of justice and beauty, but that it is *something definite* that can be considered in its own right (Coxon 1999:30). That means, first, that it is somehow separate from the empirical, individual just men or beautiful things, but second, that it can be distinguished from other forms and particularly from the one, nonempirical Parmenidean being. Parmenides would not deny the existence of forms, but rather claim that there is only one real form.

[Parmenides] considered the terms identified as Forms or Kinds by Socrates as alternative names either of the one being or of an indefinite plurality with only a nominal being, while Socrates’ formula

treats each such term as the name of an individual which is objectively what it is but is distinct from being as such. (Coxon 1999:104)

Note that Parmenides criticizes Socrates for having attempted prematurely to define each of the individual forms separately (135c9–d1). That may indicate that according to Parmenides, the forms cannot be grasped in isolation at all, or that they can each be defined only after a good deal of training. If the latter part of the *Parmenides* is supposed to indicate the nature of such training, we may guess that it is *hard* training.

(2) The Copula

Coxon refers to Eudemus:

Eudemus comments (*fr.* 37 Wehrli) that the attempt to eliminate the copula was aimed at countering Zeno’s argument that no sensible could *be* anything, since no subject of predicates could be unitary, and that this problem was first solved by Plato’s introduction of a double sense of ‘is’. (Coxon 1999:21)

... [Eudemus] adds that Plato invoked the linguistic distinction of nouns from verbs to illustrate the logical distinction of what possesses or is believed to possess substantial being from the temporal occurrences denoted by these assertions by the copula. (*ibid.* 34)

There are two types of logical copula: one atemporal, the other temporal.¹ Things other than forms ‘are’ in a *temporal* sense of being: they come into existence, cease to be, acquire and lose properties.² The forms themselves ‘are’ not in a temporal sense of being. They may fall under second order types and qualify each other, being related to another. But none of these things occurs in time. A form does not become or cease to be, it simply is, and it does not become or cease to be *F*, but simply is *F*.

¹Cf., perhaps, Rödl 2005.

²γίγνεσθαι, 129a4. Accordingly, Cornford 1939:69 notes that μεταλαμβάνειν 129a3 means “*beginning to partake*”; he refers to 155e, 156a.

(3) Respects of Likeness

The introduction of forms might amount to an introduction of respects of likeness, which would have been the easiest answer to Zeno. Then, Socrates should have said something like the following:

If two things are alike, they both share in some form. That is, A is like B in that both A and B are F (write $A =_F B$). But then it is possible that for some form F , $A =_F B$ and for some other form G , $A \neq_G B$.

However, he presents a more complicated and less convincing argument.

If two things are alike, they both share in likeness (L). To share in L , however, is not to be identical to L . Therefore, something can share in L and also share in the opposite of L at the same time. It is thus no contradiction that A and B are both like and unlike.

If this is correct, it invalidates Zeno's indirect proof. That something shares in F does not imply that it does not share in non- F . That two things are unlike does not mean that they are unlike in every respect. Likewise, that something is one does not imply that it could not also be many (129b).

But then it seems to be irrelevant that the form in question is likeness (Allen 1997:91). (This should count against such an interpretation.) Socrates could also have said that if something is white, this does not imply that it is nothing but white. White things may also be not white.

1.4 129a6–b6

Socrates draws a distinction between those relations that things can have to forms and those that forms can have to other forms. Perhaps this indicates that contrary to Parmenides and Zeno, Plato was willing to assign some real ontological status to changeable and empirical things. Allen 1997:124 has claimed that giving things like mud and hair a special status *independent* of forms is the mistake of the young Socrates that Plato wants to demonstrate

here. However, this can only be considered a mistake from a *Parmenidean* point of view. Cf. Coxon 1999:103: “a primary purpose of his [Socrates’] theory is to refute Parmenides’ denial of any reality to phenomena”.

The Logic of Sharing

Formally, the structure that Socrates already has introduced is the following:

There are F and F' such that some things share in F , some share in F' , and some share in both.

This would not hold for Fregean predicates (where $'$ is read as negation):

There are $F(\dots)$ and $non-F(\dots)$ such that for some things x , $F(x)$ is true, for some $non-F(x)$ is true, and for some both $F(x)$ and $non-F(x)$ is true.

There are no things x for which both $F(x)$ and $non-F(x)$ would be true. It may be the case that Socrates agrees with Zeno that in the realm of sensible beings, we must be prepared to encounter real contradictions.

On the other hand, the structure that Socrates has introduced would also apply, in a logically less objectionable manner, to things like cakes.

There are two cakes A and B such that some people can have a part of A , some can have a part of B , and some of both.

On this reading, however, $'$ does not indicate negation, and accordingly F and F' are not related to another in any interesting sense. A is not the opposite of B . If it were, no one could have both A and B . (Substitute ‘have B ’ by ‘eat A ’.)

Let us then assume that there is no real negation in the realm of sensibles. Either we do not have contradictions (on the cake-reading) or contradictions are only to be expected (on the Fregean reading), which would at least deprive negation of its logical force. Socrates now adds to his formal structure:

There are F and F' such that some things share in F , some share in F' , and some share in both. But neither can F share in F' , nor can F' share in F .

This amounts to adding a real negation, but in a queer way. Oppositeness is only clearly defined for forms. Presumably, other things are mixtures of opposites, such that no simple principle of noncontradiction would hold for them (cf. Anaxagoras, fr. 17).

Principles of Noncontradiction

The Parmenidean principle of Noncontradiction is very simple: nothing can be and be not at the same time (Scolnicov 2003:13). Plato's is much more sophisticated: nothing can be such and not such in the same respect at the same time. The Platonic principle also works for sensible beings; Parmenides had to hold that the sensible world is downright contradictory.

Plato is fully committed to the unrestricted (or absolute) Principle of Noncontradiction, and he sees, with Parmenides and Zeno, that sensible things do not conform to it. But Plato does not dismiss the sensible world as a domain in which there is no truth and no reality. Forms do comply with the absolute Principle, and they are, therefore, fully real. But if . . . we should want to ascribe some degree of reality to the sensible world, we must posit the possibility of restricting the Principle of Noncontradiction, so as to allow some reality to entities that do not conform to the absolute Principle. (Scolnicov 2003:14)

Senses of “ A is B ”

It is often said that Socrates improves on Eleatic ontology by acknowledging two senses of being. One may, from a more aristotelian point of view, distinguish at least the following senses of “ A is B ” (Cf. Categories 2).¹

¹A further ‘is’ would be Wiggins’ “is of constitution” (Wiggins 2001).

- i. A is identical to B (“a rose is a rose”),
- ii. A is an instance of B (“a rose is a plant”),
- iii. A has the property B (“a rose is red”).

Apparently, Socrates would not say that empirical things are really identical with themselves; they are constantly changing. Assuming that this is the case, (i) will only be applicable if both A and B refer to forms. Otherwise, it would make no difference between forms and their instances, except that A and B must belong to the same category.

As for (ii), it is questionable whether forms instantiate themselves. On some occasions, Plato says things like “the form of beauty is beautiful”; cf. the discussion on self-predication and the Third Man Argument. At any rate, it should be clear, first, that forms are instances of some higher order forms (every form is an instance of ‘form’, ‘being’, ‘one’ etc.). Second, in (ii) B could not possibly be anything but a form.

There are three possible readings of (iii). First, A may be a form, and B such a predicate as ‘one’. Or, secondly, A is a particular thing. Then it may be related to a form, which is what Socrates appears to mean here.

iii.’ The particular thing A participates in the form B .

Speaking for myself, however, I would find the following reading much more plausible:

iii.” An instance of A has an instance of B .

We are talking about a particular thing that is addressed under the form A (“a rose”). It is an instance of a form (“being a rose”), which fact may be articulated by a sentence of type (ii). Say it is a red rose. Then it possesses a property, redness. But the form ‘redness’ in itself is not possessed by anything. That would imply that when the redness of this rose is altered or destroyed, redness would change or cease to be; similar absurdities will be presented by Parmenides. Hence if there is such a form of redness in itself, it is not possessed by any red thing. Red things possess their own *instances* of redness.

This again may be expressed by a sentence of kind (ii): the particular redness of this rose is an instance of the form ‘redness’.

This may be the initial mistake that Socrates makes in stating his theory of forms. He conceptualizes property-possession as a simple relation between things and forms, not as a relation between instances of thing-forms and instances of property-forms.

Note however, that subscribing to a theory of property possession along the lines of (iii'') would not solve all problems. We would still have to explain what it is for a thing or a property token to be an instance of its type. The problem, then, is not the relation between like things and the form of likeness, but still the relation between particular roses and rednesses and their types ‘rose’ and ‘redness’. One might hope that such problems are easier to handle; but this is not the occasion to give it a try.

2 130a–133a

2.1 Overview

Parmenides is now going to put forward several objections.

A List of Misconceptions According to Coxon 1999:110–1, all these objections relate to some misconception of platonic forms.

1. 131a–e: forms are not “in” their participants, but rather something like their immaterial source.
2. 131e–132b: forms may not be classed along with their participants.
3. 132b–c: forms are not thoughts but objects of thoughts
4. 132d–133a: if forms are paradigms, the likeness relation between patterns and their copies cannot be symmetrical.
5. 133a–134e: forms are not radically separated from their instances.

A Partition of Accounts Scolnicov 2003:24 has suggested the following general pattern:

- I. Forms and their images belong to the same ontological category.
 - (a) Concerning participation,
 1. either things physically share the whole forms (131b3–c11),
 2. or things physically share parts of forms (131c12–e2)
 - (b) Concerning priority,
 1. either forms are modeled after things (131e8–c11),
 2. or forms are paradigms of things (132c12–133a7).
- II. Forms and their images belong to independent ontological realms (133a8–134e8).

On two occasions, Socrates does not conform to such a division. In 131b3–6, he introduces a distinction between things of different ontological categories by comparing the forms with the day that can be at more than one place at once. In 132b3–c11, he suggests that forms may be thoughts, again introducing things of another ontological status. On both occasions, Parmenides corrects Socrates. He substitutes a material sail for the ‘immaterial’ day, and he urges Socrates to assume that when forms are thoughts, their images should also be considered thoughts.

The whole discussion is modeled on Zeno’s initial argument. Either forms are like their images, or they are completely unlike their images. Since neither assumption is tenable, it seems that forms are both like and unlike their images.

2.2 130a–e: Ideas of hair, mud, and dirt

And with regard to those, Socrates, which might be thought ridiculous, such as hair and clay¹ and dirt or anything else entirely undignified and trivial,² are you perplexed whether or not to say that there

¹Coxon. Cornford, Allen, Turnbull, and Scolnicov translate πηλὸς as “mud”.

²Cornford for ἀτιμότατον τε καὶ φαυλότατον. Allen: “worthless and trivial”. Turnbull: “unvalued and unworthy”. Scolnicov: “most base and lowly”.

is a separate form of each of these too, a form different from what we can hold in our hands?¹

—No, Socrates answered, I think that these are just the things we see. To suppose that a form of them is something² [subject to a definition] is perhaps too paradoxical. (130c7–d5)

Hair is a body member, and as such, it has no independent form. It only has a form related to the body. Clay, as matter, does not have its own form.

The point regarding base and undignified things is that there can be no standards of deficiency. To say that something is a deficient instance of *F* does not introduce any new criteria besides those for being a good instance of *F*. This has been emphasized by Pseudo-Dionysius in his *Divine Names*. In the *Phaedo* (74), forms appear as what things “want to be”. As no one can want to be evil, no thing could “want” to be deficient.

(See also *Politicus* 266d; *Sophist* 227a–b. For hair, see the historical notes in Coxon 1999:5.)

But Parmenides goes on to say that all these things do indeed have forms, that is, they can be defined.

Yes, for you are still young, Socrates, Parmenides answered, and philosophy has not yet taken hold of you, as it will yet take hold in my belief, when you will not find any of them undignified.³ (130e1–3)

Turnbull has read this remark as a warning that one should not confuse moral standards with natural ones. It may be that no one can want to be evil, but that does not mean that nothing imperfect exists.

In effect it invites Socrates not to confuse the intelligibility of everything that is or comes to be (including hair or dirt) with its desirability. (Turnbull 1998:22)

¹Turnbull. Cornford, Allen, Scolnicov: “things we handle”. Coxon: “those with which we men are concerned”.

²Coxon.

³ὅτε οὐδὲν αὐτῶν ἀτιμάσει. Cornford, Allen, Turnbull, Scolnicov (roughly): “You will not despise any of them”. Coxon: “you will find none of them insignificant”

Allen assumes that to consider anything formless would be to dignify it.

So Socrates has made a wrong admission. Specifically, because hair, mud and dirt are worthless and trivial, he has implicitly endowed them with independent reality. (Allen 1997:124)

But why should we not claim that what we can hold in our hands is, after all, not ‘really’ real? At least Parmenides appears to be able to say so.

2.3 130e4–131b2

Now, each thing that comes to take part receives as its share¹ either the whole form or a part of it? Or could there be another way of coming to take part, apart from these?

—No, How could there be? (131a5–8)

If each participant receives the whole form, there cannot be more than one participant in one form, unless the form is duplicated. If, on the other hand, each receives a part, no participant receives the whole form. But what should it mean to receive a part of a form? Parmenides draws a very materialistic picture of forms and their parts. Scolnicov argues that he is licensed to do so, since the possibility that forms are immaterial will be dealt with later.

Here Parmenides interprets μέρος, ‘part’, as strictly material. This is not simply a caricature of the doctrine of forms. So long as the possibility of a split-world ontology is not being considered, Parmenides argues from his own point of view: from a single-world, homogeneous ontology, in which all entities are of the same type. (Scolnicov 2003:56)

Allen frequently speaks of “participation in a part of an idea” (1997:133: “participation is participation in parts”). But it was the meaning of “participation” in the first place that was at issue. If participation is read as “sharing a part”, then “participation in a part” would be “sharing a *part of a part*”.

¹Cornford for τὸ μεταλαμβάνον μεταλαμβάνει.

2.4 131b–c The Day and the Sail

Parmenides claims that if each participant in a form receives the whole form, there will be several instances of the whole form in its participants and hence, the form will be apart from itself. Socrates then adduces the example of the day(light), which is in many places at once and yet in no way separate from itself.

According to Scolnicov, Socrates thereby invokes an immaterial analogue, which is out of place here. Immaterial forms are discussed later. However, Parmenides does not tell Socrates not to use immaterial things as examples. He simply asks for the permission to change the example, to which the young Socrates agrees. The change from daylight to a sail spread over a number of people is not radical, anyway. The sail is not cut into pieces, but it remains one and the same sail, stretching over a dimension.

So wenig das Tageslicht Teile hat, nur weil man etwa ein Stück davon mit einem Sonnenschirm verdecken kann, so wenig kann man von Teilen eines Segels sprechen, je nachdem ob sich zwei oder zehn Menschen den Raum unter ihm teilen. (Schudoma 2001:23)

We still think in such terms, at least metaphorically, when we speak of things *falling under* a concept. What both Parmenides and Socrates do want to say is that the form, like the sail, is one and the same and separate from its instances. These instances only “fall under”, but they do not affect the form. But neither does the Form affect the instances if it is literally *above* them.

By accepting the sail analogy, Parmenides has in fact already abandoned the crude materialist picture according to which the form is given to its instances, either as a whole or in pieces. The sail is not given to any of the men under it. The problem that remains, however, is that in order to act like a sail, a form must have parts. Only things that have parts can be extended, and only extended things, or so Parmenides wants to argue, can have an extension.

If Parmenides really gives up the materialist assumption about sharing parts at this point, he makes less obvious mistakes.

In his next steps, however, Parmenides does connect the claim that the form is divisible into parts with the unwarranted assumption that these parts are

literally given, as parts, to the instances. This would rather amount to cutting the sail into pieces. (Consider two men sharing a car. They need not cut it into pieces, and they need not even agree who owns or uses which part of the car; such that in case of a damage, any of them only would have to care for his part.)

2.5 131c–e: Dividing Largeness

Parmenides shows that there is one way in which forms can not be said to have parts. A meter can be divided into parts that are less than a meter. Likewise, largeness could be thought to be divisible into parts that are less than largeness, smallness would divide into parts smaller than smallness and so on.

There are at least three things that may be thought to have gone wrong here.

- (a) Forms have no parts that could be taken away, that is, a form cannot be divided into its parts (cf. *Symposion* 211b).
- (b) Forms may be divisible in some sense, but to divide a form F into parts is not analogous to dividing an instance of F into parts.
- (c) If largeness were large, it could be divided into parts smaller than largeness. But a form F is, in general, not F .

The next objection that Parmenides raises appears to concern (c): the F -ness of a form F .

2.6 131e–132b

I presume you believe that in each case there is one form because of something like this: whenever you think several things to be large, perhaps you think, looking at them, that there is a single and uniform look in them,¹ whence you consider the large to be some one thing.

¹μία τις ἴσως δοκεῖ ιδέα ἢ αὐτὴ εἶναι ἐπὶ πάντα ἰδόντι. “Look” is Turnbull’s choice for ιδέα; Cornford, Allen and Coxon have “character”, Scolnicov “idea”.

—You speak the truth, he said.

—And what about the large itself and the other larges?¹ Whenever you look at them, with your mind,² in the same way, will there not appear again one large, by which all these appear to be larges? (132a2–7)

This objection need *not* rely on the assumption that *F*-ness is *predicated* of the form *F*. It suffices that both the form and its instances are *called F*. They need not be called *F* for the same *reasons*; to point that out would constitute a solution of the problem. Gräser writes:

Der kruziale Punkt im Regreß-Argument ist 132a6–7 mit der Verwendung des Ausdrucks ἐὰν ὡσαύτως τῇ ψυχῇ ἐπὶ πάντα ἴδης gegeben. Denn “ebenso mit der Seele” auf die großen Dinge *und* die Idee Größe bzw. das Große selbst blicken, heißt unterstellen, daß sich Ideen und Partizipanten dem gleichen Blick eröffnen wie vorher die großen Dinge 132a2–3. Diese Beschreibung der Erkenntnis-Situation ist platonisch gesehen unhaltbar. Denn weder sind Ideen Gegenstände normaler Wahrnehmung, noch befinden sich Partizipanten und Ideen auf einer Stufe. Nach allem, was wir aus den einschlägigen Stellen in *Phaidon* und *Politeia* wissen, muß die hier vorgetragene Art der Betrachtung ausscheiden. (Graeser 2003:18)

(Gräser refers to Miller 1992:53 and Dorter 1994:32.)

(Cf. also Aristotle, 987b9–10, who claims that forms and their instances are *synonymous*, i.e. synonymously called *F*.)

Self-predication

Plato does not only suggest that the idea of *F* may be said to be *F* derivatively, but that it is what primarily deserves to be called *F*.

¹Cornford: “large things”.

²Cf. *Phaedo* 66e1.

Deshalb ist es aus platonischer Sicht nicht ungenau, von der Idee von F als dem, ‘Was F ist’ zu reden, sondern es wäre umgekehrt ungenau, von einem an der Idee partizipierenden Einzelding zu sagen, es sei F . (Hägler 1983:52)

Wenn die gebräuchlichen Prädikationen über Einzeldinge als eine Art gescheiterter oder nur näherungsweise gültiger Identifikationen aufzufassen sind, wird der platonische Protest gegen den normalen Sprachgebrauch begreiflich: kein Ding *is t* in Wahrheit das, was der Satz von ihm behauptet. (ibid. 56–7)

It is the assumption of ideas that is supposed to make a theory of predication possible in the first place. Therefore, it is misleading to speak of self-predication in relation to ideas, as if one could understand predication before understanding the theory of ideas.

But the argument of 131e–132b can be understood without the naive assumption that the form F must have the property F . We only need the fact that F must have *some* distinctive feature. The argument may proceed as follows:

- What makes this an a ? How does it differ from that b ?
- a participates in F , whereas b participates in G .
- Then what makes F differ from G ?
- F participates in F' , whereas G participates in G' .
- ...?

Indeed, this would lead to a vicious regress only on the assumption that the form is not F simply by virtue of being an instance of itself, but only by virtue of being an instance of some *further* form F' .

Note further that Coxon (107) and Scolnicov (60) consider “self-predication” unplatonic. Rather, they regard it as a Parmenidean element.

Cf. Hägler 1983:16–60 for a more detailed discussion of ‘self-predication’ in Plato.

The ‘largeness regress’

So far, it does not seem crucial that the form under discussion is largeness. Parmenides could as well have asked whether there is something common to

the form ‘man’ and the men that instantiate it. Allen presents a version of Parmenides’ argument that would make a difference. He argues that where participation is understood as sharing a part, such ideas as largeness and smallness play a special role. For the whole is larger than its parts.

Parmenides has demonstrated the following. If participation is to be construed in terms of the part/whole relation, there is participation in parts of Ideas; Ideas, therefore, are wholes of parts; wholes of parts are larger than their parts; therefore, Largeness is large; therefore, there is an infinite regress of Largeness. Given further that Largeness is what it is to be large, and excludes its opposite, and is unique, this regress is vicious, as implying multiple contradiction. (Allen 1997:166)

Despite the fact that we do not encounter any such argument explicitly in the Parmenides, it makes some sense. It could have been added.

The following is a more reasonable characterization of the ‘largeness regress’:

Here, the problem is not that an infinite regress is generated (although this too may be the case), but, as Parmenides makes quite clear (at 132b2), that the form, which has to be one in order to fulfill its function according to Socrates (a1–3), turns out to be an indefinite plurality (b2, ἄπειρα τὸ πλῆθος). According to this argument, what makes large things capable of being identically predicated is the *one* large thing common to all. Now, if it turns out that we need a similar requirement for *that* large thing, then nothing can be large, for there would be no justification for the common predication. Thus, if the form is one (under the current hypothesis), it must be not just divisible, indefinitely many. But it cannot be both one and many: it must be either absolutely one or absolutely many. (Scolnicov 2003:62)

Duplicating Parts of Forms?

Parmenides has allowed only for the following two possibilities:

1. The form is duplicated, such that there are several forms in the several participants that are in no way different from the original form.
2. A part of the form is subtracted from it and given to a participant, such that only a limited number of participants could receive partial forms.

It transpires that there is indeed “another way of coming to take part” (131a6). It might look like this:

3. A part of the form is duplicated, such that there are several such parts in the participants.

This is not yet a smooth account, but it is not far besides the truth. We want to say that what a thing has when it “is *F*” is not the whole *F*-ness, but an instance of *F*-ness. And an instance of *F*-ness is neither a part of *F*-ness nor is it a duplicate of *F*-ness.

2.7 132b–c: Forms as thoughts

But, Parmenides, said Socrates, perhaps it may be that each of the forms is a thought,¹ and it would not be proper for it to be anywhere else but in a soul. For thus each would be one indeed and would no longer be affected² by what we were just referring to. (132b3–6)

(In the discussion of this suggestion, Plato will refute naive nominalism: thoughts and linguistic expressions are nothing definite without an ontology. They are *of* something.)

The word νοήμα is rare in Plato (Allen 1997:169). It is, however, frequent in Parmenides. Νοήτον appears in fr. 3, where he says that knowledge cannot be of nothing.

¹μη τῶν εἰδῶν ἕκαστον ἧ τούτων νόημα. Cornford, Turnbull and Coxon drop the τούτων. Cornford and Turnbull translate “a thought”, Coxon “a concept”, Allen and Scolnicov “a thought of these things”.

²Scolnicov for πάσχοι; cf. 127e8, 129c1. Allen: “undergo”. Turnbull: “unaffected by the argument”. Coxon: “no longer subject to what was just said”. Cornford: “the statements . . . would no longer be true of it”.

Thoughts of Something

Parmenides goes on to argue that thoughts must be thoughts “of something”. The genitive admits of at least two interpretations, leaving subjective genitive aside: (1) thoughts of some object in the world; (2) thought of some type (Allen 1997:170–2).¹

Gräser, among many others, puts all weight on the first reading:

Nun ist Denken, wie andere Akte, intentional, d.h. ein Denken *von* etwas; und dieses *etwas*, der Gehalt, Inhalt usw. läßt sich nicht ohne weiteres als etwas ‘nur’ Mentales erklären. (Graeser 2003:21)

(This is what medieval thinkers up to Descartes called the “objective reality” of a thought; Peirce would call this the “immediate object”.) Consider the second alternative:

—What, then? said he. Each of the thoughts is one, but is a thought of *no type*?

—But that is impossible, he replied.

—Rather, of *some type*?

—Yes.

—Of *some type* that is? or that is not?

—Of *some type* that is.

—Is it not of *some type*, which that thought takes as being set over all of them, as one single idea?

—Yes.

—Further, will not *this type* that the thought is of as one be a form, ever being the same over all?

—It seems necessary, again. (132b7–c8)

The reading makes some sense, but it cannot be sustained. Parmenides would argue that thoughts must be of some type, that is, equivalent to other thoughts of the same kind. This, however, would introduce forms again, since two thoughts can only be of the same type by participating in the same form.

¹There are, in full, four possible readings: (a) thoughts are always thought of a thinker, (b) of a character like importance or weight, (c) of an object, (d) of a type.

The conclusion, however, that either everything thinks or there are unthought thoughts, does not fit to such a reading.

Anyway, it does not make much difference whether we read an objective or a definitory genitive. Thoughts are of a type only because and insofar as they are thoughts of some object. Conversely, they refer to an object only insofar and because they are of a type. For a sign to be of a such and such a type *is* to have such and such significance (cf. Peirce, CP 4.537).

Why not Thoughts?

And what, then? said Parmenides. Is it not necessary, from the way you say that either each [participant] is composed of thoughts and they all think, or, although they [the ideas] are thoughts, they are unthought?¹

—This, said he, makes no sense either. (132c9–11)

Probably Parmenides wants to say that since thoughts can only be in minds, everything that shares in a thought must think. If the genitive were still definitory, he would claim that minds are kinds of thoughts.

The argument seems to be that if (1) forms are thoughts and (2) their instances participate in them by receiving the whole form or a part of it, then instances of forms must think (= have thoughts).

But it is not at all clear whether Parmenides has brought his point home here. Gadamer writes the following:

Wenn Teilhabe an einem Gedanken ist, ist sie denkende Teilhabe. Das müßte bedeuten, daß alles Teilhabende denkt, oder aber daß es Gedanken gäbe, auch wenn niemand sie denken könnte. Beides erscheint als unsinnig (Gadamer 1986:84).

This is a translation, but not an explanation of the passage. Why should it appear nonsensical to say that there are thoughts that no one thinks? There are,

¹Allen. Cornford: “thoughts which nevertheless do not think”. Turnbull: “despite being thoughts, everything is unthought”. Coxon: “that they are concepts and do not think”. Scolnicov: “although thoughts, they are without thought”.

I should say, certainly such thoughts. Or consider the explanation Kutschera offers:

Das heißt: Wären Eigenschaften der Dinge etwas Mentales, so wäre deren Natur, deren Beschaffenheit nichts Objektives, sondern etwas Mentales, was absurd ist. (Kutschera 1995:36)

I do not see how Plato could have drawn such a distinction between mental and nonmental (=real?) entities, nor why he should have regarded the mental and the objective as being contrary in any sense. (Cf. the picture that Taylor 1989 and Cary 2000 suggest: that the ‘mental’ was considered more public than anything else.) Parmenides’ description of forms as unthought thoughts or ‘objective concepts’ is not really objectionable.

Further, Parmenides has already introduced the very distinction that would solve the present problem: the distinction between a thought and its object. There is something particular in each large thing that makes an observer think the thought of largeness. This does not imply that large things think. The largeness in things is not a thought, but only the object of a thought. Nonetheless, it is the same in all large things insofar as it is the subject of the same thought.

The move that is now open to Parmenides turns on the claim that every thought must be of some *type*. In saying that things are large insofar as they are objects of (adequate) thoughts of largeness, we have presupposed that thoughts of largeness can be grouped into a unified set. But they are of the same type only insofar as they are about largeness, which is a form.

2.8 132d–133a: Forms as Paradigms

Socrates continues:

But, Parmenides, at least to me the matter appears to be very much like this: these forms stand fixed like models¹ in nature,² and the

¹Scolnicov for παραδείγματα. Cornford, Turnbull, Coxon: “patterns”. Allen: “paradigms”.

²Turnbull, Coxon, Scolnicov for ἐν τῇ φύσει. Cornford, Allen: “patterns/paradigms fixed in the nature of things”.

others resemble¹ them and are their likenesses;² and this participation in the forms turns out to be for the others nothing else than being copies of them.³ (132c12–d5)

(This account of uniformity is very close to modern genetics. Things are similar to another because there is something in them that is literally a copy of a common source.)

Assume that A is a copy of a paradigm P . Then A must be like, but not identical to P . (This already brings us back to Zeno's initial argument.) But in order for A and P to be similar, there must be some feature F which A and P share.⁴ This however implies that both participate in F -ness, and hence, according to the present account, that they are similar to F -ness. They are so, presumably, by participating in further features F' and F'' . And so on.

Here we have an instance of the third man argument: If Simmias is a man by virtue of being similar to the form Man, then there must be a further form Man' (the third "Man") which Simmias and Man share such that they are similar to another (Allen 1997:183).

... das Argument ist weder in erster noch in zweiter Linie als Widerlegung der Einzigkeitsannahme gedacht, sondern als Widerlegung eben der Erklärung, die für Sokrates die wahrscheinlichste ist, nämlich der Paradigma-Theorie, und zwar direkt und nicht erst auf dem Umweg über die Negation der Singularitätsannahme. (Hägler 1983:63)

Responding to this argument, Proclus has stressed the point that in the case of paradigms and their images, likeness is asymmetric. The image is like the exemplar, as being its copy, but the exemplar is not like its image, since it is not the copy of its image. However, the relation between a form and its image can be asymmetrical only if forms and images belong to two different

¹Allen, Turnbull, Coxon, Scolnicov for εἰκέναι. Cornford: "are made in their image".

²ὁμοιώματα.

³Scolnicov for εἰκασθῆναι. Cornford: "being made in their image". Allen: "a resemblance of them". Turnbull: "for the others to copy them". Coxon: "becoming images of them".

⁴Cf. the rather doubtful set-theoretical account of similarity in Tversky 1977.

ontological realms (Scolnicov 2003:64–67). Unless there is *no* feature that a form shares with its instances, the present argument will apply. If an image shares any feature its paradigm, it must do so by sharing a second order form with its paradigm.

Selected Bibliography (not all used here)

- Allen, Reginald E. (1997). *Plato, Parmenides. Translation and Commentary*, Volume 4 of *The Dialogues of Plato*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bestor, Thomas Wheaton (1980). Plato's semantics and Plato's "Parmenides". *Phronesis* 25, 38–75.
- Bluck, R. S. (1959). Forms as standards. *Phronesis* 4, 5–11.
- Brisson, Luc (1994). *Platon: Parmenide*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Brumbaugh, R. S. (1982). The history and an interpretation of the text of Plato's "Parmenides". *Philosophy Research Archives* 8.
- Cary, Phillip (2000). *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self. The Legacy of a Christian Platonist*. Oxford University Press.
- Chen, Chung-Wan (1944). On the 'Parmenides' of Plato. *Classical Quarterly* 38, 101–114.
- Cherniss, H. (1957). The relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's earlier dialogues. *American Journal of Philology* 78, 225–266.
- Cherniss, Harold F. (1932). Parmenides and the 'Parmenides' of Plato. *American Journal of Philology* 53, 122–138.
- Clegg, J. S. (1973). Self-predication and linguistic reference in Plato. *Phronesis* 18, 26–43.
- Cornford, Francis MacDonald (1939). *Plato and Parmenides. Parmenides' Way of Truth and Plato's Parmenides translated with an Introduction and a running Commentary*. London: Routledge.
- Coxon, A. H. (1999). *The Philosophy of Forms. An Analytical and Historical Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*. Van Gorcum.
- Curd, Patricia Kenig (1991). Parmenidean monism. *Phronesis* 36, 241–264.
- Dancy, Russell M. (2004). *Plato's introduction of forms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dorter, Kenneth (1994). *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues: The Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman*. University of California Press.
- Frede, Dorothea (1988a). Rezension von Allen, Parmenides, 1983. *Philosophische Rundschau* 35, 86–95.
- Frede, Dorothea (1988b). Rezension von Haegler, Parmenides. *Philosophische Rundschau* 35, 76–86.

- Gadamer, Hans Georg (1986). *Plato. Texte zur Ideenlehre*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Geach, Peter Thomas (1956). The third man again. *Philosophical Review* 65, 72ff.
- Gerson, Lloyd P. (1981). Dialectic and forms in part one of plato's *Parmenides*. *Apeiron* 15, 19–28.
- Graeser, Andreas (2003). *Platons Parmenides*. Franz Steiner Verlag: Stuttgart.
- Hägler, Rudolf-Peter (1983). *Platons "Parmenides"*. *Probleme der Interpretation*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Hathaway, R. F. (1973). The second 'third man'. In Julius M. E. Moravcsik (Ed.), *Patterns in Plato's Thought*. Dordrecht.
- Havelock, Eric A. (1963). *Preface to Plato*. Cambridge, Mass.
- Koumakis, Georgios (1971). *Platons Parmenides. Zum Problem seiner Interpretation*. Bonn: H. Bouvier & Co. Verlag.
- Künne, Wolfgang (1975). Dialektik und ideenlehre in platos 'parmenides'. untersuchungen zu hegels plato-deutung. Dissertation.
- Kutschera, Franz von (1995). *Platons "Parmenides"*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Kutschera, Franz von (2002). *Platons Philosophie*, Volume 2. Paderborn: mentis.
- Lee, E. N. (1973). The second 'third man'. In Julius M. E. Moravcsik (Ed.), *Patterns in Plato's Thought*. Dordrecht.
- Malcolm, John (1991). *Plato on the Self-Predication of Forms*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Marten, Rainer (1975). *Platons Theorie der Idee*. Freiburg: Alber Verlag.
- Meinwald, Constance C. (1991). *Plato's Parmenides*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Meinwald, Constance C. (2002). Plato's pythagoreanism. *Ancient Philosophy* 22, 87–101.
- Miller, Mitchell H. (1992). *Plato's Parmenides: The Conversion of the Soul*. Penn State University Press.
- Natorp, Paul (1921). *Platos Ideenlehre. Eine Einführung in den Idealismus*. Hamburg: Meiner Verlag.
- Nehamas, Alexander (1979). Self-predication and Plato's theory of forms. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, 93–103.
- Palmer, John A. (1999). *Plato's Reception of Parmenides*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Peck, A. L. Plato's parmenides: Some suggestions for its interpretation.
- Peipers, D. (1883). *Ontologia Platonica*. Leipzig.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders (1931–58). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Bristol: Thoemmes.
- Prauss, Gerold (1966). *Platon und der logische Eleatismus*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Proclus Diadochus (1987). *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*. Princeton University Press. Transl. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon.
- Rödl, Sebastian (2005). *Kategorien des Zeitlichen. Eine Untersuchung der Formen des*

- endlichen Verstandes*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Ross, David (1953). *Plato's Theory of Ideas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Runciman, W. G. (1959). Plato's parmenides. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 64, 89–120.
- Ryle, Gilbert (1939a). Plato's 'Parmenides'. *Mind* 48(190), 129–151, 302–325.
- Ryle, Gilbert (1939b). Review: Cornford, Plato and Parmenides. *Mind* 48.
- Sayre, Kenneth M. (1983). *Plato's Late Ontology. A riddle resolved*. Princeton University Press.
- Sayre, Kenneth M. (1996). *Parmenides' Lesson: Translation and Explication of Plato's Parmenides*. University of Notre Dame Press.
- Schofield, Malcolm (1973). Eudoxus in the 'Parmenides'. *Museum Helveticum* (30), 1–19.
- Schofield, Malcolm (1996). Likeness and likenesses in the *Parmenides*. In Christopher Gill and Mary Margaret McCabe (Eds.), *Form and Argument in the Late Plato*, pp. 49–77. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Schudoma, Ingeborg (2001). *Platons Parmenides. Kommentar und Deutung*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann.
- Scolnicov, Samuel (2003). *Plato's Parmenides. Translated with Introduction and Commentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sellars, Wilfried (1959). Vlastos and 'the third man'. In *Philosophical Perspectives*. Springfield: C. C. Thomas.
- Spellman, S. (1983). Patterns and copies: The second version of the third man. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64, 165–175.
- Taylor, Charles (1989). *Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Turnbull, Robert G. (1998). *The Parmenides and Plato's Late Philosophy. Translation of and Commentary on the Parmenides with Interpretative Chapters on the Timaeus, the Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Philebus*. University of Toronto Press.
- Tversky, Amos (1977). Features of similarity. *Psychological Review* 84(4), 327–352.
- Vater, Hans (1971). *Die Dialektik von Idee und Teilhabe in Platons "Parmenides"*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag.
- Vlastos, Gregory (1954). The third man argument in the Parmenides. *The Philosophical Review* 63(3), 319–349.
- Vlastos, Gregory (1969). Plato's "third man" argument (*parm.* 132A–B2): Text and logic. *Philosophical Quarterly* 19(77), 289–302.
- Wahl, Jean (1951). *Étude sur le "Parmenide" de Platon*. Paris: J. Vrin.
- Waterlow, Sarah (1982). The third man's contribution to plato's paradigmaticism. *Mind* 91, 339–357.
- Whitacker, Albert K. (1996). *Parmenides*. Focus.
- Wiggins, David (2001). *Sameness and Substance Renewed*. Cambridge University Press.

Wyller, Egil A. (1960). *Platons Parmenides in seinem Zusammenhang mit Symposion und Politeia. Interpretationen zu Platonischen Henologie*. Oslo.

Zekl, Hans Günther (1971). *Der Parmenides. Untersuchungen über innere Einheit, Zielsetzung und begriffliches Verfahren eines platonischen Dialogs*. Marburg / Lahn: N. G. Elwert Verlag.