

# *Introduction to James A. Doull's* "The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*"<sup>1</sup>

In 1966 James Doull prepared a rough draft of a book on Plato's late dialogues, in which a significant part of the work was devoted to the *Parmenides*.<sup>2</sup> Although the book was never completed, Doull proceeded during the next thirty-four years to accomplish what he had begun by writing a number of articles on Plato's dialogues. In June of 1976 he completed the article now being published in *Dionysius*. "The Problems of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*" was originally submitted for publication as part of a tribute to John Findlay's work on Plato in *Studies in the Philosophy of J.N. Findlay*. The article was subsequently withdrawn and in its place "Findlay and Plato" was published in Findlay's *Festschrift*.<sup>3</sup> In a book he began in 1966 but never published, Doull intended to treat Heidegger's interpretation of the Platonic philosophy. In the *Festschrift* paper, Professor Doull set out part of the argument of the intended book, i.e., Heidegger and Findlay present opposed interpretations of the Platonic principles each of which have a partial claim to being a true account. Doull interpreted the first part of *Parmenides* as having the structure of the divisions in the Line of Plato's *Republic*, a structure given a scientific articulation in the *Theaetetus*. His article, "A Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*," published in *Dionysius* in 1977, belongs together with his interpretation of the *Parmenides*.<sup>4</sup> In December 1999, Doull produced a paper which appeared in *Animus* and considered the same part of the *Parmenides* (126a–137c) as he had treated in his article "The Problems of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*."<sup>5</sup> The two papers complement each other. The earlier paper presents a more detailed account of the problems treated in the first part of the *Parmenides* than does the more recent

<sup>1</sup> James Doull died on 16 March 2001. His manuscripts are collected and preserved by the James Alexander Doull Archive, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Memorial University, Managing Editor, David Peddle. "The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*" was prepared for publication by the archive and the holder of the copyright, Floy A. Doull. The archive wishes to thank Ms. Heather Perry for her work in transcribing this essay.

<sup>2</sup> The draft of the book is preserved in the James Alexander Doull Archive.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Doull, "Findlay and Plato" in *Studies in the Philosophy of J.N. Findlay*, ed. R.S. Cohen, R.M. Martin and M. Westphal (Albany, 1985) 250–62.

<sup>4</sup> J.A. Doull, "A Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*," *Dionysius* 1 (1977): 5–47

<sup>5</sup> J.A. Doull, "The Argument to the hypotheses in *Parmenides*," *Animus*, Vol. 4 (1999).

one. The two articles do not differ, however, so far as the essential account presented is concerned. Nonetheless, the arguments are organised differently. Doull considered as one problem in his *Animus* article what he treated as the second and third problems in his essay of 1976. There he represented the third problem as completing the second in the series. Surprisingly, the argument for regarding the two problems as really one is more fully articulated in the article now appearing in *Dionysius*. This interpretation is significant because it shows that Plato is beginning explicitly in *Parmenides* from the fourfold division in the *Republic* and the 'second best method' of the *Phaedo*. This insight is understood to provide the context within which the text is to be interpreted. The 1999 paper was the first part of a longer article on which he continued to work until the year before his death. That article treats the whole *Parmenides* as well as the development of the argument of that dialogue within the other late dialogues and in Aristotle's treatment of the Platonic logic. With this, Professor Doull completed the work he had begun in 1966. His final comments on the Platonic philosophy will appear in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Forthcoming in Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, eds. D. Peddle and N. Robertson (Toronto).