

The Problem of Participation in Plato's *Parmenides*

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The difficulties *Parmenides*, from 131a–135c in the dialogue named after him, brings before Socrates about 'participation' or the relation of 'the many' to the 'Eide' need first to be set carefully in the argument up to that point. They are difficulties peculiar to the Platonic philosophy, and are certain to be found unintelligible if considered in the light of an Aristotelean or some modern logic. That like objections are made to the Ideas by Aristotle to show that 'participation' is only an empty word and a poetical image need not mean either that he is regarding the problems from the same standpoint or that he does not understand the Platonic standpoint. That 'participation' is an empty name and an image it would not trouble Plato greatly in the end to assent to, but the words would have another emphasis than for Aristotle: they express for Plato as the truth of the matter that the relation is not 'substantial'.

The dialogue begins with the interest of certain Clazomenians, philosophers in the fullest sense, in what was said when a very young Socrates met and had philosophical discussion with Zeno and *Parmenides*. Their interest one will naturally take to mean that they hope to learn from the discussion what Anaxagoras, according to *Phaedo*, had failed to show, viz. how the Good was effectively principle and not rather the material conditions of its operation. In that dialogue Socrates tells how, being unable to investigate the Good itself, taken in the sense he gives this concept, as against Anaxagoras, of the total cause of Becoming, he proposed as a *δεύτερος πλοῦς*, second-best course, to explain the becoming and persisting of things as taking or losing part in their adequate or generic *λόγος*.¹ But there these 'reasons' or 'Eide' are introduced for the special purpose of showing the soul to be immortal, and, as he observes at the end of his proof, the hypotheses on which it rests need further examination, that is, the Good itself, the 'Eide' and the 'participants'.² It is indicated to the reader that in *Parmenides* he looks for this examination of the hypotheses.

¹ *Phaedo* 97c foll.

² *Phaedo* 107b.

The first part of *Parmenides* (that is, to the discussion of a new dialectical method at 135c) treats problematically the three hypotheses mentioned. (1) Zeno's arguments against the assumption that there are 'many' and Socrates' reflection on them express logically, and not, as in *Phaedo*, by the image of the sun which blinds one who would gaze on it directly, the nature of the One or Good and why a 'second-best' method can be thought a method at all of investigating it and not simply external to it.³ The One or Good, and not only 'the many' appears as a contradiction from which Socrates takes flight. (2) Socrates' account of his method and Parmenides' questioning about the extent of the Ideas contains both the rule of finite investigation that contraries do not combine and the denial of it if the Ideas are causes of Becoming. Socrates' method and the hypothesis that there are Ideas are thus shown inconsistent and appear both of them uncertain. The examination of 'participation' exposes in the notion of 'participant' both an undivided unity and an endless dividedness. In 'participants' the contradiction of the One itself and that of the divided are found to be compounded and altogether explicit.

In this elenchus one has the first or negative step towards knowing the hypotheses as hypotheses and not fixed and unquestionable beginnings. The result of it is apparently the destruction of Socrates' hope that in the Ideas he could find the relation of 'the many' to the Good and explain them as being the way they are because of the Good. The criticism of 'participation' ends with the Ideas unknowable to us and dialectic therefore impossible. But Parmenides then indicates how another interpretation is possible, namely that the hypotheses are not for a thinking external to them, which rejects them in turn, but for the One itself regarded as negating the distinctions and taking them into its self-relation. The One would then not be simply the Eleatic principle but the origin of the Ideas and the 'participants' and the negation of their apparent independence from itself. The Ideas would thus be saved and dialectic, but it would be a dialectic which had power over its hypotheses—whether abstract forms of the Principle or a finitude assumed to be independent of it—and knew how to treat them as literally hypotheses, that is "stepping-stones and points of departure" to the Good.⁴ The three sections of the first part are thus equivalent to the whole course of the hypotheses in the second part. The first two sections state problematically what there will appear as the two hypotheses about the being of the One. The third section treats what is later the hypothesis about 'the others' as consequent on the twofold being of the One. It treats this and also the

³ *Phaedo* 99d foll.

⁴ *Republic* 511b.

return of 'the others' to dependence on the negativity of the One, that is all the second or negative series of hypotheses. For in the questions about 'participation' Socrates is constrained to give up an assumed division between 'Eidos' and 'participant' and to see them as relative to each other and sustained in their relativity by the One itself.

The problematical or critical part differs from the later hypotheses neither in subject matter, which in both is relations of the One or Good to the Ideas and to 'a many' caused by the Ideas, nor in the logic of these relations. The difference is that in the first part the argument falls to Zeno and Socrates and Parmenides, while in the second Parmenides carries it alone with only a young and altogether passive respondent. Against Zeno and the Eleatic One Socrates would save the finite in the form of Ideas and 'participants' in them. Parmenides shows him that he has not understood the logic either of the Ideas or of 'participation.' But in this elenchus the argument has returned to where it began, that is to the Eleatic One. Socrates' position and the refutation of it fall within a circle, the movement of which Parmenides can now set forth objectively.

Out of the criticism of Socrates emerges a new dialectic which for the first time attends seriously to the logic of the production of a *κόσμος* or finite order from one or more *ἀρχαί*. The new dialectic attempts to express in a perfectly universal form or logically that the principle cannot be an abstraction beyond its product but must also be comprehensive of it; secondly what the division of product from its cause is logically; and thirdly the relation and dependence of the caused or, as Plato calls it, 'the others' is to the Principle. The result of the dialectic would thus be to have shown the Good as principle.

Socrates' response to the arguments of Zeno is twofold. First he gives in to them, secondly he counters them by an hypothesis about 'the many' which seems to evade their force. In giving in he reinterprets the arguments and extracts from them their common logical form: 'If there are many, the many will be both of contraries, since this is not possible, there are not many.'⁵ This reasoning he takes to be, not a polemic against the opponents of Parmenides and their assumption of 'a many,' but proofs of the One and equivalent to those of Parmenides himself. The One and 'the many' are not on this understanding unrelated hypotheses, but rather the nullity of 'the many' is the being of the One. When Zeno's arguments are given this simple objective form, a difference appears in the object between the One to which they conclude and the contraries themselves together with their presence in

⁵ *Parmenides* 127c.

the many as different but not opposed. The arguments presupposed such a finitude which they then showed to be in truth a contradiction and nullity. But from the conclusion which is the One as self-identical, this divided being, as Socrates observes, is other: it is the negativity or not-being of the One—the divided or Dyadic principle. This being which is there as well as the One is for Socrates partly abstract contraries, such as 'unity' and 'being,' 'like' and 'unlike,' partly their indeterminate relation as 'the many' before the objective meeting of contraries in them.⁶

Through this negativity or otherness Socrates would investigate the One or Good, not directly but as the self-identical in this indeterminate 'many.' These self-identical objects or 'Eide' are for him first of all universal or logical contraries—contraries not in a genus. If he remained with only these 'Eide' he could give no account of Becoming as 'participation' of 'Eide' but only, as in the early Dialogues, argue for and against given opinions as he related them to one or the other of contraries. With the logic of this procedure he finds no difficulty: something can be 'many' and also 'One,' 'like and unlike,' and so on. But the one contrary belongs in one comparison, the other in another; it is for a subject knowing them, and not objectively, that both are present.⁷

The Socrates of *Parmenides* is represented as very young.⁸ Neglecting pedantic questions of chronology, one will naturally suppose this to mean that the argument will take up Socrates' thought from its beginning. He hears a Zeno now mature and past the polemical dialectic of his youth. Socrates' inquiries in the early Dialogues are an objective dialectic and not that of the Sophists. Presupposed is the One or Good, the knowledge of which is through such a negation of 'the many' as Zeno's arguments provide.

But Socrates has also moved beyond this abstract and subjective dialectic to the investigation of all nature as the cyclic process of 'participation' in 'Eide.' He is conscious of logical difficulties in this extension which he has not solved. It is Parmenides himself who draws out these difficulties, appropriately since they are about the relation of Socrates' divided principle to the One. The concrete ideas now considered are an objective connection of contraries universally and the showing of this connection in the cyclic becoming and perishing of the 'many.' This objective identity of the divided troubles Socrates because it threatens to take him back to the One and make an end of finite inquiry.

⁶ *Parmenides* 128c foll.

⁷ *Parmenides* 129c foll.

⁸ *Parmenides* 127c.

Socrates is perplexed whether there are Ideas other than those of abstract contraries, the Good and the Beautiful and the Virtues, that is whether he can go beyond a practical attitude. But his perplexity about natural 'Eide' is not the same in all cases. With 'fire,' 'water,' 'man' he has been unable to decide whether there are 'Eide.' In such cases as 'mud,' 'dirt,' 'hair' it seems to him "too absurd" to think there are 'Eide.' He has indeed sometimes been troubled by the thought that he must give the same answer for all things. But from that thought he takes flight for fear he fall into an "abyss of nonsense" and be lost.⁹

To 'separate' the elements or the species of living beings seems reasonable to Socrates, as in *Phaedo* it seems reasonable that the soul can retreat into its self-identity at the death of the body. His proof that the soul can thus retreat has however two parts. In the first he shows it to be separable from its contrary excluding it as 'odd' and 'even' are exclusive. In the second he rather demands for his conclusion than proves that the 'immortal' is also 'indestructible.' The conclusion is then interpreted to mean that what is imperishable is "God and the 'Eidos' itself of life." The proof, that is, terminates thus with the concrete Idea which is of its nature imperishable as itself uniting contraries and not merely their succession for a subject. But without going beyond his method Socrates cannot allow Ideas in that full and proper sense.¹⁰

With 'mud,' 'dirt,' 'hair' there is not the same reason to assume 'Eide' as for the previous examples. They are mixtures of the simple bodies, the last belonging to soul for the protection of its embodiment, which no longer remain themselves if they are analyzed into universal and separable constituents. Regarded in one way, as for example in the *Phaedo* myth, they belong to a lower nature in which souls become involved in their fallen state. In this view they appear as things "trivial and of little value" in comparison with the ideal and universal in nature. Partly Socrates is inclined to this abstract ideality. But it occurs to him also to see the universal and the mixed as one total process. His criticisms of Anaxagoras in *Phaedo* was that he usually explained natural events through *sunaitia*—conditions or ancillary causes- and not as the operation of Intelligence.¹¹ If he will evade the force of his own criticism, it is necessary that he think 'mud,' 'dirt,' 'hair' and the like instrumental and belonging to the causality of the Ideas.

Socrates is deterred from this conclusion, as Parmenides observes, because he is "still young" and "has regard for the opinions of men." It is not of

⁹ *Parmenides* 130b-e.

¹⁰ *Phaedo* 102b-106e.

¹¹ *Phaedo* 98b foll.

course that men generally have any opinion about the Ideas and whether they are also of things "trivial and of little importance." But the gradation and evaluation of nature Socrates makes is mythical and of opinion. But what holds Socrates to this gradation and evaluation of nature is the assumption that things such as 'mud,' 'dirt,' 'hair' are "just what we see them to be." For opinion there is a being of "the many" and a being of universals and the two are not objectively united in one view. The argument will recur to the logic of opinion in the problems of 'participation'. Here the interest is not in that so much as generally in the integration of the two levels of nature.

The direction of the argument can easily be seen from the *Phaedo* myth.¹² The argument proper about the soul arrives at the 'Eidos.' The myth is then about the relation of the 'Eidos' to individual souls and the conditions of their mortality. Mythically there is both a lapse of souls into a lower and contingent realm and a desire and movement back towards the 'Eide.' The fall and the return are different, and it is this division Socrates holds to because he "respects the opinions of men." When philosophy has taken hold of him as Parmenides predicts it will, Socrates will not despise 'mud,' 'dirt,' 'hair' and the like because he will see the opposed movements as one activity. Where the same matters are treated in the second hypothesis of the second part this one activity will be the relation of Being to Becoming. With that relation the hypothesis ends, turning out to be the relation of the One to itself through its division.¹³

It is this result Socrates discerns and takes flight from as "an abyss of nonsense" in which he will be lost. He sees the dissolution of his principle into the One he sought to escape from at the beginning. If there are Ideas, so the argument indicates, they are not abstractions but the total, self-sustaining ground of 'the many,' and the seeming realm of contingent being is a Becoming of the Ideas or a *γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν*. As this, so the second hypothesis will show, it is for the One or is known; as well as being none of the many, the One is them all, and in this twofold relation is again a Becoming. It is this Becoming which is as well Being, that is next to be considered in the problem.¹⁴

Parmenides' first series of questions have brought before Socrates, what he anyway tended to think, that there is not an inferior 'mixed' being, independent of the Ideas, but that there are causes alike of the simple and universal in the many and of all their dividedness and involvement with one an-

¹² *Phaedo* 107d.

¹³ *Parmenides* 141e foll.

¹⁴ *Parmenides* 155e foll.

other. The questions about 'participation' begin with that result or with 'the many' assumed to be thus totally dependent on the Ideas. In the language of the second part of *Parmenides* they are a new hypothesis which presupposes 'the many' and asks what is to be said of them in consequence of the two hypotheses about the being of the One.

'The many' as this new beginning are both other than the One and altogether dependent on it. The difficulties of their 'participation' in the Ideas arise from the nature of this otherness than the One. It is not simply the indeterminate or dyadic Principle which has appeared in the argument to be measured and united with the undivided Principle. The otherness of 'the many' in this hypothesis is united with their self-identity or ideality: as is said of them, they are from their own nature an endless plurality while from the One they are a whole.¹⁵ The Ideas are these same elements. If one ask then what it is for the many to 'participate' them, the question can only be about the relation of these primary elements or aspects. The consideration of the Ideas indicated that they are to be thought the concrete unity of the elements—the reflection of Being and Becoming into each other in which is comprehended all the universal and sensible content. The many 'participants' are the same elements abstractly related. Rather the elements are first abstractly related and the series of problems considers the stages by which again they become concrete and adequate to each other.

The logic of the problem is what is elsewhere expressed in the images of the Line and the Cave—the stages of the recollection of the Ideas.¹⁶ The recollection and liberation of the soul from its hardened and unquestionable hypothesis is possible because the being of 'images' and the grades of being correlative with the other forms of knowing differ from one another as different relations of the same primary elements. The 'images' which the souls in the Cave first take for real are not without relation to the Ideas. On that account the soul adheres to them and gives up its assumption that they are true being with difficulty. They 'participate' the Ideas, it may be said, but it needs to be shown as well that they do not 'participate.'

The logic of the problems as they are presented in the first part of the dialogue is only in part explicit. Socrates indeed follows the guidance of *Parmenides* through the series of problems to "the greatest." That is because in each case the objection made to the positive relation of 'the many' to the 'Eide' is to show them as endlessly other than themselves and the 'Eide.' Socrates therefore gives up always when at first appeared a true account. In

¹⁵ *Parmenides* 158d.

¹⁶ *Republic* 509d foll.

the end, where the relation affirmed and denied is of 'the many' to the 'Eide' in all their concreteness, it appears that either to posit or to deny the 'Eide' is wholly problematical.

What is missing in the problems and later supplied in the hypotheses of the second part is the relation of the affirmation and negation of 'participation' to the One. In the last and "greatest" problem it has indeed emerged that what sustains the two sides is a thinking which opposes the being and the negativity of the 'Eide' and through 'the many,' as immediate subjects of the contrariety, has its relation to itself. If there becomes clear that the contrariety of the 'Eide' as self-identical with their negativity or appearance is the true account and their relation to the One.

In the earlier problems if the affirmation and the negation of 'participation' are brought into one view, the result is partly to destroy the relation, since there is not a common content of both sides, partly to bring into view another object in which the terms of the previous relation are united. This consolidation of the self-identical and the endlessly divided whereby both sides of the opposition have a common content is what permits the movement and liberation of the soul from 'images' to *νοητά* and the One or Good. The problems after the first treat certainly of objects which are not the abstract relation of being and dividedness but have a stable content. There is a common content of both sides of the relation, but this content is inadequate to the formal difference, which prevails and destroys the relation.

Parmenides begins his inquisition of Socrates on 'participation' with the question whether each 'participant' 'participates' the whole 'Eidos' or part of it.¹⁷ Socrates accepts the division, which indeed belongs to the question whether there is 'participation.' The question assumes that there are 'many' which differ from the 'Eide' while also they are related to them. This beginning from an assumed 'many' gives way in the course of the 'problems' to the assumption that rather the 'Eide' are first and cause of 'the many.' At this point that is indeed known from the earlier discussion about the Ideas but is also forgotten. One is here at the attitude of immediate or 'aesthetic' knowledge where the relation of 'the many' to the 'Eide' is abstract or formal.

Socrates is not deterred by the difficulty of thinking that the one identical 'Eidos' can as a whole at the same time be in many which are separate from one another. It may be as with the light of day which, everywhere dispersed, remains one with itself. Light, which permits 'images' to be seen, represents for Socrates the One or Good which is the cause of being.¹⁸ 'The

¹⁷ The first problem, *Parmenides* 131a–e.

¹⁸ *Republic* 508c.

many' in their division *are*, and that is their 'participation.' Later in the second part 'the many' will be spoken of as 'parts' which have no meaning except as of a 'whole.'¹⁹ It is this identity of 'the many' in abstraction from their difference that Socrates attends to.

Parmenides does not dispute this explanation of 'participation' but sets against it the difference and dividedness of 'the many.' The continuity they have with one another in Socrates' comparison with the light of day is rather a discontinuity: a better comparison is with the relation of a sail to the parts of the area over which it is spread. 'Whole' and 'parts' are on this view altogether separated, and the 'Eidos' to be in the 'parts' will have itself to be partitioned. But part of 'great' or 'equal' or 'small' is without power to impart what it is in its character any more than the opposite. 'The many' are on this account the space or receptacle in which the 'Eide' are not yet determinately reflected.

In the one account the many in their separation are in unbroken unity with one another and the One. But in this their own nature or what distinguishes them from the One is disregarded. Parmenides' account regards this aspect but neglects the identity of 'the many.' In truth however neither does Socrates overlook the difference of 'the many' but sees it as immediately nullified in their self-relation nor does Parmenides show their difference to be other than the co-presence of contraries and, by Zeno's argument, the same nullity as by the other account. What distinguishes the two accounts is that for Socrates the indefinite otherness of 'the many' is negated at once before it was ever distinguished as a separate aspect, while it is 'the many' as first separate that are seen by Parmenides as nothing.

The whole λόγος has the same form as elsewhere the criticism of αἰσθησις as knowledge.²⁰ The object of that cognitive attitude is either an inner unity before the division of contraries or an outer mobility and negation of contraries: there is no stable finite content. The soul comes to have possession of the divided as its own only as it is limited or measures by the inner identity and this inner finitude appears also in the outer relations and mobility of things. What has to be abandoned is the separation of the two abstract attitudes symbolized there in the philosopher who takes flight to the abstract Good and the clever 'activist' whose life is measured by the clock.

'Participation' is next considered as the relation of 'the many' to the 'Eidos' in the attitude elsewhere called 'true opinion.' Parmenides assumes that the criticism of the first explanation has had its effect on Socrates, that he is free to regard the question now in this concreter form. Thus he can ask Socrates

¹⁹ *Parmenides* 157d-e.

²⁰ *Theaetetus* 151e foll.

whether when he is comparing many 'greats' there appears to him one identical Idea when he looks to them all.²¹ Here the identical relation of 'the many' is no longer as before without content, but is 'Greatness' or whatever other Idea. This first Idea is an abstract universal which is discovered in comparing 'the many' as, e.g., 'great.' They are not only 'great' but also 'small.' The comparison of 'the many' is the separating or abstracting of 'great' from 'small.' In Socrates' first account of participation the difference of 'the many' simply vanished into their self-relation or identity. Here the same movement of 'the many' to themselves through the negation of their division and otherness is the abstraction of a common quality, that is, the giving to it of simple self-relation as against its involvement with other qualities in all the many as such. There is in this abstraction, as Parmenides says, a looking not to some 'greats' only but to all: the abstraction is not an endless approximation but the completed separation of the quality from its otherness, that is from its otherness as contrary.

Plato chooses 'great' for his example in this as in the first problem. There 'great' and 'small' appeared as indeterminately related, here as limited, that is, as opposed in relation to the One or Good. The endlessness of 'the many' is here no impediment to the abstractive reflection because it is grounded in their identity. There was no need to take as example this or another contrary. In all cases there is formally the same exclusion of same and different, whatever the content be that is abstracted.

The difficulty Parmenides goes on to show in this explanation turns on the inadequacy in it of content to form. As before, he opposes to this reflection which brings the divided together into one relation the difference of 'the many,' their multiplicity and diversity as such. There is now 'the great itself' and 'the other greats' as well. If as before one looks "with the soul" at the ideal or universal 'great' and all the others, there comes into view another 'one great' which is cause of the former Idea and of the 'many greats.' The same division will recur in relation to the new Idea, and this recurrence will repeat itself *ad infinitum*.

The endless succession of Ideas occurs because 'the many' as distinguished from the first Idea, and then from all the rest, are ever an immediate and indeterminate multiplicity. The previous reflection in which the first Idea was discovered showed indeed that such was not their character but that their otherness is essentially formed and limited. But the presupposition and starting point of that reflection was the indeterminate otherness of 'the many' through which the Idea was sought. This presupposition remains other than

²¹ The second problem. *Parmenides* 132a-b.

the result, that is the abstract Idea, and therefore, as Parmenides says, recurs *ad infinitum*.

As in the first problem, Parmenides' objection appears to destroy the position which has appeared true to Socrates. But it may be said to prove too much in that, beginning as it does from the separate Idea, it seems to prove that the separation never occurs. Elsewhere the same difficulty is found with the assumption that knowledge is 'true opinion.' It is found that the universal one has taken for true is not confirmed when one looks to 'the many' but that with them there is error and the confusion of one thing with another. There it is shown also how this ambiguity of 'true opinion' is to be interpreted. In the endlessly repeated return to 'the many' it is forgotten that in the discovery of the first Idea they were negated already. What one returns to therefore from that Idea is properly the negativity or otherness of the abstract universal and not an indeterminate plurality. In Plato's example the endless regress will be in truth an alternation of Greatness and Smallness and a repetition of the same circle. There is a separation of universals in their contrariety from the immediate and indeterminate 'many.' Here the same result is a new attitude to 'participation' in which it is assumed that the Ideas are "in the soul."²²

It seems possible to Socrates to save the Ideas, or, as they are at this stage of the argument, abstract universals without always falling back into the indeterminacy of 'the many,' if they are taken each of them to be thoughts and to be "in souls." He escapes Parmenides' objection because the relating of the Ideas to 'the many' is unified and brought into the imagination, where the content of 'the many' is treated as a nullity or pure relativity. This new position is not fully stated however by Socrates in this response. There is lacking an identical reference of the many universals and the images. Are the Ideas, asks Parmenides, thoughts but thoughts of nothing? Of something that is or is not? The being or self-identical object to which thinking relates the universals and the image is "a one which that thinking thinks as being over all"—over all the universals, that is, and their showing or reflection on one another for the thinking in question. As in his earlier attempts Socrates' thought moves to the identity of a plurality, here a plurality of universals.

What distinguishes the identity in which Socrates in the several problems sees 'participation' or the relation of 'the many' to the 'Eide,' is the difference in each case of 'the many' which are identified. Likewise the separation or division of 'the many' from that identity, which Parmenides in turn opposes to him, is different in each case. What Socrates has unified is in this case

²² The third problem, *Parmenides* 132b–c.

thoughts or universals in relation to a thinking. Against this position Parmenides sets what seems at first a very curious view of 'the many' as other than the identity of this reflection which is "in the soul." 'The many' are composed of thoughts and all think, or, if they do not think, they are the contradiction of unthought thoughts.

Socrates replies that there is not a *λόγος* in this and goes on to a new concept of 'participation.' And indeed Parmenides' objection is not a *λόγος*, but it is the preparation and discovery of just that. The sense of his position is the same as of the question, asked elsewhere, whether knowledge is true opinion with a *λόγος*. That question is there understood to mean that 'the many' will be composed of parts which are self-identical.²³ How they can be composed of such parts is the question what a *λόγος* is. The difficulty lies in the relation of the one or individual to the parts, how it can be the continuing bond and connection of the parts and not rather a nullity as against their stability and independence.

Here Parmenides expresses himself very accurately. 'The many' will not be an indeterminate multiplicity as in the first consideration of 'participation', but their connection will have the same necessity as belongs to the identity just spoken of by Socrates. That is, the relation of 'one' to 'being' will not be immediate but universal. Secondly the self-identical parts will fall within the terms of that relation, but how they are connected in the one subject is perplexing. The connection is either a reflection that passes from the self-identity of the parts to their negativity or difference or is the contradiction in which they are brought together in one relation. In the one view it may be said that all things think or are a composing and dividing of parts that are universals or thoughts. In the other, though they are properly thoughts, they are not thought but are rather annulled.

In this problem the criticism, begun in the last, of the Ideas as abstract universals is completed. There an endless regress in the relation of Idea and 'participant' occurred because the negativity or otherness of 'the many' only immediately or abstractly excluded on the one side, always recurred on the other. Socrates' position in the third problem is then the inner identity of different universals and so the unity of affirmative and negative. The counter position of Parmenides is the explication in 'the many' of this implicit contradiction. It is the way to knowledge of the Idea as *λόγος* or as concrete in that it exposes the nullity of abstract universals, which are only in relation to a subject and not substantially or, as will be said in the next problem, "in nature."

²³ *Theaetetus* 201c foll.

The 'Eide' next appear to Socrates as "stable patterns in nature" and 'the many' as a process of assimilation to them.²⁴ In this view the 'Eide' are no longer abstractions "in the soul" which thinking strives to complete and bring into the form of a λόγος. They are existent λόγοι, from which 'the many' are only distinguished as Becoming from Being. The self-relation of 'the many' and the 'Eidos', which Socrates calls 'participation,' is no longer abstract but is comprehensive of the parts and mutual relations of 'the many.' The image of 'paradeigma' and 'likeness' is from the productive arts. But that analogy should not obscure what is here thought by that relation. The course of the argument has been to unify the contingent content of 'the many' and bring it into the identity of the λόγος or ground. The third problem compelled Socrates to abandon the hypothesis of a 'many' existent as well as the 'Eide.' The explanation he proposes here states in all clarity the consequences of giving up the hypothesis: 'the many' are an appearance of the 'Eide,' a process of contraries or Becoming, ever complete, within which is held all their manifold diversity.

Parmenides then, as in the other problems, draws attention to the difference of the 'Eide' and 'the many' likened to them. The Becoming of 'the many' is self-identical but is different from it also, as is the product of an art from its immediate unity with the concept or pattern. The two sides being distinguished, their likeness is a comparison referred to a third which will be the true 'paradeigma.' Since, however, 'paradeigma' and 'likeness' or product are different the same division will recur, and there will be an endless repetition of the identity and division of the two sides.

In the hypotheses one will learn that the ever recurring difference of the true Being of the 'Eide' and their Becoming is a contrariety and that the contradiction and negation of both is the One as pure negativity.²⁵ There the 'paradeigmatic' Ideas and 'the many' as their likeness' are the first hypothesis 'if the One is not.' This hypothesis which emerges from the nullity of 'the others,' before assumed to be on their own account, is found to be in its full development the return of the One to itself through the negation of Being and Becoming.²⁶ In the argument of the hypothesis these distinctions appear as no longer alien to the One, as in the hypotheses about the being of 'the others.' The sense of the hypothesis is that it restores the One and the finite totality to the unity they had from the first two hypotheses. But now it is a unity which has resulted from the difference of the One and 'the others'

²⁴ The fourth problem, *Parmenides* 132c–133a.

²⁵ *Parmenides* 161e foll.

²⁶ *Parmenides* 160b foll.

and which therefore has this difference as a moment in its activity. The last and "greatest" problem is about this attitude to the Principle.

The "greatest problem" is set forth in both its affirmative and its negative aspect by Parmenides himself. That is appropriate since it treats of 'participation' beginning from the One itself.²⁷ The argument of the problem has as before two parts. In the first the self-identity of the 'Eide' is shown to be inclusive of all their difference and relativity. 'Separation' therefore means that nothing of the 'Eide' is "in us," that the sensible and intelligible of our knowledge is quite other than the distinction of these elements as it would belong to a divine knowledge which knew the 'Eide.' From the demands of the previous problem Socrates rightly assents to this conclusion.

The example is used of the relation of 'master' to 'slave,' of the independent and self-related to what is dependent and subject to other. It suffices to explain the position: there is no longer as with the 'paradeigmatic' relation of the fourth problem a division between the identical 'Eidos' and an immediate product which the soul might take into itself as the beginning of a 'human' knowledge. But the example contains more in that, as Socrates knows, the true freedom and servitude is not a relation of man to man but of men to gods.²⁸ The example therefore breaks through the division of a divine and a human totality. What it is we 'participate' of the 'Eide'—'likenesses' or whatever—by which we are able to unite names and sensible images, making thus a 'human world,' is nothing else than 'Eidos' and 'likeness' in one relation.

The other part of the problem is the same argument from the side of a divine knowledge. It is against common belief that the gods should be ignorant of human affairs. This will however be the case if the knowledge itself of the gods is other than the less accurate human knowledge and truth. The 'human world' is for that inferior human knowledge, and will therefore be unknown to the gods as not the object correlative with their knowledge. But as before it was not 'human knowledge' as such that set up a 'human world' but 'participation' in the 'divine world' so here the obscurity of the 'human world' is not impenetrable to the divine knowledge, but rather its accuracy is just that it has hold of this world through its causes, that is the 'Eide.'

This last is therefore the total problem of 'participation.' It leads the hearer to doubt whether there are 'Eide' and to the firm conviction that in saying they must be "unknowable to human nature," if they do exist, he is saying something. To move from this conclusion requires an ample talent, that is

²⁷ The fifth problem, *Parmenides* 133a–135c.

²⁸ Cf. *Apology* 28e–30b.

one who is not naturally addicted to any particular hypothesis. And still more wonderful is the man who, learning that there are 'Eide,' knows the method of his learning and can teach another: he must be able to go through all the distinctions that have occurred in the present argument adequately.

The obstacle to any movement out of this problem is the conviction that one can say something meaningful without knowledge of the 'Eide.' The sceptic about the 'Eide' and the knowledge of them has failed to observe that his thought is without identical reference and that he has destroyed the power of reasoning. He is in the realm of the indeterminate, from which there is only the semblance of an escape unless, as the problem demands, the division between the 'Eide' and 'the many' is known to be hypothetical and that in relation to the One or Good. The problems and generally the negative or critical part of *Parmenides* end with that insight. The logical and the existential assumptions which oppose an objective consideration of the One in its relations with the 'whole' of 'Eide' and 'participants' have all been destroyed by the argument.

The argument took place between Socrates and Eleatics. It has drawn out the implications of the Socratic beginning of Platonism and of the 'Eide' to which Plato moved from that beginning. The Platonism of the Eidetic Dialogues, as [J.N.] Findlay calls them, was assumed. The argument has shown why it is necessary to go back from the 'Eide' to the principles. It has shown the Socratic dialectic and the 'Eide' to begin with the Principles and to lead back to them. In this the formulation of the Principles has been given an Eleatic character. The Socratic Good is treated as the One. In the first or critical part of *Parmenides* this assimilation does not affect the argument since the 'Eide' and their various relations to knowledge are assumed. In the hypotheses, and especially the second, which considers the generations of the 'Eide' from the Principles, Eleatic method and Socratic-Platonic content begin to conflict. Since, as is clear already from the critical part, the being and truth of the latter is from the Principles, Platonism appears already in *Parmenides* as an Eleatic and mathematicized derivation of the 'Eide.' That Findlay is right in thinking this mathematicized Platonism as anything but a late development is confirmed, one may say, by Plato himself in that here in the first part of *Parmenides* he represents it as underlying the discovery of the 'Eide.'