



Philosophical Review

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Source: *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 4 (Oct., 1998), pp. 501-554

Published by: [Duke University Press](#) on behalf of [Philosophical Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2998374>

Accessed: 07-11-2015 15:33 UTC

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How Parmenides Saved The Theory of Forms

Samuel C. Rickless

1. Introduction

Plato's *Parmenides* divides up into two main parts, the first ostensibly devoted to a series of criticisms launched by a venerable Parmenides against a theory of Forms previously articulated by a youthful Socrates, the second consisting of a virtually unbroken series of deductions (some from the hypothesis that *the One is*, the rest from the contradictory hypothesis that *the One is not*) to seemingly incompatible conclusions. As such, the dialogue poses a serious interpretative challenge, for it is unclear what conclusions Plato expected his readers to draw from both parts and how (or even whether) the conclusion of Part II is supposed to bear on the conclusion of Part I.

Among scholars, opinions vary on all possible fronts. While some¹ believe that Plato intended the arguments of Part I to be valid *reductiones*, others² hold that the purpose of the entire dia-

I would like to thank four anonymous referees for the *Philosophical Review* (hereafter referred to simply as "referee(s)") for their instructive comments and constructive suggestions.

The main ideas for this paper germinated while I was attending a graduate seminar on the *Parmenides* taught by my colleague, Russ Dancy, in the spring of 1997 at Florida State University. I presented some of them at an FSU Philosophy Department Colloquium in October 1997. Many thanks to the seminar and colloquium participants, especially Myunghee Do, Blake Hestir, and Greg Smith. I would also like to thank Darryl Jung, Pat Matthews, and Maria Morales for their support and probing questions. My greatest debt is to Russ Dancy and Dana Nelkin, without whose assistance and encouragement this paper would not have been written. Each helped me avoid serious mistakes, though neither is responsible for any that may remain.

¹Most, including Owen (1953), Vlastos (1954, 1969), Geach (1956), Strang (1963), Cohen (1971), Peterson (1973), and Prior (1979), accept that Plato intended the Third Man Argument to be valid. Schofield (1996) argues that Plato intended the Likeness Regress Argument to be valid. Peterson (1981) argues that Plato intended the Greatest Difficulty Argument to be valid. Ryle (1939) and Runciman (1959) argue that Plato intended some, but not all, of the arguments of Part I to be valid.

²These include Cornford (1939), Cherniss (1957), Sayre (1983), and Meinwald (1991). Forrester (1974) and Lewis (1979) treat the Greatest Difficulty Argument as invalid.

logue is to enable its readers to see that these arguments are plainly fallacious. In addition, there is no consensus on the intended message of Part II. Some believe that Plato did not mean the deductions to be valid, others that he did. Among the former, some³ claim that the arguments of Part II were meant as a joke, others⁴ that they were meant as a dialectical exercise. Among the latter, some⁵ hold that the deductions were intended as *reducciones*, others⁶ that the seemingly incompatible conclusions of the deductions are, in fact, compatible, and that philosophically interesting results may be derived from them.

I believe that Plato intended every single argument proposed by Parmenides to be sound (and hence valid) *and* that he meant us to see that the results of Part II can be used to solve the serious problems raised in Part I. To the best of my knowledge, this is a thesis for which no one has argued.

Here is a brief sketch of the interpretation I propose to defend. In the dialogues of his Middle Period (principally, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*), Plato had put forward a theory of Forms (call it “MPTF”, for “Middle Period Theory of Forms”) and had used it to argue for various philosophically significant conclusions (including the thesis that the soul is immortal). In Part I of the *Parmenides*, Socrates appeals to MPTF in order to rebut a troubling argument of Zeno’s to the paradoxical conclusion that things are not many. Parmenides then proposes a series of arguments designed to prove that every plausible version of MPTF is inconsistent. (A version of a theory is obtained by adding one or more theses to the axioms of the theory.) Taking these arguments to be sound, Socrates recognizes that at least one (perhaps all) of the axioms of MPTF must be rejected. But it is not yet clear to him which (or how many) of them must go. In Part II, Parmenides embarks on a series of deductions in order to prove that a particular axiom of MPTF (call it “X”) is false. Having followed Parmenides’ arguments in Part II, Socrates should be able to see that X should be rejected, that the result of removing X from MPTF is a leaner and meaner theory of Forms, and that this leaner and meaner theory can meet at least

³For example, Burnet (1914) and Taylor (1934).

⁴For example, Robinson (1942), Ross (1953), and Allen (1997).

⁵For example, Ryle (1939).

⁶For example, Sayre (1983), Meinwald (1991), and Peterson (1996).

four of the five main challenges to MPTF raised by Parmenides in Part I. The overall message of the *Parmenides*, then, is that, despite having suffered bruises in the first part of the dialogue, the Forms are still very much alive.

2. The Middle Period Theory of Forms

In the *Phaedo*,⁷ Socrates' main purpose is to argue that the soul is immortal. He bases part of his argument for this claim on several assumptions which derive at least part of their support from the fact that they can be used to explain why ordinary sensible things can (and do) have contrary properties. The assumptions are simple and may be stated as follows (where 'E' is for 'Existence' and 'C' is for 'Causation'):

- (E) There are properties to each of which there corresponds a Form. [For some property F, there is a Form corresponding to F (namely, a Form of F-ness).]
- (C) For any property to which there corresponds a Form, everything that has the property has it by virtue of partaking of a Form corresponding to it. [For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, everything that is F is F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness.]⁸

Support for Socrates' acceptance of (E) and (C) derives from his stating numerous instances of both of these assumptions at different points in the dialogue. Instantiating (E), he claims at *Phd.* 74a

⁷All references below are to Burnet 1901.

⁸Throughout this paper, I use the term 'property' as a convenient shorthand that facilitates the statement of generalizations it would otherwise be difficult to state. In doing so, I do not mean to suggest that Plato is ontologically committed to properties. Nor do I mean to suggest that Forms are not properties, realistically conceived. In fact, I use 'property' where I might have used 'predicate'. But talk of predicates invites the use of quotation marks, and this creates unnecessary typographical clutter. Those who balk at property-talk in this context are invited to replace it with predicate-talk. For instance, in predicate-speak, (E) says that there are predicates to each of which there corresponds a Form, and (C) says that for any predicate to which there corresponds a Form, everything that bears the predicate bears it by virtue of partaking of a Form corresponding to it. The point of using property-talk or predicate-talk is the same, namely to articulate generalizations of such claims as these: (e) that there is a Form of Largeness, and (c) that everything that is large is large by virtue of partaking of a Form of Largeness.

that there is a Form corresponding to the property of being equal (namely, a form of Equality); at *Phd. 100b*, that there is a Form of Beauty, a Form of Goodness, and a Form of Magnitude; and, at *Phd. 102b*, that there is a Form of Tallness and a Form of Shortness. Instantiating (C), he claims at *Phd. 100c* that beautiful things are beautiful by virtue of partaking of Beauty; at *Phd. 100e*, that it is by Largeness that large things are large and it is by Smallness that small things are small; and, at *Phd. 101c*, that whatever is one is one by partaking of Oneness and that whatever is two is two by partaking of Twoness.⁹

Now, as Socrates recognizes, each property (F) has a *negation* (not-F). Thus, not only is there such a property as being large, but there is also such a property as being not-large.¹⁰ Furthermore, some (but not all) properties (F) have a *contrary* (con-F). Thus, on the one hand, the property of being beautiful (tall, good) has a contrary, namely the property of being ugly (short, bad); while, on the other, the property of being human (water, fire) has no contrary. Let us then call those properties that have a contrary “C-properties.” It should be noted that, for any C-property, anything that has the property’s contrary must have its negation. Thus, anything that is ugly is, *ipso facto*, not-beautiful. But it should also be clear that the converse does not hold: not everything that is not-beautiful need be ugly, since there are things that, being plain, are neither beautiful nor ugly (see *Symp. 202a–b*).

Further, Socrates recognizes that, for any C-property, any sensi-

⁹See also *HMa. 287b–d* and *Eu. 6d–e*. These passages, along with the *Phaedo* passages cited to support Socrates’ acceptance of (C), also support Socrates’ acceptance of the following claim:

(C*) For any property, everything that has that property has it by virtue of partaking of a Form corresponding to that property.

Note that (C*) is stronger than (C), for (C*), unlike (C), entails that, for any property possessed by some sensible thing, there is a Form corresponding to that property.

However, there are good reasons not to attribute acceptance of (C*) to Socrates. For if we can provide as good an explanation of his acceptance of various instances by supposing that he accepts the weaker of two generalizations, then charity dictates that this is what we should do. Further, we should not assume that Socrates accepts the stronger generalization unless we have independent reason to suppose that he does. (I am grateful to a referee for helping me to see that it would be imprudent to suppose that the Socrates of the *Phaedo* accepts (C*.)

¹⁰See *So. 257b–c*.

ble thing that has that property (F) also has its contrary (con-F). Let us call this latter assumption “ I_s ” (for “Impurity of the Sensibles”):

- (I_s) Any sensible thing that has a C-property also has its contrary. [Given any C-property F, any sensible thing that is F is also con-F.]¹¹

For example, at *Phd.* 102b, Socrates points out that Simmias may be described as tall because he is taller than Socrates and may be described as short because he is shorter than Phaedo. But, although the proposition that Simmias is taller than Socrates is perfectly compatible with the proposition that Simmias is shorter than Phaedo, there is something odd about Simmias’s being both tall and short. How, after all, could the same thing have contrary properties? To explain this fact, Socrates appeals to (E) and (C). He

¹¹It must be acknowledged that (I_s), like (C*), may be an overgeneralization. For, as a referee rightly points out, Socrates claims (at *Phd.* 103d) that snow can’t be hot and that fire can’t be cold. If the fire and snow to which Socrates refers are sensible things, then Socrates cannot accept (I_s) without inconsistency. Since it is unlikely that Socrates would accept blatantly inconsistent claims in the very same dialogue, we must suppose *either* that the fire and snow to which he is referring are not sensible things *or* that he accepts a generalization similar to, but weaker than, (I_s). Vlastos (1956, 93 n. 14), for one, favors the first option: he takes it as “certain” that (at *Phd.* 103d) Plato assumes that snow and fire are (non-sensible) Forms, even though they are not “tagged ‘Forms’.” This claim has not gone unchallenged (see Gallop 1975, 197–99, and Dancy 1991, 131 n. 76), and I am not inclined to accept it. On the second option, Socrates accepts a generalization which (a) explains his acceptance of the claim that Simmias is both tall and short, but (b) is consistent with his denial that (sensible) fire is both hot and cold. Now let us say that X is essentially F if and only if being F is part of what it is to be X. Perhaps the simplest generalization that satisfies both (a) and (b) is (I_s'):

(I_s') Any sensible thing that is F, *but not essentially F*, is also con-F.

Thus, since Simmias is large, but not essentially large, it follows by (I_s') that Simmias is also small; but, given that fire *is* essentially hot, (I_s') does *not* entail that fire is also cold.

It is this second option that I am inclined to accept. I do not mean by this that Plato had (I_s') in mind when writing the *Phaedo*; rather, I mean that if we are not to read Socrates as accepting inconsistent claims, we must read him as committed to the truth of (I_s') or a principle very like (I_s').

Having noted this complication, I will now proceed to ignore it. For, as I argue below, none of the arguments of the *Parmenides* that are the main concern of this paper relies on anything like (I_s).

points out that, by (E), there is a Form of Tallness and a Form of Shortness, and that, by (C), it is by virtue of partaking of Tallness that Simmias is tall and it is by virtue of partaking of Shortness that Simmias is short. It is therefore the fact that Simmias partakes of contrary Forms that explains the fact that Simmias has contrary properties.

Given his acceptance of (I_s), it might seem natural for Socrates to adopt a similar principle of impurity for Forms. But Socrates denies that a Form of F-ness can be con-F (where F is any C-property). Thus, at *Phd.* 103c, he says that “an opposite will never be opposite to itself,” where it is clear from the context (*Phd.* 103b) that the “opposites” to which he is referring include the Forms. That is, Socrates accepts a principle we might call “P” (for “Purity”):

- (P) No Form corresponding to a C-property can have its contrary. [Given any C-property F, no Form of F-ness can be con-F.]

Thus, although sensible things that are tall (such as Simmias) are also short, it is impossible for Tallness to be short, and it is impossible for Shortness to be tall (see *Phd.* 102d–103a).¹²

Having accepted both (I_s) and (P), Socrates recognizes that he must also accept the thesis that no Form corresponding to a C-property is identical to any sensible thing that has that property

¹²A referee worries that (P) may not be the relevant generalization of the claim that Tallness can't be short, and this for the following reasons: First, nothing in the *Phaedo* suggests that Plato believes that the Form of Sameness, say, can't be different (from everything other than itself). Second, Book VI of the *Republic* seems to indicate that every Form participates in the Form of the Good; thus, it would seem that Plato is committed to the claim that the Form of the Bad is good.

I take it that the second worry is more serious than the first. For, although nothing in the *Phaedo* suggests that Plato does *not* believe that the Form of Sameness can't be different, the above-mentioned reading of the *Republic* does commit Plato to the falsity of (P). There are two ways of responding to this second worry without giving up the claim that Plato accepts (P) in the *Phaedo*. The first way is to accept the suggested reading of the *Republic*, and hence accept that Plato held inconsistent positions in two middle period dialogues. The second way is to contest the accuracy of the suggested reading of the *Republic*. Since the first option is less than ideal, I favor the second. But a defense of an alternative reading of Book VI of the *Republic* would take us too far afield, and so I set the matter aside with the aim of addressing it in further work.

(call this thesis “D,” for “Distinctness”). The argument for (D), which, following Russell Dancy (1997), I will call “the Argument from Relativity,” is simple and valid:

- (I_S) Any sensible thing that has a C-property also has its contrary. [Given any C-property F, any sensible thing that is F is also con-F.]
- (P) No Form corresponding to a C-property can have its contrary. [Given any C-property F, no Form of F-ness can be con-F.]
- ∴ (D) No Form corresponding to a C-property is identical to any sensible thing that has that property. [Given any C-property F, no Form of F-ness is identical to any sensible thing that is F.]

At *Phd.* 74b–c, Socrates instantiates this argument to Equality and equal sticks and stones. He points out that, whereas sticks and stones that show themselves to be equal to one [person and/or thing] sometimes show themselves to be unequal to another [person and/or thing], Equality itself cannot be unequal. Since something that shows itself to be F to one [person and/or thing] is, *ipso facto*, F, it follows that Equality is not the same as any equal stick or stone.

Socrates also accepts, in addition to the principles canvassed thus far, what has come to be known as the thesis of Self-Predication (SP):

- (SP) Every Form corresponding to a property has that property. [Every Form of F-ness is F.]

One piece of textual evidence for this appears at *Phd.* 100c, where Socrates says: “It seems to me that if anything else is beautiful *besides the beautiful itself*, it is beautiful for no reason at all other than that it participates in that beautiful” (emphasis added). The italicized phrase strongly suggests that Socrates takes it for granted that the beautiful itself (namely, the Form of Beauty) is beautiful, and there is no reason to believe that this is the only instance of (SP) Socrates accepts.¹³

¹³Socrates’ acceptance of the claim that Beauty is beautiful reappears in the *Hippias Major* (at 292e). Moreover, in the *Protagoras* (at 330c–d), Socrates claims both that Justice is just and that Holiness is holy. Given Socrates’ acceptance of several different instances of (SP), it is therefore reasonable to suppose that he accepted (SP) itself.

Why would Socrates accept (SP)? One plausible suggestion is that he takes it that whatever causes something to be F must itself be F (Dancy 1991, 86 and 98). In other words, Socrates thinks that, if X is F by virtue of (partaking of) Y, then Y must also be F. If this suggestion is correct, then (SP) is simply a corollary of (C).

But (SP) is not the last of the principles about Forms to be found in the middle period dialogues. In the *Phaedo*, there is evidence that Socrates accepts the principle (call it “I”) that every Form is “itself by itself”:

(I) Every Form is itself by itself.

For, at *Phd.* 100b, Socrates hypothesizes that “a beautiful, itself by itself, is something, and so are a good and a large and all the rest.”¹⁴

At least five different interpretations of the claim that the F is F have been proposed and defended. The standard view is that ‘The F is F’, like ‘Plato is F’, is an ordinary predication (see Vlastos 1954). On this view, ‘The F is F’ and ‘Plato is F’ are both instantiations of the universal generalization ‘Everything is F’. But it has been argued that ‘The F is F’ is an identity-claim, namely ‘The F is (identical to) the F’ (see Cherniss 1957 and Allen 1960), that it is a Pauline predication, namely ‘Necessarily, whatever is F is F’ (see Vlastos 1974), that it should be analyzed as ‘The F is what it is to be F’ (see Nehamas 1979), and that it should be understood to mean that the F is F in a *sui generis* way, in virtue of explaining the F-ness of F things (see Fine 1993).

The desire to reject the standard view is understandable and well motivated. As Fine puts it, this desire is born of the aim to find “the most innocuous interpretation of self-predication that is consistent with the text” (1993, 276 n. 74). The main problem with the standard view is that it is difficult for us to understand what it might mean to say that Justice is just or Courage courageous. For we take it that to be just (courageous) is to possess a certain character trait, and that Forms are not the sorts of things that can possess character traits. (By contrast, it is easier for us to understand how Beauty might be beautiful.)

Although detailed evaluation of the five alternatives is beyond the scope of this paper, I should say that I am not convinced that the standard view is mistaken. For, in particular, as I argue below, the Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides* cannot be read as valid unless the standard view (or something very like it, such as Fine’s 1993 interpretation) of self-predication prevails. Since there is reason to suppose that Socrates takes the Third Man Argument to represent a valid criticism of one plausible version of MPTF, there is reason to suppose that the standard view (or Fine’s 1993 view) captures Socrates’ understanding of (SP) in the *Phaedo* and other middle period dialogues.

¹⁴See also *Phd.* 78d and *Symp.* 211a–b. The correct interpretation of the locution ‘itself by itself’ is a matter of controversy. Thus, Fine (1984), following Owen (1957), suggests that each Form is itself by itself “in that each

Moreover, it should be noted that one of Socrates' arguments to the conclusion that the soul is immortal relies on the assumption that there are at least some Forms that we know. For, at *Phd.* 74b, Socrates gets Simmias to agree that they both know the Equal. He then goes on to argue that the knowledge of the Forms that they now have must be the product of recollection, that they knew the Forms before they were acquainted with any of the sensible things that partake of them, and hence that their souls existed before birth. Call this assumption "K" (for "Knowledge"):

(K) Some Forms are known by us.¹⁵

Finally, in the *Republic*, Socrates makes explicit an important assumption that may be implicit, but is never actually mentioned, in the *Phaedo*. This assumption (call it "O," for "One"), which appears at *Rep.* 476a and two instances of which appear at *Rep.* 479a, is that each Form is one:

(O) Every Form is one.¹⁶

excludes its opposite" and adds that Forms are themselves by themselves "in that each is unmixed with anything sensible" (60–61). By contrast, Vlastos (1987) argues that for a Form to be itself by itself is for it to exist separately, in the sense that its existence is independent of the existence of its participants. While agreeing with Vlastos (1987) on this point, Devereux (1994) also argues that, despite passages in the *Phaedo* that suggest otherwise, Plato consistently holds the view that a Form's being itself by itself entails its not being "in" its participants (see *Symp.* 211a–b and *Parm.* 133c). Although I am inclined to agree with Vlastos (1987) and Devereux (1994), I do not believe that a detailed discussion of the proper interpretation of 'itself by itself' is necessary to gain a proper understanding of the *Parmenides* (see below).

¹⁵Some (including Gallop (1975, 120)) have worried that (K), which follows from Socrates' claim (at *Phd.* 74b) that he and Simmias know the Equal, appears to be contradicted at *Phd.* 76b–c, where Socrates gets Simmias to agree that not everyone knows the Forms. Detailed consideration of this problem is beyond the scope of this paper. But it should be clear that there is at least one interpretation according to which the two passages are consistent. On this view, the first passage tells us that Socrates and Simmias know the Equal, while the second tells us that *some* (presumably not including Socrates or Simmias) do not know the Equal. (I am grateful to a referee for bringing this problem to my attention.)

¹⁶It is unclear how we should understand (O), as it appears in the *Republic*. I mention it at this point in order to emphasize that Socrates' acceptance of (O) in the *Parmenides* (see below) is (more likely than not) continuous with the theory of Forms he espouses in the middle period dialogues. In the next section, I discuss the proper interpretation of (O), as it appears in the *Parmenides*.

We are now in a position to see that the middle period dialogues contain six principles about Forms ((E), (C), (P), (I), (K) and (O)), one principle about sensible things ((I_s)), and two corollaries: (SP), which follows from (C) (together with the claim that whatever causes something to be F must itself be F), and (D), which follows from (P) and (I_s).

3. The Development of the Middle Period Theory of Forms in the *Parmenides*

Early in the *Parmenides* (127d–e), after listening to Zeno read from one of his books, Socrates brings Zeno to accept the following restatement of his first argument:

- (1) If things are many, then they are both like and unlike.
- (2) Unlike things can't be like and like things can't be unlike.
- ∴ (3) Things are not many.

Socrates accepts that this argument (call it “Zeno’s Argument”) is valid, but denies that it is sound on the grounds that premise (2) is false. He articulates his grounds for this position in a Speech (128e–130a). First, he tries to get Zeno to acknowledge that there is a Form corresponding to the property of being like (a Form of Likeness) and a Form corresponding to the property of being unlike (a Form of Unlikeness). In saying this, it is evident that Socrates is indicating his acceptance of (E). Next, Socrates signals his willingness to accept that things are like by virtue of partaking of Likeness and that things are unlike by virtue of partaking of Unlikeness. In saying this, it is evident that he is indicating his acceptance of (C). Finally, Socrates points out that there are things that partake of contrary Forms, and hence have contrary properties. For instance, Simmias is both like and unlike by virtue of partaking of both Likeness and Unlikeness. The fact that some like things are also unlike then entails that premise (2) of Zeno’s Argument is false.

Now Socrates is willing to accept not only that *some* sensible things have contrary properties, but also that *all* sensible things have contrary properties. In particular, he is willing to allow not only that those sensible things that partake of Likeness and Unlikeness are both like and unlike, but also that “all [sensible] things are one by partaking of oneness, and . . . these same things are

many by partaking also of multitude” (129*b*). The principle that any sensible thing has contrary properties is weaker than (I_S). For, assuming that every sensible thing has some C-property or other, it follows from the claim that any sensible thing that has a C-property has its contrary (namely, (I_S)) that any sensible thing has contrary properties; but from the claim that any sensible thing has contrary properties, it does not follow that any sensible thing that has a C-property has its contrary. Call the weaker principle “WI_S” (for “Weak Impurity of the Sensibles”):

(WI_S) Any sensible thing has contrary properties. [For any sensible thing X, there is a property F such that X is both F and con-F.]

Socrates is careful to state that he does not believe that *all* things have contrary properties. More particularly, he repeatedly claims (at 129*b-c*, and 129*e-130a*) that he would be astonished if someone were able to prove that *Forms* have contrary properties. The principle that no Form can have contrary properties is stronger than (P). For it entails, but is not entailed by, the claim that no Form that has a C-property can have its contrary (namely, (P)). Call this stronger, more radical, principle “RP” (for “Radical Purity”):

(RP) No Form can have contrary properties. [For any property F, no Form can be both F and con-F.]

Now I said above (504) that, although only some properties have contraries, all properties have negations. Consider, then, the following thesis (call it “RP*”):

(RP*) No Form can have a property and its negation. [For any property F, no Form can be both F and not-F.]

It is well to ask whether there is any logical relationship between (RP*) and (RP). The answer is that (RP*) is stronger than (RP), for, although (RP) does not entail (RP*), (RP*) does entail (RP). The reasoning for the claim that (RP*) entails (RP) runs as follows: Suppose that no Form can have a property and its negation, but that some form (say, A) can have a property and its contrary. Since anything that has a property’s contrary must also have that property’s negation (for example, anything that is ugly must be not-beautiful), it follows that A has a property and its negation. This contradicts the supposition. Therefore, if no Form can have a prop-

erty and its negation, then no Form can have a property and its contrary. Notice, however, that the parallel argument for the converse claim is unsound. In order for (RP) to entail (RP*), it must be the case that anything that has a property's negation must also have that property's contrary. But this is false (for example, not all things that are not-beautiful need be ugly).¹⁷

Having accepted (RP) and (WI_S), Socrates is in a position to see that no Form is identical to any sensible thing. The reasoning is similar to, but somewhat simpler than, the Argument from Relativity in the *Phaedo*. By (RP), no Form can have contrary properties. But, by (WI_S), any sensible thing has contrary properties. It follows directly that no Form is identical to any sensible thing. Since this corollary of (RP) and (WI_S) is stronger than (D), let us call it "RD" (for "Radical Distinctness"):

(RD) No Form is identical to any sensible thing.

It is not difficult to see that Socrates' criticism of Zeno's Argument is based on some of the principles of MPTF previously articulated in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. But there is more to Socrates' theory than the principles mentioned in his Speech. As the discussion moves on, Socrates assents to a number of principles about Forms, all of which appear in previous dialogues. First, since Socrates is willing to accept that Largeness is large (132a), it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates accepts (SP). Second, Socrates explicitly accepts that every Form is "itself by itself," namely (I)

¹⁷Given that (RP*) entails (RP) and that Socrates accepts (RP), it is possible that Socrates accepts (RP) because he accepts (RP*). Is there any evidence to support this hypothesis? In the *Republic* (at *Rep.* 476–80), Socrates claims that knowledge is of (set over) things that purely are, ignorance is of (set over) things that purely are not, and belief is of (set over) things that both are and are not. On one interpretation of this passage (see Vlastos 1965), Socrates' use of the verb 'to be' is predicative. He should therefore be read as saying that, whereas the objects of knowledge are things that are purely F, in the sense of being F but not also not F, the objects of belief are things that are both F and not F. The things that are purely F being Forms, it follows that it is not the case that Forms can be both F and not F. That is to say, no Form can have a property and its negation. (This interpretation has been questioned, most notably by Fine (1978, 1990).)

Since Socrates does not explicitly discuss negations of properties in the *Parmenides*, there is no direct evidence from the dialogue to support the hypothesis that he accepts (RP*). But I will argue below that indirect support for it may be found in the second part of the dialogue.

(128e–129a). Third, Socrates refuses to deny (K), a fact which Parmenides later exploits to its fullest extent (at 133b–134b). And finally, Socrates explicitly accepts (O) (131b, 132a).

Now I said above (n. 16) that the *Republic* does not give us any clues as to what Socrates takes (O) to mean. But the *Parmenides* is more generous in this respect. In his Speech, Socrates makes three points that function as constraints on any reasonable interpretation of (O). First, Socrates accepts that the property of being one and the property of being many (like the property of being like and the property of being unlike) are contraries (129b–c). Second, Socrates accepts that his being one follows from his being one among the seven who are present (129c–d), and that his being many follows from his having many parts (129c). (It should also be noted that, in the *Philebus*, Socrates accepts not only that a man's being many follows from his having many parts (*Phil.* 14d–e), but also that a man's being many follows from the fact that many predicates are true of him (*Phil.* 14c–d).)¹⁸ Third, it follows from the second point that Socrates is both one and many, and hence that *there is no contradiction in the same thing's being both one and many*. These three points are of the utmost importance, not merely because they set constraints on any reasonable interpretation of (O), but also because, as I shall argue, they contain the key to solving the riddle of the *Parmenides* as a whole.¹⁹

Let us now briefly collect the principles which Socrates counts as part of his theory in the *Parmenides*. In the first place, it is clear

¹⁸I am grateful to Russ Dancy for bringing the relevant *Philebus* passage to my attention.

¹⁹These points strongly suggest that, for any referring expression S, 'S is one' and 'S is many' are both ordinary predications on a par with such predications as 'S is beautiful' and 'S is equal'. The parallels between these predications are strong. For, just as the claim that S is equal follows from the claim that S is equal to *T*, so the claim that S is one follows from the claim that S is one *among many*. In short, in the same way that S is equal whenever 'equal' (or some phrase beginning with 'equal') is correctly predicated of S, S is one whenever 'one' (or some phrase beginning with 'one') is correctly predicated of S.

If this is correct, we are closer to understanding the conditions for the correct use of sentences of the form 'S is one', and are therefore (one step) closer to understanding what these sentences *mean*. In the sequel, I will not assume any particular account of the meaning of these sentences. But I believe the riddle of the *Parmenides* can be solved even if no such account is available (see below).

that Socrates holds at least six tenets previously mentioned in the *Phaedo* or the *Republic*, namely (E), (C), (SP), (I), (K), and (O). But it is also clear that Socrates accepts a stronger version of (P), namely (RP), and a stronger version of (D), namely (RD), as well as a weaker version of (I_S), namely (WI_S). These principles are not all logically independent, for (RD) follows from (WI_S) and (RP), and (SP) follows from (C) (together with the claim that whatever causes something to be F must itself be F). As it stands, then, Socrates' theory consists of six axioms about Forms ((E), (C), (I), (K), (O), and (RP)), one axiom about sensible things ((WI_S)), and two main corollaries ((RD) and (SP)). With the exception of an additional axiom about Forms on which (as we will soon see) Socrates implicitly relies, this is the Middle Period Theory of Forms which Parmenides proceeds to criticize.

4. Parmenides' Criticisms of the Middle Period Theory of Forms

I now propose to analyze the main arguments offered by Parmenides against MPTF. In this section, I provide informal renditions of the arguments; more detailed and explicit versions thereof appear in the appendix.

4.1 *The Whole-Part Dilemma*

According to axiom (C) of MPTF, for any property F to which there corresponds a Form, everything that is F is F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness. But what exactly does the relation of "partaking" amount to? In the Whole-Part Dilemma (*130e–131c*), Parmenides considers one conception of this relation: the Pie Model.²⁰ Call the result of combining the Pie Model conception of partaking and MPTF "the Pie Model version of MPTF." Parmenides' purpose is to show that the Pie Model version of MPTF is internally inconsistent.

According to the Pie Model conception, to say that X partakes of Y is to say that X gets a share of Y. In this sense, partaking of something is akin to getting a piece of pie (whence the name "Pie Model"). Let us put this conception in the form of a thesis (call it "PM"):

²⁰I have borrowed the term "Pie Model" from Dancy 1997.

(PM) X partakes of Y if and only if X gets a share of Y.

Socrates having endorsed the result of combining (C) and (PM) (at 130e4–131a3), Parmenides argues as follows (131a4–c11):

“So does each thing that gets a share get as its share the form as a whole or a part of it? Or could there be some other means of getting a share apart from these two?” 131a4

“How could there be?” [Socrates] said. a7

“Do you think, then, that the form as a whole—one thing—is in each of the many? Or what do you think?” a8

“What’s to prevent its being one, Parmenides?” said Socrates. a10

“So, being one and the same, it will be at the same time, as a whole, in things that are many and separate; and thus it would be separate from itself.” b1

“No it wouldn’t,” Socrates said. “Not if it’s like one and the same day. That is in many places at the same time and is none the less not separate from itself. If it’s like that, each of the forms might be, at the same time, one and the same in all.” b3

“Socrates,” he said, “how neatly you make one and the same thing be in many places at the same time! It’s as if you were to cover many people with a sail, and then say that one thing as a whole is over many. Or isn’t that the sort of thing you mean to say?” b7

“Perhaps,” he replied. c1

“In that case would the sail be, as a whole, over each person, or would a part of it be over one person and another part over another?” c2

“A part.” c4

“So the forms themselves are divisible, Socrates,” he said, “and things that partake of them would partake of a part; no longer would a whole form, but only a part of it, be in each thing.” c5

“It does appear that way.” c8

“Then are you willing to say, Socrates, that our one form is really divided? Will it still be one?” c9

“Not at all,” he replied.²¹ c11

Parmenides’ argument might be restated as follows. According to (E), there is a property (call it “G”) to which there corresponds a Form. Given that many separate things are G at one and the same time, it follows by (C) and (PM) that there is a Form (call it

²¹Here, and in the sequel, I follow the translation of Gill and Ryan 1996, unless otherwise indicated.

“ Φ ”) of which many separate things get a share at one and the same time (130e4–131a3). Now there are exactly two ways in which X can get a share of Y: (i) by getting the whole of Y, in which case the whole of Y is in X, or (ii) by getting a part of Y, in which case a part of Y is in X (131a4–7). Suppose first that each of the many things that get a share of Φ gets the whole of Φ [First Horn of the Dilemma]. In that case, the whole of Φ is in many separate things at the same time (131a8–11). But then Φ must be separate from itself (131b1–2), which is absurd. Next, suppose that each of the many things that get a share of Φ gets a part of Φ [Second Horn of the Dilemma]. In that case, each of these things is such that a part of Φ is in it (131c6–8). But then Φ must be divisible (131c5 and 131c9–11), and cannot be one (131c10–11). But, by (O), Φ must be one. Contradiction. Therefore, whether each of the many things that get a share of Φ gets the whole of Φ or only a part of Φ , absurdity results. It follows that at least one of the explicit or implicit assumptions employed in the reasoning to absurdity is false.

It should be noted that Socrates tries to escape the First Horn of the Dilemma by denying (the implicit assumption) that Φ is separate from itself if the whole of Φ is in many separate things at the same time. He argues that it is possible for the whole of something (namely, a day) to be in many separate places at the same time without being separate from itself (131b3–6). But Parmenides gets Socrates to accept that a day is “in” many separate places at the same time insofar as it is “over” many separate places at the same time. Consequently, saying that a whole day can be in many separate places at the same time is like saying that a whole sail can be over many separate people at the same time (131b7–131c1). But then, Parmenides argues, when a sail is over many separate people, each of these people is such that a part of the sail is over him (131c2–4). Thus, if Socrates accepts that the sail-Form analogy is true, he must accept that each of the many things that get a share of Φ gets a part of Φ . But this is precisely the Second Horn of the Dilemma. The upshot of 131b3–c4, then, is that Socrates’ suggested way of escaping the First Horn leads him directly to the Second Horn.

Socrates cannot escape the Whole-Part Dilemma without refusing to accept the validity of some step in the reasoning or rejecting at least one of the argument’s implicit or explicit assumptions.

We've just seen that Socrates' attempt to escape the First Horn forces him down the Second Horn. Can Socrates escape the Second Horn? His best bet is to deny (the implicit assumption) that Φ 's being divisible is incompatible with Φ 's being one. "After all," he might say, harking back to his Speech (129c-d), "I, Socrates, am both divisible, in that I have many parts, and yet also one, in that I am one among seven. Since there are some things that are both divisible and one, couldn't it be that Φ is among them?" But the answer, as Socrates recognizes (131c9-11), must be no. For, in his Speech, Socrates insisted (a) that having many parts is sufficient for being many, (b) that the property of being many and the property of being one are contraries, and (c) that no Form can have contrary properties [= (RP)] (see above, p. 513). Given that Φ is a Form and that divisibility entails having many parts, it follows from (a), (b), and (c) that Φ cannot be both divisible and one.

Parmenides' argument, as we have reconstructed it, is valid (see appendix 1). If sound, it shows that at least one of (E), (C), (O), (RP), and (PM) is false. Whether the argument is sound depends on whether the following statements are true (the numbers next to the statements correspond to the numbers given to them in appendix 1):

- (4) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, many separate things are F at the same time.
- (7) If X gets a share of Y, then *either* X gets the whole of Y or X gets a part of Y.
- (9) If X gets the whole of Y, then the whole of Y is in X.
- (11) If the whole of Y is in many separate things at the same time, then Y is separate from itself.
- (13) Nothing is separate from itself.
- (16) If X gets a part of Y, then a part of Y is in X.
- (18) If each of many things is such that a part of Y is in it, then Y is divisible.
- (20) If Y is divisible, then Y has many parts.
- (21) If Y has many parts, then Y is many.
- (24) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries.

We've already seen that, although Socrates questions (11), he might as well accept it, since Parmenides gets him to admit that

there is no way to deny (11) *and* escape from the Second Horn of the Dilemma. And it is plain that Socrates accepts all the other assumptions, many (if not all) of which are, at least by his standards, platitudinous. Consequently, Socrates has no choice but to accept that at least one of (E), (C), (O), (RP), and (PM) is false, and hence that the Pie Model version of MPTF [= (E) + (C) + (I) + (K) + (O) + (RP) + (WIS) + (RD) + (SP) + (PM)] is false.²²

4.2 *The Third Man Argument*

Having demolished the Pie Model version of MPTF, Parmenides articulates (132a) what he takes to be Socrates' reason for accepting (O), a reason Socrates endorses:

“I suppose you think each form is one on the following ground: whenever some number of things seem to you to be large, perhaps there seems to be some one character, the same as you look at them all, and from that you conclude that the large is one.” 132a1

“That's true,” [Socrates] said. a5

Let us call the principle from which (O) is taken to follow “OM” (for “One-over-Many”). The following argument shows us that, on the basis of assumptions previously articulated in Socrates' Speech, (OM) does indeed entail (O). (OM) tells us that, for any property F to which there corresponds a Form and any plurality of things that are F, there is a Form of F-ness that is one over many, in the sense that it is by virtue of partaking of that Form that each member of the plurality is F. But, in the same way that the proposition that Socrates is one *among* many entails that he is one (see p. 513), the proposition that the Form of F-ness by virtue of which each member of the plurality is F is one *over* many entails that it is one. Assuming that each Form of F-ness is over some plurality of F things (in the sense that there is at least one plurality of F things each member of which participates in the Form), it follows that each Form is one.

(OM), then, may be restated as follows:

²²At the conclusion of the Whole-Part Dilemma, Parmenides generates further absurdities at 131c–e. Discussion of these arguments is beyond the scope of this paper.

(OM) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form and any plurality of things that are F, there is a Form of F-ness by virtue of partaking of which each member of the plurality is F (namely, a Form of F-ness that is one over many).

And let us call the result of adding (OM) to MPTF “the One-over-Many version of MPTF.” Parmenides then continues:

“What about the large itself and the other large things? If you look at them all in the same way with the mind’s eye, again won’t some one thing appear large, by which all these appear large?” 132a6

“It seems so.” a9

“So another form of largeness will make its appearance, which has emerged alongside largeness itself and the things that partake of it, and in turn another over all {bI} these, by which all of them will be large. Each of your forms will no longer be one, but unlimited in multitude.” a10

This argument, which has come to be known as the Third Man Argument, runs as follows:²³ Parmenides begins by assuming that there is a plurality of things (say, A, B, C) that are large, and that the property of being large is a property to which there corresponds a Form. (Since Parmenides intends the argument to be perfectly general, we can read these assumptions as instances of (E) and the claim that, for any property F to which there corresponds a Form, there is a plurality of things that are F. See steps (3) and (4) of the Whole-Part Dilemma.) By (OM), there is a Form of Largeness by virtue of which A, B, and C are large. Call this form “L₁.” Now Parmenides asks Socrates to consider “the large itself [namely, L₁] and the other large things [namely, A, B, C]” and insists that there must be another Form of Largeness “by which all these [namely, L₁ and A, B, C] appear large” (132a6–8). As Vlastos (1954), following Taylor (1915–16), noticed, this passage indicates that Parmenides accepts an instance of (SP), namely that L₁ is large. Since the argument is meant to be perfectly general, it is therefore reasonable to suppose that Parmenides accepts (SP) itself. Now, since A, B, C, and L₁ form a new plurality of large things, it follows by (OM) that there is a Form of Largeness by

²³The “Third Man Argument” is standardly referred to in this way because this is how Aristotle refers to it in the *Metaphysics* (at 990b17).

(virtue of partaking of) which A, B, C, and L_1 are all large. Call this Form " L_2 ." Parmenides takes it for granted that L_2 is not identical to L_1 : as he puts it, L_2 is "another Form of Largeness." But, as Vlastos again noticed (1954), Parmenides is not entitled to infer that L_2 is distinct from L_1 unless he assumes that it is not by virtue of partaking of itself that L_1 is large.²⁴ Again, since the argument is meant to be perfectly general, it is reasonable to suppose that Parmenides accepts what, following Peterson (1973), we might call "Non-Self-Explanation":

(NSE) No Form of F-ness is F by virtue of partaking of itself.

Given (OM), (SP), and (NSE), then, Parmenides takes it to follow that there are two distinct Forms of Largeness, namely L_1 and L_2 (132a10–11). He then infers that there is "in turn another [Form of Largeness] over all these [namely, A, B, C, L_1 , and L_2], by which all of them will be large" (132a11–b1). This inference is valid. For, by (SP), L_2 is large. Hence, A, B, C, L_1 , and L_2 form a new plurality of large things. By (OM), then, there is a Form of Largeness by which A, B, C, L_1 , and L_2 are large. Call this Form " L_3 ." By (NSE), L_3 is distinct from each of L_1 and L_2 .

This reasoning could be repeated *ad infinitum*. It is clear, then, that on the basis of a few innocuous assumptions that Socrates could not reasonably reject (namely, that there are large things and that there is a Form corresponding to the property of being large), (OM), (SP), and (NSE) together entail that there are (infinitely) many Forms of Largeness. Parmenides then concludes that each Form of Largeness "will no longer be one, but unlimited in multitude" (132b1–2).

It seems, then, that Parmenides takes the falsity of (O) to follow from the fact that there are (infinitely) many Forms of Largeness. If this inference is valid, then Parmenides is entitled to conclude that (E), (OM), (SP), (NSE), and (O) cannot all be true, and hence (if (NSE) is added to the list of axioms of MPTF) that the One-over-Many version of MPTF is internally inconsistent.

But why exactly should Socrates accept that (O) is incompatible with the existence of (infinitely) many Forms of Largeness? The standard answer²⁵ is that Socrates takes (O) to mean the same as (O')

²⁴See also Peterson 1973, Fine 1993, and Allen 1997.

²⁵See Vlastos 1954, 1969; Peterson 1973; and Fine 1993.

(O') For every property F to which there corresponds a Form, there is exactly one Form corresponding to F

and (O') is manifestly inconsistent with the claim that there are (infinitely) many Forms of Largeness.

It must be admitted that this hypothesis makes sense of the argument. But it does so at some cost. For there are no indications in the text that Socrates (or Parmenides) takes (O) and (O') to be equivalent, let alone synonymous. In fact, there is reason to think that Socrates takes (O) and (O') to mean different things. For, as we saw above, it seems that Socrates has been treating 'S is one' as an ordinary predication on a par with 'S is equal' and 'S is beautiful'. But, if 'S is one' is treated as an ordinary predication, then 'L₁ is one' and (O) are related as instance to generalization. Since the parallel claim cannot be made for 'L₁ is one' and (O'), it follows that (O) and (O') are not synonymous.

But there is an additional problem for the standard answer. For, at the conclusion of the argument, Parmenides says not only that each Form of Largeness "will no longer be one," but also that each Form of Largeness will be "unlimited in multitude," that is, infinitely many. But how are we to understand the statement that each Form of Largeness is infinitely many? The standard answer is that this statement (call it "M") means the same as M'

(M') There are infinitely many Forms of Largeness.

But, again, there are no indications in the text that Socrates (or Parmenides) takes (M) and (M') to be equivalent, let alone synonymous. And there is reason to think that Socrates takes (M) and (M') to mean different things. For it seems that Socrates has been treating 'S is many' as an ordinary predication on a par with 'S is one'. And, if 'S is many' is treated as an ordinary predication, it is very difficult indeed to see how (M) might be thought to follow from (M'). Socrates, it is true, has told us that the fact that he is many follows from the fact that he has many parts (129c). And the *Philebus* tells us that something is many if many predicates are true of it (see above, p. 513). But from the fact that there are infinitely many Forms of Largeness, it doesn't follow that each of those Forms has many parts and it doesn't follow that each of those Forms is such that many predicates are true of it. Thus, on any reasonable interpretation of (M) consistent with what Socrates has

already told us about sentences of the form 'S is many', the statement that there are infinitely many Forms of Largeness simply does not entail that each of those Forms is many.

Given that the text gives us no right to assume (and some reason to deny) that (O) means the same as (O') and that (M) means the same as (M'), let us see whether we can make sense of the argument without relying on these assumptions. If (O) does not mean the same as (O') and (M) does not mean the same as (M'), we are left to ponder why Socrates feels compelled to accept that the falsity of (O) and the truth of (M) follow from the premises that Parmenides has brought him to accept. Let's begin with (M), the claim that each Form of Largeness is many. Socrates has already acknowledged that something is many if it has many parts, and there is evidence from the *Philebus* that he also accepts that something is many if many predicates are true of it. Now, in a case in which the many predicates that are true of something have Forms corresponding to them, Socrates is happy to accept the equivalence of 'Many predicates are true of S' and 'S partakes of many Forms'. Thus, it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates takes (M) to follow from the statement that each Form of Largeness partakes of many Forms. So, if we could show that the premises that Parmenides has brought Socrates to accept entail that each Form of Largeness partakes of many Forms, we would be able to explain why Socrates feels compelled to accept (M) on the basis of these premises.

Let us then consider whether the premises of the Third Man Argument entail that each Form of Largeness partakes of many Forms. In the first part of the argument, Parmenides argues that there are two distinct Forms of Largeness, L_1 and L_2 , and that L_1 is large by virtue of partaking of L_2 . It follows directly that L_1 partakes of L_2 . In the second part of the argument, Parmenides argues that there is a third Form of Largeness, L_3 , distinct from both L_1 and L_2 , and each of L_1 and L_2 is large by virtue of partaking of L_3 . It follows directly that L_1 partakes of L_3 and L_2 partakes of L_3 . Taking the argument one step further, Parmenides could show that there is a fourth Form of Largeness (call it " L_4 ") distinct from each of L_1 , L_2 , and L_3 , such that each of L_1 , L_2 , and L_3 partakes of it. So, the second part of the argument establishes that L_1 partakes of many Forms, and the next step reveals that L_2 partakes of many Forms. This reasoning can be iterated *ad infinitum*. It follows that the premises that Parmenides has brought Socrates to accept entail

that each of the infinitely many Forms of Largeness partakes of many Forms.

We now have a clear and reasonable explanation for why Socrates accepts the truth of (M) at the end of the Third Man Argument. But this explanation now helps us understand why Socrates also accepts that each Form of Largeness “is no longer one” (132b1–2). For Socrates has already insisted (b) that the property of being one and the property of being many are contraries and (c) that no Form can have contrary properties [= (RP)] (see above, p. 517). Consequently, (M) entails that no Form of Largeness is one. But, if no Form of Largeness is one, then (O) is false.

Let us take stock. The reconstruction of the Third Man Argument that I have offered moves from (E), (OM), (SP), and (NSE) (along with some obvious truths) to the claim that there are infinitely many Forms of G-ness (where ‘G’=‘Large’), each of which partakes of infinitely many Forms. This result in turn entails that each Form of G-ness is (infinitely) many, and hence, by (RP), that no Form of G-ness is one. But (OM) entails (O), the claim that each Form is one. Contradiction. It follows that at least one of (E), (OM), (SP), (NSE), and (RP) is false. (NSE) being an additional principle about Forms on which the argument implicitly relies, we may assume that Socrates takes it to be part of MPTF. Thus, if (NSE) is included among the axioms of MPTF, it follows that the One-over-Many version of MPTF [= (E) + (C) + (I) + (K) + (O) + (RP) + (WI_s) + (RD) + (SP) + (NSE) + (OM)] is false.²⁶

²⁶Some recent accounts of the Third Man Argument resemble the one offered above in their recognition of the importance of the last sentence of the relevant passage (132b1–2) and in their refusal to accept that (O)/(O’) and (M)/(M’) are pairs of synonyms.

Sayre, for example, citing the relevant sentence, points out, rightly in my view, that the problem raised by the argument is not the existence of an infinite regress of Forms, but rather that each Form turns out to be *apeira to plēthos* (1996, 82). Now Gill and Ryan (1996) and Allen (1997) both translate *apeira to plēthos* as “unlimited in multitude.” But Sayre claims that this translation is “grammatically forced,” for “how could ‘each of these Forms’ (individually, *hekaston*) be infinitely numerous?” Instead, Sayre proposes that *apeira to plēthos* be rendered as “indefinitely multitudinous,” or “an equivalent suggesting both lack of definite properties and an agglomeration not divisible into individual objects.” I do not believe that we need accept Sayre’s suggestion, however. As I argue in the text, it is possible to make sense of Parmenides’ claim that each Form of Largeness is (infinitely) many in such a way as to explain its role in the argument

The Third Man Argument, as we have reconstructed it, is valid (see appendix 2). Whether the argument is sound depends on whether the following statements are true (the numbers next to the statements correspond to the numbers given to them in appendix 2):

- (5) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, there is a plurality of things that are F.
- (10) The result of adding an F thing to a plurality of F things is a plurality of F things.
- (22) Anything that partakes of many Forms is many.

as a whole.

McCabe, like Sayre, recognizes that the Third Man Argument (suitably generalized) shows each Form to be many (1994, 86). She tries to make sense of this result as follows: The argument, it seems, proves that “there is more than one F-ness to explain the f’s,” and hence that “each F-ness will be related (somehow or other) to the others”; each F-ness, that is, “will be one among many.” But anything that enters into relations that make it one among many is thereby “pluralized,” and hence many. This is an interesting hypothesis, but, unlike the story I offer above, it is not sufficiently grounded in the text of the dialogue itself. For nothing in the text suggests that Socrates accepts the claim that something is pluralized by entering into relations that make it one among many. In fact, in his Speech Socrates says, not that his being one among many is sufficient to make him *many*, but rather that his being one among many is sufficient to make him *one*.

One of the reconstructions of the Third Man Argument offered by Allen (1997, 152–67) comes closer to the one I have offered. Allen recognizes not only that the upshot of the argument is that each Form of Largeness turns out to be many, but also that this result is obtained from the sub-conclusion that each Form of Largeness partakes of (infinitely) many Forms of Largeness. In addition, Allen recognizes that Socrates repeatedly emphasizes that no Form can have contrary properties. But Allen’s interpretation differs from mine in two salient respects. First, Allen takes one of the upshots of the Whole-Part Dilemma to be that partaking of a Form amounts to getting a part of it. Thus, Allen takes Parmenides to infer (in the Third Man) that each Form of Largeness is many from the claim that each Form of Largeness has (infinitely) many parts. By way of response, I must say that I do not see any reason to believe that the Third Man Argument depends in any way on the Whole-Part Dilemma, which, as I interpret it, stands on its own and does not issue in the conclusion that partaking of a Form amounts to getting a part of it (see above). Second, and more importantly, Allen sees no absurdity in the argument’s conclusion that each Form of Largeness is both many and one, presumably because he (mistakenly) does not recognize that Socrates’ previous insistence that no Form can have contrary properties plays a role in the argument (see Allen 1997, 158).

- (25) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries.

It should be clear that Socrates accepts (5) and takes (10) and (25) to be platitudinous. Moreover, we've just seen that it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates accepts (22). Thus, Socrates cannot reasonably hold that the premises of the Third Man Argument are false, and must therefore accept that the One-over-Many version of MPTF is false.

4.3 The Anti-Noematic Argument

Struck by Parmenides' criticisms of the Pie Model and One-over-Many versions of MPTF, Socrates changes his tune (*132b3–6*):

But, Parmenides, maybe each of these forms is a thought and properly occurs only in minds. In this way each of them might be one and no longer face the difficulties mentioned just now.

It seems, then, that Socrates (at least temporarily) abandons (OM) while accepting the following thesis (call it “N,” for “Noema,” the Greek word for thought), a thesis he takes to be at least consistent with (O):

(N) For any F, each Form of F-ness is a thought.

By doing so, Socrates puts forward a conception of the nature of the forms (namely, (N)). The result of conjoining this conception with the axioms of MPTF is a new version of MPTF (call it “the Noematic version of MPTF”).²⁷ It is this version of MPTF that Parmenides then proceeds to criticize (*132b8–c8*):

²⁷Socrates suggests that the Noematic version of MPTF might avoid “the difficulties mentioned just now.” These difficulties are the Whole-Part Dilemma and the Third Man Argument.

It is fairly easy to see how the Whole-Part Dilemma fails as an argument against the Noematic version of MPTF. The reason is that (N) and (PM) cannot both be true. (If they were, then it would follow that there are thoughts of which sensible things literally “get a share.” But this is surely false.) Since the Noematic version of MPTF entails the falsity of (PM), the Whole-Part Dilemma cannot be used against it.

It is for a somewhat different reason that the Third Man Argument fails as an attack on the Noematic version of MPTF. In accepting (N), Socrates implicitly rejects (OM). Since the result of adding (N) to MPTF does not include (OM), the Noematic version of MPTF can avoid the Third Man.

“What do you mean?” [Parmenides] asked. “Is each of the thoughts one, but a thought of nothing?”	132b8
“No, that’s impossible,” [Socrates] said.	b10
“Of something, rather?”	b11
“Yes.”	b12
“Of something that is, or of something that is not?”	c1
“Of something that is.”	c2
“Isn’t it of some one thing, which that thought thinks is over all the instances, being some one character?”	c3
“Yes.”	c5
“Then won’t this thing that is thought to be one, being always the same over all the instances, be a form?”	c6
“That, too, appears necessary.”	c8

Being highly compressed, this argument is open to several alternative interpretations. On one interpretation (see Fine 1993, 131–33), the argument is a *reductio* of (N). Begin with (N), the assumption that every Form is a thought. Now, Parmenides tells us, every thought is of a Form that is, in the sense of being extra-mental. Thus, if every Form is a thought, then some Forms, being extra-mental, are not thoughts. It follows that not every Form is a thought, that is, that (N) is false. On a somewhat different interpretation (see also Fine 1993, 131–33), the argument is meant to be a *reductio* of the conjunction of (N) and (O). Begin again with the assumption (N) that every Form of F-ness is a thought, and let A be a Form of F-ness. It follows that A is a thought. Now, Parmenides tells us, every thought T which is a Form of F-ness is of a Form of F-ness which is distinct from T. So A is a Form of F-ness which is a thought of a Form of F-ness which is distinct from A. It follows that there are two Forms of F-ness. But (O) tells us that, for every property F to which there corresponds a Form, there is exactly one Form corresponding to F. Contradiction. Therefore, at least one of (N) and (O) must be false.

Neither of these reconstructions of the Anti-Noematic Argument fits the text particularly well. The first suffers from the drawback that there is nothing in the text to suggest that, in saying that every thought is of something that is, Parmenides means that every thought is of something that is *extra-mental*. If anything, the text suggests that Parmenides takes every thought to be of something that is (132c1–2) because he takes every thought to be of something that is *one over all the instances* (132c3–5). The second must face the fact that the existence of two Forms of F-ness does not

conflict with (O) unless (O) is read as equivalent (or synonymous) with (O') (see p. 520–21). But, as we saw above, there is no reason to believe (and some reason not to believe) that Parmenides and Socrates consider (O) and (O') to be equivalent.

How, then, shall we interpret the Anti-Noematic Argument? Begin with the Noematic Version of MPTF. This version of MPTF entails (N), the claim that every Form is a thought. Now Parmenides and Socrates agree (for reasons that aren't stated, if reasons there are) (i) that every thought is of something that is one over all the instances (132c3–5) and (ii) that anything which is one over all the instances is a Form (132c6–8). Thus, by (N), every Form is a thought of a Form that is over all the instances. But (E), which is a part of MPTF, tells us that, for some property F (call it "G"), there is a Form corresponding to it (namely, a Form of F-ness). Let T_1 , then, be a Form of G-ness. It follows that there is a Form (call it " T_2 ") of which T_1 is a thought. Is T_2 a Form of G-ness? The text doesn't say. But it is reasonable to suppose that Parmenides is in a position to see that no problem will arise if T_2 is not a Form of G-ness. So Parmenides must think that T_2 is a Form of G-ness. This result follows from (N), the claim that T_1 is a Form of G-ness (namely, a Form associated with G), and suitably filled out versions of (i) and (ii), namely (i') and (ii'):

- (i') For any F, every thought associated with F is of something that is one over all the F instances.
- (ii') For any F, anything which is one over all the F instances is a Form of F-ness.

T_2 , then, is a Form of G-ness. Moreover, T_2 is "over all the instances of G." Now, by (SP), which is part of the Noematic version of MPTF under attack, T_1 is G and T_2 is G. But, by (NSE), which is also part of the Noematic version of MPTF, T_2 can't be "over" itself, in the sense that it can't be by virtue of partaking of T_2 that T_2 is G. Thus, strictly speaking, T_2 isn't over *all* the instances of G; rather, T_2 is over all the instances of G other than T_2 .²⁸ In particular, then, since

²⁸Alternatively, T_2 is over all the instances of G (other than itself) *described thus far*; that is, T_2 is over T_1 and everything that partakes of T_1 . Notice the difference between the alternative readings of (i'), the statement that, for any F, every thought associated with F is of something that is one over all the F instances. On the reading described in the text, (i'), when combined with the other premises of the argument, entails that all forms of F-ness partake of each other (see below). This result may seem

T_1 is an instance of G , T_2 is over T_1 . But then T_1 is G by virtue of partaking of T_2 , and hence, by (NSE), T_1 is not identical to T_2 . It follows that there are two Forms of G -ness, T_1 and T_2 , the first of which partakes of the second. But now, by (N), T_2 , being a Form of G -ness, must be a thought associated with G . Hence, by (i') and (ii'), T_2 must be a thought of a Form of G -ness (call it " T_3 ") that is over all the instances of G (other than itself). T_3 , then, is over T_1 and T_2 , and hence, T_1 is G by virtue of partaking of T_3 and T_2 is G by virtue of partaking of T_3 . Thus, each of T_1 and T_2 partakes of T_3 , and, by (NSE), T_3 must be distinct from each of T_1 and T_2 . Consequently, T_1 partakes of two Forms, T_2 and T_3 , each of which is distinct from T_1 . By iteration of the reasoning, it can be shown that every Form of G -ness partakes of many Forms. But this result, as we've already seen (p. 522), entails that every Form of G -ness is many. And, since the property of being many and the property of being one are contraries, it follows by (RP) that no Form of G -ness is one. But the Noematic version of MPTF entails (O), namely that every Form is one. Contradiction. If the argument is sound, we must conclude that at least one of (N), (E), (SP), (NSE), (RP), and (O) is false, and hence that the Noematic version of MPTF is internally inconsistent. (See appendix 3 for a more formal presentation of this reconstruction of the Anti-Noematic Argument.)²⁹

Might Socrates question the soundness of the Anti-Noematic Ar-

strange, but does not contradict any axiom or corollary of MPTF. (In the *Sophist*, Socrates accepts that at least some Forms partake of each other, since he holds that Sameness partakes of Difference and Difference partakes of Sameness (*So.* 255e–256a).) On the reading of (i') described in this note, (i') does not have this seemingly strange consequence. It should be noted that there is no textual (or other) evidence to choose between these readings of (i'). But the textual evidence strongly suggests that the Anti-Noematic Argument cannot be read as valid unless one or other of these readings of (i') is correct (see below).

²⁹It should be noted that Parmenides himself does not complete the reasoning in the way that I have proposed. Rather, to topple the Noematic version of MPTF, he takes it to be sufficient to show that there are two Forms corresponding to a single property. Since, as I've argued, the claim that there are two Forms of F -ness does not conflict with any combination of axioms or corollaries of MPTF, I take it that there is more to the argument than what appears in the text. I suggest that the completing piece of reasoning (which takes us to the claim that no Form of F -ness is one *via* the proposition that each Form of F -ness partakes of many Forms) is left implicit because something like it already appears in the Third Man Argument.

gument? I think not. Since the argument is clearly valid, its soundness depends on whether the following statements are true (the numbers next to the statements correspond to the numbers given to them in appendix 3):

- (5) Every thought associated with F is of something that is one over all the F instances (other than itself).
- (7) Anything which is one over all the F instances (other than itself) is a Form of F-ness.
- (11) If X is over all the F instances (other than X), then every F instance (other than X) is F by virtue of partaking of X.
- (23) Anything that partakes of many Forms is many.
- (26) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries.

I have argued that (5) and (7) are the correct interpretations of the claims Socrates explicitly accepts at *132c5* and *132c8*. Moreover, since it is reasonable to assume that Socrates takes X's being over Y as sufficient for Y's partaking of X, he cannot reasonably deny (11). Finally, we've already seen (p. 522–23) that it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates accepts both (23) and (26). Since Socrates cannot reasonably reject these statements, he cannot reasonably claim that the Anti-Noematic Argument is unsound.

4.4 *The Likeness Regress Argument*

In response to the arguments offered thus far, Socrates proposes a new conception of the nature of Forms (to account for each Form's being one) *and* a new conception of the "partaking" relation. According to the new conception of the nature of Forms, Forms are "paradigms" (patterns set in nature). Call this conception of the nature of the Forms "PA," for "Paradigm":

(PA) Each Form is a paradigm.

According to the new conception of the nature of "partaking," to "partake" of a Form is to be like it. Call the latter conception "LM," for "Likeness Model":

(LM) For any Form Y, X partakes of Y if and only if X is like Y.

The result of conjoining (PA) and (LM) to the axioms of MPTF is a new version of MPTF (call it the "Likeness Model version of

MPTF"). On cue, Parmenides then goes on the offensive (132d5–133a4):

- "If something resembles the form," [Parmenides] said, 132d5
 "can that form not be like what has been modeled on it, to
 the extent that the thing has been made like it? Or is there
 any way for something like to be like what is not like it?"
 "There is not." d8
 "And isn't there a compelling necessity for that which is
 like to partake of the same one form as what is like it?" d9
 "There is." e2
 "But if like things are like by partaking of something, won't
 that be the form itself?" e3
 "Undoubtedly." e5
 "Therefore nothing can be like the form, nor can the form
 be like anything else. Otherwise, alongside the form another
 form will always make its appearance, {133a1} and if that form
 is like anything, yet another; and if the form proves to be like
 what partakes of it, a fresh form will never cease emerging."
 "That's very true." 133a4

This argument has been read in two ways. On the standard interpretation (see Owen 1953, Cherniss 1957, and Fine 1993), the purpose of the argument is to generate an infinite regress of Forms of F-ness, where F is any property to which there corresponds a Form, and to conclude from this that (LM) is false if there is a Form of which some things partake. The argument goes as follows: By (E), there is a property F to which there corresponds a Form. Let A be something that is F. By (C), A is F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness (call it " ϕ_1 "), and so A partakes of ϕ_1 . By (LM), A is like ϕ_1 . By (SP), ϕ_1 is F. Thus, since A is F, it seems that A and ϕ_1 are alike in both being F. By (OM), then, A and ϕ_1 are F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness (call it " ϕ_2 "). By (NSE), it follows that ϕ_2 is not identical to ϕ_1 . But ϕ_1 partakes of ϕ_2 , and hence, by (LM), ϕ_1 is like ϕ_2 . By (SP), ϕ_2 is F. By (OM), then, ϕ_1 and ϕ_2 are F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness (call it " ϕ_3 "). By (NSE), it follows that ϕ_1 is not identical to ϕ_3 and that ϕ_2 is not identical to ϕ_3 . Iteration of the reasoning produces infinitely many Forms of F-ness, a conclusion that seems inconsistent with (O). It seems, then, that (LM) is false, and hence that an F thing's partaking of a Form of F-ness does not consist in its resembling the Form (in respect of being F).

On the standard reading, then, the Likeness Regress Argument

is homologous to the Third Man Argument. Both arguments rely on (E), (SP), (NSE), and (OM), and generate a regress of Forms of F-ness, for some F to which there corresponds a Form, in the same way. But there is an alternative reading that deserves to be taken seriously (see Schofield 1996 and Allen 1997). On this reading, the argument produces, not a regress of Forms of F-ness (for some F to which there corresponds a Form), but rather a regress of Forms of Likeness. This rendition of the argument goes as follows: By (E), there is a property F to which there corresponds a Form. Let A be something that is F. By (C), A is F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness (call it “ ϕ ”), and so A partakes of ϕ . By (LM), A is like ϕ . But the relation of being like is symmetrical: if X is like Y, then Y is like X (132d5–8). Consequently, ϕ is like A. But now, if X is like Y (for some Y), then X is like. Thus, A and ϕ are both like. By (OM), then, A and ϕ are like by virtue of partaking of a Form of Likeness (the “Form itself” at 132e4). Call this Form of Likeness “ L_1 .” By (NSE), ϕ is not identical to L_1 . It can now be shown that nothing is like L_1 and that L_1 isn’t like anything (132e6–7). For suppose that something (say, B) is like L_1 or that L_1 is like something (say, C). If B is like L_1 , then, by symmetry of the relation of being like, L_1 is like B. Hence, on either supposition L_1 is like something, and hence like. Since A, ϕ , and L_1 form a plurality of like things, it follows by (OM) that there is a Form of Likeness (call it “ L_2 ”) by virtue of partaking of which A, ϕ , and L_1 are like. Hence, L_1 partakes of L_2 , and, by (NSE), L_1 is not identical to L_2 (132e7). By (LM), however, L_1 is like L_2 . By symmetry of the relation of being like, L_2 is like L_1 , and hence L_2 is like. Since A, ϕ , L_1 , and L_2 form a plurality of like things, it follows by (OM) that there is a Form of Likeness (call it “ L_3 ”) by virtue of partaking of which L_1 and L_2 are like. Hence, L_1 partakes of L_3 and L_2 partakes of L_3 , and, by (NSE), L_1 is not identical to L_3 and L_2 is not identical to L_3 (133a1). Iteration of the reasoning produces infinitely many Forms of Likeness (133a1–3), a conclusion that seems inconsistent with (O). Thus, by *reductio*, “nothing can be like [L_1], nor can [L_1] be like anything else” (132e6–7). This result is not in itself absurd, but it does conflict with a previous claim, namely that A partakes of L_1 . For this claim entails, by (LM), that A is like L_1 . And this is inconsistent with part of the conclusion of the previous *reductio*, namely that nothing can be like L_1 .

Although a case may be made for both interpretations, I take it

that the available evidence favors the nonstandard interpretation.³⁰ In the first place, given that Parmenides does not refer back to the Third Man Argument in taking Socrates through the Likeness Regress Argument, we should expect him to be offering a different argument altogether. Second, the standard interpretation (unlike its competitor) must read *132d9–132e1* and *132e3–4* as redundant. (This has led some standard commentators to adopt *ad hoc* emendations of the text.) Third, *132e3–4* (“like things are like by partaking of something”) is naturally read as echoing previous statements about Likeness (at *129a4–5* and *130e6–131a1*). And finally, the standard interpretation cannot explain why Parmenides takes the time to point out that the relation of being like is symmetrical (see *132d5–8*), for, according to the standard view, this claim does not function as a premise in the argument. (Its function is taken over by (SP) instead.)

However, both interpretations face a now familiar difficulty. On either interpretation, the purported absurdity generated by the regress is that there are infinitely many Forms corresponding to the relevant property (being F/being like), while at the same time MPTF tells us that there is exactly one Form corresponding to the relevant property. But, again, no absurdity is generated if (O) is not taken to be equivalent to (O') (see p. 520–21). The (now familiar) way to fill the problematic inferential gap is to point out that the premises of the argument (on either interpretation) entail that every Form corresponding to the relevant property partakes of infinitely many Forms, and hence that every such Form is many. But the property of being one and the property of being many are contraries, and, by (RP), it is impossible for a Form to have contrary properties. Consequently, the argument entails that every Form corresponding to the relevant property is not one, a result which directly contradicts (O).

If both interpretations are supplemented in this way, they yield the following results. The supplemented standard interpretation tells us that the argument's conclusion is that at least one of (LM), (E), (C), (SP), (OM), (NSE), (RP), and (O) is false. The supplemented nonstandard interpretation, by contrast, tells us that the argument's conclusion is that at least one of (LM), (E), (C), (OM), (NSE), (RP), and (O) is false. (The latter interpretation is repro-

³⁰Most of the points that follow are made by Schofield (1996, 62–64).

duced more formally in appendix 4.) On both of these accounts, the argument is valid. The major difference between the two interpretations, then, is that it is possible to avoid the problem posed by the first, but impossible to avoid the problem posed by the second, by abandoning (SP).

Might Socrates reasonably question the soundness of the Likeness Regress Argument? I think not. I have already argued that Socrates accepts the premises of the supplemented standard interpretation (see section 4.2). On the supplemented nonstandard interpretation, the argument's soundness depends on whether the following statements are true (the numbers next to the statements correspond to the numbers given to them in appendix 4):

- (4) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, something is F.
- (9) If X is like Y, then Y is like X.
- (11) If X is like Y, then X is like.
- (13) The result of adding an F thing to an F thing is a plurality of F things.
- (15) There is a Form corresponding to the property of being like.
- (22) The result of adding an F thing to a plurality of F things is a plurality of F things.
- (34) Anything that partakes of many Forms is many.
- (37) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries.

Of these statements, it should be clear that Socrates accepts (4) and (15), and that (13) and (22) are platitudinous. Of the rest, Socrates explicitly accepts (9) (at *132d5–8*), and it is clear that the *reductio* is invalid unless (11) is listed among its premises. Moreover, as I have already argued, Socrates explicitly accepts (37) in his Speech and there are good reasons to think that he accepts (34) as well (see p. 522). Since Socrates cannot reasonably reject any of these statements, he cannot reasonably claim that the Likeness Regress Argument is unsound.³¹

³¹It is important to ask why Socrates might have thought that the Likeness Model version of MPTF avoids the problems raised in the preceding discussion. Here is one answer: First, (LM) is clearly inconsistent with (PM), and hence the Likeness Model version can avoid the Whole-Part Dilemma. Second, (PA) is clearly inconsistent with (N), and hence the Likeness Model version can avoid the Anti-Noematic Argument. It is more

4.5 *The Greatest Difficulty Argument*

Having shown by means of various relatively complex arguments that four versions of MPTF are internally inconsistent, Parmenides tells Socrates that he has saved the best for last: “You do not yet, if I may put it so, have an inkling of how great the difficulty is if you are going to posit one form in each case every time you make a distinction among things” (133a11–b2).

This challenge comes in the shape of the following argument (call it “the Greatest Difficulty Argument”), which appears at 133c3–134b13:

“I think that you, Socrates, and anyone else who posits that there is for each thing some being, itself by itself, would agree, to begin with, that none of those beings is in us.” 133c3

“Yes—how could it still be itself by itself?” replied Socrates. c6

“Very good,” said Parmenides. “And so all the characters that are what they are in relation to each other have their being in relation to themselves but not in relation to things that belong to us. And whether one posits these as likenesses or in some other way, it is by partaking of them that we come to be called by their various names. These things that belong to us, although they have the same names as the forms, are in their turn what they are in relation to themselves but not in relation to the forms; and all the things named in this way are *of* themselves but not *of* the forms. . . . {e4} Things in us do not have their power in relation to forms, nor do they have theirs in relation to us; but, I repeat, forms are what they are *of* themselves and in relation to themselves, and things that belong to us are, in the same way, what they are in relation to themselves. You do understand what I mean?” c7

“Certainly,” Socrates said, “I understand.” 134a2

“So too,” he said, “knowledge itself, what knowledge is, would be knowledge of that truth itself, which is what truth is?” a3

difficult to see how Socrates might have thought that his new proposal avoids the Third Man Argument. On the standard interpretation, since the Likeness Regress Argument does not differ from the Third Man Argument, there simply is no answer to the question. On the nonstandard interpretation, the Likeness Regress Argument does not depend on (SP). We can therefore speculate that Socrates saw, though perhaps only dimly, that he could avoid the Third Man by rejecting (SP). (However, I have argued that Socrates takes (SP) to follow from the conjunction of (C) and the assumption that whatever causes something to be F must itself be F. Consequently, if (SP) is abandoned, then (C) cannot be retained unless the assumption is denied. I won't pursue the matter further here.)

“Certainly.”	a5
“Furthermore, each particular knowledge, what it is, would be knowledge of some particular thing, of what that thing is. Isn’t that so?”	a6
“Yes.”	a8
“But wouldn’t knowledge that belongs to us be of the truth that belongs to our world? And wouldn’t it follow that each particular knowledge that belongs to us is in turn knowledge of some particular thing in our world?”	a9
“Necessarily.”	b2
“But, as you agree, we neither have the forms themselves nor can they belong to us.”	b3
“Yes, you’re quite right.”	b5
“And surely the kinds themselves, what each of them is, are known by the form of knowledge itself?”	b6
“Yes.”	b8
“The very thing that we don’t have.”	b9
“No, we don’t.”	b10
“So none of the forms is known by us, because we don’t partake of knowledge itself.”	b11
“It seems not.”	b13

This argument may be presented informally as follows: Recall that, according to (I), every Form is “itself by itself.” Since nothing that is “itself by itself” is in us (133c5), it follows that no Form is in us. But now, (i) if X is in us and X is what it is relative to Y, then Y is in us (133d2–5 and 133e4–134a1), and (ii) if X is a knowledge of Y, then X is what it is relative to Y (134a3–8). By (i) and (ii), if X is in us and X is a knowledge of Y, then Y is in us (134a9–b2). But then, since no Form is in us (134b3–5), if X is in us and X is a knowledge of Y, then Y is not a Form (134b6–10). Otherwise put, there is no knowledge of any Form in us. But surely, if there is no knowledge of X in us, then we do not know X. Consequently, we do not know any Form (134b11). But, according to (K), we know at least some Forms. Contradiction. It follows that (I) and (K) cannot both be true, and hence that MPTF is false. As Parmenides puts the point at 135a3–5: “Whoever hears about [the Forms] objects . . . that, even if they [exist], they must by strict necessity be unknowable to human nature.”³²

³²This reconstruction of the Greatest Difficulty Argument is a slightly simpler version of what Peterson (1981) calls the “active route” to the conclusion that we do not know any form. (I have essentially substituted Peterson’s Premise V-P for her Premises V-A, VI-A, and VII-A. See Peterson 1981, 6–7.) Peterson also claims that there is a second, “passive,” argument to the same conclusion, one which relies on two important claims:

Might Socrates question the soundness of this argument? Surely not. The argument's soundness depends on whether the following statements are true (the numbers next to the statements correspond to the numbers given to them in appendix 5):

- (3) Anything that is itself by itself is not in us.
- (5) If X is in us and X is what it is relative to Y, then Y is in us.
- (6) If X is a knowledge of Y, then X is what it is relative to Y.
- (9) If we know Y, then there is a knowledge of Y in us.

Of these statements, Socrates explicitly accepts (3), (5), and (6) (at *133c6*, *134a2*, and *134a5,8* respectively). And, although (9) is not explicitly stated, it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates took it to be platitudinous and that the argument (which he accepts) relies on it. Thus, Socrates must accept that (I) and (K) are not both true, and hence that MPTF is false.

5. The Transition to the Deductions

Parmenides' five arguments are devastating. Since they are all valid and based on premises that Socrates could not reasonably reject, Socrates must admit (i) that the four versions of MPTF he can think of (namely, the Pie Model, the One-over-Many, the Noematic, and Likeness Model versions) are all internally inconsistent, and (as if that weren't enough) (ii) that the axioms of MPTF themselves cannot all be true. Parmenides points out, not unreasonably, that "whoever hears about [the arguments] is doubtful and objects that [the Forms] do not exist . . . , and in saying this he seems to have

(III-P) If X is an object of knowledge to Y, X is what it is *pros* [relative to] Y.

(IV-P) If X is what it is *pros* [relative to] Y, then if X is a Form, Y is a Form.

But, as Peterson recognizes, (III-P) is unstated and also suspect, since one can use it "to get such unwelcome results as: 'Justice itself is what it is *pros* [relative to] my knowledge of justice itself'" (9). Moreover, (IV-P), which is stated (*133c8-d2*), is not used to prove that we humans do not know any Forms, but is used instead to prove that the gods do not know human affairs (*134c4-e8*). (I do not have the space to defend these claims here.)

Let me emphasize that Peterson's "active" route is, in all relevant respects, identical to the reconstruction I provide above. I am indebted to her article for showing me what I take to be the right way of presenting the Greatest Difficulty Argument.

a point" (135*a*). This is a dramatic moment in the dialogue, for, at this stage, the proponent of MPTF must make a decision: given that he cannot keep MPTF as is, he must either give up any hope of saving the Forms or try to save them by eliminating from MPTF a small number of relatively inessential axioms other than (E).

Of these two roads, Parmenides is in no doubt as to which one ought to be taken. He tells Socrates (at 135*b–c*):

If someone, having an eye on all the difficulties we have just brought up and others of the same sort, won't allow that there are forms for things and won't mark off a form for each one, he won't have anywhere to turn his thought, since he doesn't allow that for each thing there is a character that is always the same. In this way he will destroy the power of dialectic entirely.

So the Forms must be saved if the "power of dialectic" is not to be destroyed by virtue of the fact that there is nowhere "to turn one's thought."

Parmenides then tells Socrates (at 135*d–e*) that he was impressed by something that the latter did in his earlier Speech. As Parmenides puts it to Socrates:

You didn't allow [Zeno] to remain among visible things and observe their wandering (between opposites).³³ You asked him to observe it instead among those things that one might above all grasp by means of reason and might think to be forms.

Recall that, while Socrates was happy to accept that ordinary sensible ("visible") things "wander" between opposites in the sense of being capable of having contrary properties, he said that he would be "astonished" if someone were able to show that the Forms "wander" between opposites in the same way. Now, at 135*d–e*, Parmenides recommends that Socrates observe this "wandering" among the Forms, with the implicit suggestion (I take it) that Socrates is about to be "astonished." But to say that the Forms "wan-

³³I bracket the qualification 'between opposites' because nothing corresponding to the qualification appears in the Greek. Nevertheless, following Gill and Ryan (1996), I supply the qualification, given (i) that the relevant passage harks back to the Speech (128*e–130a*) in which Socrates explicitly challenges Zeno to show that Forms have "opposite" (that is, contrary) properties, and (ii) that (at 135*e*) Socrates illustrates the relevant sort of "wandering" as the having of "opposite" (that is, contrary) properties (such as the property of being like and the property of being unlike). (I thank a referee for bringing this matter to my attention.)

der” between opposites (in the relevant sense) is just to assert the negation of (RP), namely that some Forms can be both F and con-F. (And, since the negation of (RP) entails the negation of (RP*), it is also to assert the negation of (RP*), namely that some Forms can be both F and not-F.) The implication here is that the Forms may be saved *by rejecting (RP)*.

In fact, a quick look at the results of the first four arguments shows that the removal of (RP) from MPTF would render the resulting theory (call it “MPTF–(RP)”) impervious to the threat of inconsistency posed by the arguments. The results may be summarized as follows (see appendices 1–4):

- (A) The Whole-Part Dilemma: At least one of (PM), (C), (O), and (RP) is false.
- (B) The Third Man Argument: At least one of (OM), (E), (SP), (NSE), and (RP) is false.³⁴
- (C) The Anti-Noematic Argument: At least one of (N), (E), (SP), (NSE), (O), and (RP) is false.
- (D) The Likeness Regress Argument: At least one of (LM), (OM), (C), (E), (NSE), (O), and (RP) is false.

It should be clear that these results do not show that any particular axiom or corollary of MPTF is false. But there is one particular axiom which would account for all four results, namely (RP). Thus, if Parmenides could only prove that (RP) is false, he would be able

³⁴A referee suggests that Plato took the Third Man Argument, as I have reconstructed it (see appendix 2), to show that at least one of (OM), (E), (SP), and (NSE) is false. For these four statements, together with a few platitudes (steps (5) and (10)), generate a result of which Plato would not have approved: that there is more than one Form of Largeness (step (15)).

I am ready to grant that Plato believed (perhaps even took for granted) that (T) To each predicate to which there corresponds a Form, there corresponds no more than one Form. But I am not ready to grant that Plato treated (T) as an *axiom* of MPTF; in my book, he would not have thought it *incoherent* to accept MPTF while denying (T). By the time of the *Parmenides*, Plato had come to recognize that four axioms of the One-over-Many version of MPTF ((OM), (E), (SP), and (NSE)) entail the negation of (T). But he would not have felt *compelled* to give up one or more of these axioms as a result. Rather, he would have found himself torn between (a) keeping his old belief in (T) while abandoning one or more of (OM), (E), (SP), and (NSE), and (b) keeping all of (OM), (E), (SP), and (NSE) while abandoning (T). I am sympathetic to the view that, troubled by the idea of accepting the negation of (T), Plato later picked option (a); but, for reasons of space, I leave the matter open for further discussion.

to show that none of the first four arguments threatens MPTF–(RP).³⁵ It is this task which Parmenides sets out to accomplish in the Deductions.

But how is the task to be accomplished? Parmenides tells Socrates that the way “to achieve a full view of the truth” (136c) is to perform an exercise of the following form: keeping your mind on the Forms, first “hypothesize, if each thing is, and examine the consequences of that hypothesis,” and, second, “hypothesize if that same thing is not.” There are, continues Parmenides, two types of consequences, (a) and (b):

- (a) Consequences for the Form hypothesized to be and then hypothesized not to be.
- (b) Consequences for things other than the Form hypothesized to be and then hypothesized not to be.

Further, there are two types of consequences of type (a) and two types of consequences of type (b). Concerning the consequences of type (a), there are:

- (a′) Consequences for the hypothesized Form in relation to itself, and
- (a′′) Consequences for the hypothesized Form in relation to things other than it.

Similarly, concerning the consequences of type (b), there are

- (b′) Consequences for things other than the hypothesized Form in relation to themselves, and
- (b′′) Consequences for things other than the hypothesized Form in relation to that Form.

³⁵It is important to recognize that, in rejecting (RP), Socrates need not reject (P). In fact, evidence from a later dialogue (the *Sophist*) suggests that Socrates continued to hold a restricted version of (P) even as he abandoned (RP). There (at *So. 254d–255b*), Socrates insists (i) that, contrary to (RP), Motion and Rest are both the same and different, but also (ii) that, in accordance with (P), Motion cannot be at rest and Rest cannot be in motion. But it is evident that Socrates does not accept (P) itself, for he is committed to the claim that Sameness is different from Difference (and hence different) and to the claim that Difference is the same as itself (and hence the same). Thus, while Socrates holds that some Forms of F-ness (such as Rest and Motion) cannot be con-F, he also holds that some Forms of F-ness (such as Sameness and Difference) can be con-F. (It is difficult to identify the restricted version of (P) Socrates accepts in the *Sophist*, and I will not attempt to do so here.)

Having agreed to use the Form *the One* to give Socrates a taste of how the exercise is supposed to be performed, Parmenides launches into the Deductions.

6. The Deductions

The Deductions divide roughly into eight sections (D1–D8). In D1–D4, Parmenides produces a series of consequences from the hypothesis that the One is; in D5–D8, he produces a similar, but truncated, series of consequences from the hypothesis that the One is not. In D1 and D6, the consequences are of type (a) and negative (for example, that the One is not in motion). In D2 and D5, the consequences are of type (a), but positive (for example, that the One is in motion). In D3 and D7, the consequences are of type (b) and positive (for example, the others are like themselves). In D4 and D8, the consequences are of type (b), but negative (for example, the others are not the same). Further, consequences of types (a') and (a'') appear in each of D1, D2, D5, and D6, and consequences of types (b') and (b'') appear in each of D3, D4, D7, and D8. For example, in D1 and D6, the One is shown to be neither like itself [type (a')] nor like the others [type (a'')]; in D2, the One is shown to be like itself [type (a')] and like the others [type (a'')]; and, in D5, the One is shown to be like itself [type (a')] and unlike the others [type (a'')]. Similarly for the other Deductions: in D3 and D7, the others are shown to be like themselves [type (b')] and like another [type (b'')]; and, in D4 and D8, the others are shown to be neither the same nor different, presumably both in relation to themselves [type (b')] and in relation to the One [type (b'')], though this is admittedly left unsaid.³⁶

³⁶Some commentators (notably Sayre (1978, 1983) and Meinwald (1991)) contend that the negative consequences of types (a) and (b) should be identified with the consequences of types (a'') and (b'') respectively, and that the positive consequences of types (a) and (b) should be identified with the consequences of types (a') and (b') respectively. The evidence they offer for this contention is indirect and holistic, namely that the relevant identifications form the basis of a plausible interpretation of the dialogue as a whole.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of Sayre's and Meinwald's proposals. My aim is to construct an equally (if not more) plausible interpretation of the dialogue on the (not unreasonable) assumption that Plato did not intend the relevant identifications.

Parmenides focuses his attention on a number of properties, including the properties of being a whole, having parts, being limited, being unlimited, having shape, having no shape, having a location, having no location, being in motion, being at rest, being the same, being different, being like, being unlike, being equal, being unequal, being known, and being unknown. Call these properties the “D-properties,” and let F_D be any D-property.

Now Parmenides leaves us in no doubt about the conclusions to be drawn from the various Deductions. In D1, Parmenides argues that the consequences that the One is not F_D (for example, that the One is not in motion) and that the One is not $\text{con-}F_D$ (for example, that the One is not at rest) follow from the hypothesis that the One is. In D6, he argues that the same consequences follow from the hypothesis that the One is not. Since the One either is or is not, it follows by separation of cases that the One is not F_D and that the One is not $\text{con-}F_D$.

The same pattern of argument is instantiated in D2 and D5. In D2, Parmenides argues that the consequences that the One is F_D and that the One is $\text{con-}F_D$ follow from the hypothesis that the One is. In D5, he argues that the same consequences follow from the hypothesis that the One is not. Since the One either is or is not, it follows, again by separation of cases, that the One is both F_D and $\text{con-}F_D$.

The conclusions to be drawn from D3 and D7, and from D4 and D8, are essentially the same, but this time pertain to the others. From D3 and D7, it follows by separation of cases that the others are both F_D and $\text{con-}F_D$. From D4 and D8, it follows, again by separation of cases, that the others are not F_D and not $\text{con-}F_D$.

Now it is true that some of the arguments in the Deductions, upon analysis, seem less than compelling to many contemporary readers. But Parmenides presents the arguments without any suggestion as to their being unsound, and this strongly suggests that he intended them to be sound. Still, it must be acknowledged that there is an important objection to reading the Deductions in this way. For look again at the conclusions drawn above. We said that, from D1 and D6, it follows that the One is not F_D and not $\text{con-}F_D$. But we also said that, from D2 and D5, it follows that the One is F_D and $\text{con-}F_D$. Thus, it seems that D1, D2, D5, and D6 together entail two contradictions: that the One is F_D and not F_D , and that the One is $\text{con-}F_D$ and not $\text{con-}F_D$. But, in that case, it seems that

the arguments in these deductions cannot be sound. And, since their being unsound must have been obvious to him, Parmenides could not possibly have intended them to be sound.

I believe that the answer to this objection is that Parmenides does not consider propositions of the form 'X is F' and 'X is not F' to be contradictories. For Parmenides, to say that X is F is just to say that *there is some respect in which X is F*, and to say that X is not F is just to say that *there is some respect in which X is not F*. Thus, it is possible for X to be both F and not F, as long as there is no single respect relative to which X is F *and* relative to which X is not F. The reason for this is that there is no contradiction in X's being F and not F *in different respects*. Consider, for example, the fact that Simmias is both taller than Socrates and not taller than Phaedo. Given that Simmias is taller than Socrates, there is a respect in which Simmias is tall, and hence it may be said that Simmias is tall. In addition, given that Simmias is not taller than Phaedo, there is a respect in which Simmias is not tall, and hence it may be said that Simmias is not tall. But it should be clear that there is no contradiction here. Simmias is tall because he is tall in one respect (when compared to Socrates), and he is not tall because he is not tall in another respect (when compared to Phaedo). Therefore, it is no more of a contradiction to say that Simmias is both tall and not tall than it is to say that Simmias is both tall and short.³⁷

It might be thought that, if Parmenides does not treat statements of the form 'X is F' and 'X is not F' as contradictories, then he cannot endorse the arguments against MPTF advanced in Part I. For it seems that these arguments cannot be read as valid unless statements of the form 'X is F' and 'X is not F' are read as logically

³⁷In this reply, I am relying in part on Meinwald 1991 (chap. 5, 113–16). There Meinwald argues (in my view, rightly) that no seemingly contradictory results derived within a single Deduction are actually contradictory. For example, in D2, from the hypothesis that the One is, Parmenides derives the consequence that the One becomes younger than the others and the consequence that the One does not become younger than the others. But Meinwald points out that the first consequence is equivalent to the claim that the One becomes younger than the others *in one way*, and that the second consequence is equivalent to the claim that the One does not become younger than the others *in another way*. What Meinwald does not see is that this point applies not merely *within* a Deduction, but *across* Deductions as well.

incompatible. For example, as I have reconstructed them, the first four arguments of Part I are based on *reductio* assumptions which generate two claims: (i) that each Form is many, and (ii) that each Form is one. And it might be thought that these arguments are invalid unless (i) and (ii) contradict each other.³⁸ In response, it should be noted that the validity of the arguments in Part I does not depend upon treating claims (i) and (ii) as contradictories. As we saw above (p. 513), Socrates does not assume that the claim that each Form is many contradicts the claim that each Form is one. Rather, Socrates assumes that the claim that each Form is many contradicts the result of conjoining the claim that each Form is one with two further claims: the statement that no Form can have contrary properties (namely, (RP)) and the statement that the property of being one and the property of being many are contraries.

Having disposed of this objection, we are left with the following conclusion: If the individual arguments within the eight Deductions are all sound, then it follows by separation of cases (for example, from D2 and D5) that the One is both F_D and $\text{con-}F_D$ and (for example, from D1, D2, D5, and D6) that the One is both F_D and not F_D and both $\text{con-}F_D$ and not $\text{con-}F_D$. We may therefore conclude that, for each of a large number of properties, the One has that property and its contrary and the One has that property and its negation. Thus, since it is reasonable to believe that Parmenides took the individual arguments to be sound, it is reasonable to believe that he took himself to have established that (RP) and (RP*) are false. But, if (RP) and (RP*) are indeed false, then they ought to be abandoned. The result of abandoning (RP) and (RP*) is a leaner and meaner theory of Forms, namely MPTF-(RP). And, as we saw earlier, the first four arguments of Part I cannot be used to show that this leaner and meaner theory is internally inconsistent. Thanks to Parmenides, the Forms live to fight another day.³⁹

³⁸I wish to thank two referees for bringing this objection to my attention.

³⁹There is confirmation for this way of reading the *Parmenides* in the *Sophist* and the *Philebus*, both of which are thought to have been written after the Middle Period dialogues.

In the *Sophist* (at *So.* 251d–252d), the Eleatic Stranger argues that the Forms are capable of blending with (in the sense of partaking of) other Forms. He then argues (at *So.* 254d–256c) that Rest cannot blend with

One final remark: The reader will no doubt have noticed that the threat to MPTF posed by the Greatest Difficulty Argument cannot be avoided by abandoning (RP), since the argument (if sound) shows that (I) and (K) are logically incompatible. As I read the dialogue, then, Parmenides does not provide, nor does he intend to provide, an answer to this argument in the Deductions. Rather, as Parmenides tells Socrates at *133b*, it is not possible to provide such an answer without dealing with “many distant considerations.” I submit that these “distant considerations” lie beyond the dialogue, and that Parmenides is setting the Greatest Difficulty Argument aside for future consideration. Thus, Parmenides’ fifth and final objection to MPTF is aptly named, because Parmenides does not take himself to be well enough prepared to meet the challenge it represents.

7. Conclusion

The interpretation that I have offered reveals that the *Parmenides* is a remarkably unified and self-consistent dialogue designed to establish that four cogent and powerful challenges to the Middle Period Theory of Forms may be met by jettisoning one of the theory’s peripheral axioms. That axiom is the principle that no Form can have contrary properties. This interpretation satisfies a number of exegetical desiderata. First, it takes the author at his word and reads him as intending each and every argument in the dialogue to be sound. Second, it allows us to understand the function of each Part and the way in which the results of Part II may

Motion (for then either Rest would be in motion or Motion would be at rest, which is impossible), but that Being can blend with Rest and with Motion (since Rest is and Motion is). Consequently, Rest and Motion are both different from Being, and hence different. But each of Rest and Motion is the same as itself. Thus, each of Rest and Motion is both the same and different. It follows that some Forms have contrary properties. It is clear, then, that the *Sophist* contains an argument to the proposition which I have argued to be the main conclusion of the *Parmenides*.

Early on in the *Philebus* (at *Phil. 15a–b*), Socrates accepts that the Forms are both one and many. He then suggests (at *Phil. 18e*) that he and Philebus investigate the question how each of Intelligence and Pleasure can be both one and many. It should be clear that this investigation cannot get off the ground unless the falsity of (RP) is assumed. That Socrates is entitled to this assumption is precisely what I take to be the upshot of the *Parmenides*.

be used to solve the problems raised in Part I. Third, it places the dialogue at (what is already widely held to be) a pivotal juncture in the development of Plato's metaphysics. And finally, it brings to light the sheer virtuosity of Plato's philosophical talents.

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Appendices

1. The Whole-Part Dilemma

- (1) (E), (C), (O), (RP), and (PM) are all true. [Reductio Assumption]
- ∴ (2) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, everything that is F is F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness. [(C), from (1)]
- ∴ (3) There is a property (call it "G") to which there corresponds a Form. [(E), from (1)]
- (4) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, many separate things are F at the same time. [Premise]
- ∴ (5) X partakes of Y if and only if X gets a share of Y. [(PM), from (1)]
- ∴ (6) There is a Form (call it "Φ") of which many separate things get a share at the same time. [From (2), (3), (4), (5)]
- (7) If X gets a share of Y, then *either* X gets the whole of Y or X gets a part of Y. [Premise]
- (8) If X gets a share of Y, then X gets the whole of Y. [Reductio Assumption]
- (9) If X gets the whole of Y, then the whole of Y is in X. [Premise]
- ∴ (10) The whole of Φ is in many separate things at the same time. [From (6), (8), (9)]
- (11) If the whole of Y is in many separate things at the same time, then Y is separate from itself. [Premise]
- ∴ (12) Φ is separate from itself. [From (10), (11)]
- (13) Nothing is separate from itself. [Premise]
- ∴ (14) It is not the case that, if X gets a share of Y, then X gets the whole of Y. [From (8)–(13), by Reductio—contradiction on (12) and (13)]

- (15) If X gets a share of Y, then X gets a part of Y. [Reductio Assumption]
- (16) If X gets a part of Y, then a part of Y is in X. [Premise]
- ∴ (17) Each of many things is such that a part of Φ is in it. [From (6), (15), (16)]
- (18) If each of many things is such that a part of Y is in it, then Y is divisible. [Premise]
- ∴ (19) Φ is divisible. [From (17), (18)]
- (20) If Y is divisible, then Y has many parts. [Premise]
- (21) If Y has many parts, then Y is many. [Premise]
- ∴ (22) Φ is many. [From (19), (20), (21)]
- ∴ (23) No Form can have contrary properties. [(RP), from (1)]
- (24) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries. [Premise]
- ∴ (25) Φ is not one. [From (6), (22), (23), (24)]
- ∴ (26) Each Form is one. [(O), from (1)]
- ∴ (27) Φ is one. [From (6), (26)]
- ∴ (28) It is not the case that, if X gets a share of Y, then X gets a part of Y. [From (15)–(27), by Reductio—contradiction on (25) and (27)]
- ∴ (29) At least one of (C), (O), (RP), and (PM) is false. [From (1)–(28), by Reductio—contradiction on (7), (14), and (28)]
- ∴ (30) The Pie Model version of MPTF [= (E) + (C) + (I) + (K) + (O) + (RP) + (WI_s) + (RD) + (SP) + (NSE) + (PM)] is false. [From (29)]

2. The Third Man Argument

- (1) (E), (SP), (NSE), (RP), and (OM) are all true. [Reductio Assumption]
- ∴ (2) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form and any plurality of things that are F, there is a Form of F-ness by virtue of partaking of which each member of the plurality is F. [(OM), from (1)]
- ∴ (3) Each Form of F-ness is one. [(O), from (2)]
- ∴ (4) There is a property (say, the property of being large) to which there corresponds a Form. [(E), from (1)]
- (5) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, there is a plurality of things that are F. [Premise]

- ∴ (6) There is a plurality of things (say, A, B, C) that are large. [From (4), (5)]
- ∴ (7) There is a Form of Largeness (call it “L₁”) by virtue of partaking of which A, B, and C are large. [From (2), (4), (6)]
- ∴ (8) Every Form of F-ness is F. [(SP), from (1)]
- ∴ (9) L₁ is large. [From (7), (8)]
- (10) The result of adding an F thing to a plurality of F things is a plurality of F things. [Premise]
- ∴ (11) A, B, C, and L₁ form a plurality of large things. [From (6), (9), (10)]
- ∴ (12) There is a Form of Largeness (call it “L₂”) by virtue of partaking of which A, B, C, and L₁ are large. [From (2), (4), (11)]
- ∴ (13) L₁ partakes of L₂. [From (12)]
- ∴ (14) No Form of F-ness is F by virtue of partaking of itself. [(NSE), from (1)]
- ∴ (15) L₁ is not identical to L₂. [From (12), (14)]
- ∴ (16) L₂ is large. [From (8), (12)]
- ∴ (17) A, B, C, L₁, and L₂ form a plurality of large things. [From (10), (11), (16)]
- ∴ (18) There is a Form of Largeness (call it “L₃”) by virtue of partaking of which A, B, C, L₁, and L₂ are large. [From (2), (4), (17)]
- ∴ (19) L₁ partakes of L₃ and L₂ partakes of L₃. [From (18)]
- ∴ (20) L₁ is not identical to L₃ and L₂ is not identical to L₃. [From (14), (18)]
- ∴ (21) Each Form of Largeness partakes of many Forms. [From (13), (15), (19), (20), and repeated applications of (2), (4), (8), (10), and (14)]
- (22) Anything that partakes of many Forms is many. [Premise]
- ∴ (23) Each Form of Largeness is many. [From (21), (22)]
- ∴ (24) No Form can have contrary properties. [(RP), from (1)]
- (25) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries. [Premise]
- ∴ (26) No Form of Largeness is one. [From (23), (24), (25)]
- ∴ (27) Each Form of Largeness is one. [From (3)]
- ∴ (28) At least one of (E), (SP), (NSE), (RP), and (OM) is false. [From (1)–(27), by Reductio—contradiction on (26) and (27)]

- ∴ (29) The One-over-Many version of MPTF [= (E) + (C) + (I) + (K) + (O) + (RP) + (WI_s) + (RD) + (SP) + (NSE) + (OM)] is false. [From (28)]

3. The Anti-Noematic Argument

- (1) (N), (E), (SP), (NSE), (RP), and (O) are all true. [Reductio Assumption]
- ∴ (2) Each Form of F-ness (that is, each Form corresponding to F) is a thought. [(N), from (1)]
- ∴ (3) For some property F (call it “G”), there is a Form of F-ness (call it “T₁”). [(E), from (1)]
- ∴ (4) T₁ is a thought associated with G. [From (2), (3)]
- (5) Every thought associated with F is of something that is one over all the F instances (other than itself). [Premise]
- ∴ (6) There is something (call it “T₂”) such that T₁ is of T₂ and T₂ is one over all the G instances (other than T₂). [From (4), (5)]
- (7) Anything which is one over all the F instances (other than itself) is a Form of F-ness. [Premise]
- ∴ (8) T₂ is a Form of G-ness. [From (6), (7)]
- ∴ (9) Every Form of F-ness is F. [(SP), from (1)]
- ∴ (10) T₁ is G (that is, a G instance) and T₂ is G (that is, a G instance). [From (3), (8), (9)]
- (11) If X is over all the F instances (other than X), then every F instance (other than X) is F by virtue of partaking of X. [Premise]
- ∴ (12) T₁ is G by partaking of T₂. [From (6), (10), (11)]
- ∴ (13) No Form of F-ness is F by virtue of partaking of itself. [(NSE), from (1)]
- ∴ (14) T₁ is not identical to T₂. [From (12), (13)]
- ∴ (15) T₁ partakes of T₂. [From (12)]
- ∴ (16) T₂ is a thought associated with G. [From (2), (8)]
- ∴ (17) There is something (call it “T₃”) such that T₂ is of T₃ and T₃ is one over all the G instances (other than T₃). [From (5), (16)]
- ∴ (18) T₃ is a Form of G-ness. [From (7), (17)]
- ∴ (19) T₁ is G by virtue of partaking of T₃ and T₂ is G by virtue of partaking of T₃. [From (10), (11), (17)]

- ∴ (20) T_1 is not identical to T_3 and T_2 is not identical to T_3 . [From (13), (19)]
- ∴ (21) T_1 partakes of T_3 and T_2 partakes of T_3 . [From (19)]
- ∴ (22) Each Form of G-ness partakes of many Forms. [From (3), (8), (14), (15), (18), (20), (21) and repeated applications of (2), (5), (7), (9), (11), and (13)]
- (23) Anything that partakes of many Forms is many. [Premise]
- ∴ (24) Each Form of G-ness is many. [From (22), (23)]
- ∴ (25) No Form can have contrary properties. [(RP), from (1)]
- (26) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries. [Premise]
- ∴ (27) No Form of G-ness is one. [From (24), (25), (26)]
- ∴ (28) Each Form is one. [(O), from (1)]
- ∴ (29) At least one of (N), (E), (SP), (NSE), (RP), and (O) is false. [From (1)–(28), by Reductio—contradiction on (27) and (28)]
- ∴ (30) The Noematic version of MPTF [= (E) + (C) + (I) + (K) + (O) + (RP) + (WI_S) + (RD) + (SP) + (NSE) + (N)] is false. [From (29)]

4. The Likeness Regress Argument

- (1) (C), (E), (LM), (OM), (NSE), (RP), and (O) are all true. [Reductio Assumption]
- ∴ (2) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, everything that is F is F by virtue of partaking of a Form of F-ness. [(C), from (1)]
- ∴ (3) There is a property (call it “G”) to which there corresponds a Form. [(E), from (1)]
- (4) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form, something is F. [Premise]
- ∴ (5) Something (call it “A”) is G. [From (3), (4)]
- ∴ (6) There is a Form of G-ness (call it “ ϕ ”) by virtue of partaking of which A is G. [From (2), (3), (5)]
- ∴ (7) For any Form Y, X partakes of Y if and only if X is like Y. [(LM), from (1)]
- ∴ (8) A is like ϕ . [From (6), (7)]
- (9) If X is like Y, then Y is like X. [Premise]
- ∴ (10) ϕ is like A. [From (8), (9)]
- (11) If X is like Y, then X is like. [Premise]

- ∴ (12) A is like and ϕ is like. [From (8), (10), (11)]
- (13) The result of adding an F thing to an F thing is a plurality of F things. [Premise]
- ∴ (14) A and ϕ form a plurality of things that are like. [From (12), (13)]
- (15) There is a Form corresponding to the property of being like. [Premise]
- ∴ (16) For any property F to which there corresponds a Form and any plurality of things that are F, there is a Form of F-ness by virtue of partaking of which each member of the plurality is F. [(OM), from (1)]
- ∴ (17) There is a Form of Likeness (call it " L_1 ") by virtue of partaking of which A and ϕ are like. [From (14), (15), (16)]
- ∴ (18) No Form of F-ness is F by virtue of partaking of itself. [(NSE), from (1)]
- ∴ (19) ϕ is not identical to L_1 . [From (17), (18)]
- (20) Either something (call it " B ") is like L_1 or L_1 is like something (call it " C "). [Reductio Assumption]
- ∴ (21) L_1 is like. [From (9), (11), (20)]
- (22) The result of adding an F thing to a plurality of F things is a plurality of F things. [Premise]
- ∴ (23) A, ϕ , and L_1 form a plurality of things that are like. [From (14), (21), (22)]
- ∴ (24) There is a Form of Likeness (call it " L_2 ") by virtue of partaking of which A, ϕ , and L_1 are like. [From (15), (16), (23)]
- ∴ (25) L_1 partakes of L_2 . [From (24)]
- ∴ (26) L_1 is not identical to L_2 . [From (18), (25)]
- ∴ (27) L_1 is like L_2 . [From (7), (24)]
- ∴ (28) L_2 is like. [From (9), (11), (27)]
- ∴ (29) A, ϕ , L_1 , and L_2 form a plurality of things that are like. [From (22), (23), (28)]
- ∴ (30) There is a Form of Likeness (call it " L_3 ") by virtue of partaking of which A, ϕ , L_1 , and L_2 are like. [From (15), (16), (29)]
- ∴ (31) L_1 partakes of L_3 and L_2 partakes of L_3 . [From (30)]
- ∴ (32) L_1 is not identical to L_3 and L_2 is not identical to L_3 . [From (18), (31)]
- ∴ (33) Each Form of Likeness partakes of many Forms. [From

- (25), (26), (31), (32), and repeated applications of (7), (9), (11), (15), (16), (18), and (22)]
- (34) Anything that partakes of many Forms is many. [Premise]
- ∴ (35) Each Form of Likeness is many. [From (33), (34)]
- ∴ (36) No Form can have contrary properties. [(RP), from (1)]
- (37) The property of being one and the property of being many are contraries. [Premise]
- ∴ (38) No Form of Likeness is one. [From (35), (36), (37)]
- ∴ (39) Each Form is one. [(O), from (1)]
- ∴ (40) Nothing is like L_1 and L_1 is not like anything. [From (20)–(39), by Reductio—contradiction on (38) and (39)]
- ∴ (41) A is like L_1 . [From (7), (17)]
- ∴ (42) At least one of (C), (E), (LM), (OM), (NSE), (RP), and (O) is false. [From (1)–(41), by Reductio—contradiction on (40) and (41)]
- ∴ (43) The result of conjoining the Likeness Model version of MPTF and (OM) [= (E) + (C) + (I) + (K) + (O) + (RP) + (WI_S) + (RD) + (SP) + (NSE) + (LM) + (PA) + (OM)] is false. [From (42)]

5. The Greatest Difficulty Argument

- (1) (I) and (K) are both true. [Reductio Assumption]
- ∴ (2) Every Form is itself by itself. [(I), from (1)]
- (3) Anything that is itself by itself is not in us. [Premise]
- ∴ (4) No Form is in us. [From (2), (3)]
- (5) If X is in us and X is what it is relative to Y, then Y is in us. [Premise]
- (6) If X is a knowledge of Y, then X is what it is relative to Y. [Premise]
- ∴ (7) If X is in us and X is a knowledge of Y, then Y is in us. [From (5), (6)]
- ∴ (8) If X is in us and X is a knowledge of Y, then Y is not a Form. [From (4), (7)]
- (9) If we know Y, then there is a knowledge of Y in us. [Premise]
- ∴ (10) We do not know any Form. [From (8), (9)]
- ∴ (11) We know some Forms. [(K), from (1)]
- ∴ (12) At least one of (I) and (K) is false. [From (1)–(11), by Reductio—contradiction on (10) and (11)]

∴ (13) MPTF [= (E) + (C) + (I) + (K) + (O) + (RP) + (WI_S) + (RD) + (SP) + (NSE) + (LM) + (OM)] is false. [From (12)]

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