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A Defence of the Forms

Revisiting the Third Man Argument in Plato's *Parmenides*

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INTRODUCTION

The Theory of Forms is one of the most familiar works in Philosophy and it is attributed to the ancient Greek Philosopher, Plato. This theory essentially concerns perfect and unchanging things called Forms that exist in a world outside our sensible world. Forms are also said to be the causes of sensible things in our world. While sensible things change continuously, Forms are unchanging. So, only the Forms are capable of being known because they are unchanging. Based on that proposition, we may be justified in thinking that the world of Forms is the essence of Plato's overall philosophical system. However, one significant problem for this theory – interestingly raised by Plato himself in his dialogue *Parmenides* – has become known as the Third Man Argument (TMA); rather than reflecting Plato's puzzlement with his own Theory of Forms, as it is sometimes argued to do, I will argue that the TMA in *Parmenides* in fact records Socrates' response to a rather mocking interpretation of his theory, which serves to clarify the key metaphysical commitments of the theory.

This essay has two chapters. The first chapter is basically a preparation for the final analysis in chapter two.

In chapter one, I will be introducing the Theory of Forms and then I will talk about what it is and what certain people, particularly Aristotle, have thought and written about it. One particular feature that will be of importance is to clearly draw the distinction between three separate worlds: of sensible things, Ideas, and the Forms. So, in preparation for the ultimate task ahead in chapter two of analysing the TMA, some first-hand accounts of that important distinction between those three separate worlds by someone from antiquity is needed to back up the simple interpretation of the TMA I will offer in this essay. And I think that Aristotle is the perfect man for that job. So, I will be discussing Aristotle's accounts of the Theory of Forms and of the 'Third Man' under two separate sub-headings respectively. Hence, two consecutive sub-headings in chapter one, following the opening heading, will be dedicated to Aristotle. So, in some way, it might help us understand the TMA better especially in light of the Theory of Forms as viewed by Plato's very own pupil.

The heart of this essay is the Third Man Argument. It is an argument that deals with the essence of the Theory of Forms. So, the TMA will be presented in the second part of this essay following the Theory of Forms in the first part.

In chapter two, I will dedicate the whole chapter to a thorough discussion of the TMA. The first part of the discussion will be based primarily on a 1954 essay on the TMA by Professor Gregory Vlastos. Then following that I will provide my own interpretation of the TMA, using the translation of Parmenides by Benjamin Jowett. I prefer Jowett's translation because I think that the key issues are made clearer in his translation. I will be providing a symbolic interpretation of the TMA here based on Jowett's translation and presenting it as generalizations (A) to (D).

Earlier in chapter one, Aristotle is chosen from antiquity for his views on the Theory of Forms to help prepare us for the ultimate task of analysing and then interpreting the TMA from a totally different perspective in chapter two. And in chapter two, Vlastos is chosen from our own era, for ever since his essay came out it has greatly influenced how people worldwide have interpreted not only the TMA, but the Theory of Forms as well.

I will be analysing Vlastos' analysis of the TMA here; first, for its own sake and then, second, to also see if it is the case that he might have overlooked something important in the TMA. Vlastos came to the conclusion in his analysis that the primary reason for the TMA is somehow Plato's own frustration with his own Theory of Forms. But I will argue that there is another explanation for the TMA than what Vlastos has drawn from the TMA. The TMA is so small a passage on which to express his frustration towards his own Theory of Forms. I was thinking that Plato could have dedicated a whole dialogue for this purpose. But he did not. So, from another perspective, it was already a suspect thesis from the outset. However, I kept an open mind thinking that I could be the one who has been mistaken.

However, I also have had my doubts analysing Aristotle earlier and then Vlastos after that, though I believe that it did not necessarily affect my having an open mind during my own analysis in this

essay. Two people from different eras whose views of the Theory of Forms have been highly influential, and whose attitudes towards Plato bear a resemblance to one another. And this is how I summarise it: It appears that they are both too quick to convict Plato of errors in his thinking.

So, from experience, I think that the analyst who already has that mind-set set on the subject of their analysis (if they are not careful) is bound to come up with a distorted outcome for their work. And in my own analysis I suggest that that mind-set influenced Vlastos to such an extent that he overlooked a simple fact in the TMA, which I believe has misled him. In doing this I believe that Vlastos was just echoing Aristotle who, before him, appeared to have had exactly the same attitudes towards Plato.

One of the important findings, if not the most important finding, that I gathered in my analysis of the TMA was the neglecting of the key distinction between the three realms or worlds which are supposed to be metaphysically separate from one another. According to Aristotle's account of the Theory of Forms, these worlds are existing separately. The same separation principle is pointed out by Socrates, in the TMA in his response to Parmenides, implying that the Forms do not exist together with the ideas in the minds. Socrates claims that the entities in the minds are all ideas, and if, as Parmenides puts it, the Forms were also in the minds then they would not be having real existence as Ideas in the minds. This implies that whatever Parmenides was talking about, it could not have been the Forms as they must exist outside of the minds as non-Ideas.

It appeared that Vlastos overlooked that distinction in his analysis of the TMA, though Aristotle clearly mentioned that distinction in his account of the Theory of Forms. So Vlastos appears to go along with the explanation for the TMA given by Parmenides and by doing so treats the world of Ideas as if catering for the Forms as well. What I mean here is not that Vlastos believes that the Forms exist in the minds, for he probably does not believe so, but that he overlooked that the Forms that Parmenides was talking about in the TMA were mere ideas. So, if he believes that the Forms exist in the minds, then he is mistaken; and if he believes that the Forms do not exist in the minds and overlooks that the Forms in the TMA are ideas, then he is still mistaken. For the Forms, as maintained here, are not Ideas and do not exist in the minds. For Parmenides is mockingly

imagining Socrates in a mental situation, telling Socrates (Parmen. 132a) “I imagine that the way in which you are led to assume one idea of each kind is as follows: - You see a number of great objects, and when you look at them there seems to you to be one and the same idea (or nature) in them all; ...” So the main issues raised in respect of the TMA, such as the self-predication and the infinite regress, arise only because the TMA as presented in Parmenides concerns a mental situation. But somehow, given that the Forms have their own realm outside the minds, we could hardly discuss the reality of the Forms based on that imaginary mental situation. So, the outcome of my own analysis considers that as a mistake, which is exactly (as I see it and I am suggesting it here in the outset as) the point of the TMA: a mocking of the existence of the Forms, rather than a factual description of it. For the Forms do not also exist with ideas in the minds.

The question of why Plato would include a mocking of the existence of Forms may be summarised in this concluding part of the dialogue Parmenides involving Socrates. Parmenides advises Socrates (Parmen. 176), “but I think that you should go a step further, and consider not only the consequences which flow from a given hypothesis, but also the consequences which flow from denying the hypothesis; and that will be still better training for you.” In the whole exchange between Parmenides and Socrates, from beginning to end, Parmenides attacks the Theory of Forms, and Socrates is not doing much talking except briefly expressing his agreement or disagreement, and sometimes he is undecided. Everywhere else in Plato’s other dialogues, where the Forms are mentioned, Socrates is mainly considering the consequences flowing from the hypothesis ‘that the claims about the Forms are true’. So, he puts much talking into defending it. But this time, in Parmenides, Socrates is bombarded with attacks flowing from the opposite hypothesis: ‘that the claims about the Forms are not true’. And to somehow show the hidden wisdom of the Theory of Forms, via the opposite hypothesis at best, Socrates is playing the role of a young and inexperienced philosopher whose main job is to listen, so the criticisms stand out. But who also at the same time knows when to agree, disagree, or to be undecided. So, Socrates is somehow defending the Theory of Forms at the same time in that unique way. The criticisms bring out points that critics might consider as weaknesses of the Theory of Forms, and, at the same time, show the theory’s strengths. No doubts there were critics of the Theory of Forms in Plato’s time, and here is the opportunity for Plato to bring the main issues up in Parmenides and, at the same time, defend it in a fitting way using a young and inexperienced Socrates. From another perspective, an older and experienced Socrates would easily fend off the attacks, so that a

different outcome would result. Socrates' responses are very short, but they show whether Parmenides' criticisms are in line with the Theory of Forms or not, by Socrates' responses.

The other important problem with neglecting that distinction that I am also suggesting here, apart from misinterpreting the TMA, is that people are openly treating Ideas as the same thing as the Forms and both existing in the minds. So that there is an accepted belief now that the Theory of Forms is the same thing as the Theory of Ideas. But this essay hopes to systematically dispute that claim too, through providing another, perhaps better, explanation for the TMA, by first emphasizing the main distinction between the three worlds as both implied and expressed in (and about) the Theory of Forms.

CHAPTER ONE

1 The Theory of Forms

The Theory of Forms, also known as the Theory of Ideas, is one of Plato's central doctrines. In his writings, Plato normally formulates and discusses these doctrines in the form of dialogues - mostly between Socrates, his teacher, and others - so that these texts have been referred to as The Dialogues of Plato¹. The dialogues in which the Theory of Forms are chiefly mentioned and discussed are Symposium, Phaedo, The Republic, (from the middle period) and Parmenides (from the later period)².

The Theory of Forms primarily holds that some entities exist ontologically in a separate world from the sensible world in which we live as human beings. Unlike our sensible world of sensible things, that separate world contains entities that are eternal and unchanging. Those entities are called "Forms"; hence, the so-called 'Theory of Forms'.

¹ The translation of The Dialogues of Plato used here is the one by Benjamin Jowett. This translation was reprinted by The Great Books (2nd ed), Encyclopaedia Britannica, INC. University of Chicago, 1990, by arrangement with Oxford University Press. The other translations of The Dialogues of Plato discussed here are ones by A .E. Taylor, Plato's Parmenides (Oxford, 1934), and F. M. Cornford, Plato and Parmenides (London 1939) which are both consulted by Gregory Vlastos in his essay, Vlastos, G., 1954, 'The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides', Philosophical Review, 64: 319–349, which I will be analysing in chapter two. For ease of reference, I will refer to the two translations consulted by Vlastos as one translation rather than two.

² Scholars divide these texts into three periods, consisting of an early, a middle, and a later period, according to the likely order in which the texts are believed to have been written. (see for e.g. Rickless 2011; and Plato, Biographical Note, The Great Books 1992).

One important aspect that needs to be mentioned here at the outset, is that the Theory of Forms does not openly address the question of how the Forms came to be in that eternal and unchanging world in the first place. But it seems, on the other hand, to one-sidedly and openly pay more attention to how the things that depend on the Forms for their existence came to be in the sensible world. In short, the Forms are the causes of sensible things, but what about the cause or causes of the Forms? The theory does not talk about it. As a result of the lack of explanation, we are required to simply accept that the Forms just happen to be there in existence already. One would recognize this one-sided trend in many places, including this paper, when it comes to dealing with and discussing the Forms. And discussing the probable reason for it is beyond the scope of this paper.

The world of Forms is not only basically separate ontologically from our world of sensible things, but it has entities that have an unchanging and eternal nature; which is the direct opposite of the nature of the entities in our world, that have a constantly changing nature. This is a separation into two realms. And that distinction, in the natures of the two separate worlds' respective entities, is a very central feature of the Theory of Forms. This means that there are two separate realms of Forms and of sensible things.

Aristotle tells us in *Metaphysics* (Book I, Chp 6, 987a29-987b16), that that separation basis has a connection to Plato's being influenced by Cratylus, a former teacher of Plato before Socrates; and especially by the Heraclitean doctrines, regarding sensible things being in constant flux; from which that famous dictum that 'one cannot step twice into the same river' comes; and to which Cratylus adds, criticizing Heraclitus, that 'one cannot step into the same river even once.' (*Metaphy. Bk 4, 1010*). With that in mind, Aristotle implies, Plato tries to make sense of the universal definitions in ethical issues thinking that the way to make sense of universal definition, for the sensible entities, is to postulate, instead, some unchanging entities as existing in a separate world. According to Aristotle, Plato thinks that a sensible thing that is constantly in flux is impossible to be given a common or a universal definition, since it always changes in nature; it always changes from one thing to another. And for that matter by the time someone was ready to give a class of sensible things an universal definition, the things would have already changed into other things (See for e.g. *Metaphysics. Bk 4, 1010*); so, it would be very difficult if not impossible

to define sensible things; and if Socrates was searching for universal definitions, like Aristotle says, then the Theory of Forms is Plato's solution to it. That solution is that only the Forms can be given universal definitions because they are unchanging. Again, the Theory of Forms provides the response to the challenges posed by the Heraclitean doctrines and Cratylus regarding constant flux. If the entities in the realm of Forms do not change, then one can step both once and twice into the same river.

Moreover, following the above, by giving the Forms an eternal nature and placing them in a fittingly separate world, Plato thought that it would then make sense now to explain how sensible things could come to have the properties that they have, as well as the universal or common definitions that they might be given (See for e.g. Parmen. 130f9-10; Phaedo 100d-e; and Metaphy., Bk I, Chp 6, 987a29-987b16). Now that universal definitions become a part of Plato's concerns, it means that the world of Ideas must be taken into account. The world of Ideas exists in the minds that create universal definitions, mathematical entities, and ideas of both the Forms and sensible things. The world of Ideas must be a different realm in an intermediate position between the world Forms and the world sensible things, thought Plato. A sensible thing changes constantly, so there must be something unchanging as its basis and it must also be the source. The Form, being unchanging, must be the source. And because the source is unchanging it must be the real entity, and perfect too, while the sensible thing must be a copy of the Form. And in that way, a sensible thing exists by imitating a Form.

I

Now that Plato separates the three worlds from one another, by separating the Forms from sensible things and the Ideas in an intermediate position, he must come up with ways of reconciling them. The Theory of Forms postulates two central reconciliation principles (see also Rickless 1998, 2011): The first, which tends to follow directly from the ontological separation of the three worlds, is the principle of Separation. The other is the principle of Causality.

First, the principle of Separation. There are three realms that contain entities. The nature of these entities separates them into their respective realms, thus making each kind fit in their respective realm. There is a realm of Forms, a realm of sensible things, and a realm of Ideas. Entities in the sensible realm are in a state of constant change. The Forms in the realm of Forms are unchanging. The Ideas in the realm of Ideas are unchanging too, though some ideas may perish as they are not eternal like the Forms. The realm of Ideas somehow reconciles the realm of Forms and the realm of sensible things: As human beings, before we came to this realm of sensible things, we had ideas of the Forms in the realm of Forms. We came to the sensible world and forgot our ideas of the Forms, but as we live in the sensible world we have ideas of sensible things. (Phaedo 75c11-d2, 100b6-7; Republic 476b10, 480a11; Metaph. 987a29-b16). This separation implies independence of the unchanging Forms from the changing things in the sensible world and the unchanging ideas in the realm of Ideas. This independence implies self-reliance in the nature of the Forms. And, especially since they are unchanging, that also implies that each Form is one.

Being unchanging also means that a Form is indivisible. For their indivisibility follows from their state of being unchanging. So, a Form is indivisible by being unchanging. Being unchanging is the key which grounds the main distinction between the Forms and sensible things. According to Aristotle (Metaph. Bk 13 Chp4, 1078b 10-15),

“The supporters of the ideal theory were led to it because on the question about the truth of things they accepted the Heraclitean sayings which describe all sensible things ever passing away, so that if knowledge or thought is to have an object, there must be some

other permanent entities, apart from those which are sensible; for there could be no knowledge of things which were in a state of flux.”

The Form, being unchanging, is the only thing capable of being known, because they remain in existence long enough to be known. They remain in existence only by being unchanging. The essence of the Forms is their unchanging nature.

The sense of self-reliance of a Form means that a Form is itself by itself (See for e.g. Phaed. 100b; Rickless 1998 p. 508). To explain, in Phaedo 100c3-6, Socrates says, “if there be anything beautiful other than absolute beauty should there be such, that it can be beautiful only in so far as it partakes of absolute beauty”. The Form of beauty does not partake of beauty from some other source in order to be beautiful; but other things (sensible things) partake of (or rely on) the Form of beauty (which relies on itself), in order to be beautiful; beautiful sensible things become beautiful only by partaking of the Form of beauty.

Second, the reconciliation principle of Causality. The principle of Causality applies to the relationship between the Forms in the realm of Forms and sensible things in the realm of sensible things. It does not apply to the Ideas in the intermediate realm. The Theory of Forms does not specify how sensible things derive from the Forms. Except that Forms are the causes of sensible things. And these causes are by way of sensible things participating in the Forms. This participation is by way of sensible things being copies of the Forms. How they become copies of the Forms is not specified. So, despite their separation in nature this participation of sensible things in the Forms reconciles the two realms of Forms and sensible things.

By partaking of the Forms, sensible things exist. And their existence depends on the Forms. Aristotle says in Eudemian Ethics, Bk 1, Ch 8, 1217b1-16, “ – since if the object in which things share were taken away, with it go all the things that share in the Form”. So, for example, all beautiful sensible things in our world are beautiful by partaking of the Form of beauty. They would not have got it in any other way or from any other source, except by partaking in the Form of beauty. Absolute beauty then becomes a cause of the existence of a sensible thing that has become beautiful in the sensible world, as a direct result of partaking of the Form of beauty. This

causality principle, therefore, applies to the connection between sensible things and their corresponding Forms; Socrates says, “if there be anything beautiful other than absolute beauty should there be such, that it can be beautiful only so far as it partakes of absolute beauty – and I should say the same of everything. Do you agree in this notion of the cause?” (Phaedo 100c).

In Parmenides, especially in the early part of the dialogue, we are shown some discussions about the nature of both the Forms and the sensible things in detail. It starts with Zeno giving an argument against pluralism, which claims that the things that are, are not many, but one – a doctrine attributed to Parmenides. Zeno says that he does it to protect the arguments of Parmenides, his friend, against those who make fun of him and ridicule his thesis.

After Zeno gives the argument which he intends as a defence of Parmenides’ arguments, Socrates cross-examines Zeno and raises critical points in the arguments before Parmenides joins in later on to criticize the Theory of Forms. Zeno’s argument is to disprove the being of many - that being is one rather than many. It states that if being were many, then it would both be like and unlike. But that would be impossible, for nothing is both like and unlike. Socrates is not surprised by the argument. He denies the argument by saying that there is a Form of likeness and a Form of unlikeness. That sensible things become like or unlike by participating in the Forms of likeness or the Forms of unlikeness respectively. And in the same criticism of Zeno’s argument by Socrates, other important aspects come to light about the Theory of Forms. For example, as for the sensible things, (from the implication of Socrates’ argument) two general properties appear to be present: One is a general property of being like, and the other a general property of being unlike. Such presence of two general properties in a single sensible thing tends to support the view that Zeno’s claim is absurd. Socrates’ argument implies that if something can both be like and unlike then, against Zeno’s claim, it is many and not one.

The same sensible thing that exhibits the two properties of being like and unlike partakes of not one but two different Forms. If Socrates is greater in size than Parmenides and smaller than Zeno, then according to Socrates’ argument, it is because Socrates partakes of two separate Forms of Greatness and Smallness.

In his criticism of Zeno's argument, Socrates' revealing the nature of sensible things being many is important primarily because it paves the way for understanding how sensible things exhibit the properties that they appear to have. And that is important for understanding the Theory of Forms. It is also throwing light on the Third Man and the Third Man Argument that are both following shortly. For in the Theory of Forms, there is a first man (or men) in the sensible world, and there is a second man (or a common Idea of the first man or human beings) in the world of Ideas, and a Third Man (or the Form of man), the cause of the first man, in the world of Forms. And then we have the Third Man Argument which draws our attention towards the distinctions between the three realms of sensible things, Ideas, and Forms. In the Theory of Forms, the many (sensible things) partake of the unchanging One (Forms) for existence.

For a sensible thing, being many by being like and unlike implies change or corruption. Their being in the state of change or corruption subject them to divisibility. Because they change, the explanation for how they came to be must come from things that do not change. So, the implication is that something sensible that shows up as a quality does not originate in itself. For it originates only by partaking of its respective Form that is eternal and unchanging. So, it comes from something that is unchanging.

Socrates implies (e.g. in Parmen. 129) that the reason why a sensible thing can only correspond to or partake of one Form is because, unlike sensible things, any given Form is not many, but one.

¹ Socrates, for e.g., says (at Parmen. 129), "But if he were to show me that the absolute one was many, or the absolute many one, I should be truly amazed." Socrates here suggests that there is an absolute many, or a Form of many.

In considering these issues, we should be careful not to mix up Zeno's thesis of a sensible thing being one and Socrates' claim of a Form being one. Socrates says in Parmen. 129, "Now if a person could prove the absolute like to become unlike, or the absolute unlike to become like, that, in my opinion, would indeed be a wonder." That would mean that a given Form does not change. Zeno's claim concerns sensible things being one, and is challenged by Socrates. A Form is not a sensible thing and not being so is why it is not changing and therefore one. And Socrates challenges Zeno's conclusion of sensible things not being many, but one.

While he challenges Zeno's argument, Socrates suggests the correct way of putting it: That in a given sensible thing the one and the many coexist; so that it is inappropriate (for Zeno) to say that the many are one or the one many.

A given Form is one, but a given sensible thing can be seen as one, and can also be seen as many, for they coexist in one; and that is the essence of sensible things, the coexistence of one and many in one. Socrates explains how he can be many and also one; he says that someone can show that Socrates is many by saying that Socrates has "...a right and a left side, and a front and a back, and an upper and lower half." And that Socrates is many in this regard for partaking of the Form of many, or Absolute many. The same person can also show that Socrates is also one by pointing out that Socrates is one of the seven people present. And that he is one by partaking of the one (or the Form of one).

By the principle of Separation of the Forms from sensible things, the two worlds are somehow not totally isolated from one another; that is because the entities of both worlds are linked together through sensible things partaking of the Forms. By the principle of Causality, the relationship between Form and sensible thing is causal. So, again, reemphasizing the earlier discussion, another way of expressing the link between the Forms and sensible things is that the Forms are the causes of the corresponding sensible things.

However, the partaking link between the Forms and the sensible things implies reliance of the sensible things on the Forms for a share of their existence. This reliance for a share of the Forms' existence implies imperfection in the sensible things' share. Sensible things are (like) copies of the Forms. The Theory of Forms therefore postulates the Forms to be absolutely perfect in nature, while their corresponding copies in the sensible world are imperfect. As copies of the Forms, the sensible things, though some may try to be perfect like the Forms, will always be imperfect.

That there is, for example, a Form of greatness. The Form of greatness is absolutely perfect. Socrates is greater in size than Parmenides; and if it is true, then it is not because, for example, Socrates is Socrates or because the other is Parmenides, but it is only because Socrates partakes of the Form of greatness. For the same reason, all sensible things that are great in the sensible world are great not because of anything else, but by virtue of partaking of the Form of greatness. So, being copies, they are all, unfortunately, imperfect great things. And, according to Socrates, it applies to all outcomes of any other correspondences between the Forms and the sensible things.

By combining the partaking link and the causality link (i.e. Forms as causes of the sensible things) we have resemblances, or similar properties, holding between the Forms and the sensible things and ontologically linking the two entities together. The Theory of Forms says that when sensible things partake of the Forms they become resemblances of the Forms. For example, Socrates says to Zeno (in Parmen. 129), "...things which participate in likeness become in that degree and manner like; and so far as they participate in unlikeness become in that degree unlike,..."

So, when a multitude of sensible things have a common property (for example like all round things having a common property of being round in our world, even drawings of round objects), then it is through their corresponding Form (e.g. the Form of roundness separately pre-existing out there in the world of Forms) that the sensible (round) things in our world (by the partaking process) come into existence as sensible (round) things. Like all partaking processes by which the sensible things come into existence, the sensible objects would always be the resemblances of the Forms.

So, the resemblances of the Forms (being the causes of sensible things) that we have in our world would be the resemblances of the causes (for e.g. Parmen. 129, and Metaphy. Bk I, Ch. 6, 987a29-987b 16). It follows, therefore, that the Forms ought to have already been in existence out there ahead of their respective resemblances. As humans, we cannot see the Forms, but the sensible resemblances that we see ought to tell us that there are Forms in existence which the resemblances resemble. With the exception of some sensible things or properties, for example, like the property of being muddy, or of being water (see Parmen. 130), other resemblances such as, for example, of a horse that we see, ought to suggest that there must be an absolute horse out there that the sensible resemblance of the horse resembles.

The latter part of the above paragraph alludes to Plato's Heraclitean beliefs, concerning the doctrine of constant flux. Accordingly, it may not be a common and straight forward phenomenon to see the point in the latter part of the above paragraph clearly, unless, for example, one tends to be conscious of the instability in the nature of sensible things; thus triggering the curious mind to reason as to the likelihood that the common properties that they exhibit, which are all subject to change, must all link to something permanent out there somewhere where change ceases to exist. That is in light of the view that if all are in constant flux, then ultimately being could not have been there in the first place; so nothing could have existed; then there would be no us and no sensible resemblances. But, as implied by the Theory of Forms, there are sensible resemblances, therefore there must be an unchanging world consisting of its own entities of the same nature; entities that are causally corresponding to the existence of the former.

But, however, Parmenides comes in and criticizes the Theory of Forms after Socrates criticizes Zeno's Theory of the One. Parmenides asks Socrates if it is true that he distinguishes between the world of sensible things and the world of Forms and Socrates says yes. Then Parmenides starts to cross-examine Socrates about sensible things that have Forms and then he goes on to dispute the oneness of the Forms. In response, Socrates acknowledges that while some sensible things have Forms, other sensible things have no Forms, such as mud. Now Parmenides starts disputing the oneness of the Forms, saying that there are only two ways for sensible things to participate in the Forms: they either participate altogether in the whole Form or they participate altogether in some

parts of the Form – one part per sensible thing. Either way, the Form will no longer be one, but many, for the Form will either be separate from itself or it will be divisible, respectively.

Parmenides' criticism helps throw light on the Theory of Forms by raising and attacking the central features of the Theory. For example, another implication of Parmenides' criticism is that, as just mentioned, for the Forms to be many and therefore in constant flux too, there would be nothing in existence. As we would need a starting solid and unchanging point and foundation of existence.

According to Parmenides, the two central reconciliation principles, explained above, of Separation and Causality, (when combined to explain the relations between the Forms and their respective sensible correspondences in the sensible world), still pose a number of challenges to the Theory of Forms. One of the challenges is better known as the One-over-Many Argument, or sometimes called the Sail-Cloth Argument (Parmen. 130g-131).

II

The Sail-Cloth Argument throws light on our understanding of the essence of the link between the Forms and the sensible properties. The link is very sophisticated, as only two options appear to be probable. Yet, they both appear impossible to be sensible. That way the link seems not to hold. And understanding why it seems not to hold indicates the complexity of its essence.

The actual Argument starts with Parmenides asking Socrates (Parmenides 131), “But I should like to know whether you mean that there are certain ideas of which all other things partake, and from which they derive their names; that similar, for example, become similar, because they partake of similarity; and great things become great, because they partake of greatness; and that just and beautiful things just and beautiful, because they partake of justice and beauty?”

And Socrates says, yes, certainly, that is his meaning.

Parmenides says, “Then each individual partakes either of the whole of the idea or else of a part of the idea? Can there be any other mode of participation?”

And Socrates says that there cannot be.

Parmenides continues “Then do you think that whole idea is one, and yet, being one, is in each one of the many?”

And Socrates answers, “Why not, Parmenides?...”

And Parmenides says, “Because one and the same thing will exist as a whole at the same time in many separate individuals, and will therefore be in a state of separation from itself.”

Here, Parmenides is developing the first horn of a dilemma – that if Socrates accepts the Forms are wholly present in objects, then they will be separate from themselves.

But Socrates replies, “Nay, but the idea may be like the day which is one and the same in many places at once, and yet continues with itself; in this way each idea may be one; and the same in all at the same time.”

Parmenides asks, “I like your way, Socrates, of making one in many places at once. You mean to say, that if I were to spread out a sail and cover a number of men, there would be one whole including many – is not that your meaning?”

Socrates says he thinks so.

And Parmenides asks, “And would you say that the whole sail includes each man, or a part of it only, and different parts different men?”

And Socrates says, “The latter.”

Parmenides continues, “Then, Socrates, the ideas themselves will be divisible, and things which participate in them will have a part of them only and not the whole idea existing in each of them?”

Here, Socrates is developing the second horn of a dilemma – that if Socrates accepts the Forms are partly present in objects, then they will be divisible.

And Socrates says, "That seems to follow."

And Parmenides says, "Then would you like to say, Socrates, that the one idea is really divisible and yet remain one?"

Socrates says certainly not.

And Parmenides says, "Suppose that you divide absolute greatness, and that of the many great things, each one is great in virtue of a portion of greatness less than absolute greatness – is that conceivable?"

Socrates says, "No."

Parmenides continues, "Or will each equal thing, if possessing some small portion of equality less than absolute equality, be equal to some other thing by virtue of that portion only?"

Socrates says, "impossible".

Parmenides continues, "Or suppose one of us to have a portion of smallness; this is but a part of the small, and therefore the absolutely small is greater; if the absolutely small be greater, that to which the part of the small is added will be smaller and not greater than before."

Socrates says, "how absurd!"

Parmenides rounds it up, “Then in what way, Socrates, will all things participate in the ideas, if they are unable to participate in them either as parts or as wholes?”

Parmenides presents both horns of a dilemma that challenge the compatibility between the oneness of the Forms and the partaking process.

And Socrates replies in agreement, “Indeed... you have asked a question which is not easily answered.”

Parmenides has shown, and Socrates agrees, that the problem of partaking of the One (the Form) by the Many (sensible things) is difficult to sort out; especially if the partaking or the participation principle demands that the actual occurrence of the participation, or the partaking link, has to be wholly, and at the same time, all over the multitudes of sensible things.

However, to continue with the link between Forms and sensible things, if the Forms are ontologically separate from this world of sensible things, unchanging, unseen with the human eyes, and untouchable with the senses, except with the mind, and yet they are the causes of sensible things, through the partaking link, then how could the partaking link make sense, especially if a given Form is one and yet participated of fully by each member of a multitude of things in the sensible world at the same time?

For if a Form, which is thought of as being one and has no parts, were to be partaken of fully by a multitude of sensible things, then the only rational options that one might think of in that case is for the Form to be either present fully in each of the sensible multitudes at different times, or for each of the sensible multitudes to have a share of parts of the Form at the same time.

But the main problem with the former is that if the Form (The One) were wholly present in each of the sensible multitudes (The Many), then not only the Form would no longer be separate from the

sensible things, but (according to Parmenides) it would be separate from itself. On the other hand, the main problem with the latter is that if each of the multitudes had a share of parts of the Form at once, then the Form would no longer be indivisible, but divisible and therefore many, since it would have parts shared by each of the multitudes. And if it had parts and was divisible, while spreading over the sensible multitudes at once, then again that would not be wholly present in each of the multitudes at the same time, but partly present. And if partly present, then what each of the sensible multitudes (the Many) had would be smaller parts less than the Form (The One), which would now be greater than each of the parts that the many had of its wholeness.

Socrates, at one point in the conversation, as a defence, makes use of a real life example of the day, at day time, covering a multitude of sensible things in our world at the same time. To which Parmenides responds by likening it to a sail being spread out over a number of men. But both situations, according to Parmenides, come down to both the day and the sail having only parts of them (rather than the whole of them) covering each man. In that case, the idea of the one whole covering each man at the same time is still refuted. For it still appears to be impossible.

One quite ambiguous point for some (Parmen. 131) in Parmenides' criticism is that if the Form is being divided up by virtue of the partaking process, then the parts of the Form will be smaller than the whole Forms. Then how could the smaller parts each be equal to the whole, for each one will always be smaller than the whole. If a sensible thing partakes of the Form of smallness, and manages to partake of a part of smallness, rather than the whole of it, then the sensible thing will be made small by the part of the Form of smallness; so, the small sensible thing, during the partaking process, becomes smaller, while the Form of smallness remains bigger than the small sensible thing, since it is only a part of it that is partaken of by the sensible thing. Yet, should not they be resemblances in every way? According to one implication of Parmenides' reasoning, they ought not to be resemblances, since part of the whole is not the same as the whole.

Some commentators (e.g., Rickless 2011. P.10) think that to get something big, for example, from something small as in the above ambiguous reasoning is, according to Socrates, absurd. Rickless

quotes Socrates as saying in Phaedo 101 that, it would be monstrous to say that something is made larger by something small.

But I think that what Socrates is saying at Phaedo 101 is that it is absurd to say that, for example, a man is great by reason of other things, such as, for example, a part of that man's body, like his head, for by greatness alone that great things become great. It is by greatness alone that a man, or anything else, becomes great, apart from absolute greatness. Here is what Socrates says, "and thus you would avoid the danger of saying that the greater is greater and the less less by the measure of the head, which is the same in both, and would also avoid the monstrous absurdity of supposing that the greater man is greater by reason of the head, which is small." (Phaed. 101).

That is in contrast to the point by Parmenides, who postulates an unlikely situation in which a Form, said to be one and having no parts, would be forced to have parts when shared by sensible correspondences at once. So that the sensible correspondences, which share only parts of the Form, instead of ending up being the same as the Form (by virtue of partaking of the Form), become inferior to the Form, smaller than the Form if they were to partake of something less than the whole Form.

So, Parmenides is postulating two imaginary erroneous situations, to reflect weaknesses in the features of the Theory of Forms; on the first horn of a dilemma, Parmenides is talking about the Form, which does not separate from itself, as if it does separate from itself, in the partaking process, if the process of partaking by the sensible correspondences were to occur in particular manners. On the second horn of a dilemma, Parmenides is talking about the Form, which is not divisible, as if it is divisible. In contrast, on the other hand, Socrates is not using an erroneous situation, but rather a practical situation, to show that there is no other way for the sensible correspondences to have properties, except only by partaking of the Forms. A man made great by his head is not an erroneous situation, for it is practical and can possibly be true. Socrates makes use of that practical situation to emphasize that even those practical situations cannot give a sensible thing a property (e.g. the property of being great), except only by virtue of partaking of the Forms (e.g. Form of greatness).

The Sail-Cloth argument shows that the two horns of a dilemma are not only a challenge for the compatibility between the oneness of the Forms and the partaking process, but they reflect the strength of the Theory of Forms. For example, in the case of the latter, if the Forms were many rather than one and subject to constant flux, then being would all be in flux. But there has to be some static point somewhere as a basis of existence, or there would not have been anything in the first place due to change. The Forms somehow represent that static point. In the case of the Former, if the Form is wholly present in its sensible correspondences at once, then it will be separate from itself. For the same Form will multiply to be wholly present in each sensible correspondence at once. And if the Form is partly present in its sensible correspondences at once, then it will be divisible – one part per sensible correspondence. In both cases, somehow, the oneness of the Forms is challenged.

1.2.1 Aristotle on the Theory of Forms

Normally when we talk about Socrates and Plato and his dialogues, we often include Aristotle. So that it makes it look like these three great Greek philosophers were joined at the hip. This may be because Plato was Socrates' pupil and Aristotle was Plato's pupil. Not only that, but Plato wrote about Socrates and his works and Aristotle wrote about Plato and his works; it is like saying that Aristotle knew very well Plato and his works and Plato knew very well Socrates and his works. And for the reason, if that is the case, that Aristotle knew very well Plato and his works, I am engaging Aristotle to talk about Plato and his Theory of Forms, to help us understand better the views maintained in this essay, especially to elicit more detail about the Forms and how this all works, and particularly to provide the key intermediate level of mental ideas.

At the Eudemian Ethics, Book I, Chapter 8, 1217b1-16, Aristotle says,

“For they say that the good-itself is the best thing of all, and the good-itself is that to which it belongs to be both the first among goods, and the cause by its presence, for other things, of their being goods. For they say that it is of that object, above all, that the good is truly predicated, - other things being goods through sharing in it, and similarly to it; and it is first among goods – since if the object in which things share were taken away, with it would go all the things that share in the Form, and they are called (what they are called) through sharing in it; and that is the way that the first stands in relation to what comes after. And indeed, like the other Forms, the Form of the good is separate from the things that share in it.”

Before going on to detail Aristotle’s criticisms of Plato, I want to take a moment to clarify a potential ambiguity in the passage just quoted. Aristotle here critically retells how the Platonists (or the upholders of the so-called Plato’s Theory of Forms) view the Forms; (and since it is a criticism of Plato’s alleged mistake, a Platonist here includes Plato himself). First, the Form of Good is seen by the Platonists as the best thing of all. But it does not openly say in the passage why the Form of good is seen by the Platonists as the best thing of all, except, according to Aristotle, that they see it as the best thing of all.

This claim is ambiguous. For does Aristotle mean to say that the Platonists see the Form of Good as the best thing of all, to mean that the Form of Good is the best Form of all the Forms (and their respective sensible participants), or does he mean to say that they see the Form of Good as the best thing of all things that are good only. That is, that the Form of Good is the best (in terms of perfection) when compared with, say, the sensible good things that participate in it?

The latter is most likely to be the case for it makes sense to call the Form the best, for being perfect, and its copies inferior, for being copies. That interpretation is consistent with the Theory of Forms as we understand it from Plato’s dialogues; for, according to the Theory of Forms, the Forms are seen as perfect while the sensible things that participate in the Form are seen as imperfect, for being copies. The perfect entity must then be seen as better, just by being perfect,

than its copies which, by comparison, are not perfect. It is justifiable then to call the perfect entity – the Form of Good the best among all good [including sensible] things.

On the other hand, it would not make much sense to say that the Form of Good is the best among all the Forms and everything else. For what else would this superiority claim for the Form of Good be based on except that it is itself the Form of good? But that would not be any different from, say, for example, the Form of Love and the Form of Justice, for they are themselves the Form of Love and the Form of Justice respectively. The three Forms of Good, Love, and Justice, are themselves what they are. And, given that they are all perfect, there is no good reason why one should say that the Form of Good is better than the other two, or the best among them. For in that case, it would imply some sense of imperfection, if one of them were to be the best of them all. But an essence of the Forms is that they are perfect. And if they are all perfect then it would be absurd to say that the Form of Love and the Form of Justice are inferior to the Form of Good.

So, the Platonist must have meant in Aristotle's passage that the Form of Good, like any other Form, is the best when compared with its sensible participants, rather than the other Forms and everything else.

What Aristotle says next about the Platonists also reveals the basis of the Theory of Forms. He says that the Platonists see the Form of Good as being in existence prior to all good [sensible] things. Not only that but that they see the Form of Good as the cause of all [sensible] things that are good. So, not only did the Form of Good exist prior to the existence of all [sensible] good things, but the Form of Good is the cause of the [sensible] good things' being good. This agrees with what I have outlined already.

Again Aristotle says that the Platonists believe that good [sensible] things become good by sharing in the Form of Good. And because their being good came about by sharing in the Form of Good, and that the Form of Good was in existence prior to the [sensible] things that participate in it, the goodness of the [sensible] things would all vanish if the Form of Good were taken away.

Furthermore, according to Aristotle, the Platonists believe that good [sensible] things get their name from the Form of Good, just by sharing in the Form of Good. Sensible things, by sharing in the Form of Good, not only become good, but they also get their name from the Form of Good. So, this sharing in the Form of Good gives sensible things not only their essence, but their name as well.

For the above reasons, the Platonists believe that the Form of Good is truly predicated of sensible things. That means, according to Aristotle, that sensible things either become good or bear a similarity to the Form of Good by sharing in the Form of Good.

And that explains, according to Aristotle, the relation between the entity that exists first, the Form of Good, and the entities that come after, the sensible things that become good by sharing or participating in the first entity. For, according to Aristotle, the Platonists believe that the basis of the Theory of Forms is therefore explained in terms of a relation between the Form of Good that exists first and all the good [sensible] things that come after. And that relation also leads to a separation of the Form of Good from the good [sensible] things that participate in it. For Aristotle says that the Platonists believe that the Forms of Good, like the other Forms, is separate from the things that share in it.

In the *Metaphysics*, Book I, Chapter 6, 987b-b16, Aristotle says,

“Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole but seeking the universal in these ethical matters, he was the first to fix his attention on definitions. Plato agreed with him, but because of (his Heraclitean beliefs) supposed that this (defining) was of other things and not of sensible things – for he thought that it is impossible for the common definition to be of any of the sensible things, since they are always changing. These [other] sorts of beings he called Ideas and sensible things he said were apart from these, and were called after them; for the multiplicity of

things which have the same name as the Form exist by participation in it...But what the participation or the imitation of the Forms could be they left an open question.

Further, besides sensible things and Forms he says that there are objects of mathematics, which occupy an intermediate position, differing from sensible things in being eternal and unchangeable, from Forms in that there are many alike, while the Form is in each case unique.”

The above passage tells us something important about the views of Socrates and Plato with regards to the Forms, even though Aristotle also seems to be saying something to the contrary. Aristotle tells us here that Socrates neglected the world of nature as a whole, and concentrated on seeking definitions or universals on ethical matters. Universal definitions on ethical matters outside of the world of nature would be things like eternal love, eternal goodness, eternal justice, eternal punishment, etc. So, if Socrates neglected the world of nature and concentrated on finding universals on ethical matters (first sentence of the quote), then it was not the sensible things which are in the world of nature that Socrates was defining, but things (ethical matters) of a different world.

That world, which Socrates was dealing with, is exactly the world that Plato was thinking about, due to his Heraclitean beliefs. The Heraclitean beliefs basically concern the view that sensible things are in a state of unceasing change. Plato, like Socrates, was thinking of a different world from the sensible world (or the world of nature) where change does not occur. Socrates, likewise, according to Aristotle, neglected the world of nature and concentrated on seeking definitions on ethical matters.

So, Plato and Socrates in this passage had common interest in a separate world from the world of nature: Socrates' interest in that world came about by his search for universals in ethical matters, while Plato's came about by his Heraclitean beliefs.

But while Aristotle clearly acknowledges that both Plato and Socrates had a common interest in a separate world from the world of nature, he claims that Plato misinterpreted Socrates. By implying later that Socrates' common definitions were of sensible things (though he claims earlier that Socrates rejected the world of nature and concentrated on ethical matters by seeking from them definitions and universals); he implies that Plato supposed that this defining by Socrates was of other things and not of sensible things. He says, "Plato agreed with him, but because of (his Heraclitean beliefs) supposed that this (defining) was of other things and not of sensible things." (Metaph. 987b5).

If that is the case, that Plato misinterpreted Socrates and supposed that this defining by Socrates was of other things, then it does not make sense for two reasons: First, Aristotle initially says that Socrates neglected the world of nature (Metaph. 987b1), "Socrates, however, was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole ...", but then he implies later that Socrates' defining of ethical matters was of things of the world of nature (Metaph. 987b5), "Plato agreed with him, but because of (his Heraclitean beliefs) supposed that this (defining) was of other things and not of sensible things." Second, it is doubtful that it was clearer to Aristotle than to Plato that Socrates rejected the world of nature (if that was the case), for Plato was a student of Socrates and Socrates died before Aristotle was born. And above all, Socrates wrote down nothing, but Plato wrote about Socrates in his dialogues.

So, given that it appears from the above passage, as opposed to Aristotle's claim, that both Socrates and Plato had a common view of the other world, it is likely that both Socrates and Plato both believed that universals and, for that matter, the Forms respectively exist independently in a separate world or separate worlds from sensible particulars.

Aristotle tells us here that Plato called the things that exist in that other world, which Socrates was defining, Ideas. Aristotle also at times refers to Ideas as the Forms, and that the sensible things which have the same name as the Form exist by participation in it. But Aristotle tells us that the Platonists have not specified how that participation works. In that case, they leave it unanswered.

First, as openly expressed in Plato's dialogues, and as I have mentioned before, the Forms are said to be there in existence already; but without equally mentioning how they came about. Here, Aristotle raises another similar peculiar issue about the Forms: That the participation of sensible things in a particular Form has not been explained by the Platonists. But we may ask about this lack of explanation, is it because the Platonists have something to hide, or is it because they do not know how this participation business works? For they appear to be the most probable reasons why they would left it unanswered.

But one thing is clear: Aristotle raises another familiar mystery about the Forms that is similar to how the source of the existence of the Forms appears to be another mystery, not because of anything other than that the Platonists are not openly expressing it. So, Aristotle is probably telling the truth. But why would not the Platonists openly express it?

It is doubtful that they would not express it because they did not know how this participation business works. For in the same Chapter 6 of Metaphysics, Book I, according to Aristotle, this view of "participation" is older than the Platonists; for it was dealt with earlier by the Pythagoreans who first called it "imitation," where things exist by imitating numbers. In that case, the view is older than them and defining it would not have been that much of an issue for the Platonists if all they had to do was to adopt that Pythagorean doctrine and build on it.

It is probably the case that the Platonists had something to hide. It is probable that after the death of Socrates, his followers, including Plato, were very careful about what they were writing and teaching in public. Probably, for fear of, like Socrates, ending up being once again accused of corrupting the youth of Athens and having a different God from those of Greece.

So, in that case, the way to hide the essence of their teaching from the public was to imply them rather than express. What I mean simply is that, from the basis of their neglecting of the sensible world as a whole to deal with a world that is eternal and unchanging, it appears then that the Theory of Forms by Plato (and Socrates) is wider than its metaphysical aspects. That it would probably require assistance from the Philosophy of Religion and Theology to explain how the Forms came to be in the first place, and how the participation process could somehow make sense

– which would involve in the discussion things like a God. For some reason, the theory only expresses a metaphysical side, which I think is probably why it is particularly dealt with in *Metaphysics*. But I think that there are other implications of the Theory of Forms that are not metaphysical, and cannot be discussed in a metaphysical essay. So, in a similar way that I cannot discuss non-metaphysical aspects of the Theory of Forms in this paper, Plato could not express publicly the non-metaphysical aspects of the Theory of Forms, particularly if it was a treasonable act to do so.

In the same passage, Aristotle goes on to show how the Theory of Forms involves three worlds: The first world is the world of Forms; the second world is the intermediate position or world occupied by the objects of mathematics or simply ideas; and the third world is the world of sensible things.

According to Aristotle's account of the differences among the entities in these three worlds, the entities in the intermediate world, occupied by the objects of mathematics or ideas, are similar to those in the world of Forms in that they are, unlike those in the sensible world, unchanging and eternal. That also implies that the entities in the sensible world are changing and do not last long. So, the difference between the two unchanging worlds of Mathematical objects and Forms is that many entities in the intermediate world are similar, whereas every Form is unique.

In *Metaphysics*, Book 13, Chapter 4, 1078b9 -31 Aristotle says,

“Now, regarding the Ideas, we must first examine the theory of Ideas by itself not connecting it in any way with the nature of numbers, but treating it in the form in which it was originally understood by those who first maintained the existence of Ideas. The supporters of the theory of Ideas were led to it because they were persuaded of the truth of the Heraclitean doctrine that all sensible things are ever passing away, so that if knowledge or thought is to have an object, there must be some other and permanent entities, apart from those that are sensible; for there can be no knowledge of things which are in flux...

Therefore it followed for them, almost by the same argument, that there must be Ideas of all things that are spoken of universally, and it was almost as if a man wished to count certain things, and while they were few thought he would not be able to count them, but made more of them and then counted them; for the Forms are, one may say, more numerous than the particular sensible things, yet in seeking the causes of these that they proceeded from them to the Forms.”

The claim by Aristotle above that Forms are more numerous than the particular sensible things suggests that some Forms have no sensible resemblances in the sensible world. It is understandable that the Platonists’ seeking the causes of the particular sensible things leads them to the Forms. For, according to the Theory of Forms, the Forms are the causes of sensible things.

Aristotle, as we have just seen a little while ago, tells us how the Pythagoreans first dealt with “imitation” of numbers by [sensible] things for their existence, and then the Platonists later derived their “participation” (by sensible things in the Forms) view from the Pythagoreans. He also says that Plato thought that the objects of mathematics occupy an intermediate position (or world) between the world of sensible things and the world of Forms. And because we are told that the Platonists derived their “participation” view from the Pythagoreans, and that it is quite clear how Plato’s “objects of mathematics” resembles the Pythagoreans’ “numbers,” it is reasonable to conclude that both the Pythagoreans and the Platonists referred to the (mortal) minds as the intermediate position, where numbers as ideas exist. I will discuss more of this later on.

Again, from another perspective, because we are told above by Aristotle that Plato thought that the intermediate position occupied by the objects of mathematics is separate from the world of sensible things and the world of Forms, so, it might be the case that in order for the mortal minds to have access to those objects of mathematics, those objects of mathematics would have to exist in the mortal minds as ideas.

And because this intermediate position (or world), which contains the objects of mathematics, is separate from the other two worlds which contain the Forms and the sensible things, therefore the objects of mathematics are not the same as the sensible things or the Forms.

So, according to Aristotle's account above, the Theory of Forms consists of three separate worlds: 1) The world of sensible things; 2) The world of mortal ideas; and, 3) The world of Forms.

Aristotle is trying in the above quote to demarcate between the Platonic world of Ideas and the Pythagoreans' view of numbers. That is because, as it appears, he first claims that the Platonists adopted their "participation" (by sensible things in the Forms) view from the Pythagorean "imitation" (of numbers by [sensible] things) view. And that, somehow, would naturally lead anyone to believe that it was the Pythagoreans' "imitation" view that led to the Platonic world of Ideas being adopted by the Platonists.

But it seems that Aristotle is telling us that the Platonists only borrowed the "participation" view from the Pythagoreans. Now, he tries to demarcate the Platonic world of Ideas from the Pythagoreans' "imitation" view so that, as it appears, he makes another revelation. Now, as for their world of Ideas, he is revealing that the Platonists were led to their view of the world of Ideas by their Heraclitean beliefs, that sensible things are always in flux. And because they are always in flux, human thoughts (in the world of Ideas) somehow could only have objects that are unchanging. So, they were led to their world of Forms by their Heraclitean beliefs and to their world of Ideas by their Pythagorean beliefs.

So, according to Aristotle, the Platonists borrowed their "participation" view from the "imitation" view of the Pythagoreans, and their view of constant change for sensible things from the Heraclitean doctrine of the world of nature being in a state of flux.

So, for the Platonists, according to Aristotle, if sensible things are always in flux then they cannot be the objects of knowledge; for how could they be the objects of knowledge if they always change. So, something static must be the object of knowledge. And by coincidence, the

Pythagoreans' view of [sensible] things imitating numbers for their existence would be a sensible way to explain it: That the objects of knowledge must be ideas. A sensible house, for instance, would not be the same house once the process of change takes place, even within seconds, but an idea of the same house would stay the same for a while longer.

Note that Aristotle does not openly mention here how the Platonic world of Ideas is connected to the Forms; for, so far, he seems to have only been relating the origin of the Platonic world of Ideas to the views of the Pythagoreans and the Heracliteans; and as we have seen, the former have only been dealing with ideas in the mortal minds and the latter with the changing sensible things in the sensible world; but the Forms, like the sensible things, as he has mentioned, exist separately from the ideas in the mortal minds (or the intermediate position).

And as for the Forms, which exist in their own world and are thought to be also unchanging like the ideas, and that the ideas are objects of knowledge, we can only draw from that exposition by Aristotle that in the same sense, like ideas, they (the Forms) are the Platonists' ultimate objects of knowledge. But so far, Aristotle has only been highlighting the Pythagorean and the Heraclitean views, and somehow leaving the Forms in the shadow of obscurity.

However, Aristotle concludes the above quoted passage by implying that the Platonists thought that there must be ideas of all things that are spoken of universally, "and it was almost as if a man wished to count certain things, and while they were few thought he would not be able to count them, but made more of them and then counted them; for the Forms are, one may say, more numerous than the particular sensible things, yet it was in seeking the causes of these that they proceeded from them to the Forms."

One could almost conclude that Aristotle here, as opposed to what we have just seen earlier, is treating ideas and Forms as one. But a closer look at each line reveals that he is not. First, he draws from what the Platonists believed that, to them, there must be ideas of all things that are spoken of universally. For example, people speak of something called love, universally. So, love,

according to the passage, is two main things: First, either an idea of love or many ideas of love in the mortal minds. Second, a Form of Love in the world of Forms.

But how do we know that Aristotle is not treating ideas and Forms in the above passage as one? When Aristotle speaks of ideas in the same passage, he suddenly switches to the Forms by saying that Forms are more numerous than sensible things. And that exact part makes it look like he is speaking of the same thing: That he is speaking of Forms as ideas. But if we look at how he mentions ideas before he switches to the Forms, it becomes clear that he is speaking of ideas in the mortal minds. And in that case he is not treating the Forms there as ideas, because as he mentioned earlier the Platonists thought that the intermediate position, where mortal ideas are, is separate from the worlds of Forms and sensible things.

It is this part of the quoted passage that we can tell from that the ideas which Aristotle mentions are those of the intermediate position, "..., and it was almost as if a man wished to count certain things, and while they were few thought he would not be able to count them, but made more of them and then counted them;" Here, Aristotle is analogically talking about ideas in an imaginary situation; but the point is that that situation talks of how one makes many copies of an idea in one's mind and then count them, which is impossible if they are too many. In other words, he is saying that the Platonists, due to their search for answers for the causes of sensible things, have imagined endless number of Forms in their minds, to the point where the number of Forms exceed the number of sensible things.

This is echoing the Third Man Argument in the Parmenides 132a-d, where Parmenides is telling Socrates that if he (Socrates) continues to compare the common idea of a particular property exhibited in sensible things with those sensible things themselves, then a third idea will appear, and if he continues to compare all of the three sets, then a fourth idea will appear; and if he continues the same process, then more and more ideas will appear correspondingly, thus resulting in an infinite regress of ideas.

In realising that, we can tell now that Aristotle's account in that particular passage, as quoted above, is not treating ideas in mortal minds and Forms as one. So, in conclusion, what Aristotle gathers from the Platonists with regards to the Theory of Forms is still that there are three separate worlds for the Platonists: The world of Forms; the sensible world; and the world of mortal ideas in the intermediate position.

In summary, I have talked about how the Forms are the causes of sensible things by way of sensible things participating in the Forms. I have talked about the oneness of the Forms due to its unchanging nature. And I have discussed how sensible things are in flux, and how the Platonists think that because they are in flux, so they cannot be known. That we can only have knowledge of unchanging entities. I have talked about how Parmenides presents two horns of a dilemma that challenge the compatibility between the oneness of the Forms and the participation process. I have also talked about the three separate worlds of Forms, Ideas, and sensible things. Their nature separates them into their respective realms. Sensible things are in flux, while Forms and Ideas are unchanging. And recently Aristotle's account of the Theory of Forms reveals that the world of Ideas is in an intermediate position between the world of Forms and the world of sensible things. So, that there are three separate realms for Forms, Ideas, and sensible things.

1.2.2 Aristotle on the Third Man

In the previous section, Aristotle talks about the Platonic world of Ideas, thus helping us understand this world better. In this section, he is talking about the Forms. It was Aristotle who mentioned the name 'third man'; so that the Third Man Argument came to adopt that name later on. Because of his important (indirect) contributions to the Third Man Argument, it is worthy to dedicate a few pages to Aristotle's view of the Third Man.

Based on his analysis of Plato's alleged mistakes, especially in Eudemian Ethics and Metaphysics, I think that Aristotle's stance on the Third Man becomes clear in the following passages. Of course,

it is another matter to ask what his view of the Third Man Argument might have been, for the Third Man and the Third Man Argument are two different things altogether.

The Third Man, according to what Aristotle says in *On Sophistical Refutations* 1079a1, is a synonym for the Form (or specifically the Form of man), whereas the Third Man Argument is somehow a refutation of the Forms in a particular passage in Plato's *Parmenides*, in an exchange between Parmenides and Socrates. There is no known direct reference by Aristotle to the Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides* (see, for example, Rickless 2011. p. 11); but there is no doubt that, in addition to what he might have heard in the Academy about the Third Man, he might also have read the TMA in the *Parmenides*.

However, because Aristotle openly states, for example, in *Metaphysics* 1079a1, that he doubts the existence of the Forms, and in *On Sophistical Refutations* 179b 136, that the Third Man (Form) is a fallacy, so it appears that during his own lifetime Aristotle must have dismissed the Theory of Forms as a fallacy.

Aristotle doubts the existence of the Forms, and probably his view of the TMA is echoed in the TMA by Parmenides. There we find Parmenides conveying the spirit of one who somehow disbelieves in the Forms; one who would love to refute the existence of the Forms.

The following quote shows Aristotle's analysis of the Forms. He says that he checks various proofs of the Forms and none is convincing.

In *Metaphysics*, Book 13, 1079a1-10, Aristotle has this to say,

“Again, of the ways in which it is proved that the Forms exist, none is convincing; for from some no inference necessarily follows, and from some arise Forms even of things of which they think there are no Forms. For according to the arguments from the sciences there will be Forms of all things of which there are sciences, and according to the argument of the

'one over many' there will be Forms even of negations, and according to the argument that thought has an object when the individual object has perished, there will be Forms of perishable things; for we have an image of these. Again, of the most accurate arguments, some lead to Ideas of relations, of which they say there is no independent class, and others introduce the 'third man'.

According to the above passage, Aristotle says that he examined the arguments made in favour of the existence of the Forms and for various reasons he found none of them convincing. According to him, some of the arguments were simply invalid because he discovered that the inference in them did not necessarily follow; other arguments clashed with others' beliefs on the Forms, for those arguments led to Forms of things that others believed there were no Forms for.

He gives examples of those arguments. For example, the arguments from the sciences claim that there will be Forms of all things of which there are sciences. However, here is Alexander's Commentarius in *Metaphysica* 79.6 – 79.15 commenting on the same issue, interpreting Aristotle on this particular case,

"If every science performs its task by referring to some one and the same thing and not to any of the particulars, then there will be with respect to each science something different apart from perceptible individuals, eternal and a pattern for the things produced in each science; and such a thing is the Idea. Again, the things of which there are sciences exist; the sciences are of certain different things apart from particulars (for the latter are infinite and indeterminate, while the sciences are of determinate things); so there are certain things apart from particulars, and these are the Ideas. Again, if medicine is not a science of this particular health but of health simply, there will be a certain health-itself; and if geometry is not a science of this particular equal and this particular commensurate, but of equal simply and the commensurate simply, there will be a certain equal-itself and a commensurate-itself; and these are the Ideas."

Alexander speaks of Ideas as some kind of a Form. Those Ideas are the objects of the various sciences that are separate from the sensible particulars. The science of *y*, for example, is not a science of this particular sensible *y*, but of *y*-itself, which is an Idea. And because there are sciences of them, so those Ideas must exist, according to the Platonists.

From another angle, Alexander, in *Commentarius in Metaphysica* 81.2 – 81, calls it an absurdity, to have Forms of negations; reflecting Aristotle's view in *Metaphysics* Alexander says,

“But that is absurd; for how could there be an Idea of non-being? For if one were to accept that, there would be a single Idea for things that are of different kinds and that differ in every respect – of, as it might be, line and man; for all these are non-horses.”

What that means, in another words, from an Aristotelian viewpoint, is that if the negation of horses is non-horses, and if there are Forms of negations, then there must be a Form of non-horses. But the problem with a Form of non-horses, for example, is that a Form, according to the Theory of Forms, ought to be over many similar sensible things to itself, if they were to resemble that particular Form, or if the sensible things were to be its copies. But since non-horses would include anything that is not horses, such as line and man, so, as far as the argument from one over many is concerned, a Form of non-horses would be over totally different sensible things to itself, such as line and man. But that would be unacceptable and therefore absurd.

However, according to Aristotle, “... the argument that thought has an object when individual object has perished,” claims that “... there will be Forms of perishable things; for we have an image of these”. Similar to the controversial claim above (at least, to Aristotle) that there will be Forms (or Ideas in Alexander's comments above) of things of which there are sciences, this argument claims that there will be Forms of perishable things; not because they derive from the perishable things, but that we know that they are Forms of perishable things because we still have an image of them (after the sensible object has perished). When we think we think about the image which is separate from the sensible object. So, whether or not the sensible object exists it does not affect our thinking about the image.

And that would lead us to the question of 'But where did the image (Idea) come from if not from the sensible object?' Aristotle infers from the argument (that thought has an object when the individual object has perished) that there will be Forms of perishable things for we have an image of these. According to Aristotle's inference, because we have an image (of perishable things), so there must be a Form (of perishable things). The Platonic argument is 'thought has an object when the perishable thing has perished'. It seems like the Platonic argument suggests that the image come from the perishable thing that has perished. And Aristotle infers that because there is an image, so there must be a Form. So, either, in that case, image can only be made of perishable things that have Forms or image can only be of a Form. But both options are unlikely, since we have image of perishable things that have no Forms, such as mud. We also have image of non-Forms, such as mud. So, Aristotle's inference is problematic. Image comes from the perishable thing. When the thing perishes we still have an image.

Concerning the above problem, Alexander, lines 81.26-81.27 of the Fragments, writes, "... clearly there is something apart from particulars and perceptibles, which we think of whether the latter exist or not; for we are certainly not then thinking of something non-existent. And this is a Form and an Idea."

Those are some of the reasons why Aristotle appears to have rejected the existence of the Forms, or the Third Man, the way the Platonists believed them to be, and to have been an advocator of the TMA. For, as we have seen earlier, an advocator of the TMA in the sense that Parmenides expresses it to Socrates at the Parmenides would most likely be someone who might have at least some degree of disbelief about the Forms. And of course Aristotle openly states how he disagrees with the ways that the Platonists view the Forms.

Towards the end of the passage, Aristotle openly declares that not all arguments for the Third Man or the Forms that he assessed were problematic, because some of them were more accurate than others. And among the most accurate, he says, were the arguments that led to Ideas of relations, "and others introduce the 'third man'."

After all that Aristotle has said about the Forms earlier, based on the arguments that the Platonists made in favour of the Forms, he reveals now that some of those arguments were not bad at all; among them, some arguments, he says, were most accurate. For him, the Forms are a fallacy, but not the universals. A universal, for Aristotle, is a particular quality in a sensible thing. A universal for a Platonist is an idea, in the world of Ideas. Aristotle believes that universals could not exist independently of sensible particulars. The Platonists, on the other hand, believe that some ideas in the world of Ideas are those of the Forms, acquired by the souls (of mortal beings) in an earlier life. And when the souls came to the sensible world as mortal beings they forgot about them. So, when Socrates was searching for universal definitions on ethical matters, mentioned earlier by Aristotle, he was not searching for something new. He was only trying to recollect some forgotten knowledge that he acquired in an earlier life. The Platonic ideas of justice, love, and beauty, for example, are of the Forms, for the Platonists, and the souls acquired them while formerly living in the world of Forms. But Aristotle believes that those universals could not be of the Forms, for there are no Forms, so they could not be independent of sensible particulars.

Now comes the part where Aristotle mentions the 'third man' or the Third Man. Aristotle says that the Third Man was introduced in some of the most accurate Platonic arguments that he analysed. It appears that 'accuracy' of the arguments means how compatible they were with Aristotle's own view. If they were accurate and, at the same time, introducing the Third Man, which he rejects as a fallacy, then it could mean they were somehow still flawed.

Alexander comments on the third man at Commentarius in Metaphysica 84.5-84.6 of the Fragments, "... then there will be some third man apart both from the particular, e.g. Socrates and Plato, and from the Idea; and this too will be itself one in number." So, according to Alexander, the Third Man, which is apart from the sensible particular and the Idea, specifically refers to the Form of man.

At On Sophistical Refutations 178b36 – 179a -10 Aristotle says,

“Again, there is the proof that there is a ‘third man’ distinct from Man and from individual men. But that is a fallacy, for ‘Man’, and indeed every general predicate, denotes not an individual substance, but a particular quality, or the being related to something in a particular manner, or something of that sort. Likewise also in the case of ‘Coriscus’ and ‘Coriscus the musician’ there is the problem, ‘Are they the same or different?’ For the one denotes an individual substance and the other a quality, so that it cannot be isolated; though it is not the isolation which creates the ‘third man’, but the admission that it is an individual substance. For ‘Man’ cannot be an individual substance, as Callias is. Nor is the case improved one whit even if one were to call the element he has isolated not an individual substance but a quality: for there will still be one beside the many, just as ‘Man’ was. It is evident then that one must not grant that what is a common predicate applying to a class universally is an individual substance, but must say that it denotes either a quality, or a relation, or a quantity, or something of that kind.”

Apart from Parmenides’ raising a clearer structure of the Argument in Parmenides 131-132 with Socrates, Aristotle, above, rejects the ‘third man’ as being a mistake. A mistake, he thinks, lies in mistaking the general predicate ‘Man’ (somehow equivalent of the Platonic Idea) as referring to an isolated individual substance (Form of Man – a ‘third man’). For Aristotle, individual substances here are concrete sensible things, such as individual men. So, for Aristotle, any general predicate, such as ‘Man’, does not refer to a ‘third man’ (Form), as in the Platonic sense. It refers instead to a quality in the individual sensible substance. And it is not the isolation of the ‘third man’ (Form) which makes the ‘third man’ the ‘third man’ (Form the Form), but the admission that the ‘third man’ is concrete like the individual (sensible) substance. The quality is inseparable from the individual sensible substance. The general predicate ‘Man’ refers to an individual sensible substance, individual men. The general predicate ‘beautiful’ refers to a quality in a specific individual sensible substance. For example, a quality in an individual girl that makes her beautiful is not separate from her. That is as opposed to the Platonic view that the idea of beauty in the mind was initially an idea of the Form of beauty in a past life. For example, we see a girl that somehow resembles the Form of beauty, through the Idea of beauty in our mind, and we call her a beautiful girl. But in fact it is actually the Form of beauty that is really beautiful. The girl somehow only reminds us of the Form of beauty.

Aristotle uses an example of Coricus, being a man, and Coricus the musician, being a quality that is inseparable from him because it is what he does. According to an implication of Aristotle's argument above against the 'third man', if the 'third man' were correct, then Coricus the musician would not be a quality attaching to Coricus as a result of his doing music; instead it would be an Idea, separate from Coricus. And if that idea had a corresponding Form, then that Idea would be referring to the Form, and the quality in Coricus would be resembling that Form. But according to Aristotle, Coricus the musician is not a separate individual substance apart from Coricus. It is an inseparable part of him. Therefore, Aristotle concludes, the Third Man is a mistake.

Towards the end of the above passage, Aristotle makes some claims in which the first part would seem to be contradictory and the second part ambiguous. He says, "though it is not the isolation which creates the 'third man', but the admission that it is an individual substance..... Nor is the case improved one whit even if one were to call the element he has isolated not an individual substance but a quality: for there will still be one beside the many, just as 'Man' was."

Aristotle claims that it is not the isolation that creates the 'third man', but the admission that it is an individual substance. But then he goes on to say that the case cannot improve even if the isolator admits that the 'third man' is not an individual substance but a quality. It looks contradictory because if the isolator admits that the 'third man' is a quality, and not an individual substance, then the 'third man' is not created. However, in the final part, the one that appears ambiguous is the more interesting. It says, "Nor is the case improved one whit even if one were to call the element he has isolated not an individual substance but a quality: for there will still be one beside the many, just as 'Man' was."

It is ambiguous because the word 'one' in the last sentence can be interpreted as denoting a quality, which is what Aristotle is suggesting as the case. But it can also be interpreted as denoting an individual substance. And in the latter case, Aristotle would be seen as suggesting a regress in the Argument constructed by Parmenides in Parmenides.

CHAPTER TWO

2 The Third Man Argument

Parmenides, after challenging Socrates in the Sail-Cloth Argument, introduces another question which leads on to the so-called Third Man Argument (TMA), though it does not refer to it as such.

The actual Argument (Third Man Argument) as stated in Parmenides 131-132 is as follows, between Parmenides and Socrates:

Parmenides says, "Well, ... and what do you say of another question?"

Socrates responds, "What question?"

(Q1). Parmenides answers, "I imagine the way in which you are led to assume one idea of each kind is as follows: - You see a number of great objects, and when you look at them there seems to you to be one and the same idea (or nature) in them all; hence you conceive of greatness as one."

Socrates says, "Very true, ..."

(Q2). Parmenides continues, "And if you go on and allow your mind in like manner to embrace in one view the idea of greatness and of great things which are not the idea, and to compare them, will not another greatness arise, which will appear to be the source of all these?"

Socrates answers, "It would seem so."

(Q3). Parmenides concludes, “Then another idea of greatness now comes into view over and above absolute greatness, and the individuals which partake of it; and then another, over and above all these, by virtue of which they will all be great, and so each idea instead of being one will be infinitely multiplied.”

Ever since Plato’s time, and after his pupil, Aristotle, made his famous reply to the Theory of Forms by specifically mentioning the Third Man Argument (TMA), people have been discussing and replying to the TMA up to the present day.

Among the most famous, if not the most famous, present-day responses to the TMA is a response by Professor Gregory Vlastos in a 1954 article entitled “Third Man Argument in the Parmenides.” And because of its notable reputation and complexity, I want to dwell on Vlastos’ article and make it the basis of the discussion in this Chapter.

My special treatment of Vlastos’ article here is, I think, important for understanding not only the TMA, but the Theory of Forms as well; I will argue that the structure of the TMA, as outlined by Plato at the Parmenides, is not as complex as Vlastos has reconstructed it. Comparing what I read in Vlastos’ article with what others have said about the TMA itself, as well as what Plato has written, has revealed a great deal of information: it appears that this article by Vlastos has somehow revolutionized how the modern eyes view the TMA, and the Theory of Forms for that matter. So, to elucidate the root puzzles in Vlastos’ article would be a huge breakthrough. And that is my main purpose in this Chapter.

A huge breakthrough in terms of better understanding, for the first time in over fifty years, the TMA, and the Theory of Forms at the same time in light of the former, would help us review the Theory of Forms with new eyes, so that we would consequently be able to see that the Theory of Forms and the ‘alleged’ Theory of Ideas are not the same thing – a distinction that would probably have been well-known had the root puzzle in Vlastos’ article been earlier identified.

I

Let us see first the translation¹ Vlastos uses and once again his generalization of it (pp. 2,3).

A. Parmenides 132a-b2

“I suppose this is what leads you to suppose that there is in every case a single Form: When several things seem large to you, it seems perhaps that there is a single Form which is the same in your view of all of them. Hence you believe that Largeness is a single thing.”

Vlastos calls the first part of the argument (just above) the first step, and generalizes it as (A1) in the following way:

(A1) If a number of things, a, b, c, are all F, there must be a single Form, F-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, as all F.

Vlastos calls the final part of the argument (just below) the second step and generalizes it as (A2) in the following way:

“What then if you similarly view mentally Largeness itself and the other large things? Will not a single Largeness appear once again, in virtue of which all these (sc. Largeness and the other large things) appear large? – It seems so. – Consequently another Form of Largeness will appear, over and above Largeness itself and the things which participate in it.”

(A2) If a, b, c, and F-ness are all F, there must be another Form, F1-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, and F-ness as all F.

¹ The translation of Parmenides' TMA that I use in Chapter 1 is the one by B. Jowett (1952), whereas Vlastos consults Cornford and A. E. Taylor, *Plato's Parmenides* (Oxford, 1934). There are differences between the wordings of the two versions, but Jowett's appears to be unbiased and accurate. I will explain why later.

Vlastos then explains what 'F' stands for, saying "Here 'F' stands for any discernible character or property. The use of the same symbol, 'F,' in 'F-ness,' the symbolic representation of the "single Form," records the identity of the character discerned in the particular ("large") and conceived in the Form ("Largeness") through which we see that this , or any other, particular has this character." (p. 2)

However, what I think gives Vlastos' article its celebrated and complex statuses is not essentially what he has managed to dig out of the Parmenides. It is what he has added to it. What he has added to it has immortalized his article and earned him the respect of the scholars of the Theory of Forms and of the TMA alike, over the last five decades. Right after generalizing the two steps (A1) and (A2) above, Vlastos makes the following observation (p. 3):

"Now merely to compare (A2) with (A1) above is to see a discrepancy which, so far as I know, has never been noticed before, though it leaps to the eye the moment one takes the trouble to transcribe the full content of the two steps in symbolic form."

He continues (p. 3), "In (A1) we are told that if several things are all F, they are all seen as such in virtue of F-ness. But (A2) tells us that if several things are all F, they are all seen as such not because of F-ness, but because of a Form other than F-ness, namely F1-ness."

Again (p. 3), "To be sure, there is a difference in the protasis of (A1) and (A2), and this is doubtless what has misled patrons or critics of the Argument: (A2) includes, while (A1) does not, F-ness, among the things which have the property, F."

He concludes (p. 3), "The significance of the assumption which prompts this inclusion will be discussed directly, and will indeed remain the most important single issue throughout the whole of this paper. But if we simply stick to the logical form of the two statements glaringly abrupt and unwarranted."

But what Vlastos has added to it, I must admit here at the outset, I think, is based on a mistake; and it has, unfortunately, led to a very lethal misinterpretation of the TMA, that has effectively remained unrefuted for over half a century. It has also influenced a lot of people (See e.g. Rickless (1954) p. 10) who have dealt with the Theory of Forms and the TMA, to the point of equally repeating the misunderstanding Vlastos makes; they equally (with Vlastos) dwell on what Vlastos has pointed out, by either accepting or refuting them and sometimes a bit of both, rather than dealing with what Vlastos does not say, for that, I think, is where the crux of the TMA lies.

A good example of the 'bit of both' is shown in Rickless (2011). Here, Rickless opens his third chapter on page 10 under the sub-heading 'The Third Man Argument 132a-b' saying "There is a vast literature on the Third Man Argument, initiated by the groundbreaking analysis of the reasoning in Vlastos (1954)". Rickless (for e.g. in pp. 11-13) makes good use of Vlastos' proposed premise called the 'Non-Identity Assumption', dubbed (A4) and (B4) in Vlastos' article (p. 7 & p. 13 respectively). Note that (B4) is another version of (A4) in Vlastos' article. (A4) reads (p. 7):

(A4) If x is F , x cannot be identical with F -ness.

The purpose of (A4) is a premise to link what Vlastos believes to be the missing link in the second part of the TMA (A2). (A2) reads (p. 3):

(A2) If a , b , c , and F -ness are all F , there must be another Form, F_1 -ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a , b , c , and F -ness as all F .

This is how (A4) links to (A2). Let's use the Form, Largeness, in place of ' x ', for example: If Largeness (x) is large (F), then its largeness (x being large or x being F) cannot be identical with itself, Largeness (x). So its largeness (x being large) must be a different Form (call it largeness 1). In virtue of this new Form, (largeness 1), we apprehend the character F ." So, Largeness (x) is not identical to largeness 1, hence the 'Non-Identity Assumption.'

According to Vlastos without (A4) the new Form, largeness 1, the transition from the protasis of (A2) which reads, "If a , b , c , and F -ness are all F " to its apodosis, "then there must be another Form, F_1 -ness," would not be a logical sequence. So, (A4), to Vlastos, logically links the protasis to its apodosis in (A2). That said the other logical link to fully complete (A2) is (A3). Vlastos calls this 'Self-Predication Assumption'. (A3) reads (p. 6):

(A3) Any Form can be predicated of itself. Largeness is itself large. F-ness is itself F.

Vlastos claims that without (A3), (A2) would be certainly false. He says (p. 6), “if F-ness were not F, it would be false to say that [in (A2)] a, b, c, and F-ness are all F.” So, (A3) and (A4) fix (A2). (A1) and (A2) are the two parts of Vlastos’ reconstruction of the TMA. He thinks (A2) and (A4) have a discrepancy when compared. (A1) reads (p. 2):

(A1) If a number of things, a, b, c, are all F, there must be a single Form, F-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, as all F.

The thing that I will say briefly at this stage about (A3) and (A4) is that they are meant to fix (A2) when (A2) is an interpretation of the TMA that I believe to be mistaken.

(I mention (B4) here in addition to (A4), though they are the same, in case someone asks, ‘but what of the (B)s? That said, Vlastos formulates his arguments into (A)s and (B)s. The (A)s starts from (A1)–(A5) with similar versions (B1) – (B5). Basically the (A)s are the (B)s. The link that (A4) does in (A2) is that the new Form allows our apprehending of the previous Form. So a new Form is necessary. It gives the next Form an epistemic function over the previous one. To understand this Form, a new Form is required and so on to infinity, hence the infinite regress. I will talk more about this later on.)

However, despite embracing Vlastos’ Non-Identity Assumption, Rickless (p. 12) disagrees with Vlastos’ view that the TMA implies the *epistemological function* of the Forms; i.e. in (A1) and (A2). Commentators, like Vlastos (1954, 1955), Fine (1993, 2004), Penner (1987), & Goldstein and Mannick (1978), think that the Theory of Forms includes a thesis that the function of a Form is to explain what it is for people to understand the F-ness of F things. Vlastos makes his generalization of Parmenides’ TMA include the view that through the Forms we apprehend sensible properties to be what they are; i.e., for example, in (A1) Vlastos generalizes the TMA as “If a number of things, a, b, c, are all F, there must be a single Form, *in virtue of which we apprehend* a, b, c, as all F,” and (A2) he generalizes “If a, b, c, and F-ness are all F, there must be another Form, F1-ness, *in virtue of which we apprehend* a, b, c, and F-ness as all F” (emphasis added). However, rather than taking

side with Vlastos on this view, Rickless holds on to the belief that the Oneness of the Forms is the main aspect Parmenides sets out to refute in the infinite regress.

Note that the epistemological aspect, which I claim above to be emphasized by Vlastos in his generalization of the TMA in (A1) and (A2), is the part of either one's consequent that reads "...in virtue of which..." where he appears to be implying that in virtue of the Forms, F-ness and F1-ness, we apprehend a, b, c, and F-ness respectively as all F." In other words, it appears that Vlastos is saying in (A1) and (A2) that the sensible particular, F, is non apprehensible without first apprehending, or having some kind of mental connection, with its respective Form, F-ness. Likewise, the Form, F-ness, is non apprehensible without first apprehending the other form, F1-ness.

But how do we apprehend sensible a, b, c, in virtue of its sourcing Form, F-ness, or the first Form, F-ness, in virtue of its sourcing Form, F1-ness? The only thing that is clear in what Vlastos is saying here is that the first sourcing Form, F-ness, has something to do with our apprehending of sensible a, b, c, as all F. Likewise, the second Form, F1-ness, has something to do with our apprehending of the first Form, F-ness, as an F. Whether the sourcing Forms exist in the human mind or outside of it, the connection that we, as viewers, have with them, in respect of apprehending their corresponding entities as all F, are bound to be a mental connection only. For if the sourcing Forms exist in the mind, then we can only mentally relate to them. And again if they exist outside of the human mind, in another realm, then how else can we relate to them apart from thinking about them?

So, what I think Vlastos is basically saying in his generalization in (A1) and (A2) above is that through our mental connection with the sourcing Forms (i.e., epistemologically, somehow) we are able to apprehend sensible a, b, c, and the Form, F-ness, ... Fn-ness as all F. And besides, Vlastos says (p. 2) that "...through which [the Forms] we see that this, or any other, particular has this character [F]." So, he is saying that it is through our mental connection with the Form that we are able to see that a particular is F.

I reject that epistemological interpretation of the TMA as I believe that it is neither expressed nor implied in it. And I will explain it more fully further down. However, though the epistemological view may be implied in the Theory of Forms (and I think that it is implied), the TMA is not the Theory of Forms. And it is the TMA that both Vlastos' article and this paper are basically concerned with, rather than the Theory of Forms. So, I claim here that Vlastos artificially¹ puts this epistemological aspect in the TMA, through his generalization of it in (A1) and (A2), rather than Plato himself.

To make things even more attention-grabbing, it even appears that this same article by Vlastos has ever since become not only a 'must' source of reference for scholars of the TMA, and probably the Theory of Forms, but some of the 'artificially implied' assumptions or premises applied by Vlastos to the TMA, have notably come to be closely associated with the TMA due to Vlastos' article.

For instance, on page 6 of his article,² in an attempt to breathe life into, and do justice to, the TMA by adding a few necessary premises, as he thinks that it is ineffective as an argument as it stands, Vlastos writes "We need, first of all, what I propose to call the Self-Predication Assumption."

That quoted statement suggests that Vlastos has been the first to openly declare this assumption as a necessary (implied) premise of the TMA. Because this assumption has evolved and is now tacitly made by some commentators, since then, as an inseparable 'principle' of the TMA, we, somehow, might attribute the status of this assumption as a close associate of the TMA, to Vlastos' article. So, Vlastos' article is highly important to be thoroughly dealt with once and for all. For if, as I think I see in it, there is a simple overlooking of an important element of the TMA in

¹ That is, assumptions that were initially neither tacitly nor expressly put in the TMA by Plato himself, such as this epistemological aspect of the Forms

² Note that the numbering of the pages of Vlastos' article is different from the one I give them, for ease of reference. I mark as page 1 where the article actually starts. The actual page number for 'my' page 1 is 319 (319 is the actual first page of the article). 'My' last page at end of Vlastos' article is page 31, while the actual final page number of the article is page 349.

Vlastos' analysis that leads to assumption, such as the above, being made, then disclosing it here would be highly significant for progress in this area.

However, Vlastos heavily grounds his arguments on what he believes to be the implications of what Plato both says and does not say. He quite often admits that even though Plato does not openly express the missing premises necessary for his TMA (such as the Self-Predication and the Non-Identity Assumptions), they are definitely implied. Note that the Self-Predication and the Non-Identity Assumptions are key elements in grounding the infinite regress especially in Vlastos' (A2).

At least, Vlastos thinks that the TMA presented in Parmenides is both an invalid and an incomplete argument, because at least one or two necessary premises that ought to have been expressly there are missing from it; namely the Self-Predication Assumption, which he claims to be recognized by A. E. Taylor as an indispensable premise of the TMA, " though Taylor, ironically, never realized the implications of his own discovery" (p. 6), and the Non-Identity Assumption (p. 7); thus making the TMA incapable of executing its purposes.

The two main purposes which the TMA fails to achieve, according to Vlastos, are (p. 29) "... as a diagnostic device to locate the exact source of the logical difficulties of the Theory of Forms", as well as "...in its formal purpose, which is to prove that the Theory is logically bankrupt because it involves an endless regress."

And to make things worse for Plato, he does not bother to say much further than what the TMA has expressed; neither does he (Plato) show that he wants to defend his Theory of Forms against the TMA. And accordingly, Vlastos thinks, his not saying enough about the TMA, and his leaving it pretty much undefended, implies a lot about Plato. This includes, according to Vlastos, the fact that his silence at this point is not by accident, for Plato (p. 27) "... knew that the difficulty lay at a much deeper level, which he eagerly sought to reach, but which he failed to reach, as the phrasing of the objection shows."

But again, thinks Vlastos, the TMA could have only achieved its purposes had Plato been able to make the TMA as a valid argument, by at least expressly providing the two tacit premises given above; of Self-Predication and Non-Identity Assumptions; for those premises (pp. 29, 30) "... alone can warrant the inference from its first to its second step ...", says Vlastos.

The two steps referred to just above are the result of Vlastos reconstructing the TMA in parts. For ease of reference, Vlastos divides the TMA into two main parts. He symbolically reconstructs the TMA while hoping that it would still contain the same message which Parmenides expresses to Socrates at Parmenides 132a-c. He gives the TMA a first and a second step, which he calls (A1) and (A2) respectively. And I have given his (A1) and (A2) above.

Vlastos refers to the two premises (or his two Assumptions mentioned above) as the missing links with regards to the TMA; that essentially those two assumptions should logically connect (A1) and (A2). He believes that the TMA is a deductive argument (p. 2), so he "... treats it as a formal structure of inference from premises, stated or implied." And after looking for suitable premises to fix what he believes to be an invalid and incomplete TMA, he finally thinks he finds them; and he believes that, to be valid and complete, the missing premises ought to be expressly present in the TMA; that is, if only Plato had found them; and if only it were not for the sad fact that they were hidden from Plato's grasp.

Vlastos argues that Plato comes up with the TMA because he feels that there is something wrong with his Theory of Forms (p. 25, 26). So, using the TMA, Plato wants to expose that problem; but he has to find out what the source of the difficulty is that he feels to be problematic about his Theory of Forms. But Plato fails to find that source; which Vlastos thinks must be included as premises in the TMA, to make it valid and complete; so Plato only manages to come up with an incomplete and invalid TMA; which is consequently ineffective for the job that he wants it to perform, according to Vlastos.

At times, while expressing his views regarding the above-mentioned issues, Vlastos echoes Aristotle's typical attitude towards Plato's works. The kind of attitude which tends to somehow discredit the very wise philosopher Plato was. Of all the great things that Plato has written about the Forms, Aristotle chooses to ironically honour and acknowledge his teacher's (and Socrates') contributions by somehow claiming that the foundation of Plato's philosophy rests on that (to the effect) of plagiarism. For example in *Meta.* Bk 1, Ch. 6, 987a29-987b16, Aristotle at least implies this by saying that Plato borrows heavily from Cratylus, his former teacher, and from the Heraclitean doctrines, and changes a few things belonging to the Pythagoreans as if they were his own.

Likewise, among the claims Vlastos has made regarding Plato and the Theory of Forms, there are two passages showing a glimpse of how Aristotle is regarded by Vlastos. Compared to Plato, as implied in his article, Vlastos has more respect for Aristotle, not only as a source of scholarly information, but also as a scholar of antiquity; so that the implication of what he says about the two ancient masters shows that Vlastos puts much more faith in what Aristotle says than what Plato says.

On page 21 of Vlastos' article he claims "... there can be no doubt about the fact that Plato never asserted Self-Predication in any of his writings, and not much doubt that neither did he assert it in oral discussion in the many debates that raged over the Forms in the Academy; for if he had, Aristotle would have known it, and he was not the man to pass over the wonderful polemical possibilities it opens up." Vlastos also writes, as footnotes (p. 21), "In Aristotle's version of the Third Man Argument we see self-Predication not only at his finger tips but almost in the hollow of his hand: "and 'man' is predicated both of particular men and of the Form ...,""

So, what Vlastos is driving at just above is that the Self-Predication Assumption is close to being discovered and added to the TMA, but only if one has what it takes. But given what Aristotle has said about Plato, for Vlastos, Plato is somehow not expected to come close to discovering the missing link, and he never comes close like Aristotle does, despite all the debates that went on in the Academy. However, in the last passage, unlike Plato, Aristotle comes so close to pointing it out

as such, for he actually says the equivalent of the Self-Predication Assumption, and could have claimed it as such had he perhaps elaborated it further.

However, the above-mentioned Aristotelean attitude I would call the 'Aristotelean Fever', (AF) for ease of reference. AF appears to have played the important role in blinding Vlastos from the truth of the TMA. I am saying all this for I want to diagnose Vlastos' mind a little bit more in preparation for the work ahead; to see any essential background factor that might have triggered Vlastos to overlook the simple truth expressed or implied in the TMA. On page 25 of Vlastos' article, he talks, under the subheading "The Record of Honest Perplexity", about what he believes to be "... an exact diagnosis of Plato's mind at the time he wrote the Parmenides." In the next two paragraphs, I will talk about what I believe to be a similar experience Vlastos goes through when he prepares and then writes his famous article under the influence of AF.

The trouble with having the AF when analysing a particular work of Plato (by scholars who are pre-familiar with the work of Aristotle) is that AF might become a hidden premise in the mind of the analyser of the former's work. It is a mental process, as in the second step of my own interpretation of the TMA further down in part IV; where I discuss the process, according to Parmenides, of mentally seeing a commonality among the similar sensible properties exhibited in sensible things. By basically the same process, as described by Parmenides, when we analyse an argument we tend also to somehow form some argument of our own in our mind at the same time by drawing on premises derived from both pre-existed principles as well as newly acquired ones.

However, if the analyser is not careful enough during the analysis, then the hidden AF might eventually become by accident a deciding factor in the analysis; that, if worse comes to worse, the AF might most likely distract the analyser from the truth, as probably has been the case with Vlastos; when the AF interferes, so that the analyser judges the work before them on the basis of the author's reputation, rather than on the sole basis of the work in front of them, then the analyser might end up transferring his or her mental AF experience into the work in front of them, thus distorting the truth; so much so that when the transfer of the AF happens, then it would

mistakenly appear to the analyser as if the outcome of the analysis came out of the work in front of them. So, the AF, I believe, distracted Vlastos when he wrote his article.

2.1.1 Analysing Vlastos' analysis of the Third Man Argument (TMA)

First, throughout his analysis, Vlastos never identifies what is called the 'Third Man'. That is very important, because I think that if he had done that he would probably have not missed the important point that triggers all the troubles that follow. For how can he analyse the TMA by breaking it up into two steps and making it as his main point of reference, but without pointing out 'where, in the TMA, is this thing called the Third Man? What I mean is that the adjective 'third' is not by accident, for it suggests preceding 'first' and 'second' positions. The (first) man denotes sensible individual men, the (second) man denotes an Idea of the (first) individual men, and the 'third' man denotes the Form. So, the 'third man' is the first thing that I will be identifying in the translations of the TMA by Cornford and Taylor, which Vlastos uses, before I proceed further down. In this Chapter 2, all the translations will be used, though my argument is based on Jowett's translation.

That being said, it must be reminded that I have roughly identified the Third Man in the translation by Jowett. Actually, I think that it is not easy to point out the Third Man because both translations are equal in not clearly showing the mid-ground between sensible things in our sensible world, and the Forms in the world of Forms. That mid-ground is the mind, or minds; the mind contains mental entities that exist only in the mind. Both translations use suffix "-ness" to mean both entities in both levels of existence: i.e. entities in both the second and the third levels; but unfortunately both translations appear to many people (including, undoubtedly, Vlastos) to be treating all entities, in both the second and the third level, by the use of suffix "-ness", as if they are all in one level; that is, as if they are either all Forms in the world of Forms (or the third level); or all Ideas in the mind (or the second level). But actually, in my interpretation of the TMA further down in part IV, the entities at the second level are in the mid-ground; that is one step up after the first level: The first level is our human world which contains entities that we refer to as the sensible features or properties. So, the entities at the second level, or the mid-ground, are just

mental images in the mind. We might also refer to them as concepts or conceptions. They only exist in the mind as Ideas, but not outside of it. In my interpretation, I call entities at the first level 'feature F' (fF) and the second level 'common feature F' (cfF) and the third level 'absolute common feature F' (acfF). Socrates sees a similar feature (fF) being exhibited in a number of sensible things. In the process, his mind compares them, so a common Idea (cfF) is produced. And if he continues to compare the (fF)s in sensible things and their common Idea (cfF), another entity (acfF) that will appear to be their source arises.

The third entity (acfF) is the Third Man; the Third Man then is either an entity or a group of entities. The Third Man, as a group of entities, denotes all the contents of the world of Forms, but outside of the mind. So, the Third Man is two things: It represents all entities in the third level, and it also represents each individual entity in the same level, the third level; and the third level is the world of Forms. So, all those entities in the world of Forms are Third Mans; and they can be referred to either individually or generally as the Third Man.

To make a summary of my interpretation of the three levels in the TMA (as both expressed and implied in the conversation between Parmenides and Socrates), we have three different types of entities existing respectively in three different levels: First, the sensible properties exist at the first level, which is in our human world (fF)s; Second, the Ideas exist in the second level as Ideas (cfF)s in the world of Ideas, which is also the mind; and Third, the Third Mans (the Forms) (acfF)s exist in the third level, which is the world of Forms. As for the third level entities, Parmenides proposes that they exist in the mind. Socrates denies it. I will discuss more of that later on. The reach of the senses is limited to those entities at the first level, while the mind can somehow interact with both entities at the upper two levels.

II

Vlastos emphasizes the question of whether or not the TMA is a valid argument, so he concludes (p. 1) that any progress in agreement on this question "... must come from some advance in understanding of the logical structure of the Argument." And so he sets out to "... pursue its analysis further than ... anyone has yet found it profitable to push it."

So, Vlastos generalizes the two steps (A1) and (A2) in part I above. He then compares them and claims to have found a discrepancy in the logical structure that links (A1) to (A2). He thinks that this is where the missing links are; so that some necessary premises must be found that would connect (A1) to (A2). And he spends the rest of the article finding and justifying those special premises.

But I disagree with Vlastos' claim that some advance in understanding of the logical structure of the Argument is necessary prior to further progress in agreement; and neither do I think that there is a discrepancy or missing links between (A1) and (A2). For an advance in the search for a logical answer, in the sense that Vlastos has proposed it, would only move up unnecessarily the level of complexity of the TMA to a much higher level, thus creating a bigger mess than the current state, for everyone.

Towards the end of part IV below, I mention that I think that the debate in the world today regarding the TMA essentially concerns the problem of deciding whether the entities at the third level, the third mans¹, respectively resemble those at the other two levels below it (i.e. to use my

¹ Third Mans (with an 's') stands for plurality of (all) entities existing in the third level. This plurality of third level entities does not take into account the multiplicity of Forms in the case of an infinite regress. The use of 'Third Man' does not mean in the TMA that we only talk about man. It so happens that Aristotle criticizes the Platonic entities at the third level, that he calls them (or it) the third man, using individual men as an example; he says in (Sophistical Refutations 178b36), "Again, there is a proof that there is a 'third man' distinct from Man and from individual men."

interpretation of the TMA, not Vlastos’); whether the sensible properties in the human world (the first level) and their respective commonalities in the world of Ideas in the minds (the second level), resemble their respective Forms (the Third Mans at the third level) in the world of Forms?

If they do, then the infinite regress activates and off it goes unendingly; but otherwise, if there is no infinite regress, then that means (to use the language of B. Jowett’s translation of the TMA that I use in part IV) that the result of comparing the individual properties exhibited in sensible things and their respective commonalities in the mind, do not resemble other third entities (or their respective causes in the world of Forms). For the implication of what Parmenides is saying in the TMA is that the third entity (acF) exists as a result of comparing those in the first two levels, (fF)s and the (cfF). But, given our understanding of the separation of the three realms, the comparing process is strictly limited to the first two levels, (fF)s and (cfF), and the chance for an infinite regress involving the third level (Forms) is absolutely avoided. So, in fact, the comparing process does not determine the actual separate existence of the Forms at the third level.

But how do we know that the absence of the comparing process would not rule out the existence of the Forms? Especially (to use B. Jowett’s translation of the TMA as used in part IV below) when Parmenides seems to make the comparing process look like it is the source of existence for the entities at the third level?

He goes on to say that if Socrates continues to compare the same set of sensible things exhibiting that particular feature with their mental commonality, which Socrates formerly establishes in his mind, he will recognize that a third entity (the third man, or the Form) will arise, “which will appear to be the source of all these?” (Metaphy. 132b). And that quote is referring to the Form as the source of “these”. The “these” refers to the entities at the lower two levels. So, accordingly, the entities in the third level, treated in the TMA by Parmenides in a mocking manner, as both existing in the mind of Socrates, come into existence as commonalities, out of comparing those entities in the first and the second levels. But if, however, no third entities appearing upon comparing those entities at the first and the second levels, given that the comparing process does

not determine the existence of the Forms, then how could there still be entities existing at the third level?

A reply to that would be that Parmenides says that the Third Man, or the Form, "... will appear to be the source of all these." That is, the source of both the sensible particulars in the human world and their respective mental commonalities in the mind. So, in that case (despite his making the comparing process look like it is the source of the entities in the world of Forms, which he mockingly assigns to Socrates' mind, thus making the sensible particulars in the human world appear to be first in order of existence), the source of a thing will somehow always be the first to exist prior to the existence of the thing.

Parmenides has referred to the Forms as the source of the entities at both the first and second levels, thus making the existence of the Forms somehow unaffected by the absence of the comparing process (which starts at the first level) and, therefore, for that matter, of an infinite regress. So, we have reason to establish here at this stage, as our first point of reference, that Parmenides does make reference to the pre-existence of the Forms, despite his use of the comparing process (as if it is the source of existence for the entities at the third level) and, for that matter, of an infinite regress. For ultimately, somehow, an infinite regress leads to no Forms in the first place. For the source to have no beginning by being in an infinite regress is no source at all and therefore nothing. So the implication is that Parmenides understands how the Forms are seen as pre-existing, but for some reason he rejects it.

Someone might dispute the above interpretation and say that the part "...will appear to be the source of all these" is not the same as a part such as "... will ... be the source of all these"; in a way that the function of the phrase 'appear to', in the former, suggests that the third entity that will appear may not necessarily "... be the source of all these", for it only suggests a mental appearance. And besides, if the Forms exist separately from the mind, then how would Socrates mentally experience their truth?

A reply to the above will be as follows: The implication of the former (“...will appear to be the source of all these”) with the ‘appear to’ in it, is that Socrates has already formed a firm view of the Forms prior to this talk between him and Parmenides. So, Parmenides’ use of ‘appear to’ is his way of refuting Socrates’ view by making fun of the Theory of Forms: That the Forms only appear in the mind of Socrates, so that Socrates thinks that it is the case, when in fact it is only due to the comparing process, which he (Parmenides) proposes. In that case, it does not have to be the latter part, without the ‘appear to’ in it, to avoid being a mental appearance; for the former can still imply a non-mental existence, such as in the above regard. Plato puts all the words there for a good purpose. To omit them is not the right thing to do.

However, in addition, the former part also appears to be in two parts: The first part, which is just skin deep, is more like Vlastos’ first major point in his analysis. I will look at it first. On his 3rd footnote (p. 2), he declares that Plato’s use of the word ‘seem’ in (A1) is irrelevant or, in his own words, “...immaterial to the argument.” But the question is, why would Plato put it in there, if it were irrelevant to the TMA? Vlastos replaces the word ‘seem’ with the word ‘are’ in his generalization of the TMA in (A1). So that his (A1), in part for the sake of clarity, reads:

“(A1) If a number of things, a, b, c, ‘are’ [instead of ‘seem to be’] all F, ...”

At the end of the same footnotes, as above-mentioned, Vlastos gives his reason for thinking that ‘seem’ is irrelevant in (A1) to the argument. It is because, he says, “A few lines later Plato speaks of the large things as ‘participating’ in Largeness (132a11), which is his way of saying that they are large (so far as participating are anything at all) and do not merely appear such...”

This is the ‘A few lines later’ which Vlastos mentions just above: “Consequently another Form of Largeness will appear, over and above Largeness itself and the things which participate in it.” Note that these few lines are in Vlastos’ second step (A2) of the TMA; here is (A2) again in short for ease of reference: “(A2) if a, b, c, and F-ness are all F, ...”

So, Vlastos is using the implication in his (A2) by Parmenides of 'participation' in [the Form] Largeness by the things that participate in it [i.e. the several sensible large things and mentally Largeness (i.e. mental image or conception)] to justify his considering of 'seems' in (A1) to be irrelevant to the TMA. But I think that Vlastos cannot afford to do that. For by doing so, he is disregarding a very important element of the TMA; that is, that the TMA is (both expressly and implicitly) structured into three main components: First is the first level (realm), consisting of sensible properties exhibited in sensible things; second is the second level, consisting of ideas, or mental images or concepts; and third is the third level consisting of the Forms. Parmenides proposes that the entities that ought to be (in Socrates' view) in the third realm also exist in the second realm, which Socrates implicitly refutes.

So, the use of 'seem' in (A1) best describes the compatible relationship between sensation and the human environment at the first level. In the Platonic view, the contents of the human world are ever changing (e.g. see *Metaphy. Bk 1, Ch. 6, 987a29-987b16*); and, to the eyes, sensible things are appropriately described as they 'seem' to be; for as changing things, they somehow are what they appear.

On the other hand, the 'are' in (A2) best describes the compatible relationship between the mind and the contents in the upper two levels or realms; for the contents of those levels are, with respect to sensible things, unchanging. So, where the mind roams and where the Forms are, unlike the senses, there is no 'seem', but all 'are'; for 'seem' is more compatible with change. And that is why 'seem' is more suitable for (A1); and 'are' is more suitable for (A2) as it reflects the same suitability between the mind and its objects. But Vlastos' seeing that (A2) implies the use of 'are', incorrectly assumes the same use for (A1).

In *Parmenides*, Socrates first criticises Zeno's argument against pluralism and change; now it is Parmenides' turn, being a friend of Zeno, to criticize Socrates, resulting in the TMA. Socrates is conveyed as Plato's mouthpiece in the dialogues, including the TMA. And we learn from the dialogues and from Aristotle that change is an essence of Plato's view of sensible things. And from

the same sources we learn that the same is the opposite of Plato's view of both the Forms and the Ideas in their respective worlds. That Ideas and Forms do not change, like sensible things do.

However, with that (change happening to sensible things) in (Parmenides') mind, he is implying that it would be impossible for Socrates to perfectly confirm with his naked eyes whether something sensible is as it appears to his eyes. In that particular case, (A1), it would be inappropriate in the place of 'seems' for Vlastos to use 'are'. Because to use 'are' implies that one is certain, using his eyes, that what one sees is what it is. So, Vlastos is not justified in replacing 'seem' with 'are' in (A1); and, for that matter, in claiming that the difference is immaterial to the TMA; for definitely in that case the use of 'seem' is highly important for the formation of the TMA.

But in (A2), where the 'participation' part is, it is the mind that is at work all along, comparing things, resulting in the appearance of "... another Form of Largeness ..., over and above Largeness itself and things which participate in it." So, the use of 'are' in (A2) is justified. To state the comparing process again: First, the naked eyes in (A1) look at several sensible things which, to the eyes, seem to be (but are not necessarily) large.

And by viewing them, the mind forms a common idea of what the eyes have seen as exhibited in the sensible things; that is, the first common idea of Largeness. Again, if the mind continues the same process by comparing the first set of several sensible large things with the first common idea of Largeness, then a second common idea of Largeness will appear; this, somehow, 'represents'¹ the Form, or the third man; and if one continues the same comparing process, more common ideas of the earlier mental commonalities, together with that first mental common idea of Largeness, will appear correspondingly; the comparing process may continue endlessly, since there would be no reason to stop at a particular common idea (as long as a common idea keeps appearing in the mind every time the comparing process is carried out). And in that case it will be endless, hence the infinite regress. Note that this is only a regress of Ideas, not of Forms.

¹ The Forms as presented in the TMA by Parmenides are Ideas only. I will explain the distinction more later on in this Chapter.

So, the claim in (A2) of a 'participation' (by the several sensible things and the first common idea of Largeness) in the second common idea of Largeness (representing the Form, or the third man) is the work of the mind, but not the naked eyes, and suits the use of 'are'.

So if, according to Vlastos, "... Plato speaks of the large things as 'participating' in Largeness ..., which is his way of saying that they are large..." then it is because it is the work of the mind. And thinking at (A2) that those large things 'are' large in virtue of participating in Largeness, will not replace the fact that what appears to the naked eyes at (A1) will always 'seem' to be what it appears to be; which highlights the changing nature of sensible things; as opposed to the unchanging nature of ideas and Forms, at (A2), where only the mind can roam their territories.

The second part of my reply to the same concern raised above is more than skin deep. By using the words 'skin deep' above, I do not mean that Vlastos view on 'seem' is somehow unimportant; for it is highly important to clarify that issue, to clear up a few things about the TMA. For, as I have said, the use of 'seem' in the TMA by Plato has its own very important point to make; and to disregard it is to miss the point; and to miss the point will lethally lead to misinterpreting the TMA. So, it is important to have discussed this important point also in preparation for what lies ahead of us here in Vlastos analysis.

This second part is very much important because so far in this Chapter I have been building up my discussion towards uncovering the veil that has overshadowed the TMA for so long; and this veil has confused people over the point of the TMA, with respect to the Theory of Forms; and that I hope to achieve this task mainly by reviewing what have been said and implied particularly in the TMA.

Throughout Vlastos' article, he treats the TMA as more of a self-assessment by Plato, himself, of his own Theory of Forms. And in that case, he disregards the probability that the TMA might not actually be a self-assessment of the Theory of Forms; that it might be a look at the Theory from a contrasting standpoint: From a Parmenidean viewpoint. And besides, the discussion which makes

up the TMA is between Parmenides and Plato's mouthpiece, Socrates. But before that main event, Socrates refutes the Parmenidean doctrine as presented by Parmenides' friend, Zeno. And right after that preliminary encounter, between Socrates and Zeno, Parmenides comes in and takes over Socrates' leading role, in the dialogue, against Socrates himself.

It does not make much sense for Plato to set up the Parmenides (and include Zeno and Parmenides and the significant parts that they play in the dialogue, given the famous Parmenidean One, or 'The All is one', or the 'oneness of being', or 'unity', by the latter), but has no intention of involving directly the Parmenidean doctrine of One in his main reason for including the TMA. The Parmenidean One which Zeno tries to defend is simply that (sensible) things do not change, or no motion. That is as opposed to the Platonic Oneness of the Forms, Forms do not change. Socrates criticizes the Parmenidean One[ness] of sensible things, and Parmenides criticizes the Platonic Oneness of the Forms.

Perhaps that would be like, as a tribute to Plato, for example, openly using one of Plato's theories, say, U, to refute a particular view, say, V, that I come up with, but not seeing a reason for using U to refute V. That would be unusual. And, therefore, Vlastos' not acknowledging the Parmenidean One, as an important element in the formation of the TMA, would be equally unusual.

Somebody might argue that no doubt Plato uses the Parmenidean One to show, as Vlastos has claimed, that the Theory of Forms suffers from a severe regress; except, one might add, that the only problem is that Vlastos, instead of acknowledging that the TMA is most likely a criticism made against the Theory of Forms from a Parmenidean standpoint, gives Plato the credit of personally criticizing his own Theory of Forms. And, of course, that his attempt on self-criticism fails; for he presents an invalid and incomplete TMA, which he does not know how to deal with.

The problem with that view is huge. For insisting (as Vlastos does) on Plato's self-criticism of his own Theory of Forms not only attacks Plato's reputation and intelligence, but also fails to throw light on the Theory of Forms either. For this self-assessment, unfortunately for Plato, is grounded

on another sub-claim by Vlastos that Plato is mentally incapable of knowing if the TMA is a valid argument or not; and that is because Plato just cannot come up with the necessary premises with which to fix the TMA; in that case, this job is just beyond Plato's grasp. Vlastos writes (p. 30), "I trust it has now become clear that Plato could not supply these and so could not know whether or not it was a valid objection to his theory."

But that is an extravagant claim to make about a figure as significant as Plato, especially as it turns out to be based on misinterpretation of a simple, barely six-line, argument (TMA) that hardly makes up half a page.

Vlastos can only guess as to why Plato presents the TMA and makes no attempt to rectify it, or defend the Theory of Forms against it, if it is meant to be a challenge. Vlastos thinks that Plato just presents the TMA as it is and does nothing more. But would not that be very strange?

Why would a philosopher, let alone a philosopher such as Plato, want to waste time and resources writing a book to discredit himself and his own work in the end? Though Vlastos does not think that that was Plato's intention, it is what Plato gets if we go by Vlastos' interpretation of the TMA.

Of course it would be very strange and highly unlikely; for in that situation either those who found the TMA to be unclear were mistaken or the author would be mad to have thought of writing such a book in the first place. Somehow, the latter is what comes out of Vlastos' interpretation of the TMA. But I shall argue that, on the contrary, Vlastos makes a very big misinterpretation of the TMA.

Halfway through the second part of this thesis, I mention how the entities in the second level appear to the mind during the process of comparing the entities at the first level; but there is something very important that I want to clear up, in order to be very clear about my interpretation of the TMA, in relation to the Theory of Forms; I will show in part V below how this simple

interpretation of mine is implied in the exchange between Parmenides and Socrates. In showing this distinction clearly, I hope that it will help us see a clear picture of the TMA and the Theory of Forms that is obscured in Vlastos' influential interpretation.

By comparing those entities at the first level, or the sensible world, a common mental entity appears in the second level, or in the mind. And finally, upon comparing those at the first level (sensible things exhibiting a common feature) and their respective common entities at the second level, a third common entity appears also in the second level (in the mind). Note that in Parmenides' TMA, all entities at the first level exist outside the mind. While those other two kinds of entities that ought to be at the second and third levels (in Socrates' Theory of Forms) are mere mental images in Parmenides' TMA. They only exist in the mind as mental images, and that is how Parmenides expresses them in the TMA.

The thing now is, it is fine for the entity at the second level or realm to exist in the mind (for that is where it ought to be as an idea), but how can a Form, which ought to be at a third level outside the mind, also exists together with the other entity (idea) at the second level both as ideas? No wonder that some people refer to the Theory of Forms as the Theory of Ideas. It is probably because the TMA presents the Forms as Ideas. But in part V below I will explain why that is not the proper interpretation of the TMA. For Forms are Forms, and Ideas are Ideas, existing at their unique separate ontological worlds¹.

¹ Note that since we limit the interpretation discussed here to the TMA only, the 'mind' referred to here is that of a human being, or especially that of Socrates. In that regard, distinction is drawn here between ideas created as a result of the comparing process, proposed by Parmenides, in Socrates' mind, and other ideas created in the same mind apart from the comparing process via some other means. The former is what concerns us here. And for the same reason, that I only focus here on the TMA, I will only go as far as saying that in my interpretation of the TMA, as drawn from the entirety of Plato's dialogues, there are two kinds of Forms in the world of Forms: One is the extended Forms and the other is the abstract Forms. The former include 'divine' ideas in the mind of the Ultimate Source. The 'divine' ideas are the source of all entities in all the three levels. But I will not deal with that in this paper for that is beyond what I set out to do here. I only focus here on ideas that appear as a result of the comparing process in Socrates' mind, for that is the essence of the TMA.

III

Let us assess the discrepancy that Vlastos sees (p. 3) in the TMA if one compares his (A1) and (A2). He says that “In (A1) we are told that if several things are all F, they are all seen as such in virtue of F-ness. But (A2) tells us that if several things are all F, they are all seen as such not because of F-ness, but because of a Form other than F-ness, namely, F1-ness.” Vlastos continues, “To be sure, there is a difference in the protasis of (A1) and (A2), and this is doubtless what has misled patrons or critics of the Argument: (A2) includes, while (A1) does not, F-ness, among the things which have the property, F.”

Here is Vlastos’ generalization of Parmenides’ TMA in (A1) and (A2) again, he says:

“(A1) If a number of things a, b, c, are all F, there must be a single Form, F-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, as all F.”

“(A2) If a, b, c, and F-ness are all F, there must be another Form, F1-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, and F-ness as all F.”

Clearly, by mistake, Vlastos treats both levels, the second (world of Ideas) and the third (world of Forms), as the third level (world of Forms). I have warned before that some people could be misled because the two translations (the one by B. Jowett which I use and the one used by Vlastos) are not very clear about the distinction between the mental commonality the mind ‘first’ creates, out of the set of sensible things a, b, c, exhibiting a common feature, which Socrates may see in the sensible world, and the second commonality the mind creates for the ‘second’ time when Socrates continues to mentally compare the former two.

The confusion is being fuelled by the use of the suffix “-ness” in both cases (i.e. for both the first and the second commonalities, as people usually see the use of “-ness” as referring to a Form). So, after that ‘first’ step (of the comparing process) and, if Socrates continues to the ‘second’ step and compares the sensible a, b, c, and their mental commonality, then a second mental commonality

will appear. This second mental commonality is proposed by Parmenides as the Form (which is an Idea in Socrates' mind).

However, clearly the reason why Vlastos thinks that there is a discrepancy between (A1) and (A2) is because he treats both the first commonality and the second commonality as Forms. Probably because, in both translations, they both use suffix "ness." So, in (A1) Vlastos thinks that by a different Form, F-ness, we apprehend sensible things a, b, c, as all F; and, in (A2), by another totally different Form, F-ness, (which he changes to 'F1-ness' to differentiate it from the first) we apprehend both a, b, c, and the first 'Form', F-ness, as all F.

But the simple truth is, the first commonality (which Vlastos calls F-ness) in (A1) is not a Form, and it is not supposed to be a Form. This is what I call in my generalization (A), in part IV below, a common feature F (cfF), shared by each of the fF in a, b, c. It is just a mental image that 'we' (or Socrates) would naturally create, if we were looking at a number of things that looked the same and tried to create a commonality between all of them. We are bound to come up with a commonality out of comparing a set of sensible things that exhibit similarity in some manner. But the second commonality in (A2) (which Vlastos differentiates as F1-ness) is the Form (as an Idea), and is supposed to be the (mental) Form in Parmenides' TMA. This is what I call in my generalization (B) absolute common feature F (acfF), shared by each of fF in a, b, c, and the cfF. Socrates refutes this (B) the Form as impossible to exist in the human mind.

So, the rest of Vlastos' article is grounded on his (mistaken) belief that the first commonality in (A1) is a Form; which, if that is the case then it, clashes with the other Form in (A2) for they would both be seen as presenting a conflicting claim with respect to apprehending sensible a, b, c, as all F. That is, (A1) claims that we apprehend a, b, c, as all F through the first mental commonality (cfF) (which he thinks that it is a Form, and names it 'F-ness'). And at (A2) he also believes that this second commonality (acfF), or F1-ness, is the second Form by virtue of which we apprehend only the first commonality (cfF) (since a, b, c, have already been covered by F-ness) as all F. So, because Vlastos misinterprets the first mental commonality (cfF) as a Form, he calls F-ness, the same sensible a, b, c, would be 'covered' by two different Forms (i.e. by virtue of which) in (A1) and then

again in (A2), unless he finds a different Form to cover sensible a, b, c, and another to cover F-ness; for it would be incorrect for two Forms to cover one set of sensible things exhibiting a similar feature; and that is the discrepancy which Vlastos points out as existing between his (A1) and (A2); so, having made this mistake one might think that the regress threatens. For by having two Forms, F-ness to cover sensible a, b, c, and F_1 -ness to cover F-ness, then he will need another Form, F_2 -ness, to cover F_1 -ness, and another F_3 -ness to cover F_2 -ness and so on endlessly. He overlooks the fact that it is by his own making that results in that lethal discrepancy; according to the Theory of Forms, however, there can only be one Form for each set of sensible things exhibiting a similar feature. And Vlastos proceeds with his search and analysis throughout his article with that mistaken belief in mind; he continues to invent sophisticated premises in the hope of fixing this alleged discrepancy; such as his inventing of (A4), the Non-Identity Assumption, and (A3), the Self-Predication Assumption. I will come to that later.

That is why Parmenides, in B. Jowett's version, refers to the second commonality as appearing like it is the cause of the former two: Of sensible a, b, c, and the first commonality (cfF), or the first commonality with the suffix "-ness". Parmenides does that because he identifies the second commonality, not the first, as the Form. He says to Socrates, in B. Jowett's version, (Metaphy. 132b), "And if you go on and allow your mind in like manner to embrace in one view the idea of greatness [the first commonality (cfF)] and of great things [sensible a, b, c] which are not the idea, and to compare them, will not another greatness arise [Form], which will appear to be the source of all these [(cfF) and a, b, c]?" So, this distinction is clearer in B. Jowett's version. But Vlastos uses another translation and puts his emphasis on an epistemological function for the Forms; so that he ends up treating both commonalities as Forms. And he consequently sees a discrepancy between his (A1) and (A2) as a result.

Vlastos fails to recognize in the TMA this logical step in our everyday living when we look at sensible things that exhibit some similar characteristics. By nature, we create, but without being aware of it, a common mental image that captures all the similarities exhibited in certain sensible things; which explains why at times when we look at a particular thing and it reminds us of another thing that we believe to be its resemblance, in a particular way. That is because there has to be a commonality of all those similar sensible things already created in the mind, as a memory

image, otherwise how could anyone remember another past object(s) on the basis of their resemblances to a current one (Thomas, 2014, 1999). I would call it an Animal Habit Assumption (AH). Obviously, Parmenides has that AH in mind when he begins hammering Socrates with the TMA. He ridicules Socrates' Theory of Forms by proposing that through the AH he ultimately ends up mentally creating the Forms in his Theory of Forms. And to make things worse, Parmenides continues his mocking of Socrates by saying that by continuing to reason in this way he would create an infinite series of Forms.

And Parmenides is right, like he shows in the TMA, for if anyone (including Socrates) reasons continuously using this comparing process, he or she will create an endless series of reproduced mental images. However, Socrates strongly refutes this proposal saying that the Forms cannot be created via the AH, for the human mind is a place for ideas only. And no matter how big the reproducing of ideas may be during this mental process, they will always be ideas, rather than Forms; implying that the Forms exist outside of the human mind and, therefore, cannot be subjected to this mental repetition of ideas in human mind.

Another important element that I see in Vlastos' version of the TMA, which is clearly indicated in his generalization of the TMA in (A1) and (A2), is that his version appears to be emphasizing more than anything else an epistemological function of the Forms. Another problem with this attempt is that it would be a very unrealistic way to embrace things: According to this epistemological view in Vlastos' translation, we apprehend a sensible thing to be of a particular feature through its respective Form. But how can that epistemological view of his be explained in terms of the comparing process? In the comparing process proposed by Parmenides, the commonalities appear as a result of comparing entities at each level. The only thing Parmenides mentions (apart from the infinite regress) about the Form (the second commonality) is that that it appears to be the source of all these. How does that translate into "... through which we apprehend a, b, c, as all F?"

How could we apprehend the things that we sensibly deal with in this world, through some entities that are not only totally different in nature from sensible things, but existing in an ontologically different world, that we cannot access with our senses? But what does 'apprehend'

mean in that regard? And how might the author of this epistemological view get around comfortably (if he thinks that this view is implied in the TMA) apprehending things around him, including himself, through things in a different world that he has never seen before in his life time? By the way, for example, do we apprehend a white thing as white, and if so, how do we apprehend it as white, given that we are quite certain that we have not had access to the Form, Whiteness, since birth? It appears that many of us already apprehend a white thing as white, without accessing the Form, Whiteness? In that case, the epistemological view of the TMA is unrealistic and could not possibly be implied in the TMA. And because of that, it is doubtful that either Parmenides or Plato and Socrates would have thought of it for the TMA, let alone the Forms. Therefore, it follows that Vlastos' generalization in that regard is false.

And because Vlastos builds his argument on a mistaken belief, it is easier now to pick up errors elsewhere in his article.

Just because, as we have seen, the first commonality is mistaken by Vlastos as a Form, his (A1) is incorrectly generalized. Again he says, "(A1) If a number of things a, b, c, are all F, there must be a single Form, F-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, as all F." This Form, F-ness, he refers to here is, according to Parmenides, not a Form, but the first mental commonality in Socrates' mind. Therefore, his interpretation of an epistemological function for the Forms does not hold in (A1), since there is no Form in (A1) in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, as all F.

Moreover, the TMA version he uses refers to it in (A1) as "...a single Form...". But he does not recognize that when he comes to his (A2) the text correctly refers to that same entity not as "... a single Form ...", but as "...mentally Largeness..." He does not clarify whether the Forms that he talks about are Ideas in Socrates' mind or not. Though, he appears to be implying that Forms are not ideas. If that is the case, he should not have treated the first commonality as a Form, but as an idea. Whatever the truth in that regard, the first commonality as an idea (in Socrates' mind) is clearly expressed in the text, even in the version that Vlastos uses.

It follows that his generalization in (A2) is mistaken because the F-ness in the antecedent is not a Form. He says, “(A2) If a, b, c, and F-ness are all F, there must be another Form, F₁-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend, a, b, c, and F-ness as all F.” So, again, it follows that there is no need for a second Form, F₁-ness, in the consequent. Rather, the first Form which should be F-ness ought to be in the consequent of (A2). And because Socrates refutes the existence of Forms inside the mind (his mind), the Form in the antecedent of (A2), F-ness, does not exist outside Socrates’ mind, and therefore does not affect the actual Forms in the world of Forms. So, the F-ness in the antecedent of (A2) is really ‘the mental idea of F-ness’.

Again, Vlastos’ Self-Predication Assumption, (A3), the Idea of F-ness is itself F, is true of ideas and only holds true inside Socrates’ mind, rather than outside Socrates’ mind. And because the Forms do not exist in Socrates’ mind, (A3), the Self-Predication Assumption, is therefore crushed. Because (A3), being the next absolute commonality appearing at each stage in the comparing process, allows the comparing process to proceed in the first place, beyond the first commonality, leading to the mental infinite regress. But the infinite regress holds only inside the mind (of Socrates), if Socrates mentally continues the comparing process. So, (A3) that is responsible for the continuation of the mental infinite regress beyond the first commonality in Socrates’ mind has no effect externally.

That being said, Vlastos raises a point here (p. 6) which he attributes to A. E. Taylor; saying that it is Taylor who recognises that (A3) is necessary “for were it not true, the protasis of (A2) would be certainly false; if F-ness were not F, it would be false to say that a, b, c, and F-ness are all F.” But this claim is false because this F-ness in the protasis of (A2) is not a Form, but an idea in Socrates’ mind; that idea is the first mental commonality out of comparing sensible things a, b, c.

His other main solution for the alleged discrepancy is his (A4); where he thinks that although it is not openly stated in the TMA, it is implied. He thinks so because otherwise (p. 7) “The transition from the protasis of (A2), *If a, b, c, and F-ness are all F*, to its apodosis, *then there must be another Form, F₁-ness*, would then not be a logical sequence, but the wild and whimsical jump we have seen it to be above.” (emphasis added). But the thing is that we have seen that what Vlastos

considers as a Form, F-ness, in the antecedent of (A2), is not a Form. So, he is mistaken. For, in that case, the only Form in (A2) ought to be the one in the consequent. The other thing is that Vlastos arranges his generalization in (A1) and (A2) to give the Forms an epistemological function, but as we have clearly seen in B. Jowett's version of the TMA, that view is not in the TMA; it is neither expressed nor implied, for the reasons that I have mentioned earlier. Commentators like, for e.g., Sellars (1955) and Rickless (2011) disagree with this epistemological view. And because, as claimed by Vlastos at the start of this paragraph, his reason for insisting that (A4) is implied is because otherwise the transition from the antecedent to the consequent of (A2) will not be a logical sequence. But since we have identified errors in (A2), so (A4) is pointless. It follows that his (A5), which follows from his (A4), is equally pointless. (A5) is just the outcome of substituting the Forms, F-ness, into the formula in (A4): The formula in (A4) reads (p. 7) "if x is F, x cannot be identical with F-ness." For (A4): If Largeness, ('x'), is large, ('F'), its largeness, (x being F), is not identical with itself, (Largeness 'x'). So, its largeness (x being F) must be a different Idea. Call it largeness 1. In virtue of Largeness 1, we apprehend Largeness 'x'. To apprehend largeness 1 another Form, largeness 2, must be 'invented' in the same way and so on endlessly. The Self-Predication Assumption, (A3), F-ness is F, is the antecedent of (A4).

So that, for (A5), if we substitute x in (A4) with a Form, F-ness, we have: if F-ness is F, F-ness cannot be identical with F-ness; there is an inconsistency at the consequent. So, what we do to avoid the inconsistency is we either substitute x with another Form, say, F1-ness, or with a sensible thing, say, a: For e.g. if F1-ness is F, F1-ness cannot be identical with F-ness, or if a is F, a cannot be identical with F-ness. The inconsistency is avoided in both cases. Remember that (A4) is what Vlastos calls the Non-Identity Assumption; one of the two solutions (the other is (A3) the Self-Predication Assumption) which Vlastos employs in the hope of doing justice and saving the Theory of Forms for Plato; who, he thinks, does not bother to defend the Theory of Forms against his own TMA. And the main objective of this (A4) is to fix what he believes to be the inconsistency in (A1) and (A2). That is, by inventing F1-ness. To show that F1-ness is necessary he is forced to invent (A4) and substitutes F1-ness into it to get (A5); and if there is no inconsistency when the substitution is made, then it shows that he is on the right track.

But we have seen that this is a mistake; for mistaking the first commonality in the consequent of (A1) and in the antecedent of (A2) as a Form, which he generalizes as F-ness. And, as a result, he is inventing another Form, F1-ness, to be the Form in virtue of which we apprehend the Form, F-ness, in the antecedent of (A2). But as I have argued, that F-ness in the antecedent of (A2) is not a Form. So, if Vlastos had known that to be so, he would not have invented F1-ness to function as an epistemological 'caretaker' Form for F-ness. For he could have seen, if he were not mistaken, that both the sensible things, a, b, c, and the first commonality, (cfF), ought to have been apprehended as all F in virtue of F-ness, rather than in virtue of F-ness and F1-ness respectively.

So, a correct (A2), I will call it c(A2), for Vlastos would have been like this: c(A2) If a, b, c, and cfF are all F, there must be a Form, F-ness, in virtue of which we apprehend a, b, c, and cfF as all F. And after c(A2) there is no need for Vlastos' (A1), as (A1) has now been included in c(A2); for only one Form, F-ness, does the same epistemological function for both a, b, c, and cfF, rather than inventing a separate Form, F1-ness, to epistemologically deal with F-ness itself separately.

In the case of c(A2) there would be no need for an (A4); in which (unless one comes up with another Form, F1-ness) there is bound to be an inconsistency, if x is being substituted with the same Form, F-ness. So a new Form, F1-ness, must be introduced. But note that no discrepancy in (A4) if x is being substituted with a sensible thing, unlike substituting with a Form. That is because (A4) is a rightful formula that defines the nature of sensible things with respect to the Forms. It is not a rightful formula that defines the nature of a Form with respect to itself. Overall, the formula suits well Vlastos' view (due to a simple misinterpretation of the TMA) that the formula does not define the nature of a Form with respect to itself; that is because what he comes up with is an epistemological function of the Forms: As implied by his (A4), even the apprehending of a particular Form, e.g., F-ness, as an F is not in virtue of itself, but in virtue of different Form, F1-ness. So, the infinite regress fits well with his epistemological interpretation of the TMA that in virtue of the next Form we apprehend the previous Form as an F, and so on to infinity.

It appears that we have just identified the foundation upon which Vlastos has built his whole argument. A foundation built on a simple misinterpretation of Parmenides' TMA. Earlier, we have

come across a possible factor that I refer to as the Aristotelean Fever (AF), which could have played a role in blinding Vlastos from being able to see the TMA clearly. And recently I point out that Vlastos overlooks the animal habit, AH, that leads to his mistaking the first commonality for a Form. And the AF could have been an important factor in his overlooking of the AH. So, he spends the whole article trying to defend and justify the mistaken belief that he sees in the connection between his (A1) and (A2). He incorrectly believes that there is a discrepancy between them. So, basically he invents his (A3) and (A4) as his answers for this mistaken discrepancy.

IV

Here is the alternative interpretation of the TMA I recommend. The TMA may be divided and generalized symbolically in four parts as follows:

“I imagine the way in which you are led to assume one idea of each kind is as follows: - You see a number of great objects, and when you look at them there seems to you to be one and the same idea (or nature) in them all; hence you conceive of greatness as one.” (Parmen. 132a).

(A) If each member of a group of sensible things a,b,c appears to exhibit feature F (fF), then there must be a common feature F (cfF) shared by each of the fF in a,b,c .

“And if you go on and allow your mind in like manner to embrace in one view the idea of greatness and of great things which are not the idea, and to compare them, will not another greatness arise, which will appear to be the source of all these?” (Parmen. 132b).

(B) And if fF and cfF are compared, the source of fF and cfF , absolute common feature F ($acfF$), shared by each of fF in a,b,c and the cfF , will appear.

“Then another idea of greatness now comes into view over and above absolute greatness, and the individuals which partake of it; and then another, over and above all these, by virtue of which they will all be great, and so each idea instead of being one will be infinitely multiplied.” (Parmen. 132C).

(C) And if fF , cfF , and $acfF$ are further compared, a 2nd absolute common feature F ($2ndacfF$), shared by each of the fF in a,b,c , and the cfF and the $acfF$, will appear.

(D) And if fF , cfF , $acfF$, $2ndacfF$, $3rdacfF$, ... $nthacfF$ are compared even further, an (n)th absolute common feature F , ($((n)thacfF)$), shared by each of the fF in a,b,c and the cfF and the $acfF$ and the 2nd $acfF$ and the $3rdacfF$ and the... n th $acfF$, will appear.

In generalization (A), above, fF stands for a feature, like being great, that may be exhibited by sensible things. Sensible things like Socrates, Parmenides and Zeno may individually appear to be great. If so, then accordingly there must be a common feature of being great cfF shared by the feature fF in each of Socrates, Parmenides, and Zeno. So, this cfF is the commonality shared by each fF in Socrates, Parmenides, and Zeno. The fF would be equivalent of Aristotle's 'particular quality'. The cfF would be Aristotle's 'general predicate.' Aristotle rejects the idea of a third man.

In generalization (B), to use the above example further, we proceed further and compare the (to use Aristotle's terms) particular quality of being great, fF, in each of the three men, with the common quality of being great, cfF, shared by each of the fF in the three men. Accordingly an absolute common quality of being great, acfF, (that happens to be the source and shared by each of the fF in the three men and the cfF), will appear. This acfF is the equivalent of the third man, or the Form. In this example, the third man is the Form of greatness, or absolute greatness. The cfF is not identified here with the Form, like it is in Vlastos' interpretation. Again, the acfF is not identified here with the first 'extra' Form, like in Vlastos' interpretation. The reason is that the cfF is identified here with an Idea. The acfF is identified here with the Form, not an extra Form.

In generalizations (C) and (D), they show situations concerning the real challenge to the Theory of Forms. The challenge begins in (C) and then moves on to (D). For in (C) and then (D) the result of constantly comparing all entities at every stage of the Argument, starting with the three entities fF, cfF, and acfF in (B), are said to be heading towards a vicious regress.

So, to continue with the same example, in (C) if we compare the particular quality of being great, fF, in each of the three men, and the common quality of being great, cfF, (shared by each of the fF in the three men), and the absolute common quality of being great, acfF, (shared by each of the fF in the three men and the common quality of being great, cfF), a 2nd absolute common quality of being great, 2nd acfF, (shared by fF, cfF, and acfF), will appear. Now, the appearance on the 2nd acfF is the beginning of the regress. And when we move on to (D), which starts by comparing all the entities in (C) including the 2nd acfF, and then the 3rd acfF we tend to move towards an infinite regress as represented by (n)th acfF.

In (D) if the particular quality of being great in each of the three men, fF , and the common quality of being great, cfF , and the absolute common quality of being great, $acfF$, and the 2nd absolute common quality of being great, 2nd $acfF$, and then 3rd $acfF$... the n th absolute common quality of being great, n th $acfF$, are compared, an $(n+1)$ th $acfF$, indicating an endless journey towards infinity, appears to hold.

At the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates refutes Zeno's argument against pluralism. And Zeno is only trying to defend the Parmenidean doctrine that there is no change: that sensible things as parts and as a whole are one, not many. Zeno is a friend of Parmenides. Now, Parmenides comes in and does the same to Socrates, who claims instead that the Form is one; that it does not change like the sensible things do. Parmenides, in the Third Man Argument, gives Socrates a taste of his own medicine. Parmenides attempts to refute the oneness of the Forms, after Socrates refutes the oneness of sensible things.

Plato, according to Aristotle, is influenced by the Heraclitean doctrine of constant change; but this doctrine of constant change appears to be in opposition to Parmenidean doctrine that counter argues that there is no change; that sensible things are one, as they do not change. The Theory of Forms then is more like, in essence, the reverse of the Parmenidean doctrine. And that is quite clearly shown by implication, first in Socrates first refuting Zeno's argument (the Parmenidean doctrine), and then later on in Parmenides' refuting Socrates' argument (the Platonic doctrine).

To equally ridicule by equally showing by argumentation that there can be weak spots in the Theory of Forms, Parmenides builds up his Argument towards refuting the oneness of the Forms (See also Rickless 2011 p11). Usually everywhere else, (Phaedo 100c4-6, 100d7-8, 100e5-6, 101b4-6, 101c4-5, 75c11-d2, 100b6-7; Republic 476b10, 480a11), Socrates would start by postulating the existence of the Forms out there, and then he would hook the participating sensible things on to them. That shows the essential role played by the Forms in the Theory of Forms. In reverse, Parmenides starts from the sensible things building up towards refuting the oneness of the Forms. He makes use of the basic principles of the Theory of Forms to attack the Theory itself: like the use

of the principle of Participation in the Forms by sensible properties, based on types of resemblances exhibited in them. His emphasis on the attack is based on comparing similarities at all levels, starting from the ground level of sensible things and then moving up.

He reasons that if the same kind of properties in a particular group of sensible things are observed and compared, an idea of one similar entity uniting all will appear from it. And if the observer continues to 'mentally' compare all of them as one group (i.e. the particular property in each sensible thing and the idea of the common or uniting entity) an equally similar, but superior, whole and eternal entity will appear. This third entity is supposed to be the Form. And since there is no good reason why we should stop at the third, we must keep on comparing each set of outcomes at each level. And by continuing to do so would lead to no end as the process would go on to infinity.

I will conclude by explaining that there are two readings of these passages: one that yields a regress, but is unproblematic as it does not involve the Forms, and one which involves the Forms, but does not yield a regress.

V

To see this, let us look at the first line spoken by Parmenides in the formation of the TMA in Parmenides 132a. Parmenides tells Socrates, “I suppose this is what leads you to suppose that there is in every case a single Form.”

To judge this written talk on its own merit, the above-quoted statement by Parmenides is telling us that the Theory of Forms had already been around at the time this talk took place. And Parmenides is saying to Socrates that since Socrates believes that there is a single Form in every case, so, it is probably the case that what he (Parmenides) is about to tell him (Socrates) must be how he (Socrates) came up with that idea of his about the Forms in the first place.

The first statement by Parmenides, however, is very important for it reveals the basis of the TMA. Again, as implied by the first line, Socrates’ Theory of Forms is in Parmenides’ mind when he challenges Socrates in the TMA. So, the first statement is proposing the existence of the Forms in a different way from what the actual Theory of Forms has been, up to the point of this conversation. So, we have an actual Theory of Forms that Socrates already has (prior and up to the point of this conversation between them) and a proposed Theory of Forms as Ideas proposed by Parmenides in the TMA. The actual Theory of Forms, prior to the conversation, is one in which, the Forms are presumed to be there in existence already; that is, in the world of Forms, outside the human mind, and ontologically apart from this sensible world.

In the TMA, Parmenides pictures the Forms as having the same nature as ideas are in the human mind. That is because Parmenides presents the Forms as ideas in the mind of Socrates. And that, I think, is why many people also call the Theory of Forms the Theory of Ideas. But the first statement by Parmenides ought to make the distinction, and throw light on it, between the actual Theory of Forms by Plato and Socrates, and the proposed Theory of Forms (Forms as Ideas in the human mind) by Parmenides, in the TMA.

The dialogue can be read in two ways. In the dialogue, Parmenides articulates all three levels – the features of sensible objects (fF)s, mental ideas (cfF)s and Forms (acF)s. However, Parmenides then goes on to suggest a regress occurs, but either (a) if we view (acF)s as true Forms, he is wrong as no such regress occurs (as self-predication is false), or (b) if we insist that a regress occurs, then as Socrates says, this can only be because Parmenides is mistakenly taking the (acF) to be another idea, which does create a regress, but not a problematic one – as many similar ideas amount to just one idea.

So, clearly, the proposed Theory of Forms as Ideas in the human mind (or the mind of Socrates) is, therefore, the one where the proposed infinite regress is concerned with, but not the actual Theory of Forms. And we understand from the next two lines right after the TMA that Socrates refutes the infinite regress of the Forms as being impossible to occur in the mind of Socrates. Because, according to Socrates, there can only be one common idea, (cfF), of each set of similar sensible properties, (fF)s, as exhibited in sensible particulars. Socrates replies to Parmenides, “But may not the ideas, ..., be thoughts only, and have no proper existence except in our minds, Parmenides? For in that case each idea may still be one, and not experience this infinite multiplication.”

Parmenides acknowledges this refutation by Socrates by asking (Parmenides 132e) “And can there be individual thoughts which are thoughts of nothing?” Parmenides now prepares the battle field for his next round of attack. But from that point on he is no longer referring to the ideas in human minds as the source (afF), but as just commonalities (cfF). That is, commonalities in the second level (cfF) due to the comparing process.

Socrates clearly refutes the infinite regress in his final reply to Parmenides, saying, yes you can continue to compare collections of features and ideas to create new common features, but so what? – there is no reason why there cannot be multiple ideas. Socrates says here that only the mental entities at the second level exist in the human mind. The proposed mental entities at the third level (the Forms by Parmenides) do not, and they cannot exist in human mind. Because, as

implied by the same reply, a Form cannot appear as an idea in the human mind upon comparing the first mental commonality with their respective set of sensible things exhibiting a particular feature.

Or with respect to my symbolic generalization of the TMA in part IV, generalization (B) is refuted by Socrates as being impossible to occur in the human mind. And because of that refutation, it follows that the infinite regress of the Forms in (C) and (D) is consequently refuted, since they are presented as existing in the mind; for the proposed infinite regress of mental commonalities occurring at every stage of the comparing process, is of the mind; and the Self-Predication Assumption, F-ness is F, if accepted, is the key that triggers the regress of the mental commonalities.

Notice that the refutation by Socrates concerns Forms as ideas existing in the human mind; because there can only be one realm for the human mind, and another separate realm for the Forms, outside of the human mind, and apart from the sensible world. So, what I think Socrates is implying is that (to use my symbolic generalization of the TMA in part IV, namely (A) and (B)) only the first two realms or levels (in (A)), but not the third level (in (B)), is compatible with the actual Theory of Forms: That is, if each member of a group of sensible things a, b, c , appears to exhibit feature F (fF) (in my generalization in part IV), then there must be a common feature (cfF) shared by each of the (fF) in a, b, c . Here, again, feature (fF) is a sensible thing in the sensible world, whereas the common feature (cfF) is an idea. And that is the only common element in both Parmenides' proposed Theory of Ideas (or Forms as Ideas in the human mind) and Socrates' actual Theory of Forms (or Forms outside of the human mind). The difference is, as in (B), that Parmenides mockingly insists that the Forms then are Ideas formed in Socrates' mind, which Socrates refutes.

The implication of Socrates' refutation of Parmenides' Theory of Ideas is Socrates' acknowledging that (fF) and (cfF) are a sensible thing and an idea respectively; and they are because, according to Socrates, there can only be one common idea (cfF) for every set of sensible things exhibiting feature (fF), rather than two or more. But this mental image, according to the same implication,

does not hold true of my generalization (B) in part IV, because not only the Forms cannot be a mental entity existing in the human mind, but despite the outcome of the comparing process mentally reproducing in an infinite regress of common entities, those endless images would all be occurring not in two, but in just one realm. So, they cannot have a proper existence outside of the human mind.

So, what Socrates suggests here, in other words, is that no matter how many times to infinity a mental infinite regress, ((from my generalization (D) in Part IV) (n+1)th absolute common feature F, ((n+1)th acfF)), repeats itself by appearing endlessly in the mind of Socrates, whenever the comparing process is being mentally repeated, they all amount to the same thing: An idea. So, given that many similar ideas amount to just one idea, due to their being presence in the same realm, the mental infinite regress does not affect the actual Forms which exist outside of Socrates' mind.

There is another very important implication of this refutation by Socrates that is very important in clearing up the heart of this infinite regress puzzle. When Socrates refutes the possibility of existence of the Forms as Ideas in his mind, self-predication is refuted as well. That is basically because the 'actual'¹ Third Man (the Form) cannot be established as an idea in Socrates' mind; for the Third Man or the Form exists at a separate realm, i.e. a third realm or level.

So, the Third Man has its proper existence outside of Socrates' mind, in the actual Theory of Forms. For, as I have discussed earlier, the TMA of Parmenides has been confined by Socrates to, as high up as, the second level only. And, again, the second level is a mental realm suited for human ideas only. And because the infinite regress only occurs in the human mind, and does not have a proper place outside of the human mind, so the actual Third Man, or the Form, which exists outside of the human mind, is not capable of being made, nor reproduced, in the human mind as a

¹ I say 'actual' Third Man to differentiate between Parmenides' Third Man, as a mental picture in the human mind, and Socrates' 'actual' Third Man or the Form, which exists outside of the human mind in the world of Forms.

mental entity, through the comparing process; therefore the actual Form cannot be subjected to the self-predication problem posed by the proposed comparing process.

Be reminded that in the comparing process proposed by Parmenides in his TMA (in B. Jowett's translation which I use in Chapter One¹) one compares, first, the similar features in the individual sensible particulars, before their common mental feature suddenly appears.

And if one continues the same process of comparing the current entities, then a third common mental entity suddenly appears. This third common mental entity is (according to Parmenides) the Form, which, says Parmenides, appears (to Socrates) as the source of the entities at the first two realms (the first and the second realms). Now, Socrates implicitly tells Parmenides that the human mind can only be one realm. In other words, there cannot be more than one realm existing inside the human mind.

Once again, Parmenides appears to have already realized that the third entity (Form) is being viewed by Socrates as the source of the entities at the first two levels, and that it exists separately; but he still mockingly insists on putting it alongside the second common entity (idea) inside Socrates' mind. Parmenides says Parmen. 132b,

“And if you go on and allow your mind in like manner to embrace in one view the idea of greatness and of great things which are not the idea, and compare them, will not another greatness arise, which will appear to be the source of all these?”

¹ I think B. Jowett is more specific than the translation of Parmenides' TMA used by Vlastos. First, for the simple reason that Jowett adds the phrase 'to compare them', while Vlastos' version omits it. Vlastos' version relies on the phrase 'similarly view' that comes before in the same sentence (but it is 'to embrace in one view' in B. Jowett's). The importance of including the word 'compare' is that it expressly tells us that Socrates is not just looking and thinking about those entities, before a common entity appears suddenly as a result. But that Socrates compares them at each turn, leading to an infinite series of mental pictures appearing in response. So, in Parmenides' proposed Theory of Ideas as Forms in Socrates' mind, the comparing process becomes the cause of the 'mental' Forms as well.

To which Socrates responds and refutes his proposal (Parmen. 132d), saying that there is no proper existence for the source (of the entities at the first two levels) in his mind,

“But may not the idea, asked Socrates, be thoughts only and have no proper existence except in our minds, Parmenides? For in that case each idea may still be one, and not experience this infinite multiplication.”

There cannot be two ontologically separate realms or levels coexisting as one. The source, being the Form, (or the actual Third Man), must not also be inside his mind; for the human mind is not a proper realm for the Form. So, from what Socrates says, we draw from it that the actual Third Man or the Form, which does not exist in the second level in Socrates’ mind with ideas, must exist outside; so it must be a third level. Hence, the three levels of existence given earlier in part IV above.

To summarise: Parmenides proposes the Theory of Ideas (Forms as ideas) existing in Socrates’ mind. Socrates implicitly refutes this proposal saying that the Forms do not have a proper existence in his (Socrates’) mind. Another important implication revealed in the exchange between Socrates and Parmenides in the TMA is that Socrates believes in the ‘actual’ Theory of Forms, especially the view that the Forms exist outside of his mind. So the difference between the actual Theory of Forms, that Socrates and Plato hold, and the Theory of Ideas, that Parmenides proposes, is that the former hold that the Forms exist in the world of Forms, outside of the human mind; whereas the latter mockingly proposes that the Forms not only exist in Socrates’ mind as Ideas, but the mind creates them through the comparing process. Socrates refutes Parmenides’ proposal, implying that Forms do not exist in his mind. And in doing so, he rejects Vlastos’ Self-Predication Assumption as well.

But because the Forms are not mentally created in the comparing process, and they exist outside the human mind, therefore they are not subjected to the Self-Predication Assumption. For Self-Predication is the mental condition that must be met for the comparing process to continue reproducing the endless series of Ideas in the mind. We also have seen the discussion earlier involving our point of reference; where I conclude that the actual Forms exist independently of the comparing process.

We also have seen that, unlike the claim by Vlastos, the TMA cannot be a self-assessment of the Theory of Forms by Plato himself. For that would put Plato at odds with his brilliant state of mind that is shown in his writings; It makes more sense to suggest that Plato, by the TMA, is viewing things from a Parmenidean viewpoint; let alone the probability that Plato is probably remaking an earlier exchange that actually took place between Socrates and Parmenides.

CONCLUSION

As we saw in chapter 1, the Theory of Forms consists of three metaphysically separate realms, namely the sensible world, the world of Ideas which exist in the minds, and the world of Forms. The fundamental feature of the sensible world (where human beings live) is the continuously changing nature of its entities; whereas, on the other hand, the entities in the world of Ideas and the world of Forms are similar in nature as they, unlike the sensible world, are somehow unchanging; yet while Forms and Ideas are both unchanging, only Forms are eternal.

The Forms appear to have existed first or to have always been in existence, among the entities in these three separate realms. But it does not openly express in the Theory of Forms how the Forms came into existence in the first place. The sensible entities in the sensible world are said to be copies of the Forms. How the copies were made out of the Forms is not specified either, except that the copies exist by participation in the Forms. Minds, on the other hand, produce and then internally store ideas of both the Forms and the sensible things. The Theory of Forms does not openly say which world the minds themselves are entities of.

Ideas which only exist in the minds are unchanging. So is the idea that Ideas are different from sensibles as they are unchanging, but different from Forms as they are not eternal. The duration of the existence of the ideas varies, depending on the nature of their respective entities (the entities they are ideas of) which may or may not be external to the minds. For ideas could be of both other ideas and non-ideas, the latter being external to the minds. Some ideas in the minds exist for a longer duration than others, but their respective entities, including relations, of which they are ideas, existed before them.

Some ideas are ideas of sensible things, and others of the Forms made in some earlier lifetime. When sensible things in the sensible world perish or change their ideas in the world of Ideas could still be in existence in the minds. On the other hand, because the Forms in the world of Forms would not perish, but remain longer in existence than both the ideas in the minds and the sensible

things in the sensible world, so their respective ideas in the minds would remain in existence in the minds longer than ideas of both other ideas and sensible things do.

That said, it is of utmost importance to note that 'minds' as openly expressed in the TMA and particularly mentioned by Aristotle overwhelmingly refers to 'mortal minds' of human beings, as opposed to 'divine mind' of, say, a supreme being such as God. This distinction is highly important in this essay as it makes the difference by throwing light on the TMA. The mortal minds, being limited, compared to a superior 'divine mind' that one might assume to be capable of performing the unthinkable, can only contain mortal ideas. It cannot also contain the Forms. So, the Forms must exist outside of the mortal minds.

The Forms, if they do not exist also in the mortal minds with the ideas, must not exist in the sensible world either, for the sensible world is a changing world, whereas the Forms have the opposite nature of being eternally unchanging. So, given the three realms and that the Forms neither exist in the world of Ideas nor in the sensible world, the Forms must exist in the third realm. That is, the world of Forms. Having the distinction between these realms in mind helps very much in interpreting the TMA, although the TMA is self-explanatory in that regard using certain translations, but especially the one by B. Jowett.

So, as identified in this essay, the central weakness in Professor Vlastos' interpretation of the TMA in his 1954 essay, is therefore the overlooking of that simple but important distinction between the three realms. For the setting of the TMA as expressed by Parmenides confines to the first two realms only, the sensible world and the world of Ideas, and totally neglects the world of Forms. And that is the heart of the problem not only when it comes to understanding the Theory of Forms, but the TMA itself, or so it appears.

As for the latter, Socrates points out the weakness of the TMA in the above manner, thus implying the rightful place for the Forms, in his response to Parmenides saying "But may not ideas ... be thoughts only, and have no proper existence except in our minds, Parmenides?"

However, neglecting the heart of the problem also appears to give rise to the generally accepted belief that the (mortal) Ideas are themselves the Forms; so that the Theory of Forms has come to be also known as the Theory of Ideas.

Then it was up to the interpreters of the TMA to see what is problematic with the TMA in that regard. Vlastos, most importantly, appears not to have identified the heart of the problem either.

So, ever since Vlastos' 1954 essay, almost all scholars interpret the TMA in light of Vlastos' famous work. And it distracts them from taking a totally new approach to the TMA.

But this essay is suggesting a different route to the TMA. A route based on the view that the TMA is somehow a mocking by Parmenides of the Theory of Forms, made in response to the refutation by Socrates of the Parmenidean doctrine, as presented by Parmenides' friend, Zeno, at the beginning of Parmenides.

So, rather than support Vlastos' view that the TMA was Plato's way of expressing his dissatisfaction with his own Theory of Forms, this essay suggests something simple that could easily be identified in Parmenides: That the TMA is a mocking of the Theory of Forms, which is typical of those who might have some doubts over it or have rejected the Theory of Forms altogether. And responding to Parmenides with the question "may not ideas be thoughts only?", Plato shows us the way to a proper understanding of not only the TMA, but also of his Theory of Forms.

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