PARMENIDES AND PLATO'S *PARMENIDES*

IN two of his dialogues especially, the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*, Plato concerns himself at length with problems presented by the Eleatics. Despite difficulties in the interpretation of individual passages, the *Sophist* has in general proved the less difficult to understand, and since some of the problems at issue in the two works indicate the same or similar preoccupations in Plato's mind, it is worth considering how far an interpretation of the 'easier' dialogue can be used to forward an interpretation of the more difficult. First, therefore, we must identify problems common to the two works; then we must see whether we can understand what Plato understood Parmenides to have done—this may help towards an understanding of what he did in fact do; finally we can apply our findings to the *Parmenides* itself, particularly to the problem of the unity of the dialogue, in the hope that Plato's intentions may become clearer.

An aim of the Sophist

Whatever other purposes were in Plato's mind when he wrote the *Sophist*, there is no doubt that he intended to study the interrelations of what he calls γένη (or εἴδη). The γένη discussed in the *Sophist* include Being, Non-Being, Rest, Motion, Sameness, Otherness, Logos (Speech), and Doxa (Opinion).[1] Plato's intention is to show that some of these γένη combine with one another while others do not, and in particular that both Being and Non-Being combine with Logos. When this is established, there is established a framework within which significant true and false statements (and beliefs) are possible.[2] Now the arguments about the meaning of the *Sophist* have been to some extent vitiated by attempts to determine whether the various γένη, Being, Same, Other, and the rest, are Platonic Forms—and in general this discussion has been carried on with insufficient reference to the fact that the same problems might arise and need solution whether the γένη are Platonic Forms or not. The fact is that no explicit attempt is made in the *Sophist* to show that any of the problems about Being and Non-Being would be any the easier to solve whether the γένη are Forms or not. There is also no clear basis in the text for the view of Peck that Plato's problems arise solely through sophistic attempts to generate Forms in cases where no Forms exist.[3] Indeed, as the discussion of the various schools in the *Sophist* would suggest, and as will be argued in the course of this paper, problems about γένη, whatever the status of a γένος, were in Plato's opinion endemic in Greek philosophy from the time of Parmenides himself.

Plato argues in *Sophist* 259 e that if the γένη are to be separated from one another all possibility of discourse (λόγοι) taking place is ruled out. At two earlier stages of the dialogue (251 bc, 252 bc) he has alluded to various thinkers (whom he regards as contemptible) who claim that only tautologous

[1] For the list see A. L. Peck, 'Plato's *Sophist*, the συμπλοκὴ εἰδῶν', *Phronesis* vii (1962), 56.

[2] J. L. Ackrill was the first to suggest that Plato's combination of εἴδη (γένη) is designed to establish pre-conditions for significant discourse ('Συμπλοκὴ εἰδῶν', *Bull. of the Inst. of Class. Stud. of the Univ. of London* ii [1955], 31–5). For a convincing explanation of the συμπλοκὴ τῶν εἰδῶν passage at 259 e 4 ff. see A. L. Peck, op. cit. 46–66.

[3] A. L. Peck, 'The μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophist*: a Reinterpretation', *CQ* N.S. ii (1952), 32–56.

statements are possible. He suggests that those who claim that only such statements as 'man is man' and 'good is good' are possible are not themselves radical enough in their scepticism about the possibility of intelligible speech if their own principles are to be carried to logical conclusions. For in fact to say 'man is man' involves combining 'man' and 'being', and this means that in some sense 'man is man' must entail, for example, 'man is not horse'. Yet this would be puzzling if the γένη Non-Being and Logos could not be combined.

Without the combination of γένη, therefore, even tautologies are ruled out and, as the Eleatic Visitor puts it, complete separation of the γένη is the most complete destruction of intelligible speech (τελεωτάτη ἀφάνισις). Obviously, therefore, when arguing in the *Sophist* that certain γένη can in fact be combined Plato thinks that he is performing a task of considerable, indeed of fundamental importance.

Γένη and Categories

It should not be forgotten, even when discussing Plato's γένη, that in the *Categories* Aristotle is prepared to describe his categories as γένη (11ᵃ38). For Aristotle, therefore, at a comparatively early stage in his philosophical career Being, Quality, Quantity, and the rest are γένη. It has been much debated how Aristotle arrived at the particular set of γένη which he has produced, but there seems to be no objection to the view advanced by Ross that the list was compiled as a set of broadest possible answers to 'What is it?' questions;[1] for example, What is this? A man . . . an animal . . . a substance. The γένη therefore are the widest possible predicates which will appear when the question 'What is it?' is asked of a representative variety of phenomena. That is why the term κατηγορία (predicate) can be used as a synonym of γένος.

There is no reason for believing that Aristotle was the first to compile lists of the broadest possible answers to 'What is it?' questions. A tradition (admittedly late) has it that Plato introduced the ten categories of Aristotle.[2] While this is undoubtedly mistaken as it stands—so far as we know, Plato never made use of the ten Aristotelian γένη—it has a basis in fact in that Plato (and probably others in the Academy) regularly talked about γένη; and the fact that not only in the *Sophist* but also in the *Theaetetus* Plato is interested in 'greatest γένη' may indicate that he too had an interest in the problem of the broadest possible answers to 'What is it?' questions. It should perhaps be noticed that when in the *Physics* Aristotle takes up problems about non-being which he finds Plato to have mishandled, his first attempt to refute the positions of Parmenides depends on his doctrines of categories (*Physics* 185ᵃ).

Γένη and Parmenides

Aristotle is obviously correct when he argues (*Phys.* 186ᵃ) that in the view of Parmenides the word ἐστι has only one meaning and that that meaning must be in part existential. According to Parmenides' way of Truth the true premiss —the only possible starting-point for the philosopher—is this word ἐστι. Truth can only be obtained by reasoning based on ἐστι as an axiom. But how are such reasonings based? Or, as the question has normally been raised by modern scholars, what is the subject of ἐστι? Three basic views have appeared here (not in the order I notice them): the first, that ἐστι is impersonal, that is, has no

[1] W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1924), p. lxxxiv.
[2] Albinus, *Didask.* 10. 6.

subject, is rejected by Owen on the grounds that Parmenides proceeds to argue for various characteristics of the subject;[1] the second view, that of Owen himself, is that the subject is 'what can be thought of or spoken of'. Owen prefers this to the third (and rather traditional) view that the subject is being or what is (*τὸ ἐόν*) on the grounds that this would make Parmenides' premiss a tautology. The difficulty of Owen's position is that there must be some sense in the word *ἐστι* in fragment 2, line 3, whereas on his view the reader of the poem would have no idea what the subject of the verb is until he reaches fragment 6, or at the very least until he reaches fragment 2, line 7 (*οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐόν*). But this is very difficult and it would apparently make it impossible even for Parmenides[2] to translate his own premiss into another language. He would have to say something like 'The true way is *ἐστι*', thus leaving the ambiguous Greek incapable of reformulation until later in the poem.

Owen seems to be misled by supposing that Parmenides was basically concerned with the question 'Does it exist or not?'[3] He thinks that this can be answered, for Parmenides, by the answer to a further question, 'Can it be thought of or spoken of?' If the answer to this second question is affirmative then 'it' exists. But there are no words of Parmenides which would lead us to believe that the question is 'Does it exist?' After all, what could 'it' be? The question is more likely to have been the more naturally pre-Socratic one, 'What is there?' (i.e. 'What are things—*τὰ ὄντα*?'). And this question had, before Parmenides, been answered in various ways: there is water, there is fire, there is the indeterminate. In other words, what noun or adjective does Parmenides think can logically be uttered after *ἐστι*?

On this view, therefore, it would follow—if we give Parmenides the credit of not smuggling in premisses—that the only possible 'filler' for *ἐστι* would be the tautologous *τὸ ἐόν* ('There is what there is'). We assume, therefore, that his procedure is purely by inspection of the word *ἐστι*. He asks himself what could there be. And the tautologous subject *τὸ ἐόν* is the only subject he could legitimately propose.

Parmenides presents his thoughts in fragment 2 as follows:

A. (The true premiss:) There is; it is not possible for there not to be.
B. (The false premiss:) There is not; it is necessary that there not be.
C. (Demonstration of the falsity of the false premiss:) You cannot think or show what does not exist (*τὸ μὴ ἐόν*).[4]

[1] G. E. L. Owen, 'Eleatic Questions', *CQ* N.S. x (1960), 93.

[2] Raven remarks 'If it is necessary to translate the sentence . . .' in *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1957), 269.

[3] G. E. L. Owen, loc. cit. 91.

[4] Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* ii. 20 (Cambridge, 1965) on the meaning of *φράζειν*. However, despite this discussion and that on the meaning of *λέγειν*, Guthrie (following Owen and others) is still unjust to Parmenides (p. 17). Owen claims (loc. cit. 94 n. 1) that where Parmenides is mistaken is his claim that we cannot think of the non-existent. Owen and Guthrie agree (rightly) that of course we can talk and think about mermaids or unicorns. But it should be emphasized that Parmenides did not deny we could talk *about* non-being—after all, he does so himself. In the Greek idiom what Parmenides denies is that we can think or speak non-being, not that we can think or speak *about* non-being. If knowing is envisaged as a kind of seeing and speaking as a kind of pointing, then it is not hard to see why Parmenides says we cannot 'see' or 'point to' what does not exist. It is possible to write *λέγειν περὶ τινός* in Greek as well as *λέγειν τι*, but the two are not always identical in sense. What has puzzled

From this it follows in fragment 6 that what you can think and speak is what is (*τὸ ἐόν*). And in fragment 7. 1 we learn that *μὴ ἐόντα* (what does not exist) cannot be. The conclusion, therefore, is that what can be (i.e. what *x* must represent in the proposition 'There is *x*') must be what is (*τὸ ἐόν*).

Parmenides has now argued that from the premiss 'There is' the next and only next step must be to say 'There is what is'. From this point on, however, his troubles begin, for in fragment 8 he assumes that he can go from 'There is what is' to a search for the possible predicates of being (i.e. of 'what is').[1] In other words he assumes that 'There is what is' entails 'What is is *x*, *y*, and *z*'. This process of conversion was apparently accepted and extended by his Eleatic successors, as we shall see. Let us, however, now consider the next move in fragment 8. Parmenides first claims that there are many sign-posts (*σήματα*) indicating that what is is uncreated and imperishable. Later, still more predicates are attached to it, notably that which supports the notorious proposition 'Being is one'.

We shall now concentrate on the proposition 'Being is one', not because it is the only interesting suggestion Parmenides made about being but because it came to be regarded as the most important. So much did it dominate the attitude, if not of Parmenides himself, at least of those who have been interested in him both in ancient and in modern times that a contemporary interpreter finds it necessary to remind us that Parmenides is not concerned with any such notion as 'the one itself' but with being.[2]

Historically there are at least three reasons why people have talked as though Parmenides' thesis was about a one (or unity) rather than about being: the activities of the Eleatics themselves, in particular of Zeno; the belief (whether ill- or well-founded) that Parmenides is concerned with a Pythagorean One or One Being;[3] and in general the writings of Plato (especially the *Sophist* and *Parmenides*) and of Aristotle. Plato remarks in the *Sophist* that beginning with Xenophanes the Eleatic tribe have held that all things are one. This is a curious statement. What Plato says is that all things, as they are called, are one (*ἑνὸς ὄντος τῶν πάντων καλουμένων*, 242 d). In his poem, however, Parmenides says nothing of that sort, but rather that being is one.

In the *Parmenides* Plato offers a version of what Parmenides says in his poem which is nearer to what we find in the poem itself. Parmenides is said to have argued that 'The all is one' (*ἓν εἶναι τὸ πᾶν* 128 ab) whereas Zeno had tried to achieve the same result by arguing against plurality. If we assume, as is reasonable, that *τὸ πᾶν* here stands for *τὸ ἐόν*, we have reached Parmenides' position: or at least one of his positions, for the startling thing is that Plato thinks that 'Being is one' is the most important, indeed the fundamental Parmenidean position, and attributes the same view to Zeno. The Platonic interpretation is supported, at least for Zeno, by the fact that we know from elsewhere that Zeno mustered forty arguments against the concept of plurality.[4]

the commentators is that 'thinking a thing' (accusative) is to be understood as 'recognizing that it is there'.

[1] *τὸ ὄν* means both 'what is' and 'being', just as so often in Plato *τὸ δίκαιον* means both 'what is just' and 'justice'.

[2] G. E. M. Anscombe, 'The New Theory of Forms', *Monist* 1 (1966), 408.

[3] This attitude, deriving presumably from Plato or Aristotle, is to be found (among other places) in F. M. Cornford's *Plato and Parmenides* (London, 1939).

[4] Proclus, *in Parm.* 694. 23; Simplicius, *in Phys.* 139. 8; 141. 1.

We can take it, therefore, that the principal deduction of Parmenides from his premiss 'There is' is 'Being is one'.

Now in the second part of the *Parmenides* Plato makes Parmenides carry out a dialectical examination of a hypothesis, which he says is his own, namely εἰ ἓν ἔστι. Since in the original version the contrary of this is said to be εἰ μὴ ἓν ἔστι, the hypothesis must in the first instance be construed as 'If a/the one exists'.

What could enable Plato to present this hypothesis as the basic hypothesis of Parmenides? We suggested earlier that both in the *Parmenides* and in Parmenides' poem Parmenides seems to have regarded his basic tenet as 'Being is one'. Now we have 'One is'. Is there any light in which we can view the two theses as identical? The most obvious difference between the two of them is that 'being' is the subject of one, 'one' of the other. Hence for them to be regarded as saying the same thing some kind of conversion must have taken place. Plato must have supposed Parmenides to have thought that 'is' can be treated not only existentially but as an identity sign. If that were so, the only further assumption required would be that the two propositions, 'One is' and 'One is being' are logically indistinguishable—and that is not too remarkable an assumption for Parmenides. Thus 'Being is one' and 'One is being' are two ways of saying the same thing; 'one' and 'being' are merely two names for the same thing. That this was Plato's view of what Parmenides was about is shown by the section of the *Sophist* where the Eleatic Visitor concludes by suggesting that it is rather ridiculous to assert that two names exist in the same breath in which it is claimed that what exists is one (244 c).

What does Parmenides *Part II attempt to show?*

Bearing in mind these remarks on Parmenides' thesis and on Plato's attitude to that thesis, let us return to the *Parmenides*. Perhaps we can now see more clearly what Plato is doing. We know from the *Sophist* (244 c) that according to Plato even if 'One is being' and 'Being is one' are to be viewed as tautologies of identical meaning, the fact that there exist the two words 'one' and 'being' is itself puzzling and in need of further explanation. That the words 'one' and 'being' are possible predicates even of tautologous sentences would, as we have argued above, provide sufficient justification for calling them γένη. But γένη means 'kinds of things' as well as 'predicates', and in this sense can be more or less synonymous with εἴδη. Hence there would be nothing odd if a discussion about the uses of terms like 'one' and 'being' were to be described as a discussion of γένη or of εἴδη. But εἴδη of course is also for Plato (before the *Parmenides*) a term used for the Forms; so that in so far as an inquiry into εἴδη (predicates) is an inquiry into the correct use of the term εἶδος, it can easily and naturally be linked to an inquiry into the Forms themselves. And indeed it is one of the functions of the Forms themselves to provide the pre-conditions for predication. Plato several times observes that the particulars take their names from the Forms in which they participate (*Phaedo* 102 b 1–2, *Parm.* 133 d 2). From this it follows that to say *A* is *x*, that is, to predicate *x* of *A*, is to name the Form *x*-ness. Thus when we say that *x* is beautiful we name the Form which is καλόν.

Let us now consider in outline what happens in the *Parmenides*. The dialogue may be summarized as follows:

(*a*) Introduction. The thesis of Zeno: εἰ πολλά ἐστι τὰ ὄντα.

(*b*) Socrates introduces the Forms (in his first speech they are called εἴδη throughout (128 e 5–130 a 2), except at 129 c 2 where γένη is used. The εἴδη are from the first described as αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό).

(*c*) Parmenides brings up arguments against the εἴδη αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτά which Socrates cannot answer (130 a 3–134 e).

(*d*) Discussion on the prerequisites for philosophical dialogue (135 a–136 c).

(*e*) Examination of the Parmenidean hypothesis: εἰ ἓν ἔστι (136 c–end).

From the point of view of understanding the purport of the dialogue as a whole, section (*d*) is the most important.[1] Before considering it, however, a brief discussion of the words used by Socrates for Forms may be helpful. In the section of the dialogue from 129 a to 134 e the most common word for Form is εἶδος. Γένος occurs twice, at 129 c 2 (αὐτὰ τὰ γένη τε καὶ εἴδη), where it seems to mean simply more 'all-embracing' Forms, and at 134 b 7, where, presumably assimilating his language to ordinary Greek, Socrates admits the word εἶδος for Form and γένος for class of Form. The status of the classes is here left quite imprecise and does not affect the argument.

The word ἰδέα, which is perhaps Plato's nearest equivalent to a technical term for Form, and which will not easily bear the meaning 'class', let alone 'predicate'—there is no evidence for its use in the latter sense—occurs three times in the discussion: 132 a 2, 133 c 8, and 134 c 1. These are worth examining in turn: (*a*) 132 a 2. 'When a number of things appear to you to be great, perhaps there seems to you when you have looked at them to be one and the same characteristic (ἰδέα) in all of them. Hence you think that the great is one.' Here the word ἰδέα, which obviously refers to the Form, seems to allude to the 'look' of the things or to the 'shape' or to a characteristic appearance. It would be grotesque in this context to translate it as 'class'.

(*b*) 133 c 8. Here the Forms are called ἰδέαι and it is argued by Parmenides that if they are 'in us' they cannot be 'absolute' (καθ' αὑτήν, καθ' αὑτάς)—a fantastic argument from Plato's point of view, and made (deliberately?) to look the more fantastic by the use, unusual in the *Parmenides*, of ἰδέα for Form. For of all possible words for Form ἰδέα best conveys the sense of what a thing, a particular, 'looks like' essentially. If the ἰδέα of beauty were not visible in a beautiful particular, it could not conceivably be designated 'beautiful'.

(*c*) 134 c 1. Here Beauty, Goodness, and other Forms are referred to as ἰδέαι. Again the paradox of our being unable to know the Forms (on Parmenides' argument) is emphasized as in (*b*) above by the use of ἰδέα. An unambiguous word for Form is needed to make the paradox clearer. A word which (like εἶδος) could mean 'class' would not be as effective in this context.

We can conclude from this brief consideration of terminology that in describing the theory of Forms and defending it against Parmenides' criticism Socrates normally describes (and accepts descriptions of) his Forms as εἴδη. Occasionally γένη and ἰδέαι are used, but the reason for the preference of εἶδος is obvious: the word can naturally mean both 'Form' and 'class'. In other words Plato is obliquely pointing out that his theory of Forms tells us something both about the 'essence' of an individual—ἰδέα might get this sense best—and about its 'class' (and therefore what can be predicated of it). The latter sense would best be indicated by γένος.

By the beginning of 135 a Socrates has been completely confused, and

[1] As I argued in an earlier paper, 'The *Parmenides* Again', *Phoenix* xvi (1962), 1–14. It will be evident from my discussion below, however, that I would not now wish to stand by everything in this paper, especially parts of the material on pages 2–6 concerning *Parm.* 135–6.

dramatically at least his puzzlement is important.[1] At the very least it enables Parmenides to explain exactly what importance the existence or non-existence of εἴδη (of some kind) has for philosophy. Parmenides summarizes the problem as follows:

A. If (1) Forms (ἰδέαι τῶν ὄντων) exist
and if (2) Each Form (εἶδος) is a thing in itself [This seems to mean that each Form is a thing in itself unrelated both to particulars, as Parmenides had argued in 133 c ff., and also to other Forms (cf. *Phoenix* xvi [1962], 3)]
then (3) People deny Forms
or (4) they claim that they cannot be known to man.

A[1]. Therefore we need an amazing man to understand and explain that
(1) Particulars can be classified: there are γένη (ὡς ἔστι γένος τι ἑκάστου);[2]
and (2) Particulars must have an essence (οὐσία αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν).

B. If (1) Forms do not exist (εἴδη τῶν ὄντων)
and if (2) (*a fortiori*) Forms (εἶδος) are not separate things (τι)

B[1]. then discussion and philosophy are impossible.[3]

At first it might seem that the conclusion that if εἴδη are abolished philosophy is at an end is peculiar. After all, people have philosophized without bringing in Platonic Forms. Why the abolition or even the misunderstanding of εἴδη will in fact destroy the possibility of philosophy is clear from the explanation offered in 135 bc that there will be nowhere for the mind to turn if it is not accepted that the ἰδέαι of particulars remain the same. In other words, if the 'character' of particulars is liable to any and every change, then all discussion of particulars will come to an end: You can't step in the same river twice; you can't step in the same river once; the word 'river' has no point of reference.

The point Parmenides (and Plato) is making is that, whatever the ontological status of this character of particulars, whether there is an essence of river apart from particular rivers or not, at least there must be a class of things called rivers. Philosophy, in other words, operates with general propositions, and if particulars cannot be classed, cannot be ranked under εἴδη and γένη (whether or not classes are Platonic Forms), then thought is at an end. This is made clearer by a comparison of the language of A[1] (2) and B (2) above. A[1] (2) reads: ὁριεῖταί τις αὐτό τι ἕκαστον εἶδος (135 a 2); B (2) has μηδέ τι ὁριεῖται εἶδος ἑνὸς ἑκάστου (135 b 7–8). Both refer to the status of εἴδη. The first, however, is concerned with whether each εἶδος is an αὐτό τι, the second with whether each is τι. The word αὐτό matters. In B Parmenides is arguing that unless εἴδη have some significance philosophy is impossible, whereas in A he is concerned with whether these εἴδη are each an αὐτό τι, i.e. a Platonic Form. There is no

[1] There still seems no convincing reason to suppose that Plato regarded Parmenides' arguments as valid against a correctly formulated theory of Forms argued by a competent dialectician. For the methods of argument Parmenides is made to employ see especially A. L. Peck, 'Plato versus Parmenides', *PR* lxxi (1962), 159–84.

[2] I withdraw the suggestion made in *Phoenix* xvi (1962), 4 that εἴδους must be understood with γένος τι ἑκάστου while reaffirming (against Cornford) that γένος and οὐσία are not here synonymous.

[3] It seems likely that the phrase τὴν τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν refers to both philosophical and non-philosophical talk. That it refers partially to philosophical talk is suggested by its echo of *Rep.* 511 b 4.

assertion by Parmenides that philosophy is impossible without separate Platonic Forms; there is an assertion that philosophy is impossible without εἴδη. And the reason is obvious. One of the purposes to which Plato puts his Forms is to solve problems of predication. But if Forms will not do, the problems remain. Even if εἴδη are not Forms, we still need to be able to say '*x* is one', '*x* is good', if philosophy is to be carried on. If certain εἴδη are annihilated, and even if they are viewed as absolutely καθ' αὑτά—unrelated to particulars—discussion stops. It would seem to follow from this that Parmenides would go on to inquire into the status of various εἴδη further.

It is obvious that Plato's Parmenides holds different views from his historical prototype, but their opinions are not entirely unrelated. It was a major claim of Parmenides himself that the objects recognized by νοῦς or λόγος are different from the objects of sense. Thus it is entirely appropriate for Plato's Parmenides to compliment Socrates on this point in 135 e. But Plato's Parmenides does not proceed as the historical figure would have done; he goes beyond the historical figure to what Plato thinks the historical figure should have said. His words are: 'I was pleased that you would not allow the problem to be discussed in terms of visible objects (ἐν τοῖς ὁρωμένοις) but in terms of what one could grasp entirely by reason (λόγῳ) and *what one would consider to be* εἴδη.' The last part of this is a development of the historical Parmenides' position; but, as we have argued, it is appropriate for him to be developed along these lines. Plato's view is that Parmenides, without realizing entirely what he is doing, discusses what we may call predicates (εἴδη, γένη) such as 'being' and 'one'. So Plato's Parmenides is made to say that arguing about these predicates is important. From the point of view of Plato as critic of Eleaticism the discussion of these εἴδη is important, both if they can be identified with Forms and if they cannot. And in fact it is the relations of the εἴδη which are of most importance to the 'new Parmenides' with which the rest of the dialogue is concerned. The subject of the 'second part' is the sense, if any, of statements involving Parmenidean γένη in their simplest interrelations. And the simplest possible interrelation is in the hypothesis εἰ ἓν ἔστι.

Before praising Socrates for doing philosophy with εἴδη recognized by reason, Parmenides chides him for his inexperience. He attempts to define the beautiful itself, the good itself, and the other εἴδη before he has a proper grasp of dialectical techniques. What he has failed to do is inquire what the consequences will be, not only if a proposition is true, but also if it is false. But at this point we should not forget Parmenides' previous remarks: philosophy cannot be carried on unless the εἴδη are interrelated. Hence it seems not unreasonable to propose that what he now sets out to do is to show what the conclusions will be both if εἴδη are interrelated and if they are not. Nor is it surprising that he is concerned with what he calls elsewhere the 'greatest γένη', the widest possible predicates. The concepts which Parmenides suggests in 136 ab as first of all deserving of discussion are 'one', 'many', 'like', 'unlike', 'motion', 'rest', 'generation', 'destruction', 'being', 'non-being'. The concepts he actually discusses in the *Parmenides* itself are 'one' and 'being'. Some of the others are examined in the *Sophist*.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the second part of the dialogue in detail. I have considered something of its methodology elsewhere.[1] It is sufficient for our present purpose only to recall the results of hypotheses one and two. In hypothesis one the conclusion is that if the hypothesis εἰ ἓν ἔστι is understood to suggest that bare unity is the only object of philosophical

[1] J. M. Rist, loc. cit. 7–12.

thought, then that thought is paradoxical, for such a unity can neither exist nor be thought of. In fact, if the historical Parmenides had posited a One of this kind it could not meet his most basic requirement, that what can be thought must be. In fact, of course, we have argued that Plato at least supposes Parmenides' hypothesis to be about an existent One, since τὸ ἐόν is his starting-point. Thus hypothesis two, which considers the consequences if 'the One exists', is directly concerned with what Plato argues to be the real burden of Parmenides' thesis, that is, the interrelation of the first (and tautologous) subjective completion of ἔστι and the most important of the other possible completions which can be 'deduced' from the first. The result of hypothesis two is that when τὸ ἕν is related to ἔστι and both 'unity' and 'existence' are allowed to be meaningful terms, then ἕν must admit every possible predicate. In other words, all kinds of statements are possible and in some way significant.

The Others

Various suggestions have been made about what 'the others' (τὰ ἄλλα) in the second part of the dialogue are. If our hypothesis about the nature of Plato's activity is correct, 'the others' must be other theoretically possible fillers of the verb-form 'there is'. The thesis of Parmenides argues that unity exists; the supporting thesis of Zeno argues that plurality (the many) cannot exist. 'The others' are to be construed as Zeno's many, viewed not only as a group, as plurality, but also as a set of possible further predicates of ἔστι. Thus, when in hypothesis three the consequences of the interrelation of 'one' and 'being' are drawn for 'the others', it is found that 'the others' also can admit all possible predicates. Zeno's denial of plurality is inconsistent, in that plurality is implied by any meaningful reading of the proposition εἰ ἓν ἔστι. What is worse (from Zeno's point of view) is that once 'one' and 'being' are recognized as distinct, every other possible predicate must be admitted as well.

'Essences' and 'Classes'

It has been one of the main objectives of this paper to establish that, according to Parmenides, whatever the fact may be about Platonic Forms, there will always be a problem about universals if discourse is to be carried on at all. Hence it is important to be clear about the precise difference in sense between the words γένος and οὐσία αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν in 135 a 8. Philosophy, Plato argues, can only be carried on with the help of universals, but, so that we may avoid talking without reference to particulars in the world, these universals must be predicable of individuals which have something permanent and enduring in common. It is of course Plato's view that this common factor is the immanent Form (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος, *Phaedo* 102 d) but this view of the status of the common factor need not be accepted by the man who is only willing to concede that there is a common factor; and the common factor is what Plato calls an οὐσία αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν. If these factors were not common in a significant sense then no classes (γένη) could be formed, and predication and the formulation of meaningful groups of words would be impossible. It goes without saying that on this analysis a γένος is not the same as an οὐσία. It is in virtue of a common οὐσία that individuals can be placed within a γένος.[1]

University College, Toronto, Canada J. M. RIST

[1] It is worth observing that, although in the *Phaedo* and *Symposium* the adjective μονοειδής is regularly applied to Forms, which are the objects of knowledge, in the *Theaetetus* (205 d) what is μονοειδής is held to be *per se* unknowable.