

---

# Difference And Participation In Plato's Parmenides

Alexandar H. Zistakis

---

## Abstract

*In this paper we are examining two crucial conceptions, and therefore also problems, of the Platonic corpus; conceptions of difference and participation that establish, constitute and structure his entire thought (regardless of relative differences between particular phases of its historical development). These conceptions are examined in their intertwinement starting from the Parmenides as the primary evidence of their status and relationship in Plato. In the course of our examination, that is through the analysis of the concept of the Sudden or the Instant, a third extremely important conception emerges and acquires shape: the Platonic conception of time, which we take to be representative of the overall Greek notion and understanding of temporality. Finally, from within such conceptual framework one recognizes and acknowledges the totality of Platonic philosophy as above all the thought of liberty.*

From the very beginning of the dialogue, already in the first statement of the theory of ideas by the young Socrates and in the Parmenides' criticism of that statement, it is made clear that things partake in different ideas, but ideas do not and cannot change into each other, nor do they become other (their other or their exact opposite).<sup>1</sup> Further on (130b), the existence of ideas is established not to be doubted afterwards throughout the whole dialogue. However, immediately after that, Parmenides poses the key question about ideas: do all things have ideas, is there an idea for everything, are there as many ideas as there are things (130c)? This question is, of course, none other than the *question of participation* itself.

Then follows the investigation of the relationship between things and ideas, and most notably of the notion and relationship of *participation* (μέθεξις).<sup>2</sup> First, participation is viewed from the point of view of ideas: How are they present in things? Is an idea in each thing or is just a part, a piece of it present in things?<sup>3</sup> This may well be understood as the problem of the in/divisibility of ideas: ideas are *not* divided in/into things, but how are they then present in things? That is, the problem is how things can participate in ideas if they cannot be either their part or their whole (of ideas, that is).<sup>4</sup> So,

secondly, the question of participation turns, changes perspective, and takes the point of view of things. The two perspectives are, therefore, interchangeable or overlapping, and the same thing should follow from both, just as the same problem appears in both (132a). If ideas are understood as general *characters* that (some) things possess, then it follows that in participation single and unique ideas get divided or multiplied, they become many. That is, every idea turns from *one* into *many* by virtue of participation. But, this is because ideas are in this case understood as things, and that doesn't have to be the only level or mode of existence of ideas. There is another unity, i.e. another meaning of "εἶδος" that does not multiply or dissolve into things. This is a "second form" of the idea, which however, doesn't mean the end of multiplying of ideas (132b). For this form is "over and above" both the idea in question and the things that participate in it. It, therefore, becomes the *third* thing, which again needs something over it to be united with the previous two, and so on, ad infinitum. Because of this, one would do well to consider the possibility of *ideas being thoughts*, i.e. forms of thinking or of the mind (132c-d). But that doesn't work either, for thoughts again appear to be multiple instead of unique. So Socrates tries the possibility of ideas being not thoughts but "patterns fixed in the nature of things [παρδείγματα ἐστάναι ἐν τῇ φύσει]," in whose image things are made. Still, Parmenides shows that there is no pattern or image to which things are like, without it itself being like (similar) to the things that are like (similar) to it. Likeness has to work both ways. This seems to be the reason for the previous position in the argument, namely for taking ideas to be thing-like or even things and treating them as if they belong to the same class of object with/as things.<sup>5</sup> Ideas have to be some kind of things if they are to be connected or related to things and things to them. Thus, we have the first version/meaning of *participation as the likeness between ideas and things*.<sup>6</sup>

As it is immediately shown (133a), this is not possible unless we accept infinite regress. So participation has to be conceived differently, i.e. not as likeness between ideas and things. The mimetic solution is not the right one. At the same time, it has to be conceived in a manner that avoids *agnosticism*. Because, if ideas and things are fundamentally separated, one may conclude that ideas are essentially "unknowable [ἄγνωστα]" (133c1). In other words, the difficulties of asserting ideas "just by themselves [αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτὰ]" are so great that the problem is unsolvable; and, to that extent at least, ideas depend on things in their existence and knowability (133a).

But, the task here is exactly to think ideas in themselves, in their purity, without reference to the world of existence. And that has to be demonstrated first.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Parmenides starts by establishing a separation between the two realms and the *self-referentiality* of each realm,<sup>8</sup> like in the master-slave

relation (133d-134a) which works on two different levels, so that consequently there are two types of *knowledge* as well.

Yet, this cannot hold either, because it exactly ends in agnosticism, so we have to establish some connection between the two worlds in order to refute the possibility of denying either the existence/being of ideas or the knowability of that existence (134b-135a).

That is why every one thing (single/unique or plural/many) has to be considered with reference and in relation to everything else as well as to itself. And Parmenides makes this statement in such a manner as to include everything in this rule, i.e. both things and ideas:

χρή δὲ καὶ τὸδε ἔτι πρὸς τούτῳ ποιεῖν μὴ μόνον εἰ ἔστιν ἕκαστον ὑποτιθέμενον σκοπεῖν τὰ συμβαίνοντα ἐκ τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰ μὴ ἔστι τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὑποτιθεσθαι (135e8-136a2)  
καὶ περὶ ἀνομοίου ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος καὶ περὶ κινήσεως καὶ περὶ στάσεως καὶ περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθοράς καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ μὴ εἶναι καὶ ἐνὶ λόγῳ περὶ οὗτου ἂν ἀεὶ ὑποθῆ ὡς ὄντος καὶ ὡς οὐκ ὄντος καὶ ὅτι οὐδ' ἄλλα πάθους πάσχοντος δεῖ σκοπεῖν τὰ συμβαίνοντα πρὸς αὐτὸ καὶ πρὸς ἕκαστον τῶν ἄλλων ὅτι ἂν προέλη καὶ πρὸς πλείω καὶ πρὸς σύμπαντα ὡσαύτως· καὶ τὰλλα αὐτὸ πρὸς αὐτὰ τε καὶ πρὸς ἄλλο ὅτι ἂν προαιρῆ ἀεὶ ἕαντε ὡς ὄν ὑποθῆ ὃ ὑπετίθεσο ἄντε ὡς μὴ ὄν εἰ μέλλεις τελέως γυμνασάμενος κυρίως διώφεσθαι τὸ ἀληθές. (136b4-c5)

It is not yet clear at this point whether this method includes also the crossing over from one realm to another, but it becomes clear by the end of the dialogue that this is the case, and thus the significance, essentiality and fundamentality of participation is retained and emphasized. But also, already here, all the concepts whose investigation follows are listed: many-not-many (or one-many),<sup>9</sup> likeness-unlikeness, motion-rest, becoming-perishing, being-not-being, etc. Apart from that, here the thing that leads to conclusion that both realms should be taken into consideration is exactly the basic methodological supposition, namely that in each case and about each thing one should examine *both possibilities*: that it *is* and that it *is not*; which can be understood as examination of the same thing from the point of view of both worlds. For the same thing will always look as though it does not exist (*is not*) from the perspective of the realm to which it doesn't belong – ideas do not exist from the exclusively empirical point of view (that of the world of sensible things), and conversely, for the isolated ideal world directed in and to itself things do not exist. However, as both ideas and sensible things force us to realize, and as the dialectical inquiry will show after its completion, neither of these two exclusive perspectives is tenable or viable.

Parmenides demonstrates the dialectical method on the example of his own notion of *One*. In that demonstration, he is going through the previously listed conceptual pairs (which represent particular ideas) and showing how the pure notion of One behaves in relation and with respect to

them. And, he does that with respect to both perspectives that have been mentioned. These two perspectives are exposed consecutively in the dialogue, like two iterations/reiterations of the same topic, and they differ according to the character the hypothesis about the One acquires in each of them.<sup>10</sup> They are: [I] *Negative* (137c-142a) and [II] *Positive* (142b-155e). However, one must bear in mind that these two perspectives are not simply parallel or symmetrical, like two different sides of the same thing which (may or may not) fall at the same time. Rather, they themselves are connected to each other, they induce each other and issue from one another, i.e. from each one's own essence and being. This is clear from the very beginning, i.e. from the initial investigation about the being of One, which in fact starts from its opposition to the Many (plurality) – that is, “*One is not many*” is the first real definition of One, and not “*One is*” (this latter point is passed over without dwelling on it, Parmenides does not analyze it, not until the beginning of the second investigation, i.e. not until the beginning of the positive stage) – so that the problem of the being of One issues from the initial investigation, and not vice versa. The results of the first investigation are the ones that induce the second iteration as it is, they produce the question of *One and being* (and their relation and connection) or of *the being of One*. The first, Negative perspective thematizes the Positive one, it establishes the latter's necessity and is the condition of its appearance and possibility. Only through the Negative part can we come to even pose a question about the being of One. That part prepares and brings about the Positive one as a theme, question, problem and a valid object of inquiry. So, both are parts of one unique, common path and method, which is the method of/to truth.<sup>11</sup>

Then, there comes a very important digression about One's touching, i.e. being in touch with itself and the others, that is, the question of the *contact between One and things* and of the *contact of One with itself*. This question, in fact these two questions, directly concern the problem and notion of participation; for the possibility and the existence of *contact between ideas* (One, being, etc.) *and things*, as well as of the *contact between ideas*, or of the *contact of ideas with/between themselves* (both contained in One's contact with itself), is crucial for the possibility of even conceiving participation. The statement that “*one will have contact both with itself and with the others* [ἄπτουσι ἄν τὸ ἓν αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων]” (148e3-4) is the *statement of participation*, and the *argument* that precedes and follows it, the argument or *proof* of this contact, is the argument and proof *for participation*. It is elaborated at 148c4-149d6, and goes as follows:

Ἡ ταῦτόν πέπονθε μὴ ἄλλοιον πέπονθέναι μὴ ἄλλοιον δὲ πέπονθος μὴ ἀνόμοιον μὴ ἀνόμοιον δὲ ὅμοιον εἶναι· ἢ δ' ἄλλο πέπονθεν ἄλλοιον ἄλλοιον

δὲ ὄν ἀνόμοιον εἶναι. - Ἀληθῆ λέγεις. - Ταῦτόν τε ἄρα ὄν τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ ὅτι ἕτερόν ἐστι κατ' ἀμφοτέρα καὶ κατὰ ἐκάτερον ὅμοιόν τε ἂν εἶη καὶ ἀνόμοιον τοῖς ἄλλοις. - Πάνυ γε. - Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἑαυτῷ ὡσαύτως ἐπειπερ ἕτερόν τε ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ταῦτόν ἑαυτῷ ἐφάνη κατ' ἀμφοτέρα καὶ κατὰ ἐκάτερον ὅμοιόν τε καὶ ἀνόμοιον φανήσεται; - Ἀνάγκη.

Τί δὲ δῆ; περὶ τοῦ ἄπτεσθαι τὸ ἐν αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοῦ μὴ ἄπτεσθαι περὶ πὸς ἔχει σκόπει. - Σκοπῶ. - Αὐτὸ γάρ που ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὄλω τὸ ἐν ἐφάνη ὄν. - Ὅρθως. - Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις τὸ ἐν; - Ναί. - Ἦτι μὲν ἄρα ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις τῶν ἄλλων ἄπτοιτο ἂν ἢ δὲ αὐτὸ ἐν ἑαυτῷ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἀπείργιτο ἄπτεσθαι αὐτὸ δὲ αὐτοῦ ἄπτοιτο ἂν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ὄν. - Φαίνεται. - Οὕτω μὲν δῆ ἄπτοιτο ἂν τὸ ἐν αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων. - Ἄπτοιτο. - Τί δὲ τῆδε; ἄρ' οὐ πᾶν τὸ μέλλον ἄψεσθαι τινος ἐφεξῆς δεῖ κείσθαι ἐκείνῳ οὐ μέλλει ἄπτεσθαι ταύτην τὴν ἔδραν κατέχον ἢ ἂν μετ' ἐκείνην ἢ [ἔδρα] ἢ ἂν κέηται ἄπτεται; - Ἀνάγκη. - Καὶ τὸ ἐν ἄρα εἰ μέλλει αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ ἄψεσθαι ἐφεξῆς δεῖ εὐθύς μετὰ ἑαυτὸ κείσθαι τὴν ἐχομένην χώραν κατέχον ἐκείνης ἐν ἣ αὐτὸ ἐστίν. - Δεῖ γάρ οὖν. - Οὐκοῦν δύο μὲν ὄν τὸ ἐν ποιήσειεν ἂν ταῦτα καὶ ἐν δυοῖν χώραιν ἅμα γένοιτο· ἕως δ' ἂν ἢ ἐν οὐκ ἐθελήσει; - Οὐ γάρ οὖν. - Ἡ αὐτὴ ἄρα ἀνάγκη τῷ ἐνὶ μήτε δύο εἶναι μήτε ἄπτεσθαι αὐτῷ αὐτοῦ. - Ἡ αὐτὴ. - Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ μὴν τῶν ἄλλων ἄψεται. - Τί δῆ; - Ὅτι φαμέν τὸ μέλλον ἄψεσθαι χωρὶς ὄν ἐφεξῆς δεῖ ἐκείνῳ εἶναι οὐ μέλλει ἄψεσθαι τρίτον δὲ αὐτῶν ἐν μέσῳ μηδὲν εἶναι. - Ἀληθῆ. - Λυοῦ ἄρα δεῖ τὸ ὀλίγιστον εἶναι εἰ μέλλει ἅψις εἶναι. - Δεῖ.

[...] <sup>12</sup>

Εἰ δὲ γε ἐν μόνον ἐστίν δυάς δὲ μὴ ἐστίν ἅψις οὐκ ἂν εἶη. - Πῶς γάρ; - Οὐκοῦν φαμέν τὰ ἄλλα τοῦ ἐνός οὔτε ἐν ἐστίν οὔτε μετέχει αὐτοῦ εἴπερ ἄλλα ἐστίν. - Οὐ γάρ. - Οὐκ ἄρα ἐνεστίν ἀριθμὸς ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐνός μὴ ἐνότος ἐν αὐτοῖς. - Πῶς γάρ; - Οὐτ' ἄρα ἐν ἐστὶ τὰ ἄλλα οὔτε δύο οὔτε ἄλλου ἀριθμοῦ ἔχοντα ὄνομα οὐδέν. - Οὐ. - Τὸ ἐν ἄρα μόνον ἐστίν ἐν καὶ δυάς οὐκ ἂν εἶη. - Οὐ φαίνεται. - Ἄψις ἄρα οὐκ ἐστίν δυοῖν μὴ ὄντων. - Οὐκ ἐστίν. - Οὐτ' ἄρα τὸ ἐν τῶν ἄλλων ἄπτεται οὔτε τὰ ἄλλα τοῦ ἐνός ἐπειπερ ἅψις οὐκ ἐστίν. - Οὐ γάρ οὖν. - Οὕτω δὲ κατὰ πάντα ταῦτα τὸ ἐν τῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἄπτεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἄπτεται.

The beauty of all this is that it works either way. Namely, whether or not ideas are same as, or at least like things; and whether or not things are same as, or like ideas, participation is established. What is more, one can easily conclude that participation is brought about by this ambivalence or duplicity, that the highest proof of its necessity and existence is the fact that ideas and things (one and many) are at once similar and dissimilar, same and different, like and unlike, and participation is indeed the very idea of this ambivalence and duplicity.<sup>13</sup>

In general, this second set of hypotheses and arguments (II *Positive*) is a refutation of agnosticism which was still vividly present in the first set (I *Negative*). In order to underline and emphasize such a character of this argumentation (II), Parmenides points at exactly that, namely at the knowability and speakability (nameability) of the One. However, as one suspects already now, the insight in the real being and nature of the One is obtainable only through the combination of I and II, for the One itself is such: it is the *knowable unknowable*, which can only mediately be spoken

and thought about; it can only be circumscribed and never directly described or denoted. In other words, One is dialectical through and through, it is dialectics itself, because it is knowable and speakable (nameable) only as and through a dialectical process (i.e. through a process of *διαλέγειν*, or through dialogue and argumentative thinking). Dialectic is the only appropriate method and approach to One because it makes one see and understand the invisible, the unintelligible, the unnamable and ungraspable, through its *λόγος*; that is, through its language and reasoning. It is the only manner of reasoning that can grasp and present (represent) that which is beyond our understanding, which is beyond our grasp (intellectual or any other – not to mention perceptive or sensual grasp). And that exactly because, as Parmenides says in the dialogue, it presupposes the One to both be and not to be (cf. 136a).

Of course, the investigation of the *Parmenides* is far from finished. The two sets by no means exhaust the problem, nor is the nature, essence and being of One exhausted in/by its positive and negative side. The argument is (and has to be) taken “yet a third time” (155e3).<sup>14</sup> And now, we read clearly the two “moments” of dialectics, or its two stages, which in terms of discourse and discursive strategies and procedures appear as unification (*ὁμόνοια* and *ἔνωσις*) and differentiation (*διαφοροποιήσις*, *ἑτεροποιήσις*, *διαίρεσις*). In the same vein, this shifting from one mode to another acquires clear shapes and meanings in all the above mentioned conceptual pairs, or better, acquires them (shapes, meanings) in accordance with these.<sup>15</sup> But, as if not wanting to leave anything only on just one side of the fence (for the change of the mode of being means still remaining in the realm of being and on the other side of not-being), Parmenides immediately notices the trace of the other, of not-being within (in the very center of) the succession and temporality as such. This trace is the *moment of transition*, that moment in which – according to the adopted logic – they are not both possible, in fact, the moment when/where either of the two sides (motion and rest) is impossible. And they are impossible exactly because otherwise there would be no transition whatsoever. That particular moment in/of time is “that queer thing, the instant [*τὸ ἐξαιφνης*.]” (156d3). It is the moment when both (motion and rest) are absent, the moment when one is not any more and the other is not yet. And, exactly at such a moment, the instant “occupies no time at all [*ἐν χρόνῳ οὐδενὶ οὐσίᾳ*]” (156e1). It is in the very center of time, it enables the time (by enabling the transition from one state to another), but it has no time, it is not temporal. It is not a temporal instant (for to be that, Parmenides seems to think, it has to have some kind of being, motion or rest), but nevertheless it organizes and establishes time, because the transition (which is actually the approximation of time, a conceptual expression of the notion of time) from movement to rest and back takes

place to and from the *instant* ("εἰς ταύτην δὴ καὶ ἐκ ταύτης τό τε κινούμενον μεταβάλλει ἐπὶ τὸ ἐστάναι καὶ τὸ ἐστός ἐπὶ τὸ κινεῖσθαι." – 156e1-3). As a consequence, the *transition happens instantly, in no time* (156c-e). In this sense, then, we can rightfully say that this is *the moment of One's not being*: "at that moment it cannot be either in motion or at rest [ἐν οὐδενὶ χρόνῳ ἂν εἴη οὐδὲ κινεῖτ' ἂν τότε οὐδ' ἂν σταίη]" (156e6-7), which is to say: it cannot be at all. For, from this perspective, if something is neither of the two – motion or rest – then it is not, or it is nothing; and this goes for all the perspectives, stages and modalities of the One or, as Parmenides says here, "its other transitions [τάς ἄλλας μεταβολάς]" (156e8).<sup>16</sup>

The term and concept of the instant (τὸ ἐξαίφνης), or of the irreducible moment of/in time – and especially of the suddenness implied in it – contains and reveals at the same time the Platonic (and not only Platonic, but the general classical Greek) concept and conception of *intensive* time as opposed to other extensive notions of time (such as the linear or the cyclic one). That it is an intensive conception of time means that there is no (real or illusory) development of time through some dimensions, stages, states – that is, not a succession of past, present and future – but an intense and intensive concentration of these dimensions in one non-dimensional point or moment, in one unique *instant* and on one and the same *instance* of time. It is as if the whole time (understood as duration and change, or as transition) is being inverted into and turned onto itself, as if imploding in/into itself. According to this notion and the image related to it, past and future meet and congeal in the present, thereby both becoming fully present in the "here and now." The instant, τὸ ἐξαίφνης, is then the simultaneous presence of past and future, i.e. of the totality of time – which is the sheer definition of time as such, as well as of eternity, and there is never any distance or difference between the absolute, complete time, on one hand, and eternity, on the other. Thus, in this instant time congeals, concentrates, intensifies, and becomes what it is.

Since the transition(s) is (are) the very being of the One – which means that time, temporality itself, is that being of the One – "the instant" designates an important input/import in Plato's whole thought. Namely, with the instant there enters the other, the opposite, the different of the One/being, and enters and resides at the very center of One/being. Thus, insofar as philosophy is the science (knowledge) of One/Being, it is immediately and at once determined as the *science of difference*. For if (as Parmenides says) "all these changes [i.e. transitions] may happen to the one, if it exists [ταῦτα δὴ τὰ παθήματα πάντ' ἂν πάσχοι τὸ ἐν εἰ ἔστιν]" (157b3-4); and if therefore, on one hand, the existence/being of One is the condition and foundation of transformations, while on the other hand

transitions do make that existence, prove that it exists and determine (or simply define, show) the modes of existence of the One<sup>17</sup>; if that is so, then One really exists and *is* only in difference and as difference. As we have just seen, everything about the One and its being is organized around and directed towards this *instant* which is *difference*: the *moment of differentiation/alteration*, as well as *something different/other/alternative* to the One and its being; that is, both the *moment, instant of change and differing* and the *Other of the One* – and, of course, it cannot be the former without at once being the latter. So, once again, philosophy as the science of the One and its being has to be the science of difference, e.g. dialectic, because its very subject (the One and its being) is difference and differentiation.

Significantly enough, we find an almost identical delineation and description of time in another late dialogue, in the *Timaeus*.<sup>18</sup> There too, time concentrates, orders, defines and posits itself in and around the instant, the indeterminable and fleeting “now” (νῦν) of time. Given its thematic and its status in the whole Platonic work, the *Timaeus* points even more clearly than the *Parmenides* at the significance of this conception of time on yet another level. Namely, being *the* cosmological dialogue, it emphasizes the fact that time, and more precisely the flow of time (which includes the historical, physical and individual time as well), implies the mutual interdependence between the ideal and the phenomenal and demonstrates their indissoluble bond(s).

Ὡς δὲ κινηθὲν αὐτὸ καὶ ζῶν ἐνόησεν τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν γεγονὸς ἀγαθμα ὃ γεννήσας πατήρ ἡγάσθη τε καὶ εὐφρανθεὶς ἔτι δὴ μᾶλλον ὅμοιον πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα ἐπένοήσεν ἀπεργάσασθαι. καθάπερ οὖν αὐτὸ τυγχάνει ζῶν αἰδίων ὄν καὶ τότε τὸ πᾶν οὕτως εἰς δύναμιν ἐπεχείρησε τοιοῦτον ἀποτελεῖν. ἡ μὲν οὖν τοῦ ζῶου φύσις ἐτύγγανεν οὐσα αἰώνιος καὶ τοῦτο μὲν δὴ τῷ γεννητῷ παντελῶς προσάπτειν οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν· εἰκὼ δ' ἐπένοει κινητὸν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἰούσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα τούτων ὄν δὴ χρόνον ὠνομάκαμεν. ἡμέρας γάρ καὶ νύκτας καὶ μῆνας καὶ ἐνιαυτούς οὐκ ὄντας πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι τότε ἅμα ἐκείνῳ συνισταμένῳ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτῶν μηχανάται· ταῦτα δὲ πάντα μέρη χρόνου καὶ τὸ τ' ἦν τὸ τ' ἔσται χρόνου γεγονότα εἶδη ἃ δὴ φέροντες λανθάνομεν ἐπὶ τὴν αἰδίων οὐσίαν οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγομεν γὰρ δὴ ὡς ἦν ἔστιν τε καὶ ἔσται τῇ δὲ τὸ ἔστιν μόνον κατὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον προσήκει τὸ δὲ ἦν τὸ τ' ἔσται περὶ τὴν ἐν χρόνῳ γένεσιν ἰούσαν πρέπει λέγεσθαι κινήσεις γὰρ ἔσταν τὸ δὲ αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχον ἀκινήτως οὔτε πρεσβύτερον οὔτε νεώτερον προσήκει γίγνεσθαι διὰ χρόνον οὐδὲ γενέσθαι ποτὲ οὐδὲ γεγονέναι νῦν οὐδ' εἰς αὐθις ἔσεσθαι τὸ παράπαν τε οὐδὲν ὄσα γένεσις τοῖς ἐν αἰσθήσει φερομένοις προσήμην ἀλλὰ χρόνου ταῦτα αἰῶνα μιμουμένον καὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν κυκλουμένου γέγονεν εἶδη καὶ πρὸς τοῦτοις ἔτι τὰ τοιαῶτα τὸ τε γεγονὸς εἶναι γεγόνος καὶ τὸ γιγνόμενον εἶναι γιγνόμενον ἔτι τε τὸ γενησόμενον εἶναι γενησόμενον καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν μὴ ὄν εἶναι ὄν οὐδὲν ἀκριβὲς λέγομεν. περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων τάχ' ἂν οὐκ εἴη καιρὸς πρέπων ἐν τῷ παρόντι διακριβολογεῖσθαι.<sup>19</sup>



Thus, through time and its own internal relationships and organization, the ideal brings order into the chaotic phenomenality, it establishes the order of the chaos. Furthermore, only this ideal constellation enables us to *recognize* the order in the chaos, for only after one has recognized and understood the order can one understand the chaos (and thus bring it to order). Finally, and contrary to the usual opinion, when it comes to time the chaos is not the change, not alteration, but rather the very continuity and stillness. Therefore, once one has understood that the cyclic and the linear are but two sides of one and the same thing, namely of the *στάσις* or the *a-temporal*, only then is one ready to go back *to* time, *in* time and *into* time; and, when that is done, the phenomenal sides of time are seen and understood as what they really are: *the instances of the instant*, or *ἐκφάνσεις* of the unity and identity of past, present and future.

This suggests that the notion of time implied in the conception of the instant remains vividly and decisively present in Plato's whole dialectic. Indeed, this notion seems to provide the metaphysical as well as physical foundations for dialectical logic and thought in general. Among other things, this notion makes Platonic dialectic static and cyclic. Furthermore, the very conception and understanding of ideas, their circumscription and definition, seem to either start or end in this same instant, thus uniting and identifying the ideal (ideas and ideality as such) with time, or at least making one the focal point of the other. Therefore, one could say that Idea is the Time itself, and vice versa, the Time itself is (an) Idea. Differently put, the idea of time is this instant where time focuses onto and into itself, thus positing all its instances in the same spaceless, timeless, non-dimensional moment/instant. This multi-dimensional and yet non-dimensional instant holds past and future in itself and as itself, i.e. as present (as both being there and being now), it identifies them *as* and *in* the "now" (*νῦν*). The present is (becomes, transforms into) past and future.

This, then, has important consequences for the fundamental structure of time itself. The most important one concerns the flow of time, that is, the (principles of) organization of its constellations, and posits this organization as radically different from what we usually imagine and perceive. Namely, contrary to how it seems to us, time is neither linear nor simply progressive. Time holds neither unlimited and one-dimensional progress, nor an ever-repeating circle (of events, moments, etc.). Time explodes in all possible directions, at different rates, rhythms and speeds. It has neither beginning nor an end in the usual sense. It is constantly interrupted, disrupted and re-commenced. Time launches and scatters itself in different directions. It is indeed a fluctuating constellation of moments, instants, and its combinations and settings are constantly and radically changing. That is why time (temporality and its developments) has no definite sense or meaning either.

It is fundamentally instable, constantly scattering and gathering itself. It incessantly dissolves, recuperates, disorganizes and reorganizes itself, and yet, in all this ceaseless dissolution, de-structuring, de-composition, reconstruction, re-establishing etc., it remains essentially static: time always remains what it is. Through all the ex-staseis and stillness time preserves itself intact. Therein lies the most amazing and bewildering feature of time: its static and cyclic character that stems from its multifacetedness, the standstill of time itself that issues from its multidirectional dynamic, the unity and identity produced (created) by and through internal difference, differentiation, multiplicity and diversity.

However, this does not only apply to time in this sense of intensive concentration and congealing of past and future in the present. On another level, on the level of unfolding of time and of the unfolded time (what is usually called physical time, but also in the historical time, lifetime, biographical time, etc.), the present is also past and future, and this is brought about by that *instant* of the absolute time as well. Namely, the fact that in the unfolding of time every moment is or becomes past, future and present, this fact is founded in that absolute instant of time or in the idea of time, which holds all three dimensions (states) of time together and as one. Only thanks to that idea (notion, conception) can every moment of unfolded time be and become a past, present and future moment.

Thus, the widely accepted fact that the same moment of time once exists as present, while before that it exists (existed) as future and after that it exists (will exist) as past; this fact springs from and is established by/through the *absolute idea* of time, or the idea of *absolute time*. This is completely in accordance with and supports the conclusion that One is not, that it has no being; for past and future turn out to be marks of the absence of One (of any one, even of time and temporal moments/instants, since the temporal moment *par excellence*, the instant, is not there, not yet or not any more), whereas the instant itself, the present moment, is by definition evasive and fleeting (One is totally absent from it and lacks itself in it, it is not time and has neither motion nor rest [ἐν οὐδενὶ χρόνῳ ἂν εἴη οὐδὲ κινῶν ἂν τότε οὐδ' ἂν σταίη]).

So, the common appearance and conception of time, the worldly-historical unfolding of transition and change, rests upon the idea of time, i.e. upon the fundamental notion of time, which however denies and abolishes temporal existence and time in general. On the other hand, though, this very notion exists in and as that same unfolding of time; it is present in it, indeed in every moment of this unfolding. These two times are inseparable and their bond is unbreakable, for otherwise the time itself (in any of its forms and appearances) would cease to exist, it would simply disintegrate. In order for the time to continue there has to exist a relationship

between these two times, a relationship analogous with that between the ideas and the world (the phenomenal cosmos). In fact, at least as Plato is concerned, the status and the meaning of the ideal (that is, of ideas and their constellations), as well as its relationship with the phenomenal, visible world, is built *upon* this twofold notion of time and built *after* it. The key in both cases is again *participation* (μέθεξις) and its *dialectic*.

In the first place, it is in this absolute instant that the fundamental configuration of everything lies. While it cannot determine the course of transition, change and re-groupings that take place in the unfolding of physical, historical or individual (biographical) time, it is still present in each and every moment of their movement as well as in its totality. This absolute time is the absolute *constellation of temporality*, it is temporality as such, in and by itself. According to the same logic of its presence – which is identical with the logic of the presence of ideas and the ideal, i.e. of ideality, in the phenomenal – this pure, sheer temporality is *omnipresent* (πανταχοῦ παρούσα) in the sense that it survives and is confirmed in every possible expression or appearance of itself. In other words, it is the presence in the form of participation, and indeed of mutual participation of the absolute and the particular. The two times mentioned above participate in each other and depend upon each other just as ideas and phenomena do.

The notion and the image of absolute time is, therefore, exemplary and essential insofar as it is the focal point of ontology, cosmology, psychology and politics (political philosophy); it is the “instant” in and through which different realities and conceptions are identified and kept together. The ideal (ideality as such and ideas as such) and the phenomenal (the visible material world), on one hand, and the ontological, cosmic (cosmological), psychological and political dimensions and realities, on the other, all concentrate in this one instant of (dialectical, i.e. both static and cyclic) *identity of the different*.

Now, because the whole situation with One and its being (and, to be sure, with its knowledge as well) is like this, the same has to be true for things, for *multiplicity*, i.e. for the Many in its totality. So, what follows (157b-160b) is the discussion of “what will be true of the others, if there is a one.” Also, for all the reasons mentioned above, and most of all because of the last point (regarding the instant and the difference), the same kind of ambivalence or duplicity has to be present in things (“others”). In addition, the same concept (conception) is applied and working here: the concept of *participation*. This concept, which holds and keeps the ambivalence in itself, is therefore invoked as the reason and foundation of their (the others’) relationship with One, i.e. as the basis and condition of the possibility of a relation/connection between the two worlds/realms. Thus, “the others are not wholly destitute of the one [unity], but partake [participate] of it in a way [Οὐδὲ μὴν στέρεταί γε

παντάπασι τοῦ ἑνὸς τὰλλα ἀλλὰ μετέχει πη.]” (157c1-2). Therefore, they also possess both whole and part, are both one and many (157c-158d) and that means also that they are at the same time limited and unlimited (158d). In the same vein, they are at once like and unlike themselves and one another (158e-159a); the same as and different from themselves and each other, just as they are “both in motion and at rest, and have all the contrary characters [καὶ κινούμενα καὶ ἔστωτα καὶ παντα τα ἐναντια παθη]” (159a). Here, in the realm of particulars, or “others,” Parmenides reiterates the same ground and the same post he went over when he spoke about the One (i.e. when he spoke from the perspective, the point of view of the One), only in the opposite direction. Thus, here he starts from the II, the Positive stage or segment, in order to continue with what was I, the Negative stage in the discussion of the One.<sup>20</sup> And the conclusion from this perspective is: “if there is a one, the one is both all things and nothing whatsoever, alike with reference to itself and to the others [ἐν εἰ ἔστιν πάντα τέ ἐστι τὸ ἕν καὶ οὐδὲ ἕν ἐστι καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ὡσαύτως].”<sup>21</sup>

For the end, Parmenides restates the *Negative* stage and case (I), first with regard to One and then with regard to the consequences that its non-existence might have for the particulars.<sup>22</sup> The *Difference* we saw in “the instant” is appearing again as an essential moment (160d-e). It is in a way endowed with being and is endowing the being with both (one and others), and thanks to it they can now co-exist and relate – and eventually also unite. Here now, difference is definitely inscribed in the One and from there spreads out into the whole world and all things (“all” – that means those that are and those that are not). And, as perhaps another argument against agnosticism, the difference is the guarantee of One’s *knowability*. What’s more, this knowability now seems clearly dependent on the others, and that through One’s difference from them. That is, the knowability of One depends on the existence/non-existence of others, of particulars, and is intertwined with difference as the ontological definition and mode of that existence/non-existence. The difference between One and others is what connects them and puts and holds them together, forces them to relate to each other; and this necessary relation(ship) enables the knowledge of them both, so it is the foundation and the condition of their knowability (knowability of both: One and others). To that extent one could even say that the *difference is (the foundation, being, essence of) knowability*, or that at least it implies knowability of One and others.

Also, just as it was the case with regard to “the instant,” the presence of difference in the very center of the One dialectically leads to the recognition of the absolute knowability of the One, because (after the dialectical journey) it turns out that One is knowable in any case. Namely, whether we start from the hypothesis of its existence/being or from the

hypothesis of its non-existence/non-being, the One is knowable (conceivable, graspable). Only, to say that again, it is not knowable immediately and directly, but only by and through this detouring dialectical path. And, of course, this knowability – being dependent on the difference – necessarily includes the others, for the very character of the One taken in itself already comprises the others and the knowledge of the One is always also the knowledge of its relation (it is, of course, a relation of difference and otherness) with/toward the others. Thus, the One is knowable only with respect to the others, regardless of whether these are taken to exist and regardless of whether the One itself exists or not. The point here is very clear and unambiguous: *the idea of the One, the notion/concept/thought of the One includes the other in any case, because the One is unthinkable without difference.* And, whether One is or is-not, it is always related to the other because, whether it is or is not, it is in itself and by itself marked by, organized around and founded upon the difference seated deeply in its very center. Furthermore, for all the known reasons we cannot always speak about One as existent, but we always can and we always do speak and think of it as a notion, i.e. we always think and speak of the notion of it, and of it as an idea. *What goes for One goes for idea (or ideas) as well, for One is the purest idea, idea in and by itself.* And, because the One is the ideal, it is also identical with the Good. It is not just the essence of the Good, it is the Good itself; and therefore the idea of anything, as its ultimate *good*, is the One, its *unity*.<sup>23</sup>

Everything being determined in this way, the question arises as to what happens to the others in the case when one is not). This is an especially logical and important problem since we have seen how connected and interdependent One and others are. We have seen to what large extent this applies to the One, so one can only imagine how completely and utterly this relationship (or better: relatedness) affects the others/particulars.

The general conclusion is, of course, that there can be no others without One: "*If there is no one, there is nothing at all [οὔτε τι ἔστιν οὔτε φαίνεται ἄλλα ἐν εἰ μὴ ἔστιν]*" (166b6-7). For as Parmenides shows,<sup>24</sup> all the characteristics disappear. At first, all the attributes, i.e. all the conceptual pairs through which the whole investigation has been moving and with regard to which the hypotheses about One and others have been tested; all these posts are once again positively reiterated, and it turns out that the others can be all those things without the One. That is, they can be like and unlike, same and different, one and many, limited and unlimited, equal and unequal (164b-165d), or at least they will appear as such (165c4-6). However, in the last reiteration of the hypothesis of non-being of One and of its consequences for the status of others, Parmenides shows the last conclusions to be false, or at least equally valid as their exact opposites. Thus, point by point, he states

that none of these attributes can apply to others if there is no One (165e-166b). More precisely, the others are none of those attributes; none of them can be attached to those if there is no One. And this is only a logical conclusion, particularly from the central point of view, namely from the point of view of the difference innate in the One, the difference which establishes, demands and determines the necessity of the relationship between One and the others, and (consequently) indeed of the being/existence of them both. Thus, to repeat it again, "If there is no one, there is nothing at all" (166b6-7). Furthermore, the general conclusion related to this and regarding all the hypotheses investigated in the dialogue, is that (sic!) they all turn out (or at least appear) to be true if there is One. So, "it seems that, whether there is or is not a one, both that one and the others alike are and are not, and appear and do not appear to be, all manner of things in all manner of ways, with respect to themselves and to one another [ὡς ἔοικεν ἐν αὐτῷ εἶναι εἴτε μὴ ἔστιν αὐτό τε καὶ τᾶλλα καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα πάντα παντως ἔστι τε καὶ οὐκ ἔστι καὶ φαίνεται τε καὶ οὐ φαίνεται.]" (166c3-5).

What Plato's dialectic of the one and many in the *Parmenides* tells us is the basic hypothesis (or supposition and conclusion at the same time) of all dialectic: One contains the Many, or the Other, in itself by precisely being one, i.e. One as such contains otherness and multiplicity in itself. And, it does this in both the positive and the negative manner and sense, that is, either by positively supposing multiplicity and the other as ontologically real beings (which means: as parts of its own being, or as moments of itself, or as its complements and supplements, or in any other way and as anything else) or by negatively determining it through exclusion, difference or some other way and relation to itself. This twofold relationship is exactly what dialectic discovers, explains, confirms and teaches, so that this relationship is always finally recognized as the major law of being and existence.

## Appendix: The Time of Liberty

The most important consequence of the notion of time enclosed in the idea of the "instant" concerns liberty. Namely, this idea stands very close to and indeed overlaps with the idea of liberty. First of all, the "instant" is exactly *the time of liberty*, or *the free time*, which is identical with liberty itself. For, liberty is exactly this possibility and existence of exploding, rearranging, concentrating, transforming, re-establishing, imploding, scattering, gathering, intensifying, etc., the time itself. At least since Plato (but, to be sure, before him as well, i.e. in the whole Greek antiquity) the idea (notion, conception) of liberty is conceived as the idea of exploding the given constellation of facts, events, developments, and most of all of time an temporality; or at least the idea of the potential to perform and realize this

explosion. It is thanks to liberty, therefore, that people have the possibility/power to change the order of things and the state of affairs. In fact, this possibility/power *is* liberty. And, of course, there is nothing more fundamental than the time and its dimensions, so of course there cannot be any real (let alone fundamental) liberty without this *free handling and dealing with time*. Therefore, the fundamental and simultaneously highest (ultimate) liberty is the *liberty to affect* (change, transform, explode, implode, rearrange etc.) *the course of time*, i.e. to *intervene in time* and its given structure.

On the other hand, from the point of view of time, especially of the instant, the time of liberty – whether one understands it as *a period of living and practicing liberty* or as the *moment(s) of liberation* – liberty always happens as a break in/of time, even as a break of time and temporality. Freedom (liberty) happens as an interruption of time, which however cannot be defined temporally. The moment of liberty is in this respect identical (same) as/with the “instant.” For, it affects, changes and intervenes in time without being temporal itself. And liberty behaves like this in other spheres and dimensions as well.<sup>25</sup>

The moment of liberty, therefore, stands outside and beyond time, but is all the time present *for* it. This means that liberty, as the power to re-structure time, has the ultimate power over it but does not enter it, at least not temporally. Liberty affects time but is never temporal.

This may seem paradoxical but, in fact, the opposite would be and is really paradoxical. For, that a power over something should not and cannot reside in that same thing seems quite normal to common sense. What is inconceivable for this common sense is that this power could and should reside in/within that over which it rules. In other words, the well-known paradox of the class of all classes which is (also/still) a member of its own class emerges here once again. In case of *liberty* – just like in the case of the *instant* and of the *idea of all ideas* – it always turns out that the power (the class of all classes) must belong to its own domain, realm, class. Therefore, it is actually not at all paradoxical to claim that, for instance, liberty has to be present in that same *time* over which it has and exerts power. That is, not any more paradoxical than the situation of ideas, which both structure the visible/phenomenal world and are present in it (through participation, of course). The difference between the two is on another level, namely on the level of intervention. Thus, while ideas do not and cannot intervene effectively in the phenomenal in some particular respect, liberty is supposed to do exactly that.

However, this would still be a confusion of levels. The *idea of liberty*, which is certainly different from the “fact” of liberty, has all the same attributes (and therefore also abilities and authority) as any other idea –

which is to say: as the ideal in general. Again, it is not the idea that intervenes but rather an existing (phenomenal etc.) liberty, which liberty is undoubtedly nothing else than the *soul*/proper only and exclusively to a free human being. More precisely, it is only the free individual and the free collective that can and do intervene in time. Still, as with everything else, the possibility of this intervention is prescribed, inscribed and circumscribed in and with the idea of liberty, most notably in the identity of this idea with the "instant" and the whole intensive-explosive notion of time founded upon it (upon the instant).

If liberty is the power to intervene in (interrupt, transform, confirm, etc.) the time, and if this power gets realized in the Instant, which, for its part, intensifies and inverts the totality of time into itself<sup>6</sup>; then that Instant is indeed the instant of liberty, or the moment of liberty. The instant is thus that moment when and where time actually appropriates both itself and its opposite, or a moment of *self-appropriation of time and timelessness*; the moment when time and timelessness become one, identical, and therefore the moment when and where *time appropriates timelessness*, and vice versa: the moment of *time's becoming eternal/eternity*. Differently put, the Instant is the revealing moment, an *instant of revelation*, for therein resides and happens the recognition of the eternity of time, the realization that the only eternal thing in the universe is time, that it is indeed the eternity itself.

In the same vein, since (if) the Instant is the moment of liberty, this whole construction is simultaneously the structure of liberty as such. Namely, by way of this Instant, liberty turns out to be the moment (moments) when and where time and eternity identify and become one, and this oneness, this unity and identity, is exactly liberty. Therefore, the moment of liberty is the moment, instant, where the time both stops and is being moved, pushed on. It is the instant where time is brought to a standstill, a standstill which issues in its acceleration, and *the standstill of time* (that is, *eternity*) is nothing but its *movement, continuation and acceleration*.

Here, we once again encounter the same paradox as above. Both as far as liberty and time/eternity are concerned, we have the same paradox that was characteristic of (in fact, established and set in) the theory and the status of ideas. Liberty and time are marked by the *paradox of the ideal itself*, or of Ideality, since they both simultaneously *do* and *do not* belong to themselves and the world, that is, since they both appropriate and determine themselves and are appropriated and determined.

This leads to one conclusion: both liberty and time/eternity are ideas and ideal, and therefore the theory of ideas is also the *theory of liberty and of time/eternity*. And, together with this conclusion, one is again faced with the same question: How does liberty *exist* in the world, if it exists at all?



The answer (thoroughly Platonic, to be sure)<sup>27</sup> has been hinted at a number of times already, and every time it was the same one: liberty exists only in and through human beings, the only soulful beings in nature, i.e. the only bodies in this world that are endowed with the ideal. It is this distinctive trait of his/her existence that makes *man the agent of liberty*. At the same time, however, it is through this difference that he/she re-connects and reunites with nature and the world. More precisely, it is in his/her liberty, in the instant of liberty, that man – as the soul, the spirit, the ideal and ideality – rediscovers and regains naturality, becomes one with nature and the world.<sup>28</sup>

Conversely, the ultimate answer<sup>29</sup> to the question of human nature has to be: Liberty. For liberty is *both* the appropriation of man's own self, a self-appropriation of man, *and* the appropriation of nature, of κόσμος or universe. In other words, *liberty is self-articulation* (self-definition, self-determination, self-positioning, self-confirmation) and *self-appropriation* of the soul, mind, idea, universe and time (which always also includes the opposite), their *differential self-identification*. Therefore, regarding the relationship between man and the world (κόσμος, nature, universe) one should say that it is man's liberty that differentiates and identifies him/her in relation to nature and the world, that liberty makes man be one with the κόσμος and, in the last instance, means *man's being-in-the-world*.

This at the same time means and shows that *liberty precedes man*, that man (humankind in general) as a free being is born out of and born into liberty. Thus liberty at once surpasses him/her and belongs to him/her. For, to get back to the author of this whole conception, i.e. to Plato, the birth of time ("χρόνου γένεσις"<sup>30</sup>) is simultaneously the birth of liberty.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the relationship between man and liberty is one of appropriation. Man is at the same time appropriated by liberty and appropriates it, so once again liberty turns out to be self-appropriation.

Because this dialectic of appropriation is essential, crucial characteristic of liberty, we see how and why *liberty* came to be the *question of property* and eventually the very *idea of property*. Ever since the ancient times (first implicitly and then, from Plato on, quite explicitly) liberty has been related to and defined through property. Ever since then, *liberty means the possibility of property*, to be free means to own something (or somebody), to *own goods* – and that in both possible senses: as *things* and as *qualities* or *values*. I am free if and when I can own, when I have property, when something belongs to me.

This introduces a whole range of *relations of belonging and ownership*. For, at the same moment in which things, qualities, values *belong to me*, in and through this same situation, I pose and establish myself as *belonging somewhere*, as *belonging to something*. If and when I

am free I belong somewhere. Only as a free being, or as being a free existence, entity, individual, only as being free I can belong to anything and belong anywhere. It is the *paradox of liberty*, the paradox of being free, that the same property that marks my *liberation* (from other things and relations with others) necessarily makes me *belong*, it *appropriates* me. Freedom as property and appropriation turns me into a property as well, for it posits (establishes, defines) me as belonging; in a word, it appropriates me. And thus, as belonging somewhere, as being appropriated, or as a property, I am free.

This dialectic of belonging most explicitly takes place on the social level. As a free being I necessarily belong to a community. And I belong to community because I am the proprietor. I belong *as* the proprietor - of freedom, of goods, etc. If I do not own anything I cannot be a member of community. I must have some property in order to qualify for the membership in a community, which membership for its part establishes me as a free being, entity, individual. Only as being-in-a-community can my existence be a free existence. Thus, liberty itself means belonging, means being appropriated. Therefore, I have to own (others, other things, etc.) in order to belong somewhere, and only this multiple and multifaceted property constitutes my freedom. I am free to own and to be owned, my liberty is the simultaneous appropriation on and from all sides.

On the other hand, one could also say the reverse, namely that my belonging qualifies me to be/become the one to whom things/goods belong. By belonging (to the community) I define and articulate myself as a free being, which means: as the being to which something belongs, or as the being that owns things, as the being that has/owns property.

Any which way one looks at it, on many levels liberty is identified with property and this identification is circular, thus circumscribing the circular structure of liberty. For, property qualifies me as a free being, and this being free qualifies me to belong to the community as such (as a communal thing, as unity and relatedness, as a form of being-together, as a collective being), which belonging to the community then posits me as a free being. The whole dialectic here is circular, reversed and reversible. There seems to be no primacy of one over the other. However, being established in this way, this circularity and reversibility actually concentrates the whole complex of relationships, it concentrates and congeals itself in one and the same moment. *Circularity* inevitably and necessarily, immediately, turns into *instantaneousness*. The circle inverts into an instant thanks to the simultaneous presence of its elements (relations). Since there is no logical or temporal precedence of (any) one over (any) other, since *ownership and belonging fall together and at once*, the whole system of property and appropriation is (happens in/as) one and the same instant; the whole system

falls into, belongs and is, one and the same instant, moment, point. And this is only appropriate, since one is here dealing with liberty. This *concentration, inversion, or rather introversion of property and appropriation* is totally appropriate to liberty, that is, to the structure and modality of freedom, which is in itself *a-temporal* or *de-temporalized* so as to be able to apply to (to appropriate) the whole of time and history in such a way and to such an extent that it establishes time and history.

Thus, the instant (τὸ ἐξάιφνης) of liberty unfolds itself into time, and the other side of this unfolding is the introversion of time, the concentration and congealment of time (history, temporality) into the instant. Liberty is, once again, an instant; only here it is the *instant of appropriation and self-appropriation, the instant of property.*

From yet another perspective, this issues in the conception of liberty as property in the sense of a *piece of property*, as something one can obtain (produce, purchase, gain, earn, etc.) and part with (lease, sell, give away to others). In this way, liberty is not just a property of the individual, a quality of his/her life and behavior and of his/her position in the community to which he/she belongs, but also a thing over which this individual has the power to keep or exchange it. Such *reification of liberty* is innate in it. More precisely, it is innate and implanted, rooted, in the very conception/concept of liberty that we have had since Plato. Therefore, the Platonic notion/conception of liberty is not only the prevailing notion of liberty<sup>32</sup> but it also entails quite specific conclusions and consequences (situations, states, developments, etc.) which all lead to reification of liberty.

Through all this – namely through its hegemony in human history as well as through the specific direction of its development, i.e. through its progression towards abstractness, exchangeability and reification – the Platonic idea (notion/conception) of liberty reveals its innermost *contradiction and paradox*. For this idea has been based on the assumption that it is impossible to pin down liberty, that being free cannot be reduced to any particular sphere, dimension or being/entity. Presumably, this idea cannot be defined in any particular terms. Rather, according to its self-understanding and self-perception, it is the very idea of totality, a holistic notion, which means that it can only be thought in terms of the totality of beings (or of the Being), as a more or less rational and therefore humanly conceivable system of everything. Liberty has/possesses generalization and totalization as its fundamental, intrinsic quality and character; and the rationality and institutional nature of liberty, in whatever degree these may exist or be possible, ensue from its generality and totality. In other words, liberty as an idea is always the most general, total and totalizing idea of the world and Being. Which is to say that liberty cannot exist in or as any particular/individual thing, entity, existence. Rather, liberty remains present

in everything and nothing, it penetrates, underlies, impregnates the whole world but cannot be reduced to any part of this world. It exists as the whole world and can be recognized and acknowledged only in the totality of a free world. Differently put, liberty transcends existence by being transcendental to it. Liberty is always larger than life, larger than anything (existent or possible), it is even larger than itself. By definition, it always eludes and escapes us in the same way the absolute, or the totality, elude and escape us. Consequently, liberty should not be something tangible or determinable.<sup>33</sup>

In a word, the *Instant* – and the conception of time founded upon it and structured around it – is exactly the *instant of liberty*. For, one cannot imagine higher and more complete, total and fundamental *idea of liberty* than this notion of *stepping out of time* exactly at the very core and center of time. This idea emerges as the idea of complete and total appropriation of time by and through the interruption, transformation, explosion and implosion of temporality itself.

The Instant establishes liberty and establishes itself as liberty. It functions as liberty itself on a number of levels. First, it fulfills the demand and the need for the ability to *affect* (i.e. to guide, rule and structure) something, some realm, some dimension, while belonging to (standing within) that same thing. Second, it establishes liberty as the force of both interruption and continuation, or as the *power of transformation* (explosion, implosion, dissemination, re-ordering, unification, fathering, dispersion, conversion, intensification, extension, etc.) *in/of time* which itself is *not temporal*. Then, it establishes liberty as constantly *both inside and outside the world*. Finally, it establishes *liberty as a matter of participation*.<sup>34</sup>

- 
1. Plato, Parmenides 129d-e.
  2. Cf. 131a sq.
  3. That is, in the thing we call after the idea, the thing that has a certain quality, which is ideal/idea itself, and therefore has certain character taken from the idea (see 131b-c).
  4. See 131e.
  5. Cf. the beginning of this argument in 131e.
  6. This especially in 132d1-4.
  7. This is clearly demanded and emphasised in 133c.
  8. For, in fact, "Ὀυκοῦν καὶ ὅσα τῶν ἰδεῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλας εἰσὶν αἱ εἰσὶν αὐταὶ πρὸς αὐτάς τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχουσιν ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν εἶτε ὁμοιώματα εἶτε ὅπη δὴ τις αὐτὰ τίθεται ὧν ἡμεῖς μετέχοντες εἶναι ἕκαστα ἐπονομαζόμεθα τὰ δὲ παρ' ἡμῖν ταῦτα ὁμώνυμα ὄντα ἐκείνοις αὐτὰ αὐ πρὸς αὐτὰ ἐστὶν ἀλλ' οὐ πρὸς τὰ εἶδη καὶ ἑαυτῶν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκείνων ὅσα αὐ ὀνομάζεται οὕτως" (133c8-d5).
  9. For these, see the preceding passage (136a5-b4).

10. In what follows, I am somewhat departing from the usual division of the hypotheses of the second part of the dialogue. (For the standard and widely accepted division see F.M. Cornford, *Plato* ~~Error! Bookmark not defined.~~ and *Parmenides*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964<sup>5</sup>.) This departure is by no means decisive or essential, and should not be understood as a reproach to that division. As it will soon become clear, no substantial changes have been made in my exposition of the *Parmenides*. It is just that the purpose here is somewhat different, due to the fact that we are looking for the traces of the concept of participation, and are concentrating on its effects throughout the dialogue.

11. Let us here briefly reiterate the two paths. [I] (1) One is neither a *whole* nor has *parts* (137c-d); (2) it also *has not* and cannot have *shape* (137e); (3) it has *no place*, it cannot be anywhere, not in another and not in itself (138a-b); (4) it also has *no motion* and *no rest* (138c-139a), it does *not move*, it is *not at rest*, and it cannot become, transform, change, etc.; (5) furthermore, it is *neither same nor different* with/from anything else or itself (139b-e); (6) and therefore it is *neither like nor unlike* anything else or itself (139e-140b); (7) just as, because of all that, it is *neither equal nor unequal* to itself or another (140b-d); (8) and, finally, it has nothing to do with time: "οὐδὲ ἄρα χρόνου αὐτῷ μέτεστιν οὐδ' ἔστιν ἐν τιμῃ χρόνῳ" (141d4-5; see also 140e-d). It follows that One cannot have being and that it in no sense is: "τὸ ἐν οὐτε ἐν ἔστιν οὐτε ἔστιν" (141e12), or that One is nothing, that it is not (141e-142a), which is contrary to the starting presupposition and thus automatically brings us back to it. So, the starting point has to be re-examined. Or, as Parmenides calls it, the "ὑπόθεσις" (142b1) has now to be reconsidered from the Positive perspective. [II] The second demonstration of dialectical method starts now from the hypothesis that "a one is [ἐν εἰ ἔστιν]" (142c7), which here means that it "has being [ἐν ἔστιν]" (142c7). Of course, in advance, we somehow sense that the results of this part of the method will be the exact opposite of the results of the previous segment and that the answers to the same questions/themes will be opposite to the answers there. So, first, One is supposed to be different from being (142c5). The whole thing is now interpreted from the perspective, i.e. from the point of view of the relationship between One and being, or better from their difference. Thus: (1) One *is* both a *whole* and has *parts* (142d) and also, as one and as being, it has to be *many* ("unlimited in multitude [ἄπειρον ἂν τὸ πλήθος]"). So, in contrast to 137c, the conclusion is that it is a plurality (142e). It is important to note that this result will remain the lasting acquisition/achievement of the dialogue. The One as the unity of identity and difference is not disputed afterwards, but only further developed and articulated. Thus, the presence of difference within ideas remains decisive and fortified. And from this conclusion further follows that (1a) One (and being as well) has *difference*, that it is "different or other [τῷ ἑτέρῳ τε καὶ ἄλλῳ ἕτερα ἀλλήλων]" (but not the difference itself) and therefore non-identical (143a-b); which again issues in (1b) the fact that One implies and generates the *number* in the sense of *plurality* (143c-144a); which then points to the fact that being is *divided* and equally distributed among things (144b), which again tells us that unity is indeed "parceled out by being [κεκερματισμένον ὑπὸ τῆς οὐσίας]," i.e. that One is made to be many by the fact that it is, and that it is indeed an *infinite plurality* (144c-e) in both senses: in the sense that each part is a unity in itself, and that the very notion of unity (the idea) *is* its opposite (that is, it is "necessarily many"). Or, as Parmenides says, "a 'one which is' is both one and many, whole and parts, limited as well as indefinitely numerous [Τὸ ἐν ἄρα ὄν ἐν τέ ἐστί που καὶ πολλά καὶ ὅλον καὶ μέρη καὶ πεπερασμένον καὶ ἄπειρον πλήθει.]" (145a2-3). (2) Secondly, One as it appears now also *has shape* (145a-b); just as (3) it *has place*, it is placed both in itself and in another (145b-e); and (4) *both*

in *rest* and in *motion* (145e-146a). Furthermore, (5) One is both the *same and different* from itself and another (146b-147b). It is important to note that this result will remain the lasting acquisition/achievement of the dialogue. The One as the unity of identity and difference is not disputed afterwards, but only further developed and articulated. Thus, the presence of difference within ideas remains decisive and fortified. This, as Parmenides himself notes, follows from the first step (1a), where the difference was established within the discussion of One as whole and parts, i.e. followed from its being both whole and part (parts), and emerged as an attribute of the One and of being. Finally (δ), One is consequently *both like and unlike* itself and others (147c-148d). This last point is also based on the previous proof about sameness and difference of the One with itself and others, because their sameness springs from their difference. Difference is that which makes them be same (147d-148a), while the sameness produces the difference (148b).

12. I am here omitting the passage about numbers (149a8-c2) since it seems to be just an illustration of the main point, and is therefore not decisive for the present discussion.

13. Continuing after this crucial digression, Parmenides further concludes that (7) it follows that the *One is both equal and unequal* to itself and others (149d-151e). Here, though, there is another interesting digression-explanation, which deals with *greatness and smallness*. What is important here is that, at one point, Parmenides sets the two *as ideas*. He talks at one point that only in relation to each other as ideas they have meaning and being (150c5-7), which is an important reference back to the beginning of the dialogue, where he stated that ideas relate and refer to themselves (i.e. to each other) rather than to things (in the passage about the two-worlds argument, when the problem of agnosticism was posed: 133a-b), only now it is not such a lethal problem any more, but rather a simple neutral logical conclusion; which change also points to the progress in investigation, namely to the fact that we are well on our way to surpass and refute agnosticism and its critique. Parmenides, furthermore, gives us to understand here that only ideas relate and refer to ideas, i.e. that they have meaning and being only (or at least primarily) for each other and only in relation to each other, and not to things (cf. 150c5-7 *passim*). Finally, (8) the question of the temporality of the One is addressed with the, now entirely expected, conclusion that it *exists in time* and that it *both is and becomes* older and younger than itself and *does not* become older or younger and *never* is older or younger than itself (151e-152e). In addition, One is said to have the same relationship with others, which are necessarily its parts, and since One as having parts has difference within it/itself, it again both *is* and *becomes* older and younger than its parts (which parts are nothing but these others) and also *is not* and *does not become* older or younger than they are (153a-155b).

14. 156e-160b. – [III] This whole stage appears as a re-iteration of the previous two stages/paths. In fact, the beginning of this argument clearly points at that. (The whole first part of the argument is developed in 156e-157b.) For in the very beginning the sequence of investigation, the fact that there is a succession of stages and that it is somehow temporal (and necessarily so), is not only respected and taken into consideration, but also immediately taken, interiorized and assimilated, into the One as another hypothesis about its being and essence/character. Thus, the two previous hypotheses – that One is and that One is not – are both included in the One so that the One itself is understood as a succession of its being and not-being. Therefore, it is *successively One and many*, i.e. existent and non-existent, becoming and perishing, “coming into existence [γίγνεσθαι]” and “ceasing to exist [ἀπόλλυσθαι]” (156a5-6), or

rather it actually changes the mode of its being and is once One and then Many, once combined and then separated (156b).

15. This succession of one and many, or being and not-being, then becomes: with respect to like-unlike (I6, II6) assimilation and dissimilation (156b); with respect to equality-inequality (I7, II7) it becomes increased, diminished or equalized (156b); and with respect to motion and rest (I4, II4) it either "comes to stand [ἵσθηται]" or "changes to being in motion [ἐπι τὸ κινεῖσθαι μεταβάλλη]" (156c1-2).

16. See also the whole surrounding passage 157a-b. This immensely important concept has seldom received due attention and even less proper interpretation. Its importance for Plato's philosophy on the whole, and particularly for his dialectic, has been acknowledged relatively recently. One such attempt is M.M. McCabe's analysis in *Plato's Individuals* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 121-24. This analysis has one important conclusion, which brings us closer to understanding the concept of the instant (or "suddenly," as McCabe literally translates τὸ ἐξαίφνης), namely that this moment is itself beyond being (nothing really, not one nor many) and thus the moment of not-being/nothingness within being/existence, which enables that very being/existence as such (as one, many, change and durability). However, due to her general approach, which is based on the strict analytical distinction and division between "complex (generous) particulars and simple (austere) forms" (p.52), McCabe stops half-way and treats the whole conception of the instant as another example of the paradox that puts unsurpassable obstacles to Plato's theory, such as the lack of a clear concept of individuality and individuation and the like (cf. pp. 99-113). Because of that, her otherwise thorough and learned treatment of the *Parmenides* remains insufficient.

17. For it cannot exist in some other way than as it happens in transitions. Differently put, if it doesn't exist in the way these transitions prescribe and realize, then it doesn't exist at all, it is not – not as one and not in any way.

18. See *Timaeus* 36d8-40d5.

19. *Timaeus* 37c6-38b5.

20. Cf. 159b-160b. Of course, here it is the negative side of the particulars, i.e. the case of them being destitute of unity and of the one being thoroughly separated from the others. This is just a part of the large set [I], the Negative, which continues.

21. 160b2-3. – The analysis of the Negative set [I] of dialectics continues, now with reference to particulars and to the One as well. But, here, the One seems to be understood as one among many, or as one (particular) thing. Or at least it seems that Parmenides is discussing the fate of others (of particulars) in case "the one is not" (160b5). Also, it seems to be taken in this sense since Parmenides immediately draws the difference and contrast between "a one does not exist" and "a not-one does not exist" (160c). Of course, this last difference could lead to the opposite conclusion, as if the former refers to the One, whereas the latter refers to plurality and to many (i.e. to things that make the plurality, many things). Be it as it may, the following argumentation seems to confirm our first conclusion, since it repeatedly returns to the meaning according to which it is a particular thing (particular things) that is in question. (See, for example, 160c5-6, where it says: "if a man says 'if a one [one thing] does not exist,' it is plain that the thing he is saying does not exist in something different from other things [δηλοῦ ὅτι ἕτερον λέγει τῶν ἄλλων τὸ μὴ ὄν ὅταν εἴη <ἐν εἰ μὴ ἔστι>."] Still, one should not make

any conclusions yet, but rather wait until the discussion that follows these passages is completed and see what its results will be.

22. That is [IV] the *closing argument* of the *Parmenides* (160c-166b). [IV.1] In the first part of his closing argument (160c-164b) Parmenides is re-examining the negative hypothesis about the One. Only now the case is different than before (and that due to the dialectical path that leads here), and there is now a clear difference and contrast, even opposition, between saying (as previously) that “a one does not exist” and saying (as one obviously should now) that “a not-one [no-thing] does not exist” (160c1). The second part of the closing argument ([IV.2] 164b-166b) rather refers to the plurality of one, to the side of many in it, and maybe even tends to posit one as something comparable to others. For, Parmenides does say: “if a man says ‘if a one does not exist,’ it is plain that the thing he is saying does not exist is something different from other things ... So in speaking of a ‘one’ he is speaking, in the first place, of something knowable, and in the second of something different from other things [δηλοῖ ὅτι ἕτερον λέγει τῶν ἄλλων τὸ μὴ ὄν ὅταν εἴπῃ <ἐν εἰ μὴ ἔστι> — Πρῶτον μὲν ἄρα γνωστὸν τι λέγει ἔπειτα ἕτερον τῶν ἄλλων]” (160c5-8). It seems that One is now posited in relation to others and thereby the existence of others is acknowledged, or at least the non-existence of one is not automatically taken to be a denial of the existence of others.

23. What follows in the rest of this argument, this reiteration of the hypothesis that One is not (does not exist) from the newly gained vantage point (i.e. from the vantage point gained by the previous dialectical development of the hypotheses about One), are the conclusions appropriate to this hypothesis and to the stage in which we are now. Thus, with regard to previous themes and issues, the conclusions are that One, in addition to being necessarily *knowable and different* (5 - 160d-e) is also *unlike others and like itself* (6 - 161a-b), and is *not equal to others* but nevertheless (or, in fact, exactly because of that) has equality in itself. That is, it has equality, greatness and smallness, which means that it is *both equal and unequal to itself* (7 - 161c-e). Furthermore, even though non-existent, it still *has being* in some sense. (Such a qualification here, in this context, should be understood as the inversion of the difference between “having” and “possessing” knowledge from *Theatetus* 197a-c. “Having” here is more akin to “possessing” there. In any case, it is obviously an ideal possession, the one I was calling upon above when I was talking about the notion of One persisting regardless of whether One really existed or not.) And this is ‘proved’ by an obscure passage about the kinds of being implied in existence and non-existence (162a-b), only to conclude that One both has and does not have being (162b4-7). From such determination of the being of One follows that One has transition, or even that it *is* in the ‘state’ of transition (162c1-3), and therefore has motion as well. But this is again only one side of the matter, for it immediately turns out that it is also at rest; so the One that does not exist is *both at rest and in motion* (4 - 162c-e). Then again, since it follows that this One is in fact *both becoming and ceasing to be*, on one hand, *and not becoming or ceasing to be*, on the other (163a-d); and since, on account of that, it does not change in character (163e1-3), it also follows that it is *neither at rest nor in motion* (4 - 163e). At this point, the opposite conclusions begin to be drawn. Thus, in contrast to the previous set of conclusions, it now turns out (and it seems to be all on account of the conclusion that One, which does not exist, cannot change in character) that it *cannot* have equality or inequality (7 - 163c-164a), nor can it be like or unlike (6 - 164a), the same or different (5), nor can it have any being and therefore also any name or notion, it cannot even be the subject of discourse: “οὔτε ἄρα ὅμοια οὔτε ἀνόμοια οὔτε ταῦτά οὔθ’ ἕτερά ἐστιν ἢ τὸ τι ἢ τὸ τοῦτο ἢ τὸ τοῦτου ἢ ἄλλου



ἢ ἄλλω ἢ ποτὲ ἢ ἔπειτα ἢ νῦν ἢ ἐπιστήμη ἢ δόξα ἢ αἰσθησις ἢ λόγος ἢ ὄνομα ἢ ἄλλο ὄτιοῦν τῶν ὄντων περὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν ἔσται;" (164a6-b2).

24. Cf. 164b-166b.

25. One only has to remember the problem with which we started this whole investigation, namely the problem of rationality/irrationality of liberty. There too, it turned out that liberty was, is and always will be the irrational core and foundation of rationality; that it was the ultimate argument about which it is impossible to argue; that liberty was the central point of any possible structure, which point is however beyond any particular structure and generally beyond any structuration.

26. "Itself" here meaning both the Instant and the whole of Time.

27. One might not like this but it remains a fact that, up to this day, it has been the only real answer available; or at least the only one accepted and agreed upon widely enough to be relevant.

28. Speaking in terms of Platonic dialogues, one could here speak of the merger between the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus*.

29. Just as emphatically Platonic as the previous one.

30. *Timaeus* 39e3.

31. Which is, indeed, almost a tautological statement, for nothing can come to being, in any mode or form, before time. Cf. again *Timaeus* 37e5-38b5.

32. In fact, as it has been remarked, the only viable and relevant one we have ever had.

33. Yet, throughout history, it has always been particularized, reduced, articulated in terms of properties. And even though this development that wants liberty to be something exchangeable and, most of all, something institutionalizable, something that fits in (the framework of) institutions, is quite paradoxical; our whole history has been the story of the institutionalization of liberty. Now, since institutionalization is genuinely a limitation, confinement and enclosure of (some) reality, this history emerges as the story of the limitation of the unlimited, of the enclosure of the infinite, as the confinement of liberty. No wonder then that one of the most often and most popular conceptions of history remains the Romantic one, and no wonder that it was Romanticism that inaugurated history as the highest human science, or as the model and the paradigm of scientific approach and research in the humanities. For, after all, it was Romanticism that made this contradiction and paradox its fundamental principle and sought to find and expose the uncanny, to express the inexpressible, articulate the inarticulate, define the indefinable, limit the unlimited, etc. Be it as it may, to the extent in which our history is the history of liberty (of course, not necessarily in the Hegelian sense of "the progress in the consciousness of liberty," and most likely not at all in the sense of progression or regression), it is also this story/history of the paradox of liberty: the paradox of the limitation of the unlimited, of the specification and particularization of the total, the general and the absolute.

34. These are just some of the most prominent functions and consequences of the Instant as the epitome of liberty. Of course, it does not end here. The complete list is very long, almost inexhaustible.