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Plato's Theory of the Intercommunion of Forms (Συμπλοκή Εἰδῶν): the *Sophist* 259, e4-6

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Plato's lifelong confrontation with Parmenides and his metaphysical mire of believing that nothing (το μὴ ον) does not actually exist, gradually in the Sophist comes into finish, insofar as the philosopher after facing the foe and having the last laugh simmers down. In this paper after giving an interpretation of what Parmenides says, I shall present an analysis of Plato's drastic answer to him (Sophist, 259 e4-6) to see how Plato opens the impasse way created by the Eleatic philosopher. Here the intercommunion of Forms is regarded as the final answer by which Plato devastates Parmenides infamous thesis. Since hitherto no in-depth analysis is given by the scholars who are puzzled with the subject, I have tried to analyze the intercommunion of Forms philosophically. Plato's Eleatic challenge has always been crucial in Plato himself and philosophical development after him. As while as Parmenides thesis (Sph., 238 a8-9) provides the sophists opportunity to reject the falsehood, Plato's theory of Forms in contrast in order to cross off the extremely sly sophists tries to make Parmenides come down. In my opinion, the intercommunion of Forms, as the last step of the theory of Forms, basically determines Plato's late ontology tightly knitted with logic. Vindicating this proposal depends on true understanding of the intercommunion of Forms. Since Plato's late ontology, in my opinion, is closed to Frege's ontology and discussion of language, we are armed to interpret the intercommunion of Forms with recent recent logico-philosophicus achievements, I think. In this respect, this is what I have done in my paper: analyzing sentence from Plato's logico-metaphysical point of view. Ultimately, I have tried to show how the aim of the intercommunion of Forms, which Plato himself states, is demonstrating the possibility of dialogue and discourse. This statement explicitly sets forward that the discussion is bound up with several logical approaches, according to which finally full bright light is shed on different implications of the subject such as universals.

Keywords: Form, intercommunion of Forms, sentence, predication, the verb "is" (είναι), ontological glue

1. What Parmenides Says

1.1. Parmenides' Criticism of Socrates

It is the Platonic dialogue the *Parmenides* in which we are envisaged with a very earnest criticism against the theory of Forms; insofar as after observing the Forms as separate and independent entities, Parmenides goes

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on to undermine the existence of Forms and then to refuse fixing of thoughts. According to his critics, there will not be anything to which our thoughts be fixed.¹ The result of such a position against Forms undoubtedly will be not allowing things to have character (because nothing will be separated from the other and everything is the same with everything else), and eventually Parmenidean thesis destroys the possibility of significant talk (την τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμιν) (*Parmenides* 135 c1-2). Scientific investigation has been eliminated beforehand.

Parmenides' objection against Forms and predication, especially negation, prompts us to survey the problem earnestly.² Since Parmenides is the root of the problem and his criticism voiced so powerful, the salvation of the aporia depends on understanding him. Therefore firstly, I begin by making the Parmenidean point of view clear.

1.2. Parmenides Argument, Dealing with

Let us start by articulating Parmenides' argument in some limit premises. In this extent, his opinion could be set out as below:

- (1) Either a declarative sentence is true or it is not true, but it is not both.
- (2) A. The meaning of a sentence is the fact to which it refers.
 - B. The meaning of a singular term (or a predicate) is the object(s) to which it refers.
- (3) Whatever "really" is, can meaningfully be stated by true sentences.
- (4) There are no negative facts.³

Since no compromise between negation and affirmation is expected in the theory, these premises clearly show us that Parmenides indeed closes all doors to any positive knowledge and discourse, and whoever wants to pass him and the problems have to opposite the striking premises. It is from these points that Plato's challenge with Parmenides rises up by recalling Parmenides' famous thesis that "Never let this thought prevail you that not-being is; but keep your mind from this way of investigation." Plato himself is obviously against (2) A., (3), and (4). Concerning (2) B. also, he comes to shift it into somewhere else which plays the pivotal role in his Parmenidean challenge.

2. Plato versus Parmenides: the Challenge

Plato's main answer against the best verse of Parmenides' poem has been appeared in the theory of Forms. In a better word, Parmenides' infamous theory shows us that the theory of Forms in an opposite way is proposed against it in order to doom the Eleatic doctrine. In Platonic sense, whatever assumed to be ruled over as general term in Parmenidean doctrine in Plato's theory of Forms becomes a Form with which we are enabled to name everything, whether corresponded with reality, or non-corresponded. Such an applying of Parmenidean thesis provides Plato chance to catch up him. By this, Plato takes the δυνάμις away from the premise (2) A. and shifts directly to the Forms. In this extend, against Parmenides' way which is vital only in natural language, a technical language is included in Plato's created language. This language is explicitly embedded in the theory of Forms and truly could be called the philosopher language.

This interpretation deprives Parmenides from the possibility of preventing of thinking, but the problem is not yet solved. Because of the following premises, namely (2) A., (3), and (4) which are still alive, Plato has not rescued himself from Parmenides. His current problem concerns negative facts and their existence in the world of the Forms. Also throughout all these levels of the solution, the general problem in which there is a demand for settling down an interpretation for the ontological glue, still insists! If Plato still is going to take a firm stand

on his orthodoxy concerning the relation between the physical world and the Forms, then negative facts would be existed in the physical world, because the world of Forms is reflected in the physical world. For example, in the sentence "A is F," the meaning of the phrase concerns the fact of which about Forms it refers to. But in the sentence "Bachelor is not mother," according to the Platonic basis, there should be a fact of Forms according to which bachelor not to be mother. Hence, the problem directly concerns negative facts, and in this respect, Plato's asserts on Not-Being in 257-258 are very useful to fulfill the quarrel in Parmenides' yard. "When we say not-being, we speak, I think, not of something that is the opposite of being, but only of something different" (Sophist, 257 b3-4).

These lines show us that Plato consciously goes ahead to accomplish his last battle with Parmenides. The previous quotation denotes on Plato's attempt in construing the Not-Being as a kind of being, whether in the world, or consequently in the sentence. In contrast with this, Parmenides' premise (3) shows us that Parmenides refuses to accept the negative sentence. Accordingly, when he rejects the negative sentence, his judgment on negative being (not-being) in the world of reality is evidently negative. In other words, negation at no level makes sense for Parmenides. For this reason, he preaches to keep the mind from investigation on this matter, over and over again! It seems for him that a concrete fact and true sentence is something correspondently similar with positive sentence. It is in the case that "in speech we know there is just Affirmation and Negation" (Sophist, 263 e11-13).

Afterwards, whatever prompts Parmenides to do as, Plato's solution as an outlet from the problem is embedded in demonstrating something against Parmenides' advice for possibility of speech and λ όγος. Here, I am not going to argue why Parmenides arrives to his doctrine, but as an answer to his thesis, we need something with ability of providing the positive results. Positive results in this sense mean consequences which overcome Parmenides on the one hand, and provide implications for the genesis of λ όγος, on the other hand. It is a very serious task which is not ignored by Plato and seems to be laid down in his set forth achievement of the philosopher's language. The philosopher language is Plato's innovation, generally proposed for opening a way towards discourse. Since this language is replete with beneficial implications, these implications, like the other scholars, impulse me to advocate it.⁷ One of these implications is replacing of negation. This matter defeats Parmenides who warns us to escape from any investigation about Not-Being, in his land. Plato boldly proposes this achievement with a very brilliant discussion in the *Sophist* 259 e3-5, entitled: "Συμπλοκή Εἰδῶν" (hereafter, the intercommunion of Forms).

In the *Sophist*, Plato desperately seeks to prove that Forms are related in certain definite ways, that there is intercommunion of Forms (*Sophist*, 251 d-252 e). In the same dialogue, he speaks about the intercommunion of Forms in order to discover all aspects of the issue as below: "The complete isolation of each thing from all is the utterly final obliteration of all statements (discourse). Because the power of discourse is derived from us, namely, the Forms have intercommunion with each other" (Plato, *Sophist*, 259 e4-7).

Plato's assertion concerning the intercommunion of Forms certifies that more than anything language in this field plays the main role. In this extent, he proposes the theory in order to make sense the discourse which gets appeared through language and ignoring this means rationality give way to sophistry. As it is pointed out by Lewis Campbell, "the denial, that is to say, of all intercommunions of Forms, leads to purely negative results. Examples of this are the exclusive antithesis of Being and Not-Being and the mutual exclusion of rest and motion" (George Patrick Goold 1996). As we see, in this respect, all opposites, specifically negatives, give way to a new meaning. Concerning Parmenidean problem, the important point is Campbell's immediate

assertion that "the difficulty is solved at once when we recognize that positive and negative are necessarily intercommunicated in the nature of things, that the negative has only a relative existence and is not opposite of the positive, but only different from it" (George Patrick Goold 1996). The intercommunion of Forms plays such a crucial role. Till hitherto, no philosophical analysis is given to this important topic. The last part of my paper is devoted to it.

3. The Intercommunion of Forms, the Theory

3.1. First Step: Stating the Problem

I shall confirm that I am challenging with this topic, ritually as the outlet of a problem, created by Eleatic philosophers. Owing to the aforementioned information, I believe that we are sure that any discussion goes through the district of the speech and language. Because of overturning Parmenides, Plato has to prove that the Forms are related in a certain way that is the intercommunion of Forms (*Sophist*, 251 d-259 e). In 253, it is assigned to philosophy that its task is discovering what these relations are.

Before dragging in the problem, I would like to give some comments which seem to be beneficial for elucidating the milestone from where I am speaking. Since the aim of the research is to discover the exact nature of the relationship between the intercommunion of Forms and the structure of rational discourse, I believe that it might be so true to interpret the Forms as concepts. Although the rest of this paper is devoted to crystallizing this matter, here I would like to point out why I support certain Forms to be interpreted as concepts. Such an interpretation, I think that firstly, pulls plug on some scholars according to whom the Forms and their implications are magic entities. The best example of this outlook is Peck whose interpretation takes place in this lineage. Concerning the intercommunion of Forms, he says that "Συμπλοκή of είδεis beyond our control, some blend, some do not, and we merely recognize it when it is there" (Peck 1962). Secondly, it seems that Peck's interpretation saves himself from the trouble of solving the difficulty. It is in the case that my interpretation not only does not get involved in such an approach, but also drops us in the middle of problem. By recognizing the aporia in Parmenides and surveying it in language, there is no reason to throw the problem out of our shoulders.

The difficulty with which we are in deal is the exposition of the intercommunion of Forms, in a field in which the intercommunion depends on the relation between certain Forms and statements. Having interpreted the Form as concept likely closes us to an appropriate meaning of the Form, though numerous problems still exist. How the containment of Form in the sentence would be the main difficulty with which we are engaged!

3.2. Second Step: Preliminaries Salvage Points¹³

Except all well-philological analysis done concerning the intercommunion of Forms and the important passages which the topic is discussed in,¹⁴ doing a slightly different angle one point (lacked in scholarly works) should get involved in research. None of the scholarly works to either solve or go to the ins and outs of the philosophical aspects of the intercommunion of Forms.

Challenging certain aspects of interpretations of the intercommunion of Forms shows us how such important topic is neglected philosophically. For reasons of economy, I will not assess any of scholarly interpretations, but in order to be dragged in the problem, it is worth noticing briefly in what extent scholars have discussed the subject.

One gleaning interpretation which might importantly be referred in this observation is Professor

As we see explicitly, it is declared by Cornford that Plato is saying something about Forms being "contained in" or "used in' statements." In spite of the fact that Plato's own examples with the proper name Theaetetus and his positions mentioned later in the dialogue disconcert Cornford's interpretation, Cornford's translation also runs away from construing what Plato says. Ackrill points out that "Contains at least one Form" is exactly what τὴν τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκήν does not mean. In addition, the word ἀλλήλων is absent in Cornford's translation! With one another (=αλλήλων) in no rate could be interpreted as at least one Form (enters to the meaning of a statement). He asserts that "communing together is not synonym of combining or blending, it includes all statements, affirmative or negative" (1935). Cornford's interpretation through his book obviously indicates on a fact according to which for making statements, except Form, there are some other elements, too. But all statements contain at least one Form, and in order to be in harmony with Plato, he regards this containing necessary for all thought or judgment about the objects of direct perception.

Cornford's opinion, in spite of not ignoring the famous description of Forms, seems to be encountered with couple of problems:

He returns back and compares the current theory in accordance with Plato's previous doctrines.

He does not regard the sentential side of the problem.

Parmenides problem has not been solved by his interpretation.

As an answer to Professor Cornford, I would like to say that in some sentences like "A is C," the difficulty could be passed in any way. But Cornford would answer sentences in which the negative predication is used. That "A is not C" is the simplest example for such sentences. In other words, could be deliver an interpretation, as he has done before, also for negative sentences? Does Plato hint into any determination of negative Forms at least in the Sophist or his early writings?²⁶

In response to above questions, I must say that firstly, in Plato's masterpieces there is no trace of negative Forms, neither in the *Sophist*, nor other dialogues—even if we interpret Forms as a realist commentator even in relation with references such as the *Republic*. X 596—otherwise aiming at meaning, which then is my conceptualism. If Plato speaks about negative Forms, Parmenides finds right to laugh at him. The Form in itself has no meaning for Parmenides, therefore how it is possible for Plato to imagine negative Forms. Secondly, concerning Parmenides' problem that takes place in sentential structures, Cornford's account has nothing to do.

The fault that blocks Cornford is the trap the other scholars much more are entangled in too.²⁷ They envisage with the same corollaries which Cornford has confronted. In their analysis, the essence of the problem has been reduced into a bungling that passes over the sentential structure into the only "partaking" of Forms

which exactly is not the appropriate understanding of what Plato says about intercommunion of Forms, because when Plato stands against Parmenides, he should defeat him in his land. Theory of Forms beforehand is criticized by Parmenides and it would not be logical to assume that Plato duels Parmenides in the land that is formerly devastated by Parmenides.

3.3. Third Step: the Solution

The first important point in this observation could be started by mentioning the first part of the *Parmenides* (126 a-135 a). This part includes an introduction, the presentation of Zeno's positions and Socrates criticism of them. Finally, it contains Parmenides' criticism of the theory of Forms, proposed by the young Socrates. *Parmenides* 131 b has the basic passage through which Plato confronts with Parmenidean question of how it is possible for the whole of a Form to be presented in more than one place. Plato's dealing with this question appeared in the *Theaetetus* 202 b6, *Sophist* 259 e, *Cratylus* 388-389. What pops up in most of these important paragraphs is Plato's formulating of Forms concerning language, insofar as the existence of X, either concerns Forms or the real world takes place in sentential structure. In this respect, if we concentrate ourselves on a sentential context, the discussion can go through at two different levels, that is: specific and general.

(1) Specific:

When we have a sentence, the sentence is constituted in two formats which take place, for instance, as below:

X has a property Fness.

X is the Fness.

These two sentences could be categorized by the expressions: Predication and Identification that both of which have operations that involve being. The involving of being leads us to the second stage.

(2) General:

When it is syntactically possible to make predicative or identifying sentences, the main difficulty is that:

How it would be possible to have this possibility in the real world? In other words, how it exists ontological glue for predicating or identifying something into something else, as it is in the sentence or more general in the language?

The general answer to this question goes around Parmenides objections on theory of Forms and also the advices²⁸ that encounter us with some metaphysical difficulties. But, this fact ensures us that Plato's theory of Forms seems to be a theory by which Plato is going to be envisaged with Parmenides' thesis. Plato's theory of Forms is a well-built theory on the discussion of "what is," and as much as Plato goes forward, specifically in the late dialogues, the theory spells out the implications of Parmenidean thesis. Consequently these premises vindicate Plato's attempt for demonstrating a way in which the aforementioned glue, whether in the real world or in the language is supported.

The intriguing role that Platonic Forms play, eventually makes Parmenides determine to ask: "How it is possible for the whole of a Form to be presented in more than one place?" In a curtailed word, Plato's answer to this question is constituted under the expression of the intercommunion of Forms. "Think of particular things as $\Sigma \nu \mu \pi \lambda \delta \kappa \alpha i$, the Forms as the threads that are thus interwoven ($\pi \lambda \epsilon \kappa \nu \alpha i$)."

Whatever Platonic Forms are, as the controversy shows us, in a sense they are on the corner. The most important point to consider here might be that Plato is addressing us to something by the intercommunion of Forms. What Plato has in mind is that how the external world gets connected to the Forms. In other words,

when we speak about the external world, how our thoughts connect to the real world! Plato is in need of establishing very firm join between language and reality. I call this join ontological glue²⁹ which concentrates on the kind of linking between internal and external worlds. This links gets crucial when we attribute something into something else, for instance, "X is black!" The link philosophically gets more high priority when we replace X by a proper name, for example in "Socrates is wise." The problem in such cases is how wiseness is attributed to Socrates. In the sentence, at the first blush, the verb "is" plays the role of linking between Socrates and wiseness. But does this linking cover also the real world?

The answer is negative. Aristotelian analysis of sentence into subject, predicate, and relation does not support this neither from ontological point of view, nor semantic. This is the matter that deceives scholars whose interpretation is based on rendering "is" into "...partaking of..." Two statements about Theaetetus in the *Sophist* are examples whose structure helps us to understand the mistake and discover the solution then. In the statement such as "Theaetetus is sitting" or "Theaetetus is flying," or even "Theaetetus is not flying," most of the scholars believe that Plato renders such statements into "Theaetetus partakes of the Form of..." or "Theaetetus does not partake of the Form of..." They set forth an interpretation by which neither the intercommunion of Forms is interpreted nor Parmenides has been run off.

Parmenides' stating of either unutterability or unthinkable(ness) (ἀνόητον) of negation indicates on making any attribution with the aid of "is." For him, "is" belongs to the subject and through this way it is a link that connects the subject to the predicate. Consequently when the verb "is" is negated nothing, it could be spoken about subject, only because no link between cannot be get on feet, and no discourse could be assumed. The first result of Parmenidean thesis, namely, unutterability of Not-Being, is impossibility of falsehood, whereas by reversing Parmenidean thesis, the result will be ensued in the possibility of falsehood. In this respect, falsehood concerns being as other than they are (όντων όντα έτερα). Here is the point that connects the theme with discourse, thinking (διάνοια), judgment (δόξα), and the importance of the intercommunion of Forms. Necessarily we are in need of making sentence to understand the world. This result leads us to the other stage of our subject, by which I support Plato's unique achievement in developing metaphysics. Plato's ontology is in contrast with Parmenides, and analogically his analysis of sentence to which the ontology is rendered certainly should be same with Parmenidean.

In my opinion, Plato regards "is" in predicative part of the sentence and leaves the subject detached and separate. The solo subject can be prone to either affirmation or negation. Since we are enabled to make sentence about the objects and occurrences in the sensible world, the discourse comes into reality. The ontological glue provided by regarding "is" in the predicative part surpasses the problem and Forms as concepts get interwoven with together.

4. Conclusion

In sum, the problem of the proper names is the core of the solution of the intercommunion of Forms. This problem is related to the subject-predicate relation. In all cases, for example "Socrates is wiseman" or "Theaetetus is flying," according to the scholars, the word "is" has always been regarded as a possession of the subject. I think this interpretation would be misunderstanding Plato's logical thought. In debunking of scholars, I believe that if we regard "is" completely in predicative part—as Plato does so³⁰—the difficulty will be removed and most of the problems would be over and hurdles such as copula and other meanings of "is" would be solved. It is due to this reason that I regard the Form as concept in the first part of my paper. In this extent,

"is" in the sentence operates as being in the real world and this solution solves all mentioned problems: (1) The intercommunion of Forms; (2) The ontological glue and its relation with sentential structure; moreover, (3) The essence of Forms as concepts is demonstrated.

Overall, I shall point out into a turn by which Plato presents, I believe, the last step of his ontology. As I hinted before, Plato injects the ontology into a sentential Form. The textual shift vindicates a nifty idea according to which Plato, with a strong language, is going to provide a milestone for his metaphysics. By the example concern Theaetetus, he shows that not only we are in deal with things, reality generally as object of knowledge, but also this fact makes sense only and only when we are engaged with it, in the world of words. It is obviously a theory of meaning in which Plato not only is not dismayed by Parmenidean monism, but also devastates the Eleatic doctrines and lags them behind, in addition to mapping a pure logical transmission in his ontology.

Notes

1. Parmenides, 135 b.

- 3. Pelletier, Francis Jeffry, 36.
- 4. Sph. 238 a8-9, also DK 28 b7. 1-2/237 a8-9 & 258 d2-3/Coxon 1989, 190-1/Kirk, Raven & Schofield, 1938, 248.
- 5. This idea is advocated by the following scholars: Cornford, Ross, Allan, Hamlyn, Schipper, Bluck, Moravcsik, Runciman, Owen, Lewis, Wiigins, Philip, Ackrill, Kostman, Sayer, Frede, Lorenz, Mittelstrass.
 - 6. When we say not-being, we speak, I think, not of something that is the opposite of being, but only of something different.
 - 7. fn. 1
- 8. The complete isolation of each thing from all is the utterly final obliteration of all statements (discourse). Because, the power of discourse is derived from us, namely, the forms have intercommunion with each other.
- 9. Campbell's not on Plato's *Sophist* 259 e, The Loeb Classical Library, Ed. George Patrick Goold, Harvard University Press, 1996, fn. 1, 426-7.
 - 10. Ibid.
- 11. Concern the word concepts here, it is pointed out by Ackrill that "the use of this term may seem provocative. But whether or not the $\varepsilon i\delta \eta$ and $\gamma \varepsilon v \eta$ of the Sophist are something more than 'mere' concepts, a good deal of interpretation of 251-9 can satisfactorily proceed on the assumption that they are at least concepts." Ackrill, John Lloyd, *Plato and the Copula*, fn. 2.

There is not any good account why it is better to interpret Forms into concept, but in this paper I have tried to give reasonable answer for this shift. In addition to these, I think it seems that regarding certain Forms as concept is the only way that ridges between them and statement.

- 12. Peck, 1962, 59.
- 13. Ignored by the scholars.
- 14. Dürr, Von Karl, Moderne Darstellung der platonischen Logik. Ein beitrag zur Erklärung des dialoges (Sophistes): Modern Representation of the Platonic Logic. A Contribution to the Explanation of Dialogue (Sophist), in Museum Helveticum, 1945, 171-5, and also Ackrill, John Lloyd, Plato and Copula: Sophist 251-259, in Plato: Mataphysics and Epistemology, ed. Vlastos, George, NY, 1971, 219-20.
 - 15. The whole sentence is mentioned before, in the second section of my paper. fn. 8.
 - 16. Cornford, 1935, 300.
 - 17. Ibid., 314.
 - 18. See also Achrill, John Lloyd, ΣΥΜΠΛΟΚΗ ΕΙΔΩΝ, Essays on Plato and Aristotle, Clarendon, 72-79, specifically 72-73.
 - 19. Sophist 263.
 - 20. Ackrill, ibid.
- 21. Cornford translates the $\sigma \nu \mu \pi \lambda \sigma \kappa \dot{\eta}$ into weaving. I changed it into communing because of the current article in which the word $\sigma \nu \mu \pi \lambda \sigma \kappa \dot{\eta}$ on the one hand is translated into intercommunion, and on the other hand, since the discussion aims at making the discourse possible, I believe that translating the Greek word $\sigma \nu \mu \pi \lambda \sigma \kappa \dot{\eta}$ into intercommunion is more plausible.
 - 22. Cornford, 1935, 300.
 - 23. Cornford's emphasize.
 - 24. Plato, Theaetetus, 185.
 - 25. Cornford, Ibid.

^{2.} It is very important to survey the problem in details, in order to not commit the mistake that late Plato has left his theory of Ideas. Jean Wahl, *Traite de Metaphysics*, Paris, 1953, *L'Idée* d'être.

- 26. Dealing with this question seems to be existed only in the Statesman 262, and Aristotle's Alexandrian interpretations.
- 27. In a widespread rank, most of the classical philologists could be settled in same level as I have dragged Cornford in.
- 28. 1, parm. Part one & transitional part 135-136 d.
- 29. In this regard, following Frege I am in the line of Fregean philosophy.
- 30. Geach, Peter. The History of the Corruption of Logic, Leeds University Press, 1968.

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