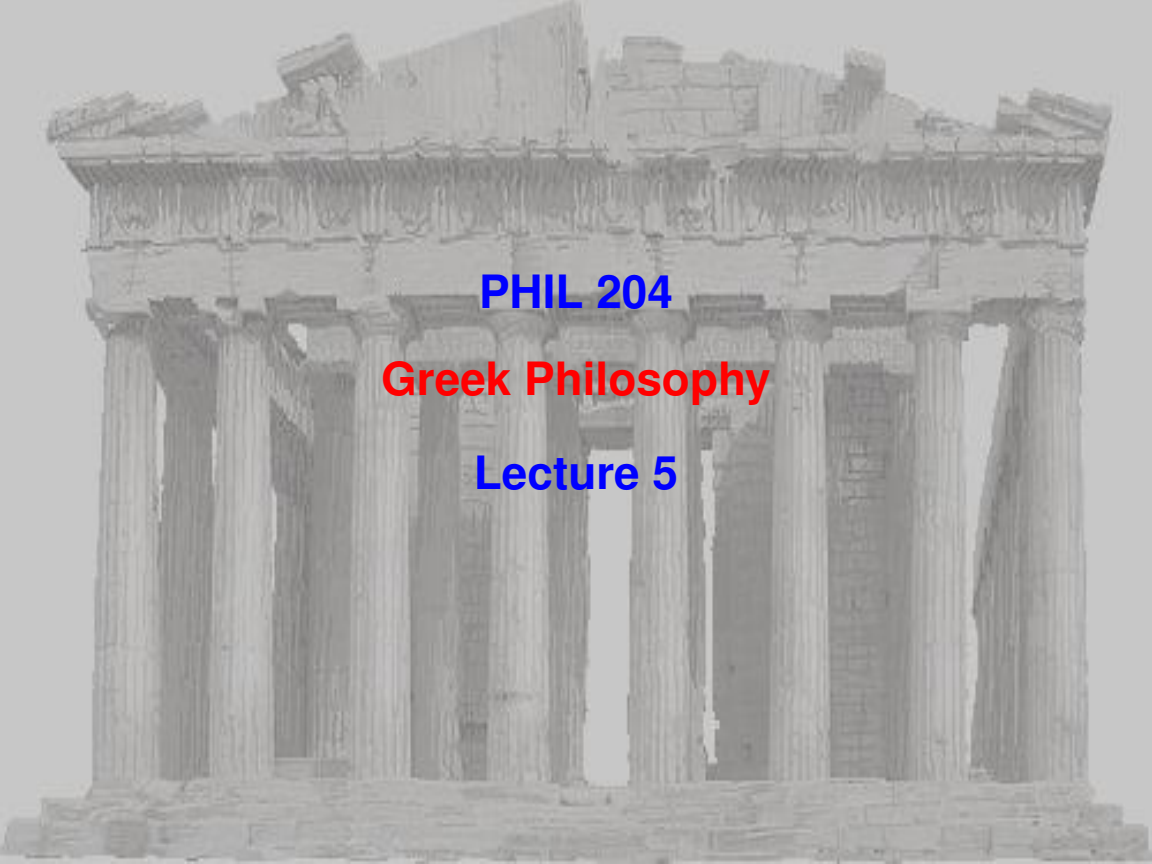
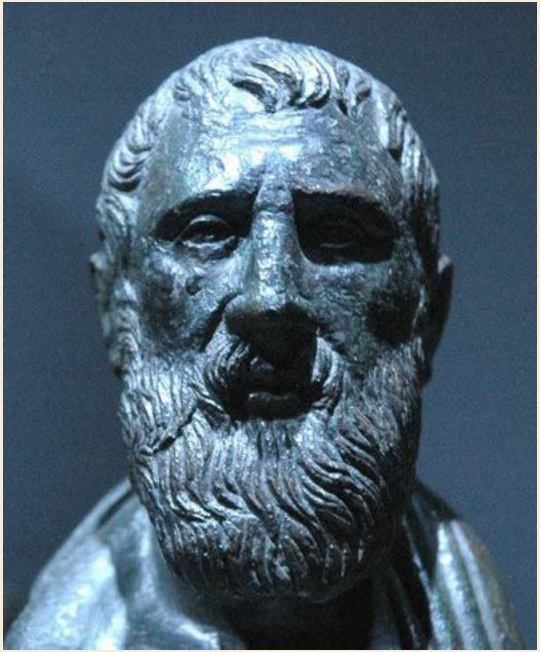


PHIL 204

Greek Philosophy

Lecture 5



Zeno of Elea 490?-430? BCE

Plato's *Parmenides* and Socrates' Theory of Forms.

A. Zeno's arguments:

If what is real is multiple, then it is both *F* and not *F*

In the *Parmenides* the word translated as ’Idea’ is the same word that is translated as ’Form’ elsewhere.

It can also be translaed as ’Species’.

B. Parmenides' Problems with Socrates Understanding of the Theory of Forms:

1. Socrates has not sufficiently thought through the question of what kinds of things there are Forms of.

2. Socrates has not sufficiently worked out the nature of participation, or sharing.

(a) Forms cannot be shared either as a whole or as part.

(i) *Not as a whole*

A Form cannot be shared as a whole by being present as a whole in each physical thing of that kind.

If it were it would be 'separated from itself' - and so would not be one.

Socrates: A Form might be multiplied in the way that a day is present in many places.

(ii) *Not as a part*

The Sail-Cloth argument.

A Form cannot be shared as a part by having a part present in each physical thing of that kind.

If it were it would be like a sail cloth covering many men.

Each man is covered by only a PART of the whole cloth.

So the Forms would be divided.

So a thing would be made large by what is less than Large.

And thing would be made equal by what is less than Equal.

Which is absurd.

(b) THE THIRD MAN ARGUMENT

***(A) The Non-identity Principle*:**

> **If *x*, *y*, and *z* are each *F*, then there is a single Form the *F*-itself, distinct from each of them, which makes them each *F*.**

So

if *Xantippe* is *beautiful*, then *Xantippe* is not identical to the *Beautiful*-itself.

***(B) The Self-Predication Principle*:**

The *F*-itself is *F*.

So

The Beautiful-itself is beautiful.

Suppose Xantippe is beautiful.

The Beautiful-itself is beautiful. [By (A)]

Therefore there is a Form *B* different from Xantippe and the Beautiful-itself by participation in which they are both beautiful. [By (B)]

By the same reasoning, there must be a fourth Form and a fifth Form and so on *ad infinitum*.

An infinite regress

THE THIRD MAN

(c) The Forms cannot be ideas in our minds.

Argument 1.

Suppose Forms exist only as thoughts.

A thought is a thought of something.

Therefore there something of which a thought is a thought.

Therefore the Forms must exist apart from the mind.

Argument 2.

Suppose Forms exist only as thoughts.

Things are what they are because they participate in a Form.

Therefore all things are made up of thoughts.

Therefore all things think or they are thoughts which do not think.

Socrates' Response: Forms are patterns, or paradigms, and participation is resemblance.

Against this:

(d) Participation cannot be resemblance.

An individual resembles the Form if and only if the Form resembles the individual.

Therefore both the individual and Form participate in the same Form.

Therefore there is a Form distinct from the individual and Form.

And so on *ad infinitum.*

(e) The greatest problem: The Forms are inaccessible to humans.

And so cannot explain human knowledge.

The Forms do not exist in us.

The Formss stand in certain relations to one another.

These relations correspond to but are entirely distinct from the relations of things in the physical world.

Example

(i) Relation of Mastery to Slavery
- relation of Forms.

(ii) Relation of master to slave
- relation in world.

Humans have no access to (i).

Absolute Knowledge (Knowledge-itself) = Knowledge of Forms.

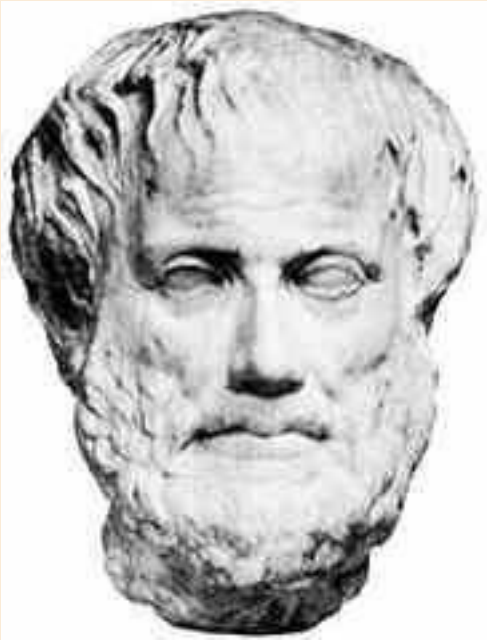
Human knowledge = knowledge of physical things.

Humans do not possess Absolute Knowledge.

Therefore humans do not know the Forms.

God has only Absolute Knowledge.

Therefore God does not know human beings.



Aristotle 384-322 BCE

Aristotle's Analysis of Plato's Mistake

(1) Plato has failed to distinguish the different meanings of general terms such as 'good' and 'being'.

(2) Plato supposes that what is ultimately real, Forms, or Ideas,are separate from the sensible world and that each one is both INDIVIDUAL and UNIVERSAL.

Refutation of the Arguments For Platonism

(1) *The Argument from the Sciences*

Each science has its own proper object of study.

The proper objects of a science are not particular individuals.

Therefore: for each science there must exist something other than sensible particulars.

Therefore there must be everlasting patterns of things, i.e. Ideas, or Forms.

Aristotle's *reductio ad absurdum:*

This proves the existence of Forms of things
that the Platonists do not want to have Ideas of.

Eg. the Form of the bed-itself.

(2) *The One Over Many argument.*

Each individual human being is a human being.

No thing is predicated of itself.

Therefore what is predicated of each individual is not the same as any of them.

Therefore there is something everlasting, distinct from the individual things which is predicated of each of them.

It is everlasting because always predicated.

What is one over many and everlasting is a Form, or Idea.

Aristotle's *reductio ad absurdum:*

This implies that there are Forms of negations etc.

But it is absurd that there should be Forms of non-beings.

These negative Forms would collect entirely dissimilar items - stones, fish and trees etc, are all, non-human.

(3) *The Object of Thought Argument*

Whenever we think of human being we are not thinking of a particular human being.

Therefore there is something of which we are thinking which is not particular.

What we are thinking of is a Form, or Idea.

Aristotle's *reductio ad absurdum:*

**We can equally well argue that since
we can think about perishable individuals
there are Formss of perishable individuals.**

(4) *The argument from Relations*

When we call sensible things equal we are referring them to a standard of equality.

None of the sensible things itself is the standard of equality.

Therefore there must exist apart from sensible things a standard of equality etc.

Aristotle's *reductio ad absurdum:*

The Forms are supposed to be entirely independent of one another but all relations involve dependence.