

Parmenides and the Question of Being in Greek Thought

"Parmenides began Philosophy proper." G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. I Greek Philosophy to Plato, (1825), Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 254

In the beginning of Western thinking, the saying of Parmenides speaks to us for the first time of what is called thinking. Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (1954), New York, Harper & Row, 1967, p. 196

ARGUMENT

This page is dedicated to an analysis of the first section of Parmenides' Poem, the Way of Truth, with a selection of critical judgments by the most important commentators and critics.

In the Annotated Bibliography I list the main critical editions (from the first printed edition of 1573 to present days) and the translations in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, and I give a selection of studies on Parmenides; in future, a section will be dedicated to an examination of some critical variants of the Greek text, with particular attention to corrections to the Diels-Kranz (abbreviated DK) edition of the *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.

The fragments of Parmenides' Poem are cited according to Diels-Kranz numbering system as adopted in the 6th edition, Berlin 1952; the Poem is divided into three parts: the Proem fr. I, 1-32; the Way of Truth (Alethéia) from fr. II to VIII, 49, and the Way of Mortal Opinion (Doxa) fr. VIII, 50 to XIX, 3.

Complete references of the texts cited are given in the Annotated bibliography.

INTRODUCTION: PARMENIDES' POEM

"Parmenides is credited with a single 'treatise' (Diogenes Laërtius 1, 16, DK 28 A 3) . Substantial fragments of this work, a hexameter poem, survive, thanks largely to Sextus Empiricus (who preserved the proem) and Simplicius (who transcribed further extracts into his commentaries on Aristotle's *de Caelo* and *Physics* 'because of the scarceness of the treatise'). Ancients and moderns alike are agreed upon a low estimation of Parmenides' gifts as a writer. He has little facility in diction, and the struggle to force novel, difficult and highly abstract philosophical ideas into metrical form frequently results in ineradicable obscurity, especially syntactic obscurity. On the other hand, in the less argumentative passages of the poem he achieves a kind of clumsy grandeur.

After the proem, the poem fans into two parts. The first expounds 'the tremorless heart of well-rounded Truth' (fr. 1, 29). Its argument is radical and powerful. Parmenides claims that in any enquiry there are two and only two logically coherent possibilities, which are exclusive -- that the subject of the enquiry exists or that it does not exist. On epistemological grounds he rules out the second alternative as unintelligible. He then turns to abuse of ordinary mortals for showing by their beliefs that never make the choice between the two ways 'is' and 'is not', but follow both without discrimination. In the final section of this first part he explores the one secure path, 'is', and proves in an astonishing deductive tour de force that if something exists, it cannot come to be or perish, change or move, nor be subject to any imperfection. Parmenides' arguments and his paradoxical conclusions had an enormous influence on later Greek philosophy; his method and his impact alike have rightly been compared to those of Descartes' *cogito*.

Parmenides' metaphysics and epistemology leave no room for cosmologies such as his Ionian predecessors had constructed nor indeed for any belief at all in the world our senses disclose to us. Nonetheless in the second (and much more scantily preserved) part of the poem he gives an account of 'the opinion of mortals, in which there is no true conviction'. The status and motive of this account are obscure."

From: Geoffrey Stephen Kirk, George Earle Raven, and Malcolm Schofield - *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* - Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1983 (Second revised edition) pp.

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"The poem of Parmenides raises peculiar problems, and it will be as well to approach the text with the chief of these already in mind. In the prologue he receives from a goddess the promise that she will reveal to him two sorts of information: first the truth about reality, then the opinions of mortals, which are unambiguously said to be false. 'Nevertheless these too shall thou learn' (fr. 1.31). In conformity with this, the first part of the poem deduces the nature of reality from premises asserted to be wholly true, and leads among other things to the conclusion that the world as perceived by the senses is unreal. At this point (fr. 8.50) the goddess solemnly declares that she ceases to speak the truth, and the remainder of the instruction will be 'deceitful'; yet she will impart it all 'that no judgment of men may outstrip thee'. Then follows the second part of the poem consisting of a cosmology on traditional lines. Starting from the assumption of a pair of opposites, 'fire' and 'night' or light and darkness, it proceeds as a narrative of an evolutionary process in time. The 'true way', on the other hand, had asserted that reality was, and must be, a unity in the strictest sense and that any change in it was impossible: there is no before or after, and the exposition unfolds as a timeless series of logical deductions.

Here is the crux. Why should Parmenides take the trouble to narrate a detailed cosmogony when he has already proved that opposites cannot exist and there can be no cosmogony because plurality and change are inadmissible conceptions? Has it in his eyes no merit or validity whatsoever, so that his purpose in composing it is only to show it up, together with all such attempts at cosmogony, for the hollow shams that they are? If so, the further question arises: what is it? Some have thought it to be based on a particular cosmic system of which he disapproved, for instance that of Heraclitus or the Pythagoreans. Others have suggested, following up the goddess's own words about the 'opinions of mortals' in general, that it is partly or wholly intended as a synthesis of what the ordinary man believed about the world; others again that it is an original production, indeed the best that Parmenides could devise, but still intended to show that even the most plausible account of the origin and nature of the sensible world is utterly false. These critics point to the motive expressed by the goddess, 'that no judgment of mortals may outstrip (or get the better of) thee'.

An alternative is to suppose that Parmenides is doing his best for the sensible world, perhaps on practical grounds, by giving as coherent an account of it as he can, saying in effect: I have told you the truth, so that if I go on to speak about the world in which we apparently live you will know it is unreal and not be taken in. But after all, this is how it does appear to us; however misleading our senses may be, we must eat and drink and talk, avoid putting our hand in the fire or falling over a precipice, live in short as if their information were genuine. Being ourselves mortals we must come to terms with this deceitful show, and I can at least help you to understand it better than other people.

These are the most baffling problems which Parmenides presents: the nature of the 'Way of Seeming' and the relation between it and the 'Way of Truth'. Yet the essence of his remarkable achievement lies, as might be expected, within the Way of Truth itself. " pp. 4-6

From: William Keith Chambers Guthrie - A History of Greek Philosophy. Vol. II: The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1965, First Chapter: The Eleatics. Parmenides - pp. 1-79.

"The problem of being was first posed in the West by the Greek Parmenides in the fifth century B.C. (...) Parmenides flourished in Elea, a Greek colony on the west coast of Italy, south of the Gulf of Salerno. The colony had been founded about 540 B.C. by Greeks from Ionia, who evidently brought with them the Ionian interest in the origin and development of the visible universe. At any rate, some fifty years after the foundation of the colony, a philosophical poem composed by Parmenides handed down the first recorded Western attempt to account for the universe in terms of being, instead of through the Ionian way of change and growth. This poem of Parmenides had far-reaching effects on subsequent philosophic development, as is amply attested in later Greek writings. It continued to be read for about a thousand years, and its tenets were discussed penetratingly by thinkers of the stature of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. Its influence on the thought of lesser figures is apparent. By the time the last copy of the complete poem had disappeared it had been quoted so abundantly by other writers that the sections and verses copied allow the general structure of the poem to be reestablished and permit the characteristic tenets attributed in tradition to Parmenides to be studied in the fragments themselves.

The poem had three parts, which formed a unified whole. The fragments that remain show how the second part followed in express sequence upon the first, and the third in express sequence upon the second. The first part was an introduction or proem, the second dealt with being, and the third with the way things appear to men. The composition fits into a recognized literary genre of the time. Somewhat as in Hesiod's Theogony (1-108) the goddesses appear to the poet at the foot of their sacred mountain and impart to him the truth about the way the immortal gods came into being, so Parmenides in the proem of his work introduces himself as being borne along in a chariot guided by sun

maidens who 'leaving behind the dwellings of night, sped me toward light' (Fr. 1.9-10; DK, 28 B). There Parmenides is warmly welcomed by a goddess into her home. She tells him he is to learn from her 'all things, both the unwavering heart of well-rounded truth, and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true assurance.' (1) The two other sections of the poem go on then to show him first what the truth is, and second how things appear as they do to mortal men. The tenses used by Parmenides in the poem indicate clearly enough that he was describing a journey made regularly, quite as a philosopher repeatedly journeys into the regions of his thought. (2) In consequence the poem is meant to describe the travel of the philosopher in his own proper world. The road traveled is characterized as "far away from the wandering of men. (3) On it Parmenides is to learn first the truth about all things, and then how the contrasted appearances are able to penetrate all in a way that makes them so readily acceptable to human cognition.' The contrast is clear between truth and appearance. Things are considered to appear to men in a way radically different from what the truth about them reveals. In this framework the second section of the poem intends to explain the truth, while the third section will explain how things are able to appear to men in a way different from the truth about them. The poem envisages truth as something unwavering, something firm and stable. The way men ordinarily think is, on the contrary, wandering, 'unstable. Appearance -- the ordinary thinking of mortals -- is in this manner sharply contrasted with the inspired teaching of the goddess."

(1) Fr. 1.28-30 See Tarán, Parmenides, on the controversies about the meaning of these lines (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1965) pp. 210-216.

(2) See Tarán pp. 9-13.

(3) Fr. 1.27 translated by Tarán p. 9; cfr. p. 16

From: Joseph Owens - Being in Early Western Tradition - in: Mervyn Sprung (ed.) - The Question of Being. East-West Perspectives - University Park and London, Pennsylvania State University Press pp. 17-18.

"Parmenides of Elea, a revolutionary and enigmatic Greek philosophical poet, was the earliest defender of Eleatic metaphysics. He argued for the essential homogeneity and changelessness of being, rejecting as spurious the world's apparent variation over space and time. His one poem, whose first half largely survives, opens with the allegory of an intellectual journey by which Parmenides has succeeded in standing back from the empirical world. He learns, from the mouth of an unnamed goddess, a dramatically new perspective on being. The goddess's disquisition, which fills the remainder of the poem, is divided into two parts; the Way of Truth and the Way of Seeming. The Way of Truth is the earliest known passage of sustained argument in Western philosophy. First a purportedly exhaustive choice is offered between two 'paths' - that of being, and that of not-being. Next the not-being path is closed off the predicate expression '... is not' could never be supplied with a subject, since only that-which-is can be spoken of and thought of. Nor, on pain of self-contradiction, can a third path be entertained, one which would conflate being with not-being - despite the fact that just such a path is implicit in the ordinary human acceptance of an empirical world bearing a variety of shifting predicates. All references, open or covert, to not-being must be outlawed. Only '... is' (or perhaps '... is ... ') can be coherently said of anything.

The next move is to seek the characteristics of that-which-is. The total exclusion of not-being leaves us with something radically unlike the empirical world. It must lack generation, destruction, change, distinct parts, movement and an asymmetric shape, all of which would require some not-being to occur. That-which-is must, in short, be a changeless and undifferentiated sphere.

In the second part of the poem the goddess offers a cosmology - a physical explanation of the very world which the first half of the poem has banished as incoherent. This is based on a pair of ultimate principles or elements, the one light and fiery, the other heavy and dark. It is presented as convening the 'opinions of mortals'. It is deceitful, but the goddess nevertheless recommends learning it, 'so that no opinion of mortals may outstrip you'.

The motive for the radical split between the two halves of the poem has been much debated in modern times. In antiquity the Way of Truth was taken by some as a challenge to the notion of change, which physics must answer, by others as the statement of a profound metaphysical truth, while the Way of Seeming was widely treated as in some sense Parmenides' own bona fide physical system."

From: David Sedley - Parmenides (early to mid 5th century B.C.) - in: Edward Craig (ed.) - Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy - New York, Routledge, 1998, Vol. I, p. 229.

"Parmenides of Elea marks a turning-point in the history of philosophy: his investigations, supported and supplemented by those of his two followers [Zeno and Melissus], seemed to reveal deep logical flaws in the very

foundations of earlier thought. Science, it appeared, was marred by subtle but profound contradictions; and the great enterprise undertaken by the Milesians, by Xenophanes and by Heraclitus, lacked all pith and moment. The age of innocence was ended, and when science was taken up again by the fifth-century philosophers, their first and most arduous task was to defend their discipline against the arguments of Elea. If their defense was often frail and unconvincing, and if it was Plato who first fully appreciated the strength and complexity of Parmenides' position, it remains true that Parmenides' influence on later Presocratic thought was all-pervasive. Historically, Parmenides is a giant figure; what is more, he introduced into Presocratic thought a number of issues belonging to the very heart of philosophy. Parmenides' thoughts were divulged in a single hexameter poem (Diogenes Laërtius, 1.16 = 28 A 13) which survived intact to the time of Simplicius (A 21). Observing that copies of the poem were scarce, Simplicius transcribed extensive extracts; and thanks to his efforts we possess some [B 6] lines of the work, including two substantial passages."

From: Jonathan Barnes - *The Presocratic Philosophers* - London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1979 - Vol. I: Thales to Zeno, p. 155.

"Parmenides expressed his ideas in a poem, but his work has been irreparably lost for at least fifteen centuries. Nothing remains of Parmenides' original Poem. The work was probably written at the end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century B.C. Without any doubt, it was copied and recopied (always by hand) over the course of many years, but all traces of it were lost in the sixth century of our era, that is, practically a millennium after it was written by Parmenides. The last concrete reference to the book appears in the neo-Platonic philosopher Simplicius (who is known to have left Athens in 526 A.D. because the Platonic Academy was closed down).

After quoting some lines from the Poem, Simplicius explains that he is taking that liberty 'because of the rarity (*dià ten spânin*) of Parmenides' book' (Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, p. 144) From then on, nothing is known about Parmenides' work. (...) Attempts to reconstruct Parmenides' Poem began shortly after the Renaissance, but although they were very praiseworthy, there were classical texts still unknown at that time, and the quotations from Parmenides contained in them were not discovered until several centuries later. These attempts at reconstruction go from Henri Estienne (*Poesis philosophica*, 1573) to Hermann Diels (*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 1903). Thanks to their work, which went on over many centuries, today we can read a good part of Parmenides' Poem. Nineteen different quotations were found (one of them translated into Latin!). These were unfortunately labeled 'fragments,' which is why, for the sake of convenience, works on Parmenides speak about 'fragment 3' or 'fragment 5'. As each fragment includes a number of lines, it is customary to write 'fr. 8.34', for example, when quoting line 34 of 'fragment' 8.

From what I have said, it can be seen that the version of Parmenides' Poem we possess is not complete. Passages that weren't quoted by anybody will remain unknown forever. Of course, the authors we use today as sources (perhaps abusively, because these authors were writing to express their own ideas, rather than to leave testimonies of other thinkers, except in the case of historians' of thought such as Theophrastus) quoted only those passages that interested them. There is nothing more subjective than a scholar's interest. A paradigmatic case is the vital Parmenides text, our present fragment 2, which postulates the existence of being, quoted for the first time by Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.345) a thousand years after it was written. Probably the discovery of the fact of being by Parmenides seemed so 'obvious' that nobody thought to quote it. Perhaps the same thing happened with other passages of the Poem; we will never know. Even so, today we possess nearly 152 lines of Parmenides, and these are an inexhaustible source of reflection. So let us take advantage of them."

From: Néstor-Luis Cordero - *By Being, It Is. The Thesis of Parmenides* - Las Vegas, Parmenides Publishing, 2004 pp. 12-14 (notes omitted).

"Sextus Empiricus and Simplicius have preserved to us the most important fragments from the poems of Parmenides; for Parmenides also propounded his philosophy as a poem.

The first long fragment in Sextus (*adv. Mat.* VII, 111) is an allegorical preface to his poem on Nature. This preface is majestic; it is written after the manner of the times, and in it all there is an energetic, impetuous soul which strives with being to grasp and to express it.

(...)

Since in this an advance into the region of the ideal is observable, Parmenides began Philosophy proper. A man now constitutes himself free from all ideas and opinions, denies their truth, and says necessity alone, Being, is the truth. This beginning is certainly still dim and indefinite, and we cannot say much of what it involves; but to take up this position certainly is to develop Philosophy proper, which has not hitherto existed. The dialectic that the transient has

no truth, is implied in it, for if the determinations are taken as they are usually understood, contradictions ensue."

From: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel - Lectures on the History of Philosophy - London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1968 (reprint of 1892 edition) - vol. I p. 250 and 254.

THE QUESTION OF BEING IN PARMENIDES' POEM

Interpreting Parmenides invariably leads us to many of the foundational questions of metaphysics: What is the meaning of essence and existence as such? How can I be certain that reality is not just an illusion stealthily concocted by my senses and imagination? What is the purpose and significance of self-conscious life? Is there a beginning to the space-time continuum? Can something come-to-be from nothing? Is my soul immortal?

Exploring these questions in Parmenides requires that we first come to terms with the general meaning of the verb εἶμι in all of its inflected forms as present indicative ἐστί (is), infinitive εἶναι (to be), and participle ἐόν (Being). We must then ask whether differences in inflection and syntax cause discernible differences in the verb's meaning. And, if there are differences in meaning produced by differences of inflection, are the correlations predictable and exact, or do they differ from context to context? Finally, what impact would such differences of meaning have on our understanding of the Parmenidean concept of Being?

Charles Kahn points out in his valuable essay "The Greek Verb 'To Be' and the Concept of Being" [1966] that "the most fundamental value of einai when used alone (without predicates) is not 'to exist' but 'to be so,' 'to be the case,' or 'to be true'." (1) Kahn calls this sense of the verb "to be" its "veridical usage." Kahn's innovation challenges those standard interpretations of Parmenides based on a much later distinction between essence (i.e., what a thing is) and existence (i.e., the fact that a thing is, abstracted from any of its worldly determinations). These standard interpretations argue that Parmenides intended to distinguish very subtle differences of meaning by the verb ἐστί, for instance:

(1) ἐστί as existential "is," expressing the fact of a thing's presence:

E.g., B 2.3: ὅπως ἐστί: "that it is," where "it" implies unqualified existence, as conveyed in ἐστί.

(2) ἐστί as the "is" expressing the possibility of a thing's presence:

E.g., B 6.1: ἐστί γάρ εἶναι: "since it is possible to be," where the phrase "it is possible" (ἐστί) has the infinitive "to be" (εἶναι) as subject, and the ideas of possibility (ἐστί) and existence (εἶναι) are inseparably linked.

(3) ἐστί as the copula "is" linking predicate to subject:

E.g., B 8.48: ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστί: "since all is inviolate."

Although these distinctions between the various uses of ἐστί are obvious in later Attic prose, it is much more difficult to argue that Parmenides had uses (1) and (2) clearly distinguished. For instance, while it may be argued that at B 6.1 the term "Being" (ἐόν) lies hidden as an impersonal "it" in the clause "since it is possible to be" (ἐστί γάρ εἶναι), by assimilation to the immediately preceding clause "it is necessary to say and think that Being is" (χρή τό λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐόν ἐμμεναι), it is far less clear just what the impersonal "it" represents in B 2.3's "that it is" (ὅπως ἐστί) and "that it is not possible not to be" (ὡς οὐκ ἐστί μή εἶναι), and 2.5's "that it is not" (ὡς οὐκ ἐστί) and "that it must not not be" (ὡς χρεὼν ἐστί μή εἶναι) -- unless we supply "Being" implicit by analogy from B 6.1. What we find in the poem is more of a primordial monistic theory of Being, than a sophisticated ontological system of classification between various modes of Being.

Kahn's contribution possesses great merit precisely because he breaks free not only from total dependence upon the post-Parmenidean essence-existence distinction, but from the much more problematic application of the three (or more) uses of "is" presupposed by standard interpretations. Kahn sees the poet in his proper historical context as an early philosopher espousing a much more holistic message about the way things are than many scholars are willing to countenance. Thus, I argue parallel to Kahn, that the many and various uses of the verb "to be" that we find so prevalent in the later Attic prose writers were simply not available to Parmenides as established literary practice."

From: Martin Henn - Parmenides of Elea. A Verse Translation with Interpretative Essays and Commentary to the Text. Westport: Praeger Publishers 2003, pp. 31-32.

"If we are to examine Parmenides' reasoning profitably, an indispensable preliminary is to establish at least a provisional reading for the Greek words translated "is" or "it is" (esti), "what is" or "being" (on, to on), "to be" (einai). For while it is evident enough that in his poem Parmenides purports to be delivering an insight of the utmost significance concerning to eon (as he calls it), still the construction which he puts upon the term and its cognates, and the understanding which he expects of his listener, are not so clear and have been topics of dispute.

Especially notable, and often noted, is the fact that Parmenides' discussion of 'being' shows no sign of the conceptual distinction considered elementary nowadays, between the "is" linking subject and predicate and the "is" of existence; and in fact it needs no documentation here that this distinction was not reflected in either ordinary or philosophical Greek idiom until, at least, a much later date than his, the word esti expressing both concepts. Also highly visible in the poem is the abundance of occurrences of esti used absolutely, unaccompanied by any predicate expression. As a result of this last, the poem can create in the contemporary reader the impression that to eon is being used to mean 'what is' in the existential sense only, to mean what there is; indeed some students of the poem conclude not only that Parmenides is unwittingly confining himself to the existential meaning, but even that his confusion on this score is responsible for his entire doctrine. (2)

Such scant basis as there is for the latter idea will be adequately treated below; (3) but it is important to understand from the outset that the notion of 'being' studied by Parmenides and by early Greek philosophy in general, is not 'confined' to either of our two distinct concepts, that of existence and that of being something-or-other in the sense of having such-and-such properties (being a man, being green); rather, these notions are impacted or fused in the early Greek concept of being. A result is that a Greek inquiry ti to on, 'what is being?', frequently must be interpreted as concerned simultaneously with the concepts of being = existence and of 'being Φ ' for variable Φ . To approach a Greek thinker, even as late as Aristotle, without keeping this in mind is to risk serious misunderstanding of his concerns.

This fusion of the ideas of existence and of being-of-a-certain-sort does not merely show itself in the early use of the word esti, but seems to be part of a more general situation having other manifestations also; these have such close bearings on the interpretation of Parmenides that the matter should be explored a little further. First let us recall -- what has often been pointed out -- tendency in ancient philosophy, (a) to take as the ideal or paradigm form of fact-stating assertion the ascription of a property to an object, and the further tendency (b) to take as the ideal or paradigm form of ascription of a property to an object the use of a subject-predicate sentence with subject and predicate linked by the copula. (5) In this way the predicative use of esti can come to be thought of as paradigmatic for asserting that anything at all is the case, or obtains. And once we see this we can discern a considerable variety of assimilations at points where nowadays it is customary to make distinctions; thus, a running together of

(1a) being-the case (on) with (1b) existence (on),

(2a) facts (pragmata, tynchanonta, etc.) with (2b) objects (pragmata, tynchanonta, etc.)

(3a) coming-to-be (the case) (gigenesthai) with (3b) coming-to-be (= coming to exist) (gignesthai).

Parallel to the fusion of the notions of fact and object as items of the world, is a tendency at the semantical level to run together properties of sentences with properties of singular and general terms. Here the common element is an expression's 'corresponding (or failing to correspond) to something that is' in the two senses of "is"; thus truth for sentences, describing what is (the case), can tend to fuse with applying to something for singular and general terms, denoting something that is (= exists), and conversely falsehood for sentences tends to merge with failure to apply to anything for terms. In this case the assimilation is rather conceptual than fully visible in the vocabulary; for example, terms (onomata) that apply to or denote something are not for this reason (6) called "true" (alethe); the fusion is evidenced when the notions are being explained: thus truth as 'saying, indicating in speech, that which is,' and falsehood as 'saying, indicating in speech, that which is not.' In these terms we can put the assimilation in this way:

(4a) saying, indicating in speech, that which is (= stating truly) with (4b) saying, indicating in speech, that which is (designating something that exists),

(5a) saying, indicating in speech, that which is not (= stating falsely) with (5b) saying, indicating in speech, that which is not (= designating something that does not exist)."

pp. 112-114 (notes omitted)

From: Montgomery Furth - "Elements of Eleatic Ontology," Journal of the History of Philosophy: 111-132 (1968).

THE STANDARD INTERPRETATION (IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ACCOUNTS) OF PARMENIDES

Most recent English-language discussions of Parmenides have been influenced by G.E.L. Owen's account of Parmenides' theory and its place in Presocratic thought. Owen's view (or various versions and adaptations of it) has become the standard interpretation of Parmenides. (11) I argue against Owen's views in Chapters I and II; here I explore the explanation of the development of Presocratic thought to which Owen's account (or one like it) is committed. I believe that my interpretation of Parmenides and the development of Presocratic philosophy makes better sense of the history of Presocratic thought, at least as we have it in the surviving fragments. (12)

Any explanation of the thought of Parmenides must give an account of the nature of the esti (it is) in B2 and throughout the poem, and also explain the subject of that esti. Owen's view is that the subject of the esti is "what can be thought or spoken of" and that the esti is existential. (13) Thus, according to Owen, Parmenides' doctrine is that only what can be thought or spoken of can exist and indeed must exist. And, given the arguments of B8, only one such thing can and must exist; a solitary thing, neither coming to be nor passing away, nor subject to any changes, constitutes what there is. (14) Barnes suggests a modification of Owen's view. According to Barnes, rather than investigating "in a Kantian fashion, the implications of rationality," Parmenides explores "the possibility, not exactly of rational thought, but of scientific research." (15) Like Owen, Barnes adopts an existential reading of Parmenides' esti, and so, according to Barnes, Parmenides is claiming that whatever is the object of study exists. (16) Unlike Owen, Barnes does not think that Parmenides was committed to numerical monism, so he does not find in Parmenides a claim that only one such object of study can, indeed must, exist. (17)

This interpretation of Parmenides' argument faces a number of difficulties. The question of who it is that Parmenides is attacking has long exercised commentators. No predecessor of Parmenides, at least as far as we know, had held that one can or ought to inquire into what does not exist. Rather, the Presocratic thinkers who preceded Parmenides sought to explain the physical phenomena of the world reported by the senses, offering accounts both of the development of the kosmos and of the physical, astronomical, and meteorological characteristics of that kosmos. There was, as far as the surviving evidence shows, no worry about or interest in the sorts of questions about "meaning, reference, and existence"; (18) that the Owen-Barnes view attributes to Parmenides. Owen specifically denies that Parmenides' target wits any of the cosmological views (or assumptions required by the cosmological views) of his predecessors, and Barnes takes a similar position. Both take Parmenides' target to be the assumption that things can be talked about or studied when they do not exist; Owen claims that ordinary persons who think that some things are non-existent or that some things exist here but not there are those who take "the path of mortals" and are thus the object of Parmenides' scorn in B6. (19) What evidence is there for this explanation of Parmenides' target? Owen and Barnes offer none that connects Parmenides with the views or arguments of earlier philosophers. (20)"

11 In most English-language accounts of Parmenides, the assumption is that the Owen view (or a version of it) is correct. However, Tarán interpretation is an alternative to the Owen view, taking Parmenides' subject to be Being. I discuss Tarán's account below, in n. 27.

12 I do not suggest that I prove that what I call the standard accounts, and those views based on them, are false. Rather, I think that the story that I tell makes better sense of the history of Presocratic philosophy. The fragmentary nature of the evidence, and the difficulties in interpreting that evidence (particularly the testimonia) make it unlikely that any interpretation can be counted as final or definitive. What I have tried to do in this book is to interpret the fragments and testimonia as carefully as I can, imposing as few preconceptions on the material as possible. It is impossible to read Presocratic philosophy as the Presocratics themselves did; any interpretation is filtered through contemporary philosophical attitudes and colored by knowledge of "what happened next" (as evidenced by the very name "Presocratics"). But this does not, I think, mean that we cannot have grounds for preferring one interpretation of the evidence to another. On the issue of different interpretations of Presocratic thought, see Mourelatos, "Alternatives in interpreting Parmenides." I discuss several current interpretations of Parmenides in this section, but I do not pretend that this is a comprehensive survey of views on Parmenides, nor do I intend it as such. Such comprehensive surveys may be found in Tarán, Guthrie, and Bormann. Here my object is to discuss two views of Parmenides: one that makes Parmenides' subject "what can be thought or investigated" and another claiming that Parmenides' subject is Being. Mourelatos, in *Route* and in a number of papers, offers an important and attractive alternative to the interpretations of Parmenides that I have discussed here. I see my own view as a development of Mourelatos's account of the Alêtheia section of Parmenides' poem, and say more about the details of his account, and about the similarities and differences between his view and mine in Chapters I and II.

13 Owen, "Eleatic Questions," pp. 14-16.

14 Owen's view is accepted by (among others) Stokes (One and Many), Furley (in his Encyclopedia of Philosophy article on Parmenides, although he opts for a "fused" interpretation of the esti in "Notes on Parmenides"), Gallop (Parmenides), and McKirahan. See also Chap. I, n. 9. In his later work Owen gave up the existential reading of the esti (see Chap. I, n. 7), but his existential interpretation in "Eleatic" remains influential. O'Brien rejects much of Owen's interpretation, but he, too, opts for an existential reading of the esti (see his claims throughout "Le Poème de Parménide").

15 Both quotations occur on p. 163 of vol. I of Barnes's Presocratic Philosophers (=PP).

16 My formulation is intentionally loose here, in order to capture some unclarity that Barnes finds in Parmenides' views. Barnes takes it that Parmenides' claim does not decide between claims about the inquiry into and so the existence of (1a) "things of a certain sort (stars, winds, horses)" and (1b) particular things ("the sun, Boreas, Pegasus") (PP, vol. I, p. 163). Furthermore, according to Barnes, Parmenides does not "see that two distinct propositions are on view" in the modal operators of the second halves of lines B2.3 and B2.5. According to Barnes, Parmenides' claim is neutral between (2a) "If a thing is studied, it has the property of necessary existence" and (2b) "It is necessarily true that anything studied exists" (PP, vol. I, p. 164).

17 A version of Barnes's view seems to be adopted by Schofield in KRS (see pp. 245-46). Like Barnes, Schofield claims that the subject of the esti is "any subject of inquiry whatever" (p. 245), but he allows that both predicative and existential interpretations of the esti are possible: "Parmenides' use of estin is simultaneously existential and predicative ... but not therefore .. confused" (p. 246). Nonetheless, it should be noted that, while adopting the fused esti, Schofield stresses the existential component: he interprets the negative way as primarily an attempt to make negative existential claims (see p. 246). According to Schofield, Parmenides' claim that a non-existence assertion expresses "no clear thought" is paradoxical, "but like all good paradoxes it forces us to examine more deeply our grasp of the concepts it employs -- notably in this case the relations between meaning, reference, and existence" (p. 246). Unlike Barnes, Schofield thinks that Parmenides is committed to numerical monism, although he finds the argument for monism unclear (p. 251). A re-examination of some of these issues is to be found in Mason, who suggests that in exploring connections between thought and reality Parmenides is concerned to give an account of how properly to characterize what is.

18 See Schofield in Kirk, Raven, Schofield (1983), p. 246.

19 Owen, "Eleatic," pp. 14-15; Barnes, PP vol. I, pp. 165-70.

20 Barnes offers a passage from the Dissoi Logoi. But it is much later than Parmenides and is no doubt influenced by later philosophical debates, including the work of the Sophists. (On the Dissoi Logoi, see Robinson, *Contrasting Arguments. An edition of the Dissoi Logoi*. New York: Arno Press, 1979. Robinson argues [pp. 34-41] for a date of around 403-395 for the Dissoi Logoi.) Owen says, "I am not of course denying that some of the ideas employed in the course of [Parmenides'] argument may have been inherited from earlier theorists. This must be true of some of the cosmogony, and probably at least the idea of peiras in the Alétheia" ("Eleatic," p. 16, n. 51). But Owen does not admit that the earlier Presocratics had any other importance for Parmenides, although he also claims in the last sentence of his article that Parmenides "wished to demolish" the tradition of earlier Presocratic cosmologies. As ordinary persons as well as practitioners of inquiry, earlier Presocratic thinkers would be the target of Parmenides' arguments. But Owen does not see in Parmenides any special concern with earlier cosmological thought and inquiry.

From: Patricia Curd - *The Legacy of Parmenides. Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1998, pp. 9-11

THE UNIQUENESS OF BEING ACCORDING TO PARMENIDES

Having pursued Parmenides' argument to the end, we may now pause to consider the function within it of the predicate *év* applied to Being at the opening of the argument. We have observed that it is not a predicate that is formally announced as requiring proof. The nearest Parmenides comes to putting this predicate in the programme is to say that (8.4) the subject is *μουνογενής*, unique of its kind, or (quite simply) unique, single. But he nowhere devotes a separate paragraph to the proof of its *μουνογενής* nature alone. So much there is to be said for Cornford's assertion that Parmenides does not prove his Being to be one. (115) Where Parmenides does, however, prove it is in the middle of a paragraph (8.34ff) ostensibly aimed at proving that the only thought is the thought of the subject's existence, and it is the immediate premiss from which that conclusion is deduced. The subject's singleness is proved from another predicate (*ούλον*) in its turn derivable from the original decision to speak or think of nothing save one thing, namely,

what is. The assertion that Being is one is for Parmenides the statement that it is alone and single. This statement he bases on the assumption that one can think of nothing else, which in turn is based on the assertion that there is nothing else there to be thought of. Parmenides recognizes that the oneness of Being in this sense is an intermediate stage in his argument when he summarizes the thought of his opening denial of becoming by saying that "it was once" and "it will be" are inapplicable, since it is now all together, one and continuous, and when he goes on to argue at 8.22ff, as a necessary supplement to the argument against becoming, that it is indivisible and continuous. That Being is single follows from the fact that it is οὔλον and συνεχες, that there is nothing else. That it will remain single and unique is the result of its being unchanging and unmoving; but it must be unchanging and unmoving because there is nothing else for it to change into and no other place for it to move to. The singleness of Being is central to the argument and depends in its turn directly on the original disjunction ἐστὶν ἢ οὐκ ἐστὶν. It depends on the doctrine that you cannot talk or think about the non-existent and therefore cannot discourse about anything other than the existent. The only place where the impossibility of anything other than the existent is explicit is at 8.36ff, but it is nevertheless an important, indeed a cardinal, point.

Nowhere in the poem does Parmenides start from "what is one" and deduce anything about its nature; he appears to be doing so in the opening demolition of becoming and perishing, but this is illusory, in that Being's singleness is dependent in turn on the negation of nonexistence. Further, Parmenides has nothing to say about "plurality" arising from unity. He would agree (or indeed argue) that his subject is one and cannot become many, but it is not in virtue of its unity that it cannot become many. It cannot become many, he would agree, because there never will be more than one thing; and there never will be more than one thing because that would infringe the rule that only Being can be thought of, and nothing else, either now or at any other time. Even if at B8.22 the denial of divisibility were a denial that the subject can become many, the reason given is not that it is one but that it is, all in a like degree. To say this is not to state that Parmenides would have agreed that what is one can become many-- he would have excluded this or any other kind of becoming. It needs still to be said that Parmenides is concerned with becoming in general and that there is no reason in his text to suppose that the specific kind of becoming in which a unity gives rise to a plurality ever entered his head. Previous thought might have given him the idea, but his poem shows, and in logic need show, no trace of it whatever.

Nor does Parmenides show that what is one cannot be many.¹¹⁶ For again, if οὔλον, συνεχες, εν, μουνογενες, οὐ διαμερον, ταύτον, and so forth constitute a denial of plurality, as they do, it is still not in virtue of its initial unity that Parmenides' subject has these predicates hung on it but in virtue of its own existence, as being the only thing that can be talked or thought about. It is not so much that what is one cannot be many (though Parmenides would certainly have agreed, if pressed, that it cannot) as that what is must be one, single, continuous whole. Again, Parmenides does not start from unity. As long as in παν ἐστὶν ὁμοιον the word ὁμοιον was taken adjectivally, there was some sort of case for supposing that line to infer the negation of plurality from the assertion of unity. But the case even then was not strong; for, though ὁμοιον is in Aristotle a kind of ἐν, the two words are not interchangeable in Presocratic thought. Further, if ὁμοιον be adjectival and equivalent here in Parmenides' mind to ἐν, one would still have to search for the argument that led Parmenides to postulate the unity (in this sense) of his subject. Parmenides would then be found guilty of proceeding from the proposition that the subject all is (παμπαν line 11) to the statement that it is all alike. The basis for this could of course be the original κρίσις; the abolition of difference being equated with the abolition of not-Being. But this interpretation, apart from ignoring the stylistic difficulties of taking ὁμοιον adjectivally, would have the philosophical disadvantage of making Parmenides less explicit and harder to follow. And, even if one followed it, one would still, it seems, be compelled to admit that unity was not an assumption for Parmenides but something he thought he had proved. One would also have to admit that Parmenides was not specially concerned to prove that what was one in general could not be many but was rather seeking to show that his subject in particular, since it was one, could not be many. There should therefore be no more heard of the hypothesis that Parmenides proved that what was one (in the sense of being homogeneous) could not have gaps in it and thus be many. It will be observed in subsequent chapters that, if Parmenides' successors did find such a proof in his text, at any rate they ignored it. (117)

It is important in this context to notice that Parmenides did not have to prove in particular that what was one could not become many, or that homogeneity could not give rise to a varied multiplicity, in order to invalidate cosmogonies of the type produced by his Ionian predecessors. There is no reason to suppose that he had them specially in mind; but, even if he had, his general argument refutes them along with the rest of mankind. For, to make a varied world arise from a substantially homogeneous beginning, clearly something must change, or homogeneity will be the only result. So that, quite apart from the Parmenidean wholesale rejection of the world perceived by the senses, a cosmogony of the Ionian kind was impossible. If becoming and perishing went, this sort of cosmogony went with them. Parmenides, even if he were specially concerned with his Milesian predecessors, and even if they had enunciated the principle that one thing could be or become many things, did not have to oppose them on that particular ground.

From: Michael Stokes - One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1971, pp. 141-143

THE ROUTES OF INQUIRY: TWO OR THREE?

"The standard view is that there are three, the route of what-is, the route of what-is-not, and the route that attempts to combine what-is and what-is-not; and that the goddess undertakes to rule out two wrong or improper routes. (80)"

(80) For full discussions of this issue, see Cordero, "Les deux chemins de Parménide" and Nehamas. "On Parmenides' Three Ways of Enquiry"

From: Patricia Curd - The Legacy of Parmenides. Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1998, pp. 53

"I suggest the following structure for the Aletheia (as we have it in the extant fragments). First, in B2, the goddess announces that there are two routes of inquiry possible, and in announcing them she indicates that only one of them is a genuine, i.e., successful route. It is successful because it is persuasive and trustworthy, and it leads to truth. The other is not a genuine route because it leads literally nowhere. One can wander along it, but taking such a route will never lead thought to its desired destination. The reason why the routes have the character they do is given in B2.7-8: "for you could neither know what-is-not (for it is not to be accomplished [ou . . . anuston (74)]) nor could you point it out" and in B3: "the same thing is for thinking and for being." In B6 the goddess repeats her assertion that what-is is while what is nothing (that which is not) is not. The youth is bidden to consider this, and then the goddess lays out her plan for the rest of the poem: she will lead the youth through the correct route (B8.1-50) and then through the Doxa, the route of is-not, pointing out the path that mortals take, thinking they are saying and thinking what-is when in fact they are on the negative route. B6 and B7 finish the preliminary story of those on the forbidden path that is mentioned at B6.4-5, giving an account of the fate of mortals on the negative route. The youth is then (B7.2-6) exhorted to keep his thought (noema) from that route, and told how to manage that task: he must judge for himself the much-contesting trials that the goddess will lay out in B8.1-49. There she shows how to try or test a claim: is it on the route of what-is or of what-is-not? Any purported claim about what-is that fails the tests enumerated in the signs of B8.2-4 is really a claim about what-is-not. (75) We learn in B8.1-49 the formal characteristics of something that passes the tests for what-is."

(74) Mourelatos's suggestion about the ambiguity of anuston here is quite suggestive. See "Determinacy," pp. 49-50. Neither can the journey along the route be completed, nor can an account of what-is-not be completed, because what-is-not is itself indeterminate and not fixed.

(75) In this sense the signs (semata) along the route in B8 also function as metaphorical turnstiles. I do not mean to suggest that the semata are literally meant as gates, but only that each sign gives a condition that a thing that is must meet. A failure to meet the criterion blocks further passage down the route of what-is. Because the signs delimit necessary characteristics of what-is, an account of what-is that fails to satisfy a sema can be cast aside with no further examination.

From: Patricia Curd - The Legacy of Parmenides. Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1998, pp. 50-51

ARISTOTLE'S CRITICISM OF ELEATIC PHILOSOPHY

"The criticism of the Eleatic unity of Being is highly instructive for the study of the method by which Aristotle built up his own doctrine of matter; and the very inclusion of the critique in the Physics shows that he was conscious of the logical character of the origin of his theory.

He first attacks the concept of Being from the point of view of the categories, (259) showing that, if it is substance, quality, and quantity, it is many and, if it be all quantity or quality, the axiom that only substance is separable is violated. The truth of this principle is indicated by the fact that everything is predicated of substance as subject, an example of the grammatical orientation of Aristotle's thought which determines the whole passage.

Since Melissus called Being infinite, he must have considered it to be a quantity since this is the category in which infinity occurs; (260) and, if it is both substantial and quantitative, it is two, not one; while, if it is substantial alone, it cannot be infinite or have any magnitude.

Since the notion of the unity of Being collides with the doctrine of the categories, Aristotle next examines the possible meaning of "one" as applied to Being. (261) Of the three possible interpretations of Eleatic unity-continuity,

indivisibility, unity of definition or essence-the first would result in multiplicity since the continuous is infinitely divisible and would also raise the question concerning the part and the whole, for discontinuous parts taken in themselves, if identical with the whole, would be identical with one another. If this unity be that of indivisibility, there will be no quantity or quality and Being will be neither infinite with Melissus nor finite with Parmenides. And, if the unity is unity of definition, the Eleatics will arrive at the conclusion of Heraclitus that all things are identical, and their theory will be concerned not with the unity of Being but with its non-existence and the identity of quality and quantity. (pp. 63-64)

(...)

The general critique of the Eleatics is followed by a special refutation of Melissus and Parmenides (p. 67)

(...)

At the beginning of the specific criticism of Parmenides (296) Aristotle says that the same type of argument is valid against him, a statement which confutes the notion that Aristotle supposed the " Being " of Parmenides and Melissus to have been differently conceived.(297) Parmenides falsely assumed that " Being" is an absolute concept whereas it really is ambiguous; he then argued falsely because he did not see that even an inseparable predicate is essentially different from the subject of which it is predicated. This explanation of the error of Parmenides is equivalent to the logical critique of Plato's Sophist; but here the language of Aristotle's correction is accommodated to his own physical terminology, and the way is prepared for a transition from the theory of predication, which is the result of the Eleatic criticism in the Sophist, to the doctrine of substrate and inhering accident. Aristotle implies that ignorance of the logic of predication led Parmenides to a mistaken notion of the physical world. The concept of Being as held by Parmenides is then subjected to a criticism which, by the process of showing that it will not fit into a logical proposition, is intended to prove that it cannot represent anything. If this Parmenidean Being is substantial Being and substantial Unity, it cannot be predicated of any subject since such a subject would be non-existent if " Being " were not an equivocal term; but neither can it act as subject, for, if anything else were predicated of it, the predicated attribute would have to be non-Being and non-Being would then be predicated of Being. Aristotle tacitly assumes that Parmenides would have to think of Being as an element in a proposition; he fails to consider the possibility that Parmenides may have fallen into error just because, having envisaged the concept of transcendental Being, he denied the possibility of existence on any lower scale. Aristotle, in trying to press the Parmenidean " Being " into service in the physical world and in rejecting its possibility because it cannot fulfil such service, is guilty of the same kind of error as Parmenides was, for he too assumes that the concept of Being must be fitted to one scale only. But his conclusion is the contrary of that of Parmenides in that he holds to the exclusive reality of phenomenal Being which Parmenides completely rejected.(298)

When Aristotle proceeds to the objection that substantial Being cannot have magnitude because as magnitude it would have parts which must then be essentially different from one another, he is using an argument resting finally on his doctrine of categories and considering the Eleatic Being as a spatial continuum equivalent to the substantial infinity which he attributes to the Pythagoreans and against which he uses the same argument.(299) The same doctrine derived from the categories forms the transition from the refutation of the possibility of the Eleatic Being as spatially continuous unity to that of its interpretation as essential and indivisible unity. Being, as substantial, must consist of parts which are themselves substantial, as is proved by the definition of such a thing.(300) That the elements of the definition cannot be accidental attributes rests upon the axiom that substance itself cannot be an attribute of any subject; and this axiom depends finally upon the exclusive character of the categories. The implication for the Eleatics is that, whatever is meant by their Being, it must, as a substantial existence, be defined by other substances which fact destroys its presumed unity.(301) But here again Being for Aristotle is conceivable only as phenomenal, for substance and propositional subject are treated as equivalent and exhaustive." The Eleatic argument (302) seemed cogent to some people who felt constrained thereby to admit the necessity for the existence of non-Being and to posit atomic magnitudes.(303) But, Aristotle says, even if Being is unequivocal, nothing prevents non-Being from existing, not as absolute non-Being but as "not being a particular thing." For Being in and for itself is simply substantial Being which may be manifold.

There is throughout this critique an apparent confusion of logical and physical concepts which is due to the dependence of Aristotle's physics upon his logic. At one time he said that the Eleatic error was due to the ignorance of the meaning of relative or accidental non-Being,(304) that is of logical privation which is the essence of the negative proposition; but such a concept, which in its Platonic origin was simply logical, is at once transformed into a physical doctrine by Aristotle, so that he can say shortly thereafter that an understanding of the nature of substrate would have solved the difficulties of the Eleatics.(305) Privation is, in effect, the immediate material of generation (306) and the logical subject of privation is transmuted by means of the concomitant potentiality into the physical substrate.(307) The notion that privation of a quality requires in the substrate the potential presence of that quality is a rule of logic

(308) transferred to descriptive physics. It is this connection of the matter of generation and of thought, this equivalence of the proposition of logic and the description of physical change which makes Aristotle think the Physics an appropriate place to discuss the Eleatic doctrine which on his own reckoning falls outside the sphere of physics." (pp. 72-76)

(259) Physics 185 A 20-B 5.

(260) Cf. page 23, note 85, 2 supra.

(261) Physics 185 B 5.186 A 3. Cf. for the different meanings of " things called one in and for themselves," Metaphysics 1015 B 36-1017 A 2.

(296) Physics 186 A 22-B 35.

(297) Ross in his commentary on the Metaphysics, 986 B 19, Vol. I, p. 153, supposes that Aristotle made a distinction with regard to the subject-matter and treatment of Parmenides and Melissus (cf. page 67, note 273 supra) ; such a distinction, however, occurs only in the Metaphysics and for a particular purpose (cf. page 220, note 15 infra),

(298) It is not necessary to assume that Parmenides had clearly conceived transcendental Being in itself; Aristotle himself had an inkling that Parmenides was trying to get at something essentially different from phenomenal existence (cf. page 66, note 270 supra), and Plato's frequently expressed respect for the Eleatic doctrine seems to be due to his feeling that it really aimed at the static certainty of the super-phenomenal world (e.g. Theaetetus 183 E 3 ff.). It is enough, for the moment, to understand that the Eleatics were stressing the immutable reality which is manifested in thought and the objects of thought as opposed to the instability of physical phenomena, and that, in the manner of those who make a startling discovery, they reserved to the new concept the sole right to consideration. But it is not impossible that they should still have considered this transcendental Being as somehow physical, though they certainly held it to be different from anything perceptible.

(299) See pages 24-25 supra.

(300) Aristotle's own solution is that no universal term has substantial existence, cf. Metaphysics 1041 A 3-5. But the argument only proves that the Eleatic Being is indefinable and transcendent; not that there is no transcendent Being. The Eleatics might well have used Aristotle's own admission that Being " runs through all the categories"

(Metaphysics Gamma, chap. 2) to prove that merely because the concept will not fit into any one of the categories one cannot argue that it does not exist or that it is meaningless.

(301) The origin of Aristotle's criticism is clearly Plato, Sophist 245 B-D; but the presumption of the doctrine of categories has restricted the application of the critique to physical existence. It is strange that Aristotle failed to see the similarity of the Eleatic Being and his own God in respect of the problems of existence. Reflection upon this similarity should have made it apparent that any attempt to apply the categories to Eleatic Being must miss the fundamental motive of the conception.

(302) Physics 187 A 1-10.

(303) The Greek commentators, Simplicius, Themistius, Philoponus, Alexander, understood the sentence to refer to Plato and Xenocrates, the first of whom is then charged with positing non-Being in answer to Parmenides, the second with setting up indivisible lines. Further, the two Eleatic arguments are divided, the first being given to Parmenides, the second (by Simplicius, Themistius, Philoponus) being identified with Zeno's first paradox. But since Plato posits absolute non-Being no more than does Aristotle (cf. Plato, Sophist 258 A 11B 3; D 7-E 3; E 6 ff.), since Aristotle does not use *ατομα μεγεθη* specifically for Xenocrates' *ατομοι γραμματα*, and since he represents the two Eleatic arguments as the incentives to the Atomic theory of Leucippus (cf. De Generatione 325 A 2 ff., especially 26-29), it seems certain that the *ενιοι* of the present passage are the Atomists. (For the other view see Robin, La Théorie Platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres, note 272, IV, pp. 300 ff.)

The second Eleatic argument here mentioned, the dichotomy, was referred by Porphyry to Parmenides; since the simple term is used by Aristotle of Zeno's first paradox (Physics 239 B 22), it is most likely to refer to the same argument here, although it has not previously been mentioned in this passage.

In Metaphysics 1089 A 2-6 Aristotle refers to some who made the " indeterminate dyad" an element in the generation of things, influenced by the argument of Parmenides to prove that non-Being exists. Ross suggests that he has in mind such passages as Sophist 237 A, 256 E, 241 D. In that case he overlooks the limitations *η θατερου φυσικς, κατα τι, πη* in these passages which make the sense equivalent to his own *ον τι ειναι το μη ον*.

(304) Physics 191 B 13-16.

(305) Physics 191 B 33-34.

(306) Physics 191 B 15-16. Yet 191 B 35 ff. he reproaches the Platonists for making matter " non-Being " and claims himself to differentiate privation and matter.

(307) The transformation is carried so far that *στρηρηεις* becomes, instead of simple negation of form, a positive reality, a kind of form itself (Physics 193 B 19-20). Cf. Baeumker, Problem der Materie, pp. 218-219.

(308) Cf. its use in Topics 148 A 3-9. It is a mistake to define a thing by privation of that which is not potentially predicable of it. The logical basis of the physical doctrine, as well as some of the difficulties involved in the

development, is to be seen in *Metaphysics* 1055 A 33-B 29.

From: Harold Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins Press, 1935 (reprint: New York, Octagon Books, 1964), pp. 72-76

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