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## Parmenides: 'To Be' or 'Not to Be'

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## PARMENIDES:

"TO BE" OR "NOT TO BE"

V. Tejera

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Recent Parmenides scholarship, though of the highest quality, still has not succeeded in allowing us to read Parmenides as we read other poets whose texts are in a similarly fragmented condition. I mean that it does not, on the whole, seem to be the deficiencies in the text (or uncertainty about disputed readings) that cause the difficulties of interpretation that keep us from appreciating the poem as a successful unity. One wonders whether, and how much, discovery of new fragments would really dispel major difficulties in extant interpretations. Simplicius, after all, seems to have felt that the selections he quoted were enough to support his interpretation of Parmenides.

On the other hand, in not dealing with the poem as an integral whole, Simplicius' interpretation is typical of others that (1) leave the second part of the poem in a problematical or weak relationship to the first part, and that (2) find in Parmenides a confirmation of, or variation of, their own understanding of a distinction in kind between appearances and reality. From Simplicius' commentaries on Aristotle's De Caelo and Physics we get more than two dozen lines of the Way of Seeming. But Simplicius assimilates the seemings to αἰσθησις (as he understood it), and Being, or what is, to νόησις (as he understood it). As he says in introducing verses 50-53 of fragment 8, "Parmenides effects the transition from the objects of reason (ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν) to the objects of sense (ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσθητά), or as he himself puts it, from truth to seeming (ἦτοι ἀπὸ ἀληθείας, ὡς αὐτὸς φησιν, ἐπὶ δόξαν), when he writes..." (In Phys. 30, 14). But this assimilation, or identification, is Simplicius' doing not Parmenides'. Parmenides did not, originally, make his distinction in this way. As Theophrastus testifies "to perceive by the senses, and to have intelligence are treated by him as identical" τὸ γὰρ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ὡς ταῦτό λέγει, De Sensibus I, 4). The tradition, however, has in the main understood Parmenides' distinction between Being and seeming in the same terms as Simplicius. As a matter of intellectual history it is not difficult to understand this, but this history will not be our concern here.

Our business is to note that the interpretations of Being which have perpetuated the distinction in this epistemological form, are just those that keep it from being the appropriate subject of the cluster of predications that Parmenides himself makes about Being. This turned the interpreter's problem into one of reconciling his own (or his time's) notion about Being with the "attributes" Parmenides assigned to it—when the real problem was to find a subject to which the attributes could all

be seen to attach without difficulty. This is the problem which the following article attacks by trying to make coherent sense out of Parmenides' text in accordance with some idea about the kinds of sense it could have made in Parmenides' time to Parmenides' peers. The solution offered also makes literary and philosophical sense out of the relationship between parts one and two of the poem.

I

The possibility I will seek to test is that Parmenides was referring, in the Way of Being (the Alētheia), to existence-as-a-whole. According to this hypothesis Parmenides, in expounding "the first way," should be understood to be making clear what can be said without contradiction about existence-as-a-whole, i.e. about what is, about Being. I call this Hypothesis I about how to read Parmenides.

To test it we can ask: which of the predications about Being in the poem become, on this hypothesis, self-evidently appropriate? And which can be shown, even if less directly, to be also appropriate or felicitous? I am referring mainly to the predications in fragment 8, lines 3-6, and 18-27. If the predications all turn out to fit this sense of Being as their subject, without anachronism and without semantic straining, then we shall have so far confirmed Hypothesis I.

Also it is not incompatible with Hypothesis I that Parmenides was either assuming or trying to make us see that as soon as you stop talking about what is (in the above sense), you are talking about either becomings or nothings. And you cannot talk about nothing (you cannot follow "this way") because it is inconceivable. It therefore follows that you can only talk—besides Being—about becoming things. So far then the Goddess has told the young man that we can talk about either existence-as-a-whole or about becoming things.

This also follows because, when we have quit talking about existence-as-a-whole, and (i) we think we are thinking inconceivables or nothings, we are really thinking about the possibility of the existence of something (e.g. a Pegasus). Likewise (ii) when we think we are talking of what is, and we talk of it as changing\* we are really talking of what is becoming; or else (iii) we are talking about parts only of what-is-altogether.

Let us note here that Parmenides has not said that seemings

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I.e. when we talk non-strictly.

are not. Nor has he said that the way of seeming is the (forbidden) way of not being. Readers are perhaps tempted to confuse these two ways because the modern opinion is that appearances are not real, i.e. are part of not being. But in Parmenides seemings are included in, or a part of, Being or existence-as-a-whole.\*

My other hypothesis is that Parmenides was enthusiastically, cautionarily, and ironically rehearsing, in the proem and the Way of Being, a splendid and consistent vision of what Being-as-a-whole must be like if Being is to be "logical." By vision I mean a conceptualization, or imagining; by "logical" I mean with a structure corresponding to an account which was consistent by the standards of Parmenides' time. This is my Hypothesis II; and it is about the nature of Parmenides' poem as literature. It is, of course, related to Hypothesis I which is about the poem as philosophy; the sequel will show how. The literary hypothesis has for its corollary that Parmenides was trying to dramatize the error of forgetting that while philosophical discourse can be made "logical" (i.e. two-valuedly consistent), only Being-as-a-whole is also logical. Hence philosophical discourse about parts of being, if it is logical, is equivocating between parts of being and Being-as-a-whole.

Under hypothesis I, and referring to lines 31-32 of fragment 1, there is a difference between existence-as-a-whole (which is easily and consistently made sense of) and appearances-as-a-whole. Appearances, in fact, Parmenides seems to be saying, can only be made sense of when taken as a whole ("all together"):

ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ... μαθήσεται, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα  
χρῆν δοκιμῶς εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περ ὄντα. \*\*

"But nevertheless you shall learn these opinions also, how the seemings/ have to be acknowledged through merely all being together. \*\*\*

\*

As is explicitly assumed by fragment 9: "But once all things have been named light and night/... .. /everything is full of light and obscure night at once/ both equal, since neither has any share in nothingness." That is, when we talk non-strictly about the composition of everything which we have discriminated by naming (i.e. of everything which we have posited as part of existence)—we are not talking about nothing.

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περ ὄντα is the superior reading, and is accepted by Guthrie, Owen, Zafiroopoulos, and Mourelatos; though Tarán, and Kirk and Raven have περῶντα.

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Tarán translates his reading as follows:

"Nevertheless you shall learn these opinions also, how the appearances,/ which pervade all things, had to be accepted."

(continued on next page)

Once the reading  $\pi\epsilon\rho\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\alpha$  has been accepted, the big point about translating these two lines is that they make most sense, as Mourelatos has pointed out, when seen as an answer to an implicit question in the young man's mind.\* This question is, "but how is it that the appearances are to be acknowledged?" The Goddess replies, "it is necessary that they be taken all together, if they are to be acknowledgeable."

Parmenides is probably best interpreted here as saying that an acceptable non-strict account of seeming things can be given if the generative opposites, or sets of opposing principles are properly brought together, or combined, and then aptly applied to the realm of all seeming things as a whole and in their interconnectability. The second point about interpreting lines 31, 32, and the preceding three\*\* is that there is no compelling reason to take "the opinions of mortals" mentioned here, as identical with the non-strict survey of appearances given in the second part of the poem. If we can grant this then we are free to look at the Way of Seeming as an ingenious review of cosmogony offered by Parmenides, through the Goddess, in terms just as satisfactory (acceptable) as those of the current Ionian cosmogonies then in dispute. The poem, then, has promised to give the young man an "account" of appearances ( $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \delta\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\acute{\nu}\tau\alpha$ ) by taking them all together.

But it remains the case that appearances-as-a-whole are not the same as existence-as-a-whole; though an "all," they are a sub-totality. The account ( $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ ) of them is a "logic" of acceptability. But because this kind of "logic" is not compelling there are alternative accounts ( $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\iota$ ) of appearances-as-a-whole. What we are given in the Doxa is not such an account, in the sense of a competing account, but something like such an account from a novel, and as we shall see, knowing point of view. The fragments make it sound like an interesting account; we shall see how this is the case.

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(cont'd). Kirk and Raven, who follow Burnet, translate thus:

"Yet none the less shalt thou learn these things also, how the things that seem, / as they all pass through everything, must gain the semblance of being."

Mourelatos (p.216) translates our reading literally as follows:

"But, nevertheless, this also you shall learn, how it would be right for things deemed acceptable / to be acceptably: just being all of them together."

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The Route of Parmenides, Chapter 8.

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..."It is necessary that you shall learn all / as well the unshaking heart of well-rounded ( $\epsilon\upsilon\kappa\upsilon\eta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\varsigma$ ; "obeyable"  $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\varsigma$  is also a good reading) truth / as the opinions of mortals in which is no true belief."

In any case, though the seemings can be made more acceptable by being taken all together, they just are whatever they can most acceptably be said to be. They are what they appear to be, but they are not necessary. So, no account of them is a necessary account; there can only be a best account and there is no necessarily connected discourse about them. The best account takes them to be part of existence-as-a-whole, but no more than that.

On the other hand being-as-a-whole not only is (it is what there is), it must be. For it cannot not be (οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι) (fr. 2, 3). And if there necessarily is an all that there is, then the account of it must be a necessarily connected discourse, i.e. a strict discourse. This is Parmenides' two-valued discourse in the Alētheia, made as deductive as his ability with the hexameters and the state of the natural language allowed.

There are no alternative "logics" or accounts of being-as-a-whole. This is because there is nothing besides; so that, all-that-there-is is the only thing there is. Being-as-a-whole is just one thing or unique (μονογενές or μονομελές, single-membered) as the translators say. What I mean is that Parmenides implicitly believes that there is an inventive and variable way of talking and a strict way. Whereas there are alternative ways of talking non-strictly (those that apply to the world of the Doxa), it does not even occur to Parmenides that any other strict account of existence-as-a-whole is possible than the one he himself is giving in the Alētheia.

We can now go back to the leading question in our guiding hypothesis I. The predications about Being, to which what we have said clearly and easily accomodates, are: entire (ούλον), single-membered or unique (μονομελές or μονογενές), complete (ἀτελεστόν)\*, one (έν), never was nor will be (οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται), and now...all together (νυν...όμοῦ πᾶν). Line 11, fragment 8 also confirms hypothesis I: "Thus it must either exist all in all or not at all," (οὕτως ἢ πάμπαν πελέναι χρεών ἔστιν ἢ οὐχι).

But is Parmenides perhaps saying that existence-as-a-whole (Being) "must be" in the sense that it "has to be postulated"? As I read him, that Being is merely postulational is not what he is saying. Rather, he is saying something like this (and this is a claim about the structure of Parmenides' thought): "Strict discourse does not necessarily imply the existence of existence-as-a whole, but it necessarily implies the possibility or Way of Being.

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\* Tarán's reasons for amending ἢ δ' ἀτελεστόν to ἢ δὲ τελεστόν (Parmenides, pp.93-95) do not seem sufficient against Simplicius and Diel and Kranz. ἀτελεστόν rightly understood, does not repeat the attributes already mentioned, ἀγένητον and ἀνώλεθρον. In any case Tarán's τελεστόν, in the sense of "replete" (Tarán says "complete"), does not contradict ἀτελεστόν in the sense of "inexhaustible" or "unfillable."

Also, the use of strict discourse does (on the other hand) preclude the possibility of becoming things, or change. That is to say, the use of strict discourse makes it necessary that there be not becoming."

Thus, if we are to be strictly consistent we cannot take appearances as our subject. We can, however, develop an acceptable account of appearances by taking them all together, i.e. by judiciously and "enlightenedly" combining terms from the paired opposites which the cosmographers had invoked both to describe and to generate the world of becoming or parts of existence.

It is Parmenides' assumption (based, unavoidably, on his own functioning) that something exists now—whatever it may be. Thus, it is quite probable that what excited him to construct his poem was the discovery that, while disputes about the nature of observable existence could be unending, there could be no disputing about the nature of Being once it was conceptualized as all-inclusive.

Let us now complete our test of hypothesis I against the remaining predications. That existence-as-a-whole is imperishable (ἀνώλεθρόν) follows strictly from the fact that it cannot become nothing; it cannot in fact become anything else at all but what it is. It cannot pass into what is not, and it cannot be what is not since it is. Being, also, must be immovable (ἀτρεμές) since, if it were movable it might change, and if it were possible for it to change then it might perish; but we have just seen that it is not possible for existence-as-a-whole to perish. Therefore, it is not possible for existence-as-a-whole to be movable, i.e. Being is immovable.\*

But if Being is immovable it could not have passed from any other state to being what it is, i.e. it could not have come from anything else. And, since it did not come from nothing (an assumption of Parmenides' time) it must be ungenerated (ἀγέννητον). Finally, the fact that existence as a whole is continuous (συνεχές) follows, for Parmenides, from the fact that it is all alike (i.e. nowhere different from itself), evenly distributed, and in contact with itself (lines 22-25).\*\*

Now, this last attribute of Being, understood as existence-as-a-whole, is clearly counter-observational. As long as we are

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\*  $\Diamond M \supset \Diamond C$ ;  $\Diamond C \supset \Diamond P$ ; but  $\neg \Diamond P$ , therefore...  $D-M$ .

\*\*...ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ὁμοῖον / οὐδέ τι τῆι μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἴργου  
μιν συνέχεσθαι, / οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἐμπλεόν ἔστιν ἑόν-  
τος. / τῶι ζυνεχές πᾶν ἔστιν. ἑόν γὰρ ἑόντι πελάζει.

part of existence, there is no way of observing existence-as-a-whole; we cannot stand outside it to observe it. If we could, then we could also, so to say, take Being out of time. But this is just what Parmenides has wisely avoided doing: he has not taken Being out of time. In order to be able to conceptualize existence-as-a-whole he has rather taken time (so to say) out of Being. This, as it were, "collapses" existence-as-a-whole into instantaneousness and continuity (*συνεχές*). This helps us to see, by the way, something we don't usually notice, namely, that the perception of extension is a function of time. Parmenides abstracts from time; but he is not denying it. On the contrary, Being is affirmed as fundamentally temporal when it is described as endless (*ἄτέλεστον*). A spatially conceived limit is always visualizable as reachable. Only a temporal envelope (so to call it) can be both unending and, in the required sense, a "limit."

The concept of Being in Parmenides is thus not visualizable.\* The one basic determination about it which Parmenides makes is that it is not Nonbeing. Being is all-inclusive, in Parmenides' formulation,\*\* because it denies only Nonbeing. This is the central and fundamental determination, or negation, upon which Parmenides' conceptualization rests. As I see it, it is not the denial of difference, or change (as so many commentators claim), that is basic to Parmenides' concept; for, the denial of difference is inconsistent with the inclusiveness which Parmenides assigns to Being.

## II

The way of what-is-not is οὐκ ἄνυστόν for Parmenides, "it is not feasible;" it can't be taken, it can only be mentioned.

But the route of "two-headed" mortals is *παλινοτροπός* "backward-turning" (fr. 6, 9). What does this epithet mean? It seems to mean (1) that once you have granted generation (i.e. an origin to things) you are involved in a perplexing, unresolvable regress. This is because what came to be would have had to come out

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\* Is this the meaning of fragment 4?: "Behold things which, though absent, are nevertheless firmly present to the mind." Being is indeed "cut off" from part of itself, if we stand outside it either compacting it into a visualizable, specious whole or by trying to put it together from "everywhere," piecemeal, for a "view" of it. Similarly, is fragment 5 to be taken as giving a property of a deductive system, i.e. Parmenides' strict discourse about Being? From another angle, Don Ihde suggests (Southern Journal of Philosophy, 1966) that there is an analogy between the characteristics of Parmenides' Being and the visual field-as-a-whole taken as a phenomenological totality.

\* See again fr. 8, 32: "it is not right for Being to be incomplete (*ἄτελεύτητον*)." Since *ἄτελεύτητον* means complete in just this sense of all-inclusive, whereas *ἄτέλεστον* means endless in the sense of inexhaustible, there is no contradiction; there is rather useful alliteration. Being is both all-inclusive and inexhaustible.



of something, from somewhere, towards something, for some reason, and at some time—and you can always ask why at this time rather than another. You can always ask for the reason for the reason, and how the something it came out of itself came to be. Secondly, to assert that something "is" generable, or differentiable, or movable is not really an assertion but a denial; it is an exclusion of something from something else, and in so far as an "it is not" statement. So, the route of mortals is not along the path of "it is"; but because its assertions are really "it is not" assertions, it threatens to lead us back into the assertion of what-is-not. We are not, however, actually landed in not-being so long as the parts of being we are talking about are not excluded from Being altogether.

In other words, we can avoid being two-headed (δίκερανοι) when we talk about seemings as long as we heed the Goddess's lesson. We must hew to her fundamental distinctions between Being, parts of being, and not-being; and we must adhere to her implicit admonitions about strict and non-strict discourse. This, I think, is just what the poem does (or must have tried to do) in the Way of Seeming. A stronger way of stating the lesson which the poem as a whole is teaching, is to say that we can avoid committing ourselves to the contradictions of ordinary discourse about parts of existence by "understanding" opposition, i.e. by keeping in mind that our assertions about the cosmic contraries, night and light, are not both assertions of being and not-being, but only dynamic abstractions from and reconjunctions of (positings about) parts of being. It is not-being that is inconceivable, for Parmenides, not partial being. Partial existence can be thought, so far as it is existence, but it cannot be accounted for consistently only acceptably. On this understanding verses 38 to 41 of fragment 8 can be translated without straining and interpreted without anomaly.\*

"With respect to this have all names been spoken which mortals laid down believing them to be true, both 'to become' and 'to perish', both 'to be' and 'not to be', 'to alter its place' and 'to exchange its bright color'."

τῶι πάντ' ὀνομάσται  
ὄσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ,  
γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ἄλλυσθαι, εἶναι τε καὶ οὐχί,  
καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροᾶ φανόν ἀμείβειν.

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\* With Mourelatos, and L. Woodbury I prefer the reading ὀνομάσται to ὄνομ(α)ῆσται. Mourelatos' interpretation of lines 40-41 is the most helpful; he writes them like this, as being statement-forms: "——came to be——" and "——ceased to be——", "——is——" and "——is not——"/ "——alters its place——" and "——transmutes color or shape."

The Goddess reminds us at verse 52 of this same fragment that even when she uses these words the order (κόσμον) referred to by, or of, her words (ἐμῶν ἐπέων) is deceptive (ἀπατηλόν).

But did Parmenides have the concept of logical contraries, or did he implicitly use the device of contraries in some paralogical way? It does not look as if he actually had the concept. But, on my reading, his "argument" works (!) because while (in fr. 2), (a) "it is" and "it is not" are advanced as exhaustive and exclusive alternatives, (b) their respective conjuncts "it is impossible that it should not be" and "it is necessary that it should not be" are not contradictories. In advancing (a) Parmenides must have been aware of his assumption that the two statements (or statement-forms) were exclusive and exhaustive, because the assumption is part of his technique of argumentation. But I see no way of knowing how consciously he was in control of the fact that the two propositions under (b) are only contraries—though it is because they are contraries that the Way of Seeming can be "followed" (i.e. discussed) at all. (Seemings are observable, but not relatable in "is" and "is not" statements if these are the only kind allowed and exclusive.) The two propositions can be seen to be (what we would call) contraries as follows. The contradictories of (i) it is impossible that it should not be, and (ii) it is necessary that it should not be, are (iii) it is not necessary that it should be, and (iv) it is not necessary that it should not be. But (iii) and (iv) are not contradictories, only contraries, as we can see from their equivalents: (iii e) it is contingent that it should be, and (iv e) it is contingent that it should not be; to wit, (iii e) it may be, and (iv e) it may not be.\*

Thus, "it is" in the sense of "it is unalterably existent" is not the contradictory of "it is not" in the sense of "it is unalterably non-existent." Taken as propositions these could, perhaps, be called complementary obverses. The contradictory of "it exists unalterably" is "it does not exist unalterably."

On this understanding, we can now read fragments 10 and 11 without feeling (as we at first uncomfortably do) that they are only programmatic, and (given the shortness of the poem) unfulfilled or unfulfillable promises. For instance, we now know (at fr. 10, 5) that we don't have to be given an existential genesis of, or creation story about, the visible sky. It is a picture that

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This, and the next point have already been adequately rehearsed in a socio-historical context by G.E.R. Lloyd in his Polarity and Analogy.

(i)  $\diamond p$ , contradictory: (iii)  $\square p$ , equivalent:  $\diamond p$  (iii e)  
(ii)  $\square \neg p$ , " : (iv)  $\square \neg p$ , " :  $\diamond \neg p$  (iv e)

an Archaic Greek needed if he was to have what the anthropologists call his "topocosm," his particular cosmos. And once he had made a cosmos out of his standpoint on the earth, by using the sky as a fixed ("fettered") frame, the stars had—of necessity—to be held in, or brought in, by it.

Similarly the "eager strivings" (in fr. 11) of the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the common air, and the Milky Way, and the farthest mountain to come into being—are all to be understood as the products of talkative distinction-makers cataloguing and generating all that they see according to the cosmic opposites of their choice.

My hypothesis is that it was because the cosmographers had not sufficiently noticed that the subjects of their naming and positings are overlaid with contradictory descriptions (or "attributes") by "logically" unregulated discourse, that Parmenides was led to dramatize in his poem what happens when strict discourse is used—when it is made consistent. He made a very exciting beginning of discovering what could and what could not be talked about strictly, and of noting the relativity of change and the non-fixity of the observable. He did this at a time when the unexplicated, empirical application of tangled notions of opposition in natural philosophy had made imperative a better understanding of the connotations of these notions. In the dimension of discourse we can say that Parmenides (a) brought into exhibition the notion of exclusive opposition, (b) made use of the implicit and associated notions of exhaustive and non-exhaustive alternatives, (c) was empirical enough to acknowledge change, but critical enough to relate it to the inexactness of discourse, (d) may or may not have had an emergent sense of contrariety, forced upon him by the need to talk about what was inescapably only part of existence, and (e) dramatized the idea that all that exists is not observable. (Disregard, here, the English language amphiboly; that is a whole new chapter in the history of philosophy!). I cannot here go into all that modern philosophy and the Western tradition have made out of Parmenides, but I have tried to keep separate what the tradition makes of him from the sense that can be made of his text in terms of his time. This time was the time of the transition between the Archaic and the Classical age in Greece.

So far, I have left unformulated the nature of the irony implicit in Parmenides' architectonic, if we take the poem as a whole—as we surely must. What the effect on us of the complete original would be, we do not know. But the imagery of the fragments suggests that it was not without enthusiasm, enjoyment, and poetic care that Parmenides achieved his vision of the possibility of "logical" Being. At the same time, it was not without a touch of tender regret for man's deluded acceptance of contending pictures of his precarious world that Parmenides proceeded to his own naming,

or review, of the main cosmographic issues of his day.

Perhaps the best ground on which to recommend my reading of Parmenides is that, in it, the Doxa is not out of relationship with the Alētheia. There is surely something insufficient about all those interpretations of a poem which leave one to understand that part two and part one of it are either unrelatable, very difficult to relate, or in some very anomalous or forced relationship. The structural connection should now be clear: the listener is conducted through part two in the spirit of the enlightenment he has received in part one. He is now clearer about contradiction, and where and how to avoid it. The veil, so to say, has been lifted to give him a brief but intense "view" of existence-as-a-whole, of strictly consistent Being. He has deeply understood (but without an explicit logic of contrary and contradictory opposition) that carelessness in the conjoining of contraries leads to self-contradiction, and that strictness in avoiding contradiction produces a consistent conception of the way of what is. But he also knows implicitly that this product of reasoning (is otherwise unobservable. He now knows how to extricate the observable-as-categorized-by-the-nature-philosophers from the web of careless, self-contradictory discourse, in the sense that the observable world is assigned knowingly to the realm of inconsistent discourse.

In her review of the world of seeming the Goddess appears to me to be doing two things for the listener. She is elegantly categorizing in her own knowing way the things that have conventionally, or already, been distinguished as subjects of natural philosophy. And she is sharing the consciousness, and going on the assumption, that any visualization or literal seeing of the world as a whole does not correspond to the structure of Being. This shared consciousness is a negative corrective which she expects her listener to apply to her survey as she runs through it. At the same time the products of the mortal kind of distinction-making ("in which there is no true reliance") are allowed to stand, accused and in contrast, in their subjection to opposite predications and in oppositional relations to each other.\*

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Of course, the poem as we have it does not distinguish between contrary and contradictory relations; and I am not saying that Parmenides had their logic in mind (except latently and inchoately). Perhaps he knew empirically that some particular claims, those that we call subcontrary (e.g. "some things are water" and "some things are not water") did not exclude each other. And perhaps he had noted empirically that what we call contrary universal claims (e.g. "all things are fire" and "no things are fire," or "all things are fire" and "all things are water") excluded each other, but could both be excluded by some third claim.

The co-existence among men of opposed universal claims which Parmenides thought false, like "all is water" and "all is fire,"\* may not only have been an example of "unrealized contrariety," it may also have served as the basis of an unformulated model of, or feeling for, this species of opposition in Parmenides' mind. It is more important to note, however, that the universal claims of the nature philosophers might well have been what stimulated Parmenides to think as carefully and trenchantly as he did about the "all"—about its nature and about its relation to discourse. In any case, and to be honest, it appears from what we have of the poem that Parmenides' sense of the opposites did not suffice to keep him from equivocating between contrary and contradictory opposition. In crystallizing the technique of invoking contradiction to enforce his argument, he had hoped to cure his contemporaries of equivocating between Being and parts of being. But he himself equivocated the still submerged species and subspecies of opposition.

But this is an unconscious irony. Parmenides' deliberate irony was pragmatistic more than anything else. He showed that the cosmos of the nature philosophers was the product of careless reasoning and discourse (*λόγος* means both reasoning and discourse). But he also knew implicitly that his own Being was the product of "consistent" reasoning and discourse. The difference between the cosmic conceptions of the nature philosophers and his own conception of existence-as-all-inclusive was that the latter was compelling while the former were not. This was quite an insight for his time, and must have had the force of revelation to his followers. He appropriately presents it as one, and in the manner of Solon—who had dramatized his political program by bringing it before the people in elegiac verses—Parmenides both dramatizes his pivotal discovery and implements it in the language common to all Greek audiences, the Homeric hexameter.

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When not taken to mean "there is fire in everything." Parmenides does not think in terms of a preferred substance or set of elements. His light and night are only analogies of substance, deliberately and ironically picked for their immateriality, with which to generate the material world. As Nietzsche said, the claim that "all is water" embryonically contains the claim that "all is one." And this is the implication that Parmenides was interested in.

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