

Parmenides' Theistic Metaphysics

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Abstract:

The primary interpretative challenge for understanding Parmenides' poem revolves around explaining both the meaning of, and the relationship between, its two primary sections: a) the positively endorsed metaphysical arguments which describe some unified, unchanging, motionless, and eternal "reality" (*Aletheia*), and b) the ensuing cosmology (*Doxa*), which incorporates the very principles explicitly denied in *Aletheia*. I will refer to this problem as the "A-D Paradox." I advocate resolving this paradoxical relationship by reading Parmenides' poem as a ring-composition, and incorporating a modified version of Palmer's modal interpretation of *Aletheia*.

On my interpretation, Parmenides' thesis in *Aletheia* is not a counter-intuitive description of how all the world (or its fundamental, genuine entities) must truly be, but rather a radical rethinking of divine nature. Understanding *Aletheia* in this way, the ensuing "cosmology" (*Doxa*) can be straightforwardly rejected as an exposition of how traditional, mythopoetic accounts have misled mortals in their understanding of divinity. Not only does this interpretative view provide a resolution to the A-D Paradox, it offers a more holistic account of the poem by making the opening lines of introduction (*Proem*) integral to understanding Parmenides' message. By setting forth its own unacceptable fiction, paralleling the elements of the *Doxa* in a ring-composition, the *Proem* simultaneously establishes the scope of the ensuing inquiry (divinity itself), and its target (traditional accounts of divinity). Maintaining Parmenides' historical position as the "father of metaphysics," the narrative that he advanced a strictly secular account of all reality is challenged. Instead, Parmenides is best understood as further advancing Xenophanes' criticisms of traditional religion, an intellectual relationship which the ancient *testimonia* strongly supports.

Acknowledgements:

Parmenides' poem opens by describing a young man on a far-ranging cosmic journey. The journey is fraught with obstacles, yet the youth is able to overcome them with the aid of his divine companions. Having reached his destination, he begins his formal study under a divine mentor. It is promised that by the end of his pupilage, the youth will know all things, surpassing all other mortals in understanding.

Unlike the youth, I certainly do not complete my doctoral studies “knowing all things”—not even with respect to my own areas of specialization. My search for knowledge will never be completed—it is truly a journey, not a destination. Nevertheless, great progress along the path has been made. As the faculty and staff in both the Philosophy and Classics departments at the University of Kansas (KU), as well as the Philosophy and History departments at Washburn University (WU), have invaluable contributed to this progress in a myriad of ways, I sincerely thank them all. I particularly wish to thank faculty members who served on my examination committees, as well as those who have written supportive letters on my behalf. I am also grateful for all the additional financial support offered to me by all the departments at both schools—this certainly helped minimize at least one of the obstacles along the way.

While my own mentors were not “divine,” they are exceptional mortals, and I am greatly indebted to them. I owe excellent instructors from high school who encouraged my academic inclinations, and whose example inspired me to take up teaching—i.e. Charlie Appelhanz, Mike Schultz, and Lynn Riney. I particularly owe Kim Morse and Tom Prasch (WU—History) who, in addition to providing excellent instruction during my undergraduate career, have ever remained founts of encouragement for my graduate aspirations. However, the undergraduate mentor to whom I owe the most is Jorge Nobo (WU—Philosophy), whose lectures and

friendship led me to recognize and embrace my true calling as a philosopher, rather than as an historian. For that, I cannot ever thank him enough. I want to thank Stanley Lombardo (Classics—KU) for the opportunity to study Parmenides under his sage guidance, and magnanimously serving as my MA thesis advisor in Classics even after his retirement. Foremost, I want to thank my primary graduate mentor, Thomas Tuozzo (Philosophy—KU). His patience and flexibility were crucial for the success and enjoyment of my graduate career, while his pointed challenges and introspective suggestions led me to write far better than I ever could have on my own.

My formal journey in search of knowledge under the tutelage of others has certainly not been “cosmic”—I have yet to even move away from my hometown in Kansas. Nevertheless, it has been long (18 years of near continuous collegial enrollment) and arduous, with many obstacles to overcome. At times, it even seemed Sisyphean, replete with existential angst. Fortunately, like the Parmenidean youth, I was privileged to have some of the most stalwart companions. I thank my fellow graduate students, whom I learned a great deal from. I am particularly thankful for the friendship of, and intellectual engagement with, fellow students Ashley Acosta-Fox and Ian McDaniel. I cannot thank my parents enough. Not only did they foster a deep love of literature and learning in me from early on, they have indefatigably and uncritically continued to support my academic aspirations, both financially and emotionally. Most of all, however, I must thank my wife and children. They had to face the unique obstacles of this journey along with me, as well as share in the sacrifices required. As much as completing this journey means to me, their love and support means far, far more.

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Introduction

The primary interpretative challenge for understanding Parmenides' poem is explaining both the meaning of, and the relationship between, its two purportedly primary sections: a) the positively endorsed metaphysical arguments which describe some unified, unchanging, motionless, and eternal "reality" (*Aletheia*), and b) the deceptive and paradoxical "cosmology" (*Doxa*) which ensues, incorporating the very principles just denied possibility in *Aletheia*. In short, this has long been understood as a problem of how the seemingly "monistic" account of *Being*, which Parmenides unreservedly endorses and has his spokes-goddess argue for, can possibly be reconciled with the apparently "pluralistic" account of the empirical world which follows, which seems to be an erroneous view held by mortals. Is all of reality really supposed to be as *Aletheia* claims, and our experience of change is merely an illusion, at least in some sense? Does this view not risk denying the existence of the very mortals who are claimed to be in error, along with Parmenides himself? I will refer to this philosophical tension throughout as the "*Aletheia-Doxa* Paradox," or more simply, the "A-D Paradox"

In an attempt to resolve this paradox, I propose a novel approach to reading Parmenides' poem overall. First, I posit that Parmenides' poem should be read as a ring-composition, which requires a more holistic account of the poem, considering the central thesis of the text in the context of both preceding (*Proem*) and succeeding (*Doxa*) sections. Reading and understanding the poem in this way (i.e. a ring-composition), the clear theological parallels between the *Proem* and *Doxa* cannot be so readily ignored. As taking the text seriously on any reading seems to require taking *Doxa* as representative of the mistaken views of mortals, the paralleled accounts in both the *Proem* and *Doxa* should be taken as standing in contrast to the truths revealed in

Aletheia. This further suggests that *Aletheia* is a metaphysical deduction explicating divine nature itself, rather than a counter-intuitive view of the totality of the cosmos.

This explains why more “linear” readings are so misleading, and explains the persistence of the A-D Paradox. By trying to understand the relationship between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* without taking the *Proem* seriously—treating the latter two sections as the only ones offering information relevant for understanding Parmenides’ philosophical views—it was easy to think Parmenides’ focus was on describing how *all* of reality was, thus giving rise to the paradoxical entailments. The theistic focus of the poem was missed, because the most obvious religious imagery was dismissed *for being* religious, and thus not properly “philosophical.”

The overarching themes revealed by ring-composition can be rather easily incorporated into a modified version of Palmer’s modal view. Palmer holds that *Aletheia* is concerned with explicating the properties of any necessary being. Taking the additional intuitive step that Parmenides came to identify necessary being with divinity, these interpretative approaches dovetail nicely—Parmenides was explicating the nature of necessary, *divine* being. However, *contra* Palmer, I deny that *Doxa* should be taken positively, as Parmenides’ own “best attempt” to explain the origins and operation of the contingent world. Instead, both *Doxa* and *Proem* serve to illustrate Parmenides’ target in *Aletheia*—rejecting the mythopoetic tradition (i.e. Homeric and Hesiodic accounts) of divine nature, whose attempts to explain the world through anthropomorphic divine agency are found unacceptable on the account in *Aletheia*.

While Parmenides’ historical position as the “father” of metaphysics and deductive argumentation persists on this view, the narrative that he advances a strictly secular, metaphysical account of all reality is challenged. Instead, he is better understood as an early skeptic of traditional religious models and authorities, who through reasoned argumentation

presents an alternative, non-anthropomorphic view of any necessary, divine being. This correction makes historical sense. Most of Parmenides' philosophical predecessors and contemporaries persisted in ascribing divinity to the most fundamental and perfect principle of their respective, naturalistic and materialistic accounts of the world; yet no rigorous defense of such an identification had been forthcoming prior. Furthermore, Parmenides uses the very same words to describe the subject of *Aletheia* that these same predecessors and contemporaries use to describe their own divine constructs. That Parmenides was engaged in such a rational theism also makes sense of the oft-dismissed ancient tradition that Parmenides is an intellectual successor to Xenophanes—whose primary philosophical contributions are focused on just this subject matter.

The argument of this inquiry can be outlined as follows. Chapter One opens with a very brief paragraph on Parmenides biography. It then continues by outlining the evidence for intellectual influences on Parmenides, based upon ancient sources, with a particular focus on possible influences by Xenophanes. It is admitted that these sources vary significantly in how Xenophanes and Parmenides are alike, and that there may be good reasons to be skeptical of these attestations individually. However, taken in conjunction, there does seem to be a near consensus amongst ancient scholars that there was *some* sort of strong intellectual relationship between Parmenides and Xenophanes, even if the attested parallels vary. Thus, it is concluded, the likelihood of a strong influence by Xenophanes warrants serious consideration, and interpretative models that can account for this influence particularly well will have an additional mark in their favor.

Chapter Two begins with a largely philological introduction to the orthodox scholarly reconstructions of his poem, based upon Coxon's arrangement and translation. With this in

place, the passages that emphasize taking *Aletheia* positively and *Doxa* negatively are focused on, resulting in an explication of the primary interpretative, philosophical problem (the “A-D Paradox”) which motivates this project. This provides the interpretative challenge for Chapter Three, in which the most influential interpretative approaches to this problem are broadly considered. It is concluded that all interpretative models that adopt a “universal” subject for *Aletheia* invariably face substantial paradoxical tensions. This results in a variety of unsatisfactory views, from which no scholarly consensus has been forthcoming.

Having established the persistence of the problem amongst more traditional interpretative approaches to the poem, Chapter Four considers whether a radical, unorthodox reconstruction recently proposed by Nestor-Luis Cordero might provide a solution to the “A-D Paradox.” Cordero advocates removing the majority of passages traditionally assigned to *Doxa*, and restricting the scope of that section to treatment of the “naming error” of mortals. It is ultimately concluded that his proposed reconstruction is philologically and philosophically untenable. However, Cordero does seem to be right that the scope of *Doxa* should be understood negatively, and as solely focused on outlining the naming error which leads mortals astray. He also seems to be correct in that finding solutions to the persistent interpretative problems in Parmenides may very well require challenging fundamental orthodox assumptions about the poem.

With the call for radical and revolutionary approaches to old problems in mind, Chapter Five challenges the very way the poem is read by moderns. It is here argued that Parmenides’ poem not only follows Homeric and Hesiodic poetry in language and grammar, but also adopts an overarching archaic structure known as “ring-composition.” Ring-composition requires a text have two halves: one leading up to a central thesis, and one returning back to the beginning in reverse-parallel. In a meaningful way, a ring-composition meaningfully ends where it began.

This outcome is not at all surprising, once it is noticed that one of the fragments (C 2/DK 5) can be read as directly suggesting the poem follows this circular arrangement.

This structural framework becomes most evident when one considers the parallels in content between the *Proem* and *Doxa*. Reading the poem according to this structure, *Aletheia* must be understood in opposition to the accounts in both *Proem* and *Doxa*. When considered in parallel, it is clear that both bookending accounts are primarily theological in nature. As the central thesis in *Aletheia* must then stand in contrast to these parallel sections, and as *Doxa* is clearly an explication of how mortals are led astray from the truth in *Aletheia*, it seems that *Aletheia* must be about divinity as well. Thus, commentators who have tended to dismiss the *Proem* as lacking any philosophical content, based upon its fantastical religious imagery, have been right to do so—but not quite for the right reasons. The account in the *Proem* is intended to be taken as false, along with *Doxa*. Both serve the very important function of framing the scope of Parmenides' thesis (divine nature), as well as introducing his target for refutation—anthropomorphic accounts of divinity from the mythopoetic tradition of Hesiod and Homer.

Once ring-composition has been sufficiently established on orthodox reconstructions, it is also possible for it to serve as an additional philological guide to refining the poem's overall reconstruction. Thus, I also briefly consider in this chapter some relatively minor proposed modifications to the poem's arrangement, pointing out that overall, they tend to further support the ring-composition thesis—even though they were initially suggested on evidence independent of this structural view.

Understanding *Aletheia* as divine best fits a novel interpretative view recently advanced by John Palmer. Thus I consider this view in detail in Chapter Six. Contrary to more traditional approaches, on Palmer's view, *Aletheia* is not arguing for how *all* of reality actually is, or even

how any and every fundamental, *genuine* being must be. Instead, Parmenides is explicating the essential properties of any *necessary* being. Furthermore, unlike most other commentators, Palmer even recognizes that the properties associated with necessary being in *Aletheia* could have been implicitly recognized by any contemporary listener/reader as indicative of a divine nature, even though he denies that Parmenides intended to advocate this particular thesis, since he never explicitly describes *Aletheia* as divine (at least, he does not do so in the extant fragments). It is no large step to take Palmer's view of the subject of *Aletheia* to be not just about necessary being, but also divine being.

While I find Palmer's treatment of *Aletheia* quite compelling on its own, as well as most consistent with ring-composition, I reject his view of the *Doxa*. Palmer attempts to explain the *Doxa* as Parmenides' own best account of the contingent world, and the relationship between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* as, respectively, accounts of both necessary and contingent being. Though this approach does avoid the usual problems of the A-D Paradox, I believe it suffers from its own unacceptable tensions and problems, and thus should also be rejected. Fortunately, nothing prevents accepting Palmer's modal view of *Aletheia* as an explication of necessary, *divine* being, while also taking the negative treatment of *Doxa* in the text seriously—which, if adopted in conjunction, can save his view from outright rejection, by adequately addressing the naming error. Rather than a positive account of contingent beings in the world (Palmer), *Doxa* can be straightforwardly dismissed as an account of erroneous beliefs about divine nature that mortals accept—beliefs that fail to meet the essential properties of divine nature outlined in *Aletheia*. Thus, the A-D Paradox is thus satisfactorily resolved, and the naming error treated seriously, without any questionable emendations to the text, or any need to read the *Doxa* in any positive light.

Chapter Seven then concludes the project. The interpretative moves of the preceding chapters are summarized, and their philosophical entailments considered—leading to the conclusion that Parmenides’ advanced a modal theism in *Aletheia*, targeting the traditional mythopoetic views of divinity held by mortals. Part of the way he intended this message to be delivered was by structuring his poem as a ring-composition. Most notably, this interpretative view provides a straightforward way to avoid the A-D Paradox—the initial problem driving this inquiry—and does so by taking the text seriously, in its ancient context. This reading finally provides a cohesive and meaningful way in which to incorporate the oft-dismissed or neglected *Proem* into a holistic account of the poem. It also allows us to make at least some better sense of the rather enigmatic claim in C 2/DK 5—that no matter where the story begins, it will return there in the end. The narrative effects upon the development of ancient Greek philosophy are also outlined. Most notably, this account makes sense of the ancient attestations that closely associate Parmenides’ views with Xenophanes. Finally, in addition to the more philosophical contributions, this inquiry has suggested a new structure for the text that, if accepted, can serve as a guide for refining and reconsidering the philological reconstructions of the poem—changes that might turn out to provide further resolutions to philosophical considerations of Parmenides’ poem.

1. Parmenides: Life and Intellectual Influences

καὶ Παρμενίδης δὲ Πύρρητος ὁ Ἐλεάτης Ξενοφάνους ἐταῖρος γενόμενος κατὰ μὲν τὸν πρῶτον λόγον ξύμφωνα τῷ διδασκάλῳ ξυγγέγραφεν.

“Parmenides of Elea, son of Pyrras, was an associate of Xenophanes and in his first account wrote down things in agreement with his teacher.”¹

The overarching aim of this project is to provide a cohesive, overarching interpretation of Parmenides’ metaphysical poem. This poem has traditionally been divided into three parts—*Proem* (or *Preamble*), *Aletheia* (*Reality*) and *Doxa* (*Opinion*). Given the supernatural and religious themes of the *Proem*, and its lack of philosophical argumentation, modern philosophical commentators have understandably tended to focus on the metaphysical arguments in the central section (*Aletheia*), and their relationship to the ensuing “cosmology” of *Doxa*, while largely minimizing or even dismissing the *Proem* as philosophically irrelevant.

As a result, the central issue for understanding the poem’s overall meaning has been taken to involve reconciling the paradoxical accounts offered in the central and ultimate sections of the poem. That is, how to reconcile: a) the counter-intuitive conclusions of *Aletheia*—that in some way “reality” is necessarily lacking in generation, perishing, motion, change, time, etc.—which are unreservedly endorsed, with b) the more ambivalently presented, ensuing “cosmology” presented in *Doxa*, which presupposes the very phenomena just denied in *Aletheia*.

¹ Aetius *On Principles* (Coxon Test. 55). All references to Coxon with ‘Test.’ Followed by a number refer to the internal numbering of the ancient *testimonia* in Coxon, not page numbers. Rather than Diels-Kranz’ (DK) 6th edition of *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Diels and Kranz), I use Coxon’s recently revised arrangement (under Richard McKirahan’s editorship) of Parmenides’ poem as the default standard arrangement, and often as the default translation, as I have here. Not only is it far more accessible for many readers (still available in print, and in English), and its treatment of ancient *testimonia* more exhaustive (with helpful English translations from the Greek), I also find its arrangement to be generally superior to DK’s. To refer to Coxon’s own arrangement of Parmenides’ fragments, I preface each reference with the letter ‘C,’ followed by the corresponding catalog number of the fragment(s) in question. I also often include the parallel fragment number from Diels-Kranz, indicated by ‘DK’, for ease of reference.

I refer to this as the “A-D Paradox,” a persistent interpretative problem for which, despite numerous noble attempts, a thoroughly satisfying resolution remains elusive.

I accept that any holistic and comprehensive treatment of Parmenides’ poem must directly confront the A-D Paradox, and thus its resolution is the central philosophical problem motivating this project. However, I deny that the poem can be understood by solely focusing on the relationship between these sections alone, while neglecting the *Proem*. Instead, I suggest that the reason the A-D Paradox has proven so persistent is precisely because the poem has not been adequately treated as a whole, allowing misleading assumptions to remain entrenched

In Chapter Two, I will return to the discussion of the poem itself, and how modern approaches to reading the poem have resulted in the A-D Paradox. Before approaching the actual text and its treatment in modern literature, however, it is worth considering what insights ancient sources can provide regarding Parmenides and his work. While blind acceptance of ancient biases and assumptions must be guarded against as much as their modern equivalents, any well-attested claims with broad consensus are worth taking seriously in interpretative exercises.

A. Biography

Extremely little can be said about Parmenides’ biography with any confidence. He was almost certainly born in Elea²—a small Greek settlement along the Tyrrhenian coast of the Appenine Peninsula (modern Italy), just south of the Bay of Salerno—sometime after the initial founding of the colony (c. 540 BCE), and it is likely he lived well into the fifth century BCE.³

² Several sources (Eusebius and Strabo) explicitly attest Parmenides was born in Elea, not just from there (Coxon Test. 91, 103).

³ There are two competing methods for dating Parmenides’ life, neither of which is clearly convincing. Diogenes Laertius’ third-century *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (ix) says that he “flourished,” or reached his “acme,” during the sixty-ninth Olympiad (between 504-500 BCE), which has been conventionally understood to correspond to one’s forties. This dating method would put his birth around 540 BCE, or very near to the founding of

He seems to have been revered locally for his political influence (he purportedly established a set of laws for Elea that remained in effect for centuries after his death),⁴ and perhaps his medical expertise as well—a first-century pedestal is dedicated to him, describing him as a “doctor philosopher.”⁵ Whether Parmenides traveled or not is uncertain, though if Parmenides truly was the personal teacher of Zeno of Elea (490-430 BCE), he must have maintained a permanent presence in Elea well into the mid-fifth century BCE. Ultimately, when and where Parmenides died is entirely unattested.

B. Intellectual Influences

Elea. Plato, in his dialogue *Parmenides* (127a5-c5), has a very young Socrates (perhaps about 20) himself conversing with Parmenides, who is explicitly described as being “about 65”—an unusual exactitude for a Platonic dialogue. On this report since we can date Socrates’ birth to approximately 470, subtracting the remaining 45 years grants a birthdate for Parmenides around 515 (Cf. *Sophist* 217c4-7; 237a3-9). Scholars on both sides assert their favored view is the “more reliable” one, and it is hard to say which is preferable, though Plato’s dating seems more commonly accepted. While Diogenes’ report is based upon Apollodorus’ earlier (2nd c. BCE) account, which is generally held to be reliable, the “acme” system of Apollodorus’, relying upon a standard forty-year gap between master and pupil, is rather imprecise and artificial. Also, to accept this earlier birth date, one has to be willing to deny any (possible) truth to Plato’s own account, and opinion is divided as to whether Plato’s exactness of detail on this particular point speaks in favor of, or against, the account. For instance, Taran takes Plato’s unnecessary precision to be a sign of verisimilitude of the chronological *possibility* of such a meeting (not that the meeting was historical fact) (Tarán 3-4); cf. (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 240). On the other hand, Cordero and Thanassas think this very same precision runs against truth (N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 5-8; Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation* 10), and at least one ancient commentator expressed skepticism regarding this meeting (Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* xi, 505 F1-6). There is no doubt that Plato often includes entirely fictitious, clearly anachronistic yet precise details in his dialogues; in fact, the very conversation reported in the dialogue would have been impossible, as it depends upon views Plato developed late in his life, which are certainly not “Socratic” at all. This is only further complicated by the suggestion that Plato offers a possibly earlier account of Parmenides’ birth in the *Sophist* (242d), requiring Parmenides’ work to have preceded, and presumably influenced, Heraclitus’ own writing. This is far from conclusive, however, as it is certainly still possible for Parmenides to have written relatively early in life, and Heraclitus relatively later on, while maintaining the 515 BCE birthdate. When Parmenides died, or where—he may have remained in Elea, or traveled, as Plato claims in *Parmenides* (Cf. *Theaetetus* 183e)—is entirely unknown.

⁴ This is attested by both Diogenes Laertius (quoting Speusippus) and Plutarch (Coxon Test. 16, 116).

⁵ The “Velia Inscription” (ΠΑΡΜΕΝΕΙΔΗΣ ΠΥΡΗΤΟΣ, ΟΥΛΙΑΔΗΣ ΦΥΣΙΚΟΣ) ascribes this appellation to Parmenides (Coxon Test. 106). “Ouliades” means “Son of Oulios,” where “Oulios” is in this case an appellation commonly associated with Apollo in relation to the healing arts. “Son” would be metaphorical, shorthand for priest in this context. A separate inscription found at the site helps to tie this together, reading “Ouliades, Iatromantis, Apollo” (“iatromantis” = physician/seer, particularly of Apollo and/or Asclepius). (Coxon 41-44; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides*; Geldard 19; P. L. Miller 53-54).

Of far greater philosophical importance, and hardly less certain than the rest of his general biography, is Parmenides' intellectual background. Was he a pupil of, or at least heavily influenced by, some particular thinker(s)? If so, did he seek to further refine, or to challenge, such views—or perhaps both? Having some reliable answers to these questions would greatly improve our understanding of Parmenides' place in the narrative of ancient Greek philosophy. More relevant to this project, such answers could provide some interpretative guidance for understanding Parmenides' perplexing poem, and in turn aid in resolving the A-D Paradox. One way to seek answers to these questions is to look at the ancient doxographical tradition itself, which points to two, mutually compatible, teachers of Parmenides—Aminias the Pythagorean, and Xenophanes.⁶

⁶ Diogenes Laertius also reports that Theophrastus claimed Parmenides to be a student of Anaximander, in addition to Xenophanes (Coxon Test. 41). This is impossible, as Anaximander died before Parmenides was born. It is possible that Parmenides was influenced by aspects of Anaximander's thought—in fact, such parallels are far easier to draw in the *Doxa* than any general Pythagorean influence. However, as this essay will demonstrate, Parmenides' project was far broader than rejecting any particular Milesian cosmology, and influences from Anaximander will not prove particularly relevant as a direct positive influence, nor particular target for refutation. Though it has been common for modern thinkers to understand Parmenides' static *being* and Heraclitus' "philosophy of flux" as contrasting responses to each other, no ancient source attests to such an influence—in fact, Plato suggests the influence went the opposite direction, which is almost certainly incorrect given the fact that Heraclitus does not hesitate to name those he disagrees with. Though closer considerations of the views of Heraclitus and Parmenides have tended to undermine the thesis that Parmenides was directly challenging Heraclitus, there are also good historical considerations that make it highly unlikely for Heraclitus to have influenced Parmenides. All the evidence suggests Heraclitus wrote his major work near the end of his sixty-year lifetime, and that Parmenides could not have written much after Heraclitus' own death. This leaves little time in-between, if any, for Parmenides to become aware of or be inspired to challenge Heracliteanism. That Heraclitus wrote late in his lifetime is evident from his explicit criticism of other thinkers, in particular his criticism of Hecataetus (c. 550-485 BCE). If Heraclitus' use of the past tense to refer to these thinkers indicates they are dead, this means Heraclitus' work is post-485 (B40). Even if the past tense does not mean the authors are dead, it is almost certain Hecataetus wrote late in his lifetime, after his travels (post-500 BCE). Thus, the earliest reasonable estimate for Heraclitus' work is 490 BCE, plus or minus five years. If it is true (as Plato claims) that Parmenides was the personal teacher of a young Zeno (490-430), and that Zeno wrote his own book in defense of his master's while very young, then Parmenides must have written prior to 470 BCE. These considerations leave a rather short window—less than twenty years—for Heraclitus' views to spread across the Greek world to Elea and inspire Parmenides to take them on. Though not impossible, this is unlikely. This window essentially vanishes if other traditional accounts are true. Heraclitus is reported to have deposited his completed book (apparently the only copy) in the Temple of Artemis (the Artemisium), making access to it quite limited. Tradition further holds that Heraclitus himself did not have any students, but that a following eventually arose amongst those who studied his book, and named themselves "Heracliteans." Given these circumstances, the time required for dissemination of Heraclitus' views into the rest of the Greek world would be substantial—not years, but decades—and far too late to have influenced Parmenides. How then might the apparent interaction/influence between these thinkers be explained, when they were almost certainly writing in isolation and ignorance of each other on opposite sides of the Greek world? If there truly are philosophical parallels between

i. Aminias/Pythagoreanism

Only one ancient source attests that Parmenides, though a student of Xenophanes, did not follow him (presumably, in his way of thinking), but was instead urged to take up the Pythagorean “life of stillness” by Aminias.⁷ There are only a few more ancient sources which attest to any general Pythagorean influence upon Parmenides. Proclus, reporting the claims of Nicomachus of Gerasa (1st-2nd c. CE), avers that both Parmenides and Zeno attended the Pythagorean school; but even if this is true, it does not necessarily follow that either adopted these views, or sought to challenge them.⁸ Iamblichus also mentions Parmenides amongst a list of “known Pythagoreans,” though no defense of, nor basis for, this attribution is provided.⁹

Beyond these three attestations, it seems that geographical considerations are the best argument for thinking any Pythagorean influence upon Parmenides likely in the first place, as the primary Pythagorean school was founded in Croton, just over 200 miles SSE from Elea. However, this is quite circumstantial and speculative. Even when the geographical argument is considered alongside the ancient attestations of Pythagorean influence, the conjunction remains far from convincing.¹⁰ Furthermore, modern attempts to demonstrate the presence of Pythagorean elements within Parmenides’ text itself seem quite strained, at best—particularly

these thinkers (and I think there are), given these historical considerations, it is preferable to seek a common influence which would explain the similarities in doctrine and critical themes, and which would have been widely spread by the end of the sixth century. The clear common influence for these thinkers would be Xenophanes.

⁷ This is reported by Diogenes Laertius, citing Sotion. He also claims Parmenides used his wealth to erect a hero-shrine in honor of poor Aminias upon his death (Coxon Test. 96)

⁸ (Coxon Test. 121). Anatolius of Alexandria also claims Parmenides likely followed the Pythagoreans in his view that the ultimate monadic nature of the world is found to rest at the very center of everything. However, he also ascribes this view to virtually the entirety of all other wise men, so this is hardly a particularly an explicitly “Pythagorean” view (Coxon Test. 150).

⁹ (Coxon Test. 154)

¹⁰ The association of Pythagoreanism with the “still life” has come under serious question as to whether such is indicative of Pythagoreanism at all, and the source itself may even be a forgery. Furthermore, not only are the sources limited in number, the reports are not from any actual Pythagorean, and quite late chronologically, casting significant doubt on their veracity regarding a cult with secret membership (Hermann 129; fn. 387, 88).

given the general lack of good information about early Pythagoreanism.¹¹ In any case, only a relatively small minority of contemporary scholars have been committed to defending this more general claim of Pythagorean influence, and far fewer are willing to grant credence to the claim that Aminias was his teacher.¹² In fact, most Parmenidean scholars reject the Pythagorean association entirely, or at least hold it to not be directly or substantially significant for informing Parmenides' own mature views.¹³

ii. Xenophanean Influences

On the other hand, the claim that Parmenides was either a direct disciple of Xenophanes (either exclusively, or in addition to Aminias), or at least heavily influenced by him in developing his own views (whether in terms of pupilage, influence, or critical response) is pervasive amongst ancient sources. However, this wide attestation has not prevented many

¹¹ Some have suggested parallels between Pythagoreanism and Parmenides' in the dualistic principles (light/fire and night) found in Parmenides' cosmology (Coxon 15-19; 40; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 9 fn. 35). Parallels have also been drawn between Parmenides' description of the philosopher-youth's journey in the *Proem* as an abandonment of bodily desires in favor of a life of pure contemplation (Coxon 15-19; 40), and the use of the same word for "body" (N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 9, fn. 35). Kirk, et. al., are only willing to grant a possible Pythagorean influence in Parmenides to two very minor concepts/phrases found only in the *Doxa* (the description of birth as "hateful," and the migration of the soul between visible and invisible realms which Simplicius describes in relation to C 13 (Coxon 207)), but otherwise hold there to be very little evidence of such influence in Parmenides' mature thought and sole work (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 240). While Taran denies any Pythagorean elements in Parmenides' conception of *Being*, he does think that Pythagoreanism influenced Parmenides method—that he most likely learnt how to employ *reductio ad absurdum* from the mathematical deductions the Pythagoreans are particularly noted for (Tarán 3, 201). In short, even amongst scholars who think there *might* be some Pythagorean influence, there is no consensus regarding the details of the influence, nor the evidence for it. Even more telling, for any Pythagorean parallels which occur in the *Doxa* and *Proem*, ascribing any *positive* Pythagorean influence would also require taking these parts of the poem to be positively endorsed aspects of Parmenides' own view. As this project will also deny that Parmenides positively endorsed either section, to the extent that any argument for Pythagorean influence resting on content from either section were true, this project indirectly suggests these ideas to be amongst the targets for refutation by Parmenides.

¹² For those who think the account regarding Aminias might likely be true, in addition to a general Pythagorean influence, see: (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 240; Geldard 8, 12-18; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 158-9). For those willing to grant a strong Pythagorean influence in general, see: (Coxon 15-19; 40; Burnet 182-85; Kingsley *Reality*).

¹³ For scholars holding there *might* be *some* familiarity with Pythagorean thought, but any actual influence is probably quite limited, see: (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 240; Curd 16 n. 33, 26-27 n. 8; McKirahan 151-2; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 9-10). For those that explicitly refute it entirely, see: (Hermann 129). The relatively sparse citations of explicit refutations should not mislead the reader. Rather, it is the relative dearth of comments relating Parmenides to Pythagoreanism in the relevant literature that best attests to this claim.

modern scholars from challenging the veracity of these claims, and outright minimizing and dismissing any Xenophanean influence beyond the shared use of dactylic hexameter, in favor of stressing Parmenides' uniqueness.¹⁴ As will be seen, such dismissal may be far too hasty. In any case, in light of the extent of the ancient attestation, the possibility of an influential relationship between the two thinkers deserves further consideration.

It should first be noted that the geographical argument for a Xenophanean influence on Parmenides is just as strong, if not superior to, the Pythagorean association. Xenophanes describes himself as having spent sixty-seven years traveling and sharing his teachings after leaving his Ionian birthplace in Colophon at the age of twenty-five.¹⁵ One passage quoted from Xenophanes' own writings is clearly about Pythagoras, demonstrating familiarity with the school in southern Italy.¹⁶ Diogenes Laertius explicitly attests that Xenophanes lived at two locations in Sicily (Zancle and Catana), and that he even wrote a poem on the founding of Elea (Parmenides' own city).¹⁷ Thus, Xenophanes was certainly in the region of southern Italy, and likely even

¹⁴ Those who point out the general dismissal of Xenophanes' influence by others in the literature include: (Hermann 133; Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 329 fn. 8). For some examples of scholars who explicitly argue against (or just dismiss as unlikely or insubstantial) an influential philosophical relationship between the thoughts of Xenophanes and Parmenides, see: (Tarán 3, 201; Geldard 3; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 10-11; McKirahan 151-52).

¹⁵ Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers* (ix.19).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* viii. 36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* ix. 18-20. Diels quite controversially inserts a line at 9.18 that would explicitly attest to Xenophanes' teaching in Elea: διέτριβε καὶ τῆς εἰς Ἑλέαν ἀποικίας κοινωνήσας ἐδίδασκεν ἐκεῖ. This addition is apparently lacking in any evidential basis, and Cordero rightly objects to it (N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 10). However, arguing for this emendation is not necessary, as contrary to Cordero, there are ancient sources attesting to a relationship between these thinkers, even strongly suggesting an historical pupilage. Though it might be assumed that Xenophanes was involved in, or at least present at, the time of Elea's founding on the grounds that he celebrated the event in poetry, he did the same for his native Colophon, which was founded centuries before his birth. Celebrating historical events in poetry hardly requires or even strongly suggests presence at them. However, such poetical celebration does suggest a deep familiarity with, and particular affinity for, a region or city—far more so, one would think, than Cordero's explanation: that Xenophanes would have known of the founders (Phoceans) of Elea, since they were originally from an Ionian city not far from his home city of Colophon, and that he wrote the poem from there (*Ibid.*). Not only would Xenophanes almost have certainly left Colophon before the founding of Elea, he would have needed to hear of such events from a good source to properly write a poem about them—and he would be far more likely to come across sources worthy of poetical inspiration when he visited/lived in Sicily and southern Italy, as opposed to hearing of distant reports while in Colophon, of some other regional people's success at founding a colony in a land entirely foreign to his experience. I suggest that

Elea itself. Even if he settled in this area later in life, as many think, he would have been present at the most likely time for Parmenides to begin engaging in his mature philosophical work.

Aside from geographical inferences, both Aristotle and his student Theophrastus explicitly claim that Parmenides was a student of Xenophanes.¹⁸ This is further attested by several later doxographers: Aetius (2nd-1st c. BCE) and “Pseudo-Plutarch” (1st c. BCE?).¹⁹ It must be admitted that it is almost certain that Theophrastus was simply parroting Aristotle, and it is possible (perhaps even likely) that both peripatetic sources were relying solely upon an offhand remark by Plato—the earliest commentator to draw a connection between Parmenides and Xenophanes—which may be less than trustworthy, and/or not intended to be taken seriously.²⁰ Plato claims that there is an Eleatic “tribe,” which commonly held that “all things are one,” and that this view was first advanced by Xenophanes—and even thinkers before him!²¹ Modern skepticism of this Platonic comment as likely relying more on quite general philosophical parallels, rather than any actual historical teacher-student relationship, may very well be correct.²² If this is the case, and if later accounts that claim a pedagogical relationship are based solely upon Plato’s claim, then the case for pupilage would be quite weak.²³ Recognition of this is likely the main reason many modern scholars have tended to dismiss any actual master-pupil relationship between these two thinkers.²⁴

the most reasonable common tie between these poems is that both cities were important to Xenophanes in a particular manner—places he identified with as “home.”

¹⁸ Aristotle says Parmenides was a μαθητής of Xenophanes (Metaphysics 986b20-23). Theophrastus uses the phrase “Ξενοφάνους δὲ διήκουσε” to communicate the same idea (Coxon Test. 40)

¹⁹ (Coxon Test. 55, 87)

²⁰ (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 240-41; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* fn. 40)

²¹ *Sophist* (242d4-d5)

²² (N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 10-11; Tarán 3, 201; Coxon 18)

²³ Cicero’s account in *Lucullus* seems to depend on Plato’s comment as well (Coxon Test. 102).

²⁴ Those who point to this problem include: (Coxon 18-19; 40; McKirahan 151; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 10; Cohen, Curd and Reeve 23).

On the other hand, many of the attestations by later doxographers do not appear to be based upon Plato's questionable comment at all, which means that dismissing all the ancient accounts attesting to a relationship on those grounds would certainly be inappropriate. Furthermore, even if it is granted that there are good reasons to be skeptical concerning an actual pedagogical relationship of the master-pupil sort, this in no way diminishes the possibility or likelihood of a more general intellectual influence and/or critical response, based upon mere familiarity with his predecessors' work. Again, given the frequency and relative ease with which ancient thinkers drew philosophical parallels between these thinkers, further consideration is warranted. However, even when not outright vague, the ancient attestations are admittedly quite varied in terms of exactly which aspects of Parmenides' and Xenophanes' philosophical views are supposed to be shared.

Some ancient sources describe the association between these two thinkers strictly in terms of a shared metaphysical monism; that both held "all things," or the "entire cosmos," to be just one unchanging thing—at least in *some* sense. This seems to have been Plato's reasoning, claiming that both held "all things are one."²⁵ Aristotle may provide further explication of Plato's thought, explaining that Parmenides held the entirety of the world to be just one thing, possessing the properties as described in *Aletheia*, and claims Xenophanes similarly held the entire world to be one thing as "God."²⁶ Theophrastus, following both his predecessors, similarly says they both made the All one.²⁷ Aetius' describes both as holding the metaphysical views that the cosmos itself is ungenerated, eternal, and imperishable, unmoved, unique and complete—however, as will be shown below, Aetius likely saw theological parallels as well.²⁸

²⁵ *Sophist* 242d4-9. Calcidius essentially parrots this claim (Coxon Test. 158-59)

²⁶ *Metaphysics* 986b21-30.

²⁷ (Coxon Test. 43)

²⁸ (Coxon Test. 55, 60)

The Neoplatonist Calcidius (4th c. CE) also associated Parmenides and Xenophanes on similar grounds—that both held all things to be one, unmoved, and eternal (ungenerated and unperishing), with the additional claim that the one unmoved being is also the *origin* of all other things in the world.²⁹ Another Neoplatonist, Simplicius (6th c. CE), associates Xenophanes and Parmenides as both having posited the intelligible first principle, agreeing that it must be one and limited, as well as a complete and unified end for all other things. He goes on to point out that they differ about this principle in several ways—while Xenophanes’s first principle is hierarchically superior to all other things in the world, and the cause for them, Parmenides’ does not make this principle causally responsible for the rest of the world, and holds it to be beyond the world (transcendent).³⁰

Others describe the relationship in exclusively epistemic terms—that both Parmenides and Xenophanes were particularly concerned with the gap between divine and mortal knowledge, and whether this could be overcome by mortals. Cicero explicitly draws this parallel, claiming that both Parmenides and Xenophanes denounced the arrogance of mortals for erroneously believing they have knowledge, when in fact they cannot have it.³¹ Aristocles of Messene (1st c. CE) asserts that both Xenophanes and Parmenides (and Zeno and Melissus—in fact, *all* the “Eleatics,” as well as the later Megarians) advocated rejecting the senses entirely, trusting in reason alone to deliver truth. Though he goes on to include some metaphysical similarities as well—that “what-is” is one, eternal, and at rest—these aspects remain subservient

²⁹ (Coxon Test. 158-59). This additional claim about the origins of things is likely due to Neoplatonist influences, and Plato’s Theory of Forms. The same is true for Aetius’ claim that Parmenides believed in the numerical identity of: fate, justice, providence, and the creator of the cosmos (Coxon 58).

³⁰ (Coxon Test. 204). Of course, much of this account is couched in Aristotelian terms.

³¹ (Coxon Test. 102). Cicero does also suggest metaphysical similarities, as he ascribes to the Megarians (explicitly including Xenophanes and Parmenides) the view that the sole good was that which was one, alike, and always the same. Plutarch also understood Parmenides’ perspective in similar epistemological terms (Coxon Test. 113).

to the epistemological parallel—that only pure reason could provide these truths.³² Perhaps most influential along these lines is the commentary by the Pyrrhonian Skeptic Sextus Empiricus (2nd-3rd c. CE), one of our most extensive sources for Parmenides’ poem.³³ Immediately after quoting Xenophanes’ claims that knowledge is impossible for mortals—for even if they spoke the truth, they would never know it, and thus are stuck with mere opinion—Sextus goes on to discuss how Parmenides, an “acquaintance” (γνώμους) of Xenophanes, similarly rejected the fallible, sensory-based opinions of mortals, in favor of infallible reason.³⁴

Later sources often ground the relationship between these thinkers as skeptics of traditional religion and/or theologians engaged in addressing theological questions, if not outright developing a “rational theology.” It has already been noted above that Aetius (2nd-1st c. BCE) claimed that Parmenides’ shares metaphysical views with his teacher Xenophanes, on the grounds that Parmenides wrote: “complete, unique, motionless, and ungenerated,” but differed in that Parmenides added fire as a second cause for all things, in addition to earth.³⁵ The only known aspect of Xenophanes’ work that could possibly share these characteristics of Parmenides’ *Being* is Xenophanes’ supreme (or only) God.

That Aetius meant to imply Parmenides’ *Being* was parallel to Xenophanes’ God in these ways can be further supported by other passages. Aetius attests both Xenophanes and Parmenides (along with Melissus) held the cosmos to be ungenerated, eternal, and

³² (Coxon Test. 132)

³³ Without Sextus’ reports, there would be no mention of the mythical introduction (*Proem*) at all in the *testimonia*, let alone any actual quotations from it.

³⁴ As evidence, Sextus provides a Platonized, allegorical interpretation of the *Proem* that has reason ruling over the passions of the body, and ignoring the senses, in order to obtain genuine, infallible knowledge (Coxon Test. 136).

³⁵ C 8.4 (Coxon Test. 55). Aetius’ description of Light/Night as Fire/Earth strongly suggests his dependence upon Peripatetic sources. Very similar claims can be found in Pseudo-Plutarch, but this is probably because he was copying and abridging Aetius’ own work, as Diels discovered, and as such should not be counted as an additional, independent attestation. Cf. (Coxon Test. 87)

imperishable.³⁶ Again, the only aspect of Xenophanes' thought that fits these characteristics is Xenophanes' concept of a supreme (and *only*, if Aristotle's testimony is accurate) deity, which seems to be an early form of pantheism.³⁷ More importantly, Aetius is also the earliest Greek to explicitly say that the unmoved, limited, and spherical entity described in *Aletheia*—which is also the very same “ungenerated, eternal, and imperishable” entity Parmenides and Xenophanes agree about in the other passages—is God.³⁸ A somewhat later (1st c. CE?) Greek peripatetic text—*On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*—describes Xenophanes as holding a strict monotheism, using very similar predicates as Parmenides' description of *Being* in *Aletheia*—eternal, one, perfect, uniform throughout, immovable, spherical. Furthermore, the text explicitly says that Parmenides was himself describing god in *Aletheia*, in largely Xenophanean terms, with one notable point of departure—Parmenides holds that God is limited (and “like a sphere”), rather than unlimited.³⁹ Philo of Alexandria, while criticizing both Parmenides' and Xenophanes' poetical abilities, wonders how strange it is that such “divine men”—theologians engaging in theological questions—should be so lacking in divine inspiration as to produce such poor poetical compositions.⁴⁰ That Xenophanes can be readily described as a “theologian practicing theology” is rather uncontroversial; yet extending this to Parmenides certainly runs counter to the tendency by moderns to see his work as a strictly secular, logical exercise in the fundamentals of epistemology and metaphysics.

³⁶ ...ἀγένητον καὶ ἄφθαρτον τὸν κόσμον. (Coxon Test. 60)

³⁷ Aetius (Coxon Test. 59). Aristotle *Metaphysics* 986b21-25.

³⁸ (Coxon Test. 56).

³⁹ (Coxon Test. 120)

⁴⁰ (Coxon Test. 104-05). Philo is not the only ancient around this time (1st c. CE) to criticize Parmenides on his lack of poetical greatness. Plutarch also does so on several occasions (Coxon Test. 107-08).

There are numerous other ancient accounts that describe Parmenides' philosophical work as having a religious subject, which do not mention Xenophanes at all.⁴¹ However, the reasoning given above—that Parmenides' description in *Aletheia* closely mirrors Xenophanes' own description of God—would seem to be the most likely reason for drawing such a parallel philosophically—a parallel which has likely been inappropriately minimized by modern commentators. For while it is true that in the extant fragments Parmenides *never* explicitly calls the entity or mode of being described in *Aletheia* “divine,” that same account is offered by an

⁴¹ Works traditionally assigned to one Menander Rhetor (4th c. CE?), a Greek rhetorician, provide further attestation for this historical interpretation of Parmenides. This author claims that Parmenides, like Orpheus, offer “naturalistic” or “scientific” hymns which explain the nature of Apollo or Zeus. The point seems to be that rather than merely naming the Supreme Being ‘Zeus,’ Parmenides has sought to explain the nature of that being, and thus explain divinity itself (Coxon Test. 151-52). It is of course not at all surprising to see theological issues emphasized by thinkers of the Abrahamic traditions, or even the Neoplatonists, as these traditions already held very similar views of the divine as the *Being* described in Parmenides' poem. The first Jewish philosopher in the Greek tradition, Philo of Alexandria (early 1st c. CE), certainly had prior, non-Greek religious influences informing his interpretations of ancient Greek philosophy, as well as a clear, ahistorical agenda—providing a rational foundation for Judaism. The 2nd c. CE Christian theologian, Clement of Alexandria, similarly claims that when Parmenides lists all the properties of “What-Is” at the opening of *Aletheia* (C 8.3-4), that he is describing God, and also enigmatically associates C 9 with learning the truth about astronomical and theological views (Coxon Test. 129-30). However, Clement's own agenda of promoting faith over philosophical reason, in conjunction with his Abrahamic treatment of ancient Greek culture and philosophy, suggest his perspective might be too biased to rely upon. Ammonius (3rd c. CE Greek Neoplatonist) is clearly thinking along these lines as well when he admits Parmenides preceded Aristotle in thoughts about theology, particularly with respect to the timelessness and immutability of the gods (Coxon Test. 187-88). Though the identity and background of the author known as “Macrobius” is completely speculative, as a 5th c. CE Roman, his broader cultural background would have certainly included extensive exposure to Abrahamic faiths and theology, given that Christianity had become the official state religion a generation earlier. On the other hand, he is often believed to have been a pagan, which seems to be supported by his writing, and thus might not be as subject to those biases. In any case, Macrobius seems to provide a far more objective evaluation in his text, including Parmenides in a list of thinkers who rejected traditional pagan worship practices, writing that Parmenides thought of the gods (thus, not the Abrahamic deity) as eternal, ageless, immaterial beings. Strangely, Macrobius includes Pythagoras, Empedocles and Heraclitus in this list, but omits the most obvious thinker who fits this description—Xenophanes (Coxon Test. 161). Boethius, describing his own conception of the divine substance as complete and limited, also quotes Parmenides in this context (Coxon Test. 218). Amongst the more theologically-inclined Neo-Platonists, such as Plotinus (3rd c. CE) and Proclus (5th c. CE), who held The One to be God, Parmenides is thought of as anticipating Plato along the following lines (Coxon Test. 141-47; 72-83). They primarily understood Parmenides' poem by emphasizing his close association, or even claim of identity, between being and thinking/contemplation. This led to viewing the Being described in *Aletheia* as explicating the most perfect instantiation of mind itself (and thus, I will add, much like Xenophanes' God, which understands all and moves things by thought alone). Just as mental activity is not observable, but observes, so the Being in *Aletheia* is not observable by the senses, and discovered by mental activity alone. The One Being in *Aletheia* is further Platonized, becoming the grounding source of being for everything else in the world, much like Plato's Forms. Furthermore, this interpretative approach tends to include a moralization of Parmenides' metaphysics on Neoplatonic lines, as indicative of how the virtuous person must seek to become as close in their own contemplation as possible to the description of mind in *Aletheia*. While the details are clearly anachronistic, the point here is the ease with which Parmenides' *Being* can be taken as a religious entity.

anonymous divine mouthpiece, and both the introductory *Proem* and the *Doxa* are full of references to traditional deities. As this project will suggest, the tendency by moderns to diminish the importance of these elements in interpretative models, or otherwise explain them away, may very well prove to be a significant stumbling block for properly understanding Parmenides poem in its proper historical context.

C. Xenophanean Influences and the Significance for Interpretative Models

It must certainly be admitted that the trustworthiness of the sources is far from ideal. Even when later thinkers and doxographers aren't obviously busy engaging in the anachronism of interpreting earlier views through their own lenses, and setting up straw-men that suit their own argumentative purposes and agenda, they are still far removed from Parmenides' own historical context, and often depending rather blindly on the writings of earlier sources that have not been preserved for modern comparison or verification. Cultural and religious biases are also particularly problematic. Besides Aetius' reports, evidence for parallels in the conceptions of divinity between Parmenides and Xenophanes only appear much later in the literature, by authors fully embedded in the context of Abrahamic faiths and Neoplatonism. It is also imperative to keep in mind that religious associations ascribed to the content of *Aletheia* may not be at all indicative of what Parmenides himself was supposedly thinking of, nor even necessarily intended to be such. In many cases, when these later thinkers attest that Parmenides was "talking about God," they might merely mean that whatever it was Parmenides himself was intent on describing, from their worldview, such would have to be the One God, by definition.

Despite the healthy skepticism that should be aimed towards these ancient reports, their attestations are nevertheless valuable. While many details are obvious anachronisms, the general

claims remain constant throughout. The pervasive association of these two thinkers in ancient minds—almost invariably to the exclusion of any other predecessor of Parmenides—across a thousand years and from numerous philosophical and historical perspectives, provides a *prima facie* reason to take this association seriously, and to charitably look for reasons to support the relationship rather than naysay it. In fact, even the clear anachronistic biases may not prove as problematic as they seem at first. For instance, though the cultural perspectives of later, more theologically-focused thinkers may indeed tend to draw conclusions with religious significance where there originally was none, this does not mean that such was not actually already present in this particular case. Indeed, their perspectives may have just allowed them to more easily see what had always been present in Parmenides' work, but was previously overlooked, dismissed, or downplayed by earlier authors who were themselves biased by their own mythopoetic traditions, not to mention metaphysical interests and commitments.

There is also no good reason to be skeptical of significant influences between the thought of Xenophanes and Parmenides based on the mere fact that ancient thinkers drew parallels in differing ways (i.e. metaphysical, epistemic, and theological—either in isolation, or in some combination). As this project will show, there are good reasons to see parallels in *all* these areas, even on traditional interpretative approaches, though the details of each must ultimately depend upon close examinations of the texts themselves. Indeed, the fact that parallels are so easily drawn along all these levels is what makes the tendency by commentators to diminish a significant Xenophanean influence on Parmenides so strange. For even if there prove to be significant differences (e.g. Xenophanes' God thinks, and Parmenides' *Being* does not) this is also no good reason to deny extensive influence or pupilage; if it were, Aristotle could not be Plato's student, despite all the good ancient evidence.

Given these facts, any interpretation of Parmenides should probably provide *some* substantial means of explaining this widely attested relationship with Xenophanes' thought. In fact, it would seem to be a significant mark in the favor of any interpretative model which explains not only Parmenides' own work in an internally consistent and coherently satisfactory way (i.e. effectively and satisfactorily resolving the A-D Paradox), but which can also provide an account of his work that is closely tied to Xenophanes' own in *all three* of these philosophical areas (metaphysics, epistemology, and rational theology). In attempting to resolve the A-D Paradox, this project will offer an interpretative model which I believe can best satisfy all of the aforementioned criteria. In fact, it will even develop the further parallel that both philosophers were focused on criticizing traditional religious models—an aspect of Parmenides' thought which has been entirely ignored by ancients and moderns alike.

Finally, the interpretative model offered below will also suggest a way of reading Parmenides that puts the ancient (and modern) criticisms of Parmenides' poetical abilities in a new light. This project concludes that reading Parmenides' poem in a particularly poetic way—as a ring-composition—best reveals the divine focus of the work, and thus the strongest parallels to Xenophanes. However, defending this reading also requires explaining why this aspect of his work has apparently gone unrecognized for so long; especially by Parmenides' closest contemporaries, who presumably had access to the complete poem, and were quite familiar with this mode of composition from poets like Homer and Hesiod. If this compositional framework were so easily recognizable to ancient minds, why are interpretative accounts similar to mine not found in the ancient doxography? It is worth considering the possibility that Parmenides could have in fact been writing in this manner, but that he provided such a relatively poor (and/or

perhaps exceedingly subtle) attempt at the compositional device that his meaning proved so evasive.

Prior to any further development of these theses, however, the central problem of this project must be explicated, engaged with, and resolved. The immediate next step in this process is to understand the nature of the text itself, including its fragmentary transmission, somewhat controversial attempts at reconstruction, and basic content. It will then be demonstrated how traditional approaches to reading the text have invariably run up against the A-D Paradox, which neither ancient nor modern interpretative accounts have yet adequately resolved.

2. Traditional Reconstructions & Interpretative Approaches

τὰ γὰρ τῶν παλαιῶν ἅπαντα Περί φύσεως ἐπιγέγραπται, τὰ Μελίσσου, τὰ Παρμενίδου...

“For all the ancient’s [works] are entitled On Nature: Melissus’s, Parmenides’...”⁴²

Ancient tradition holds that Parmenides produced only one written work, purportedly (and, likely erroneously) entitled “On Nature.”⁴³ Unfortunately, the meaning of this work is hardly less opaque than Parmenides biographical information, and any serious study of Parmenides’ poem must begin by facing the incomplete state and problematic transmission of the text. No copy of the original work has survived in any part. Instead, purported quotations from a number of ancient authors must be relied upon, in conjunction with their contextual *testimonia*, from which modern scholars have attempted to arrange into a sensible, though still quite fragmentary, text.

Though modern scholars do have substantial portions of the text itself to consider as evidence, at least some ancient scholars would have almost certainly had good access to complete copies, and there is certainly no clear interpretative consensus found amongst them. Plato, writing little more than a century later, even expressed great apprehension that, due to Parmenides’ “noble depth” (βάθος...γενναῖον), we are likely to fail to even understand the words

⁴² Galen. (Coxon Test. 126)

⁴³ By Sextus’ time (2nd c. CE) this title appears to be widely accepted, not only for Parmenides, but also for Melissus and the works of other unnamed “ancients” (Coxon Test. 124, 26, 36,). Simplicius reaffirms the claim in the 6th c. CE, explicitly stating “On Nature” (περὶ φύσεως) was used as the title (ἐπιγράφειν) for his copy of the manuscript (Coxon Test. 136). Coxon rightly points out that the only extant uses of the noun (φύσις) by Parmenides are found amongst the unpersuasive “beliefs of mortals” (Cf. Frags. 10.1, 5; 16.3), and from this concludes such a title to be impossible for the entire work. “On Nature” seems to have become a common appellation assigned indiscriminately to Presocratic works, which likely entirely lacked proper titles, beyond a simple preamble along the lines of “The following is the account of Parmenides of Elea, son of Pyrrhus,” as Coxon suggests (Coxon 269-70). Beyond Coxon’s example of Hecataeus’ slightly earlier introduction (“The following is the account of Hecataeus of Miletus...”), one can also compare Herodotus’ slightly later preamble (“This is the exposition of the research (ἱστορίης) of Herodotus of Halicarnassus...”), from which we derive the modern title *Histories*.

themselves, let alone the true meaning Parmenides intended by them.⁴⁴ Thus, one cannot help but wonder how modern interpretative attempts can hope to see more clearly than ancient eyes and minds. At the very least, it must be recognized that interpretative certainty is simply not to be had. In this project, I merely aim to provide a new interpretative framework for consideration, and hope to encourage further discussion along these lines, as far as may prove fruitful.

The extant 154 quoted lines (some only partial) of dactylic hexameter are traditionally divided into three sections: an introductory section known as the *Proem*, a central section of metaphysical arguments (*Aletheia* or, “*Reality*”), and a concluding “cosmology,” (*Doxa* or, “*Opinion*”). Though many philological difficulties persist from the conflicting transmissions of the text and attempts at reconstruction—proper punctuation, alternate Greek readings, adequate translation, ambiguities in the poetical form, etc.—the linear order of the primary sections is certain, and the assignment of particular fragments (and internal lines) to each section is generally well-supported.

This chapter provides a traditional outline of Parmenides’ poem, along with the internal and external textual evidence upon which such traditional reconstructions rest. The outline generally relies on Coxon’s own reconstruction as an exemplar, with variations in translation or placement noted along the way. In addition to providing the reader with a basic background of the poem’s content and its philological bases, how and why the *Proem* has tended to be treated as a separate and disposable section will be made clear, as well as why the two most substantive sections (*Aletheia and Doxa*) seem to stand in tension with one another.

⁴⁴ *Theatetus* 184a. φοβοῦμαι οὖν μὴ οὔτε τὰ λεγόμενα σθνῶμεν, τί τε διανοούμενος εἶπε πολὺ πλεόν λειπώμεθα.

A. Reconstructing the *Proem*

i. Summary

The poem unquestionably begins with the *Proem* (C 1). Lines 1-30 of the *Proem* seem to tell a coherent story without any noticeable gaps, and there are certainly no challenges to their placement. Here, the reader is presented with a mythical account of an anonymous young man (κοῦρος) traveling along the cosmic “path of the goddess” in a divine chariot, drawn by mares.⁴⁵ The Maidens of the Sun, having begun their journey at the House of Night, are guiding the chariot, wheels and axles blazing and shrieking. Eventually, the party arrives at the “aetherial” Gates of Night and Day, which the maidens must convince Justice to unlock and open with soft words. Only upon passing beyond these gates does the youth arrive at his final destination, “far from the path of men.”⁴⁶ There he is welcomed by a (likewise unnamed) goddess, who then provides a programmatic outline of what is to be discussed in the remainder of the poem:

⁴⁵ By tradition, it would have been either 2 or 4 mares total, but there is no indication of the number in the text.

⁴⁶ C 1.27. Scholars are divided over whether the journey indicates: a) a metaphorical ascent from darkness (ignorance) to light (knowledge), or b) a circular journey, beginning and ending at the House of Night, and thus a sort of revelatory experience through descent into the underworld, or *katabasis*. However, it would seem that any chariot-journey directed by sun-goddesses is best understood as following the diurnal path of the sun and Day (also, that of the moon and Night). Given the two geographical locations explicitly named (the “House of Night” and the “Gates of Night and Day”), both of which are traditionally located in the underworld by Homer and Hesiod, the underworld seems the most likely destination. Thus, the chariot-journey is ultimately circular, ending where it began (Cf. C2/DK5). From the House of Night—far below the center of the Earth—the Heliades would follow an ascending arc to the eastern edge of the Earth, where the sun/moon rise, and presumably collect their mortal charge. They would then continue their ascent across the heavens to apogee, then descending towards sunset, eventually arriving back in the underworld, at the Gates of Night and Day, traditionally located immediately in front of the House of Night. The chasm that lies beyond these gates is an apt poetical description of the completely dark House of Night. On this reading, rather than a metaphorical ascent towards enlightenment, the youth’s journey is actually a didactic *katabasis*. Cf. (Burkert “Das Proomium Des Parmenides Und Die Katabasis Des Pythagoras”). It also suggests an identification of the goddess as Night herself (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*). For an opposing circular account, which holds that the goddess is met up in the heavens, and completes the circle by returning to the earth and sharing his story, see: (Henn).

Furthermore, reading the journey as a metaphor for escaping ignorant darkness for the light of knowledge is only suggested by a commonly accepted punctuation choice that, though possible, is questionable. At 1.8b-10, Diels-Kranz included commas after both κοῦραι and νυκτὸς in line 1.9, making προλιποῦσαι δώματα νυκτὸς (“having left the House of Night”) a subordinate descriptive clause modifying the primary action the Maidens of the Sun perform with respect to the youth: ὅτε σπερχοίατο πέμπειν...εἰς φάος (“when they hastened to convey [me] into the light”). This suggests that the Maidens were in the House of the Night, and they left there, (and came to Earth?), with the purpose of conveying the philosophical-youth into the light of the aether. However, the works

“...And it is necessary for you to learn all things, (28b)
 Both the still heart of well-rounded reality (Ἀληθείης),
 And the opinions of mortals, in which there is no reliable (ἀληθῆς) trust.⁴⁷ (30)

That the youth is supposed to learn some truth *about* “reality” (*aletheia*) is uncontroversial, and universally understood to be satisfied by C 2-C 8.49, which comprise the second major section of the poem (*Aletheia*). Also relatively uncontroversial is that the “opinions of mortals” will be taught in the *Doxa* section (C 8.50-C 20), and that this account will be inferior to the account of *Aletheia* in some way—certainly epistemically; perhaps also ontologically.

The standard reconstruction of the *Proem* concludes with what are likely the two most difficult and controversial lines in Parmenides’ poem (C 1.31-32). There are numerous possible readings (in both the transmission of the Greek, as well as English translation), and selecting a translation for these lines requires extensive philological considerations, as well as an interpretative lens in which to understand the overall poem—the lines themselves are simply too ambiguous to make any determination. Thus, it is quite difficult to offer an unbiased translation. The following is an imperfect attempt at doing so, while remaining as interpretatively uncommitted as possible.

“But nevertheless, you shall also learn “these things,” how the “accepted/seeming things”

of Mansfeld, Burkert, and Furley have shown that the construction “εἰς φάος” to be far more likely to accompany *προλιποῦσαι* than *πέμπειν* based on syntax and frequency. Removing these commas means taking *εἰς φάος* as completing the immediately preceding clause *προλιποῦσαι δώματα νυκτὸς*, such that the “coming into the light” is just the natural outcome of leaving the House of Night, not the ultimate destination. Furthermore, readings that are committed to a heavenly destination require imputing an understood object (“me”—referring to the youth) to *πέμπειν*, which is not actually in the Greek. Though the verb is often transitive, it need not be here, and the entire passage can be read: “Whenever the Maidens of the Sun should make haste to set forth, leaving the House of Night for the light...”

⁴⁷ *χρῶ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι*, (28b) / ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκύκλιος ἀτρεμές ἦτορ, / ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθῆς. There is an alternate reading for *εὐκύκλιος* here: *εὐπειθέος*. Though debate between these two readings has gone back and forth for decades, many think Palmer’s recent defense of the former is compelling (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 378-80). On the other hand, Kurfess gives good reasons for trusting Sextus’ entire block-quotation of the entire *Proem* (which reads *εὐπειθέος*) and treating Simplicius’ similar quotation as a new fragment (Kurfess “Verity’s Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, Dk B 1.29 (and 8.4)”). I do not wish to insist on either reading here. However, as Simplicius’ lines better fit the rules for ring-composition (Cf. Ch. 5), I follow Palmer here.

should/would have had (to be) to be acceptably, passing through [just being] all things, altogether/in every way.”⁴⁸

Commentators have tended to understand these lines in several general ways. First, Parmenides might be offering an explanation for why it is important to learn about mortal opinions, despite the fact that they are so untrustworthy/unreliable, as line 1.30 avers. Another common view is that Parmenides might be telling the youth he will learn counterfactually how the opinions of mortals (or the objects of such opinions) would or could have been correct (even though they were not and are not now). Alternatively, Parmenides might be pointing to some distinct, third thing for the youth to learn, beyond just Reality and Opinion. This third thing could be, but is not limited to, the relationship between the two sections, which does not seem to have been explicitly outlined in the poem (at least, not in the extant fragments).

The suspicion that these lines might help shed light on the relationship between the two primary sections (*Aletheia* and *Doxa*) is well-warranted, and could therefore be crucially important to this project. However, given their ambiguity and indeterminacy, any further attempt to impute an interpretation upon them at this point risks begging the question. Instead, these lines are probably best dealt with once one already has settled upon an interpretative stance for the overall poem, based upon less controversial evidence. A selected interpretation can then be tested by how coherently and convincingly it can make sense of these lines.

ii. Grounds for Reconstruction

Though several others sources quote 1.28-30, the content of lines 1-27 is not mentioned at all (let alone quoted) by any other ancient source. It is solely thanks to Sextus Empiricus’

⁴⁸ ἀλλ’ ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεται ὡς τὰ δοκεῦντα / χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περ ὄντα [περὶ ὄντα]. For a similar attempt to translate these lines literally without interpretative commitment, see: (Mourelatos 194)

quotation of C/DK 1.1-30 as a whole, explicitly noting they began the poem, that the *Proem*'s existence is even known at all, and by far the most complete section available.⁴⁹ Given this, the reconstruction of the *Proem* is largely uncontroversial, as there is no extant alternative to C 1.1-30. However, there are some concerns about what should follow 1.30.⁵⁰ Simplicius quoted lines C/DK 1.31-32 immediately after quoting lines very similar to Sextus' 1.28-30, and on these grounds are traditionally taken to end the *Proem*. However, Sextus continued his block quotation after 1.30 with lines that are now normally assigned (for apparently good reasons) to C 7.⁵¹ Thus, there is some controversy over whether Simplicius' lines truly belong here or not. Alternative placements trusting Sextus' reliability over Simplicius will be further considered in Chapter Three. For now, the more traditional and nearly universally accepted reconstruction will be assumed.

B. Reception of the *Proem*

There has been a tendency to treat the three parts of Parmenides' poem separately.

Aletheia is taken to be the heart of the poem, possessing all the philosophically-relevant,

⁴⁹ (Coxon Test. 136)

⁵⁰ While Sextus alone quotes lines 1-30 altogether, explicitly placing them at the beginning of the poem, and while Lines 28-30 are reported by several additional sources (Diogenes Laertius, Plutarch, Clement, and Proclus), Simplicius *alone* cites lines 31-32, following two lines that are nearly identical to lines 1.28-30 from Sextus. Sextus, however, continues on after line 30 with lines from the current Frag 7.2-7, as if these immediately followed in the text. Diels-Kranz separated these into distinct fragments (1 and 7), and then later added lines 1.31-32 (from Simplicius) to the end of DK 1 (the *Proem*), as Simplicius' testimony suggested they should immediately follow C 1.28-30. The vast majority of interpreters have followed both these moves, with some notable exception (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources"; Kurfess "Verity's Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, Dk B 1.29 (and 8.4)"; Bicknell "A New Arrangement of Some Parmenidean Verses"). Clearly, if we are to accept lines 31-32 as genuinely belonging here in the *Proem*, and deny Sextus' report that 1.30 is followed by 7.2, then Sextus did not provide the complete *Proem*, but made a large jump forward in the poem. This philological problem leaves room for some reasonable skepticism regarding reconstructions of the end of the *Proem*, which will be further considered for philosophical significance in Chapters Three and Five.

⁵¹ The primary reason for assigning these lines from Sextus to C 7 is because the final line quoted by him is identical to the opening line of Simplicius' block quotation of C 8.1-52: "Only one account of the way remains" (μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν). However, it is possible that this line, or this phrasing, was repeated in the poem.

metaphysical arguments. The relevance of *Doxa* and its paradoxical relationship to *Aletheia* can hardly be ignored, and thus it has also received a fair amount of philosophical examination, though far less than *Aletheia*. Historically, the *Proem* has received far less attention overall—again, in even in ancient times, only Sextus refers to it—though this oversight has begun to be corrected in more recent decades.⁵² More strikingly, little if anything is said of the relationship between the *Proem* and *Doxa* (both of which seem to share a great deal of imagery and thematic elements), or the relevance of the *Proem* for the poem overall. This tendency to treat the *Proem* as independent of, and unnecessary for, understanding the content of the ensuing sections is why I have treated it separately from *Aletheia* and *Doxa* in this chapter.

When the *Proem* is addressed, the critical responses have varied greatly.⁵³ In addition to the thematic approaches outlined below (Allegorical, Historical/Mythical, and Dismissive), there seem to be three background motivating positions that should also be kept in mind—Rationalist, Spiritualist, and Mixed. The first two camps (Rationalist and Spiritualist) arise from a perceived irreconcilable tension between invocations of divine/spiritual themes suggested in the *Proem* and *Doxa*, and the derivation of the arguments in *Aletheia* via rationality.⁵⁴ Given this supposed irreconcilability, those who see Parmenides in a more rationalist vein tend to minimize and/or dismiss the divine/spiritual aspects of the *Proem*,⁵⁵ while those who take these divine/spiritual themes in the *Proem* at face value tend to read this into the rest of the poem, minimizing and/or

⁵² Some notable early treatments to particularly focus on the proem include: (Bowra); (Burkert "Das Proömium Des Parmenides Und Die Katabasis Des Pythagoras"); (Dolin); (Fränkel); (Havelock) . More recent notable treatments exclusively focused on the *Proem* (or particular aspects of it) include: (Cosgrove "The Κουπος Motif in" Parmenides": B 1.24"); (Granger "The Proem of Parmenides' Poem"); (Granger "Parmenides of Elea: Rationalist or Dogmatist?"); (Kingsley *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*); (Kingsley *Reality*); (M. Miller); (Slaveva-Griffin).

⁵³ For general overviews of the *Proem*'s reception in the literature, see particularly: (Tarán 17-31); (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 51-61); (Curd 18-23).

⁵⁴ For an excellent overview along these lines, see: (Granger "Parmenides of Elea: Rationalist or Dogmatist?").

⁵⁵ This is the most common perspective amongst commentators.

dismissing the apparent reliance upon rationality.⁵⁶ On the other hand, there are those (Mixed) who think the spiritual/divine aspects to present no significant challenge to Parmenides pursuit of truth via reason, and that both can be—and are—complementary aspects of Parmenides’ novel poem.⁵⁷ It is worth keeping these background commitments in mind when evaluating the thematic approaches below, in terms of consistency and entailments for the interpretation of the *Proem* itself, and the poem overall.

***i.* Allegorical Approaches**

The only ancient response to the content of the *Proem* is from the Pyrrhonian Skeptic Sextus Empiricus (2nd c. CE). In an attempt to demonstrate how Parmenides rejected opinions based upon sensory evidence in favor of infallible reason, Sextus set forth a detailed allegorical account in which most details described in the *Proem* are supposed to possess a particular metaphorical meaning relating to this epistemological preference. Sextus describes the chariot-ride as a journey in search of knowledge, with Parmenides’ irrational desires and appetites represented as mares, and the path of the goddess upon which he travels as representative of the guidance provided by philosophical reasoning. Sextus also identifies the charioteer-maidens with Parmenides’ sense organs. However, he then strangely associates the wheels of the chariot with Parmenides’ ears/hearing, and even more strangely, the Daughters of the Sun with his eyes/sight—as if Sextus failed to recognize the numerical identity between the “charioteer-maidens” and the “Daughters of the Sun.” Similarly, he identifies Justice as “intelligence,” and then erroneously seems to think that Justice is the very same goddess which Parmenides is subsequently greeted by and learns from, when the journey clearly leaves Justice behind to meet

⁵⁶ Most notably: (Kingsley *Reality*; Marciano; Lombardo; Henn; Geldard; Kingsley *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*).

⁵⁷ This is probably best demonstrated in: (Curd; Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*).

with a new goddess. In his attempt to make nearly every aspect of the story fit a particular metaphorical model, Sextus clearly overreaches all evidence, and falls into obvious mistakes. Even more evidently problematic, the division of the soul into these distinct parts, and the accompanying metaphorical identifications, are clearly anachronistic, borrowing directly from the chariot journey described in Plato's *Phaedrus*. For these reasons, no modern scholar takes Sextus' particular account seriously.

Modern allegorical treatments of the *Proem* have generally persisted in understanding the cosmic journey as an "allegory of enlightenment."⁵⁸ This treatment is possible no matter what one takes the geometry/geography of the chariot ride to be—whether an ascent "into the light" as a metaphor for knowledge as opposed to ignorance/darkness, or a circular journey resulting in a chthonic *katabasis* along Orphic lines. They are also consistent with any views on the Rationlist-Spiritualist trichotomy, though rationalistically-focused accounts predominate the literature. Though the particular details will vary from one allegorical account to the next, they tend to face objections similar to that of Sextus' treatment.⁵⁹ The metaphorical associations are often strained at best, if not far beyond any reasonable speculation, particularly when one attempts to find

⁵⁸ Examples of allegorical treatments focused on the journey of enlightenment can be found in: (Bowra; Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* Ch. 2; Coxon Comm. C 1).

⁵⁹ For a representative example, see: (Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*). Thanassas allegorizes the *Proem* in terms of the epistemic distinction between divine (Aletheia) and mortal (Doxa) knowledge. On his view, the journey Parmenides makes is at best vague in terms of geography, anonymous when it comes to the goddess' identity, and heavy on metaphor. The journey itself is indicative of the human desire for knowledge (straining and rushing, as far as his spirit may carry him, the axle-whining, the wheels blazing), and metaphorically suggests there are difficult obstacles to overcome (the massive locked gates and their guardian, Justice). Most importantly, Thanassas claims Parmenides goes beyond Hesiod. The goddess Parmenides meets is welcoming, and claims that the place he has arrived is not, as Hesiod would have it, "even abhorred by the gods," (Hesiod, *Theogony* 739) but rather a safe but vaguely defined location, "beyond all order and orientation." Whereas in Hesiod, the gates represented the "limits of reason," here they are the entrance to the source of philosophy, which includes divinity. The upshot of his view is that Parmenides is attempting to answer the question of the origin of philosophical reason. This origin is a divine gift, one that cannot be grounded or explained otherwise than in myth; nevertheless, it is a gift that mortals *can* attain. Parmenides has included the divine element in philosophy itself, while establishing this divine mode of thought in the mortal realm.

metaphorical representations in every minor detail. Due to ambiguity in, and variant possible readings of the text, there is room for many variants of allegorical interpretations—all equally “plausible”—and so it seems none will be convincing on the evidence of the *Proem* alone. And, since the allegorical accounts on offer tend to offer little if any substantive guidance or interpretative weight for reading the poem overall, they also tend to lack additional textual support beyond the *Proem*. More theoretically problematic, determining some aspects to be allegorical while other details are not would seem to require some non-arbitrary methodology, which is not readily forthcoming. Recognition of this has led some to claim that while the *Proem* is certainly allegorical, we are so far distant from the cultural context as to have no hope of reliably accessing its metaphorical meanings.⁶⁰ For these reasons, allegorical treatments have become less common.⁶¹

ii. Cultural and Mythical Themes

With the decline of allegorical treatments, an interest in parsing the *Proem* in terms of possible shared historical, cultural, and mythical themes has ascended. These tend to be favored by those whom adopt a more Spiritualistic view of Parmenides’ poem, but this is not necessarily the case, as those from the Mixed camp have also offered treatments along these lines. In this vein, a fair amount has been written on the parallels between the chariot’s path and Babylonian Sun-mythology, as well as how the *Proem* supposedly contains Orphic and/or Shamanistic themes.⁶²

⁶⁰ (Curd)

⁶¹ For extensive criticism of Sextus’ account, and allegorical treatments of the *Proem* in general, see: (Tarán; Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*).

⁶² Diels was apparently the first to argue for Orphic and shamanistic connections (Diels and Kranz). Orphic treatments have been supported by: (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*). Shamanistic treatments have been advocated by: (Lombardo). The existence of shamanism in ancient Greece has been challenged by: (Kirk, Raven and Schofield). Taran, in the “dismissive” camp, provides argumentation rejecting all of these approaches (Tarán).

While Greek sun-mythology may well have ancient Babylonian roots, the cultural origins do not seem at all relevant to Parmenides' own cultural understanding at his time, nor that of any likely listener or reader of his work. Shamanistic influences are even more suspect as influences, and can be easily dismissed as a literary-device designed to get the reader's attention. Orphic parallels fit very well with viewing the youth's journey as a *katabasis*, if it is the case that Orphism is traditionally associated with revelatory journeys to the underworld, as well as initiations led by the goddess Night. Unfortunately, little is known about this mystery tradition overall. Also, these few parallels are not quite compelling. First, the theme of knowledge gained via chthonic journey, while consistent with Orphism, would not seem to be unique to that tradition. More importantly, the kind of "revelations" Parmenides' youth undergoes are very different. The youth does not learn about any topics Orphism itself focuses on: moral truths, the nature of the soul itself, or what the afterlife was like. Also, key figures like Dionysus and Zeus are entirely absent. Furthermore, Parmenides' unnamed youth learns a rational account based upon argumentation that can (and should be) tested and applied (Cf. C/DK 7.5-6), which is very different from the more "revelatory" nature of Orphism. Thus, it is overly speculative to hang very much on this purported influence with any confidence.

Overall, these historically- and culturally-based treatments may have far more to recommend them than many of the more speculative allegorical accounts. However, they still tend to be interpretatively disappointing. For it remains the case that, much like those who favor allegorical treatments, after the authors go to great lengths expounding and defending their preferred interpretation of the *Proem*, their ultimate view of the poem overall is then advanced with little if any consideration of the *Proem's* relevance.

iii. Minimization & Dismissal

Overall, the *Proem* has far more commonly been minimized, dismissed as irrelevant, and/or entirely ignored by ancients and moderns alike. This is likely because commentators saw no immediately obvious philosophical content or guidance for understanding the rest of the poem within it. By dismissing or explaining away the *Proem*, interpretations would not have to actually engage with it.⁶³

A select few advocate that the reader is merely supposed to recognize that Parmenides is here indicating that his insights were the product of an actual spiritual experience he underwent. This is “dismissive” in the sense that it denies any intentional, carefully constructed and philosophically-relevant meaning by Parmenides’ inclusion of the *Proem*—all one could hope for is some psychoanalysis of Parmenides’ mind, far beyond philosophical inquiry.⁶⁴ However, there is no real evidence for this, and some against. The verbal forms (optative and imperfect) suggest ongoing, indefinite action—a journey that is repeated over and over, or at least repeatable—which cuts against a description of a one-off event that would be characteristic of a “spiritual awakening.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Austin provides an excellent example of this, on the grounds that his focus on the ontological and logical in Parmenides place the *Proem* beyond the scope of his inquiry (Austin). While it may often be fair to limit one’s engagement with a text to certain problematic passages, if it is the case—as I will be advocating below—that the *Proem* (as well as the *Doxa*) inform the reader what the subject of *Aletheia* is, it would be extraordinarily difficult to offer a full account of *Aletheia* without considering these sections. The fact that commentators like Austin have tended to think this is not the case, that the *Proem* is irrelevant to understanding Parmenides’ philosophical views, is the sort of fundamental presumption that should be called into question given the persistence interpretative difficulties faced in Parmenidean studies.

⁶⁴ Coxon at least holds this to be at least part of the explanation behind the *Proem*, while also noting the symbolic similarity to parts of the *Doxa*. Unfortunately, he never attempts to marry these two observations into a cohesive interpretation (Coxon). Lombardo’s shamanistic analysis also seems suggestive of this view, before he ultimately dismisses the reality of the spiritual (shamanistic) vision, reducing it a mere “mode of expression,” meant to invoke and invite spiritual experience—rather than a logical discourse—of the world through the account that follows, rather than continue to relate a personal journey of enlightenment (Lombardo). For a summary of older accounts along these lines, see: (Tarán 26-28)

⁶⁵ Though he is certainly not entitled to the certainty he thinks this evidence of ongoing/repeated verbal moods and their implied indefinite repetition counts against such explanations of the *Proem*—as it would be just as possible to have repetitive spiritual experiences as it is to have one—Tarán is right to point out that since such spiritual awakenings are typically singular, the text does have some bite against these approaches. (Tarán 27, 30).

More problematic, the rationalistic account/argumentation of the goddess—which she demands the listener/reader to judge by reason (*logos*)—would thus be superfluous, if not entirely undermined, by this approach.⁶⁶ At best, one might say here that Parmenides is invoking some sort of divine *inspiration*.⁶⁷ This latter objection tells against another common type of dismissal—explaining the *Proem* in terms of earlier epic poets’ common invocation of divine agents (usually, the Muses) as a source of inspiration and/or revelatory authority. Such a view can be meant seriously—that Parmenides genuinely sought divine aid in his composition—or that Parmenides is merely giving a nod to traditional form, but does not seriously mean to invoke divine aid. Either way, there is then no need to further explain the *Proem*. However, such invocations would seem to stand in tension to the rationalistic vein the poem appears to take in *Aletheia*. Furthermore, this dismissal cannot explain the rest of the pervasive divine imagery in the poem, particularly that which is found in *Doxa*, paralleling the content of the *Proem*.

In a broader and even more dismissive vein, the entire *Proem* can be understood as nothing more than a mere literary-device, whose sole purpose is to introduce the “unnamed Goddess,” in order to provide a third-person narrative for the poem.⁶⁸ As would be expected,

⁶⁶ C 7.5-6. Κρίναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα. For some explicit agreement with this rather uncontroversial point, see: (N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 15); (Curd 20).

⁶⁷ Curd recognizes this tension, and points out that one could invoke the goddess (or the divine in general) as a source of inspiration for an account, without simultaneously relying upon it as the ultimate justification for the acceptance of an account. That she thinks we can take Parmenides to be doing the former rather than the latter, and that this extraordinary journey is meant to suggest an extraordinary story to follow, is all Curd believes one can confidently say on this topic (Curd). Thanassas takes the relationship between divine authority and logical analysis to be even more complementary, arguing that to engage in philosophical reasoning is itself a sort of divine activity, and that since the foundational philosophical starting points cannot themselves be grounded in argumentation (only intuition), that Parmenides can only ground his axiomatic starting points in myth (Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*).

⁶⁸ Taran is perhaps best representative of this view (Taran 31). He holds that the goddess remains unnamed precisely because the source of the message which follows is Parmenides himself, not an actual religious figure. It is worth noting that Taran’s deciding evidence for denying any actual revelation being reported here, as well as denying any existence or importance to the goddess herself, is based upon his strict monist view of Parmenides. Since Parmenides purportedly only believes *one* thing exists in the entire world—his “unique and homogenous Being” described in *Aletheia*—none of this can be taken seriously. While I think Taran was certainly right to read the conclusions of *Aletheia* back into our understanding of the *Proem*, his strict monist interpretation misled him in its application. My thesis will ultimately make a similar, but more restricted, move. Also, consider Barnes’ explicit

such treatments are also adopted by those holding a more rationalistic view of the poem, which tend to ignore the pervasive presence of divine agents and references. Yet, once again, this is an interpretative cop-out, avoiding the difficulty of the *Proem* by dismissing its relevance up-front, and failing to explain its inclusion in any meaningful way.

While Parmenides' *Proem* may be enigmatic, any summary dismissal which suggests that the *Proem* is entirely irrelevant to understanding Parmenides' philosophical views is almost certainly too hasty. If nothing else, there are very close similarities between the imagery and thematic elements in the *Proem* and those found throughout the rest of the poem, especially *Doxa*. For instance, the *Proem* clearly contrasts light/fire/day imagery with darkness/night, just as the two fundamental opposing principles underlying the cosmogony/cosmology in *Doxa* are also Fire/Light and Night. There are also parallels between these two accounts in terms of their divine imagery, as well as the status of "naming things."⁶⁹ Those who think of the poem in a more rationalistic manner should recognize these parallels need to be accounted for. Even if one is committed to explaining Parmenides' poem as inspired by a spiritual experience, such parallels should be made sense of from that interpretation. Another example that demonstrates intentional parallels between the *Proem* and the rest of the poem is the pervasive female presence throughout the poem, particularly in relation to divinity. Though its importance remains unclear at this point, this can hardly be a coincidence.

Once considered at greater length—which will be provided in Chapter Five—the revealed parallels seem far too numerous and carefully contrived to be coincidental and philosophically irrelevant to Parmenides' message. This suggests a stronger relationship

dismissal as representative of views treated in this section: "The poem began with a long allegorical prologue, the interpretation of which is for the most part of little philosophical importance" *Presocratic Philosophers*, qtd. in (Curd 19, fn. 43).

⁶⁹ These parallels and more will be further examined in Ch. 5.

between the *Proem* and *Opinion* than has commonly been recognized. In fact, it suggests the need for a much more holistic interpretative approach to the poem overall, in contrast to the more compartmentalized analyses that have been so pervasive.

C. Reconstructing *Aletheia* and *Doxa*

i. *Aletheia*: Summary

Immediately after C 1.32, the poem is normally taken to move into its central philosophical section, *Aletheia* (C. 2-C. 8.49), in which the positively endorsed epistemic and metaphysical claims are outlined.⁷⁰ On account of the novel and clearly philosophical content (as opposed to the more mythical and cosmological content of the *Proem* and *Doxa*), these lines have received far more scholarly attention than the rest of the poem, in both ancient and modern times. Though lengthy passages from *Aletheia* strongly suggest a certain internal structure, there is certainly *some* room for debate with respect to their relative placement—particularly amongst the shorter fragments, and those which do not share any common themes with the others.

On Coxon's arrangement, *Aletheia* begins with an epistemological claim: that there are two possible "routes of inquiry" upon which one might approach understanding "reality" (C 3/DK 2). Parmenides' goddess endorses the first route, which recognizes that "what-is" *is*, and that it must be (it is not not to be), on the grounds that it is completely trustworthy and persuasive. On the other hand, the goddess warns the youth away from the route which posits

⁷⁰ I refer to this section with the untranslated Greek term '*Aletheia*,' as the traditional translation as 'Truth' can be misleading. Parmenides consistently uses this noun (and related adjective) to refer to "the objective truth about some thing x," or "the way x truly is," not the concept of, or logical conditions for realizing, "truth" itself (Mourelatos 63-67; 156-7; Coxon 282-83; Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 89-93). I also follow Palmer (and to some degree, Mourelatos) in understanding the use of the noun "*aletheia*" by Parmenides to serve as a place-holder, or name, for the very object under discussion in this poem (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 89-93). This will be important for my view later, as Parmenides should not be taken to be explicating the conditions of "all of reality," or some universal, fundamental (perhaps "noumenal") "reality" underlying experience. Rather, it is the "what is true and real" about a particular aspect of the world—the reality of a *particular sort* of thing. Palmer restricts this object to necessary being, which has divine parallels to other Presocratic systems. I will take *aletheia* to be a place-holder for "divine reality" itself.

“what-is-not and necessarily cannot be,” as it is a path that can neither be known or spoken of.

The reasoning seems to be that along this latter route, there is no object to conceive of, no subject there to refer to, and no properties that can be predicated of, “nothingness.” There is only one approach which can be successful—the one which keeps to the fact that “what-is” (or *Being*) cannot not-be (and thus must be), and thus denying “what-is-not” entirely. These will prove the foundational premises upon which Parmenides bases his later metaphysical arguments.

Arguably, a third possible “route of inquiry” may be identified in C 5/DK 6. Here, the goddess seems to warn the youth from following the path which holds being and not-being (or becoming and not-becoming) to be both the same and not the same. This is the path that mortals are said to wander “without judgment,” on a “backwards-turning journey.” Not only is confusing “what is” and “what is not” different from positing necessary being on the one hand, and necessary non-being on the other (C 3/DK 2), and thus a distinct “route,” this description seems to correspond to the dualistic cosmogony found in *Opinion*, while the route of necessary non-being does not. This way of inquiry also seems to be identical to the “empirical route” explicated in C 7, which Parmenides again warns the youth away from.

The injunction to follow the path that posits only “what is” is further complicated by the fragmentary report that there is some sort of close relationship between thinking (or knowing) and being (what exists, or can exist, or necessarily exists)—“...for thinking and being are the same thing,” or “...for the same thing is for thinking as is for being (C 4/DK 3).”⁷¹ Scholars are divided as to what the exact meaning of this relationship is supposed to be, leading to numerous mutually exclusive interpretative models. Does Parmenides really mean to make an identity

⁷¹ τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι. The second in-text translation is Coxon’s. Palmer provides a similar translation: “For the same thing is [there] for understanding and for being” (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 365).

claim between the two—that thinking really is numerically one and the same as being, and vice-versa? Or, is it that there is some shared property(-ies) between the two? Is Parmenides making the rather problematic claim that whatever can be thought, exists?⁷² Or, more charitably, only that whatever does exist can in-principle be thought of without contradiction, and thus is understandable by reason—unlike “nothingness”? Perhaps both? Most commonly, Parmenides has been understood here as anticipating Russellian concerns with language, and how meaning and reference must be coextensive with existential status.⁷³

In any case, from these epistemic considerations, the goddess’ arguments in C 8 are supposed to deductively follow.⁷⁴ By studiously avoiding positing or thinking of “what-is-not,” via *reductio*, the subject of *Aletheia* is concluded to be: truly eternal—ungenerated and imperishable (8.5-21), a continuous whole (8.21-25), unmoved and unique (8.21-33), perfect and uniform (8.42-49). For instance, since coming-to-be involves positing “not-being” in the past, and *mutatis mutandis* for perishing, and since “not-being” cannot be conceived of, “what is” cannot have either property. In a similar vein, spatial motion includes “not-being” at a current location in the past, and thus motion is also denied. This line of reasoning can be readily advanced to deny any sort of change at all. In the end, what is true about *aletheia* (whatever the subject, scope, or number of this “reality” is supposed to be) is that there is purportedly *at least* one thing (or perhaps, one *kind* of thing) that must possess all the aforementioned perfect properties.

⁷² The Sophist Gorgias seems to ridicule Melissus and/or Parmenides by adopting this interpretation. Cf. Gorgias “On Nature, or What-is-Not”

⁷³ This is perhaps the most common understanding of this line in 20th c. Parmenidean studies, following Owen’s seminal paper (G. E. L. Owen).

⁷⁴ C 8 is the section of the poem most frequently attested to, at least in part, by ancient commentators. However, Simplicius is by far the best source. In an attempt to preserve what he saw as the most important philosophical aspects of the poem—a work Simplicius noted to already be rare in his time (6th c. CE)—he quoted from this part of the text extensively and repetitively. See especially: (Coxon Test. 207, 13)

ii. *Aletheia*: Grounds for Reconstruction

Assigning fragments C 2-8.49 to *Aletheia* is well-grounded, and internal consistency highly recommends arranging the fragments as Coxon has (or, at least some very similar arrangement, such as DK's). Since C.8 itself uncontroversially contains the fundamental arguments of *Aletheia*, and also explicitly transitions from *Aletheia* to *Doxa*, it is certain that discussion of *Doxa* did succeed *Aletheia*, following the same linear order outlined at the programmatic C 1.28-30. This has the further reconstructive implication that all other fragments of *Aletheia* must precede C 8.

It is also certain that C 7 belongs to *Aletheia*. First, there is good textual evidence to make it immediately prior to C 8, given that Sextus quoted C 7.2-7 together, and C 7.6b-7 appear to identically overlap with 8.1-8.2b of Simplicius' block quotation of C 8.1-52. Also, since C 7 harkens back to discussion about the routes of inquiry that were introduced in C 2 and C 5, it must follow them. Finally, C7 commands the youth to judge the goddess' own controversial account (πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον) by discourse/reason (λόγος). Only *Aletheia* contains the goddess' own arguments (as opposed to what mortals themselves opine, which the goddess reports). It is particularly fitting for the goddess to demand judgement of her account by λόγος immediately prior to offering her central arguments outlining the counter-intuitive nature of *Aletheia*, though this is admittedly not decisive in-itself.⁷⁵ This leaves only C 2-C 6 to be justified in their relative placement.

⁷⁵ Of course, given Kurfess' view that Sextus' quotation of C 7.2-7 also belongs at the end of the *Proem* (and Parmenides repeated himself), it could easily be argued to be just as appropriate that the goddess charge the youth to judge by *logos* before ever beginning the account in *Aletheia*, implying that the youth should have been exercising his critical judgment the entire time. This change in arrangement would not seem to affect any interpretation of *Aletheia*, as the goddess' command could have the same scope on the more standard later placement, demanding the youth judge what she has outlined so far, as well as what is to come, by λόγος.

C 2's prefatory nature—"It is all the same to me whence I shall begin; for I will come back to this place again"—certainly warrants its being placed near the beginning of the poem overall.⁷⁶ As Sextus does not include it in his account of the *Proem*, the beginning of *Aletheia* has seemed to be the most logical placement, and thus Coxon makes it immediately succeed the *Proem*.⁷⁷ C 3 is also introductory in nature: "Come now, I will tell you—and having heard my account, preserve it!—which ways of inquiry alone are conceivable."⁷⁸ As it invites the youth to begin the intellectual journey of *Aletheia*, and to memorize the account about to be offered for future use (and/or transmission), it must be placed very early, and is properly best taken as the proper beginning of, *Aletheia*. As this fragment goes on to introduce the first two possible ways for inquiring into *Aletheia*, it thus must precede C 5, which depends upon the original dichotomy of routes having already been made, and likely introduces a third possible route of inquiry.⁷⁹ As noted above, the incomplete sentence preserved in C 4 closely ties together thinking and being. While C 4 and C5 must certainly fall somewhere between C 3 and C7, there is nothing that requires one to precede the other, as C 4 can be read as a premise that leads to C 5, or a conclusion drawn from it.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ ξυθινὸν δὲ μοί ἐστιν, / ὅππότεθεν ἄρξωμαι · τόθι νὰρ πάλιν ἴξομαι αὖθις. My translation. Coxon's movement of this fragment to the beginning of *Aletheia* is one of several improvements on DK's reconstruction, which places it in the middle of *Aletheia* (DK 5).

⁷⁷ I would actually suggest that this line might be pushed forward to the prior section, placing it at the end of the *Proem* itself (it could be the same fragment #, but understood as belonging to the prior section). Even more radical, the fragment would also make sense as a true introductory line, prior to the *Proem* (a new fragment #1). Our only source for this line is Proclus, who quotes it between two lines from C 8, as proof that Parmenides was not a strict monist, but believed in a plurality of things (Coxon Test. 172). However, accepting Simplicius' block quotation of C 8, C 2 certainly could not have been located there, so the *testimonia* is of no help for placement.

⁷⁸ εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐρέω, κόμισσαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας, αἴπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι. My translation.

⁷⁹ C 3: "On the one hand, that it both is and is not not to be is the path of persuasion (for it accompanies reality) and on the other hand, that it both is-not and necessarily is not to be." My translation.

"...ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἐστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι / πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος, ἀληθείῃ γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ, / ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεῶν ἐστι μὴ εἶναι, / τὴν δὴ τοι φράζω παωαπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν."

⁸⁰ , Though Simplicius explicitly testifies that C 5.8-9a precedes DK 7.2 and DK 8.1-14, it need not immediately do so, which allows Coxon to place C 6 (DK 4) in-between (Coxon Test. 208).

The situation is similar with the final fragment traditionally assigned to *Aletheia*, C 6. While there is no contextual evidence for the placement of C 6 from the *testimonia*, it is a good candidate for *Aletheia*, as its content encourages thinking abstractly—without relying upon the senses—and is thus contrary to the reliance on empirical data which mortals are denigrated for.⁸¹ Also, though C 6 must precede C 7-8, it probably does not precede it by much, for it seems to introduce the unified nature of *Being* as outlined in C8: “for what-is will not be separated from clinging to what-is, neither by being dispersed in every which way throughout the cosmos, nor by being drawn together.”⁸² Thus, Coxon locates it as closely to those arguments as possible, even though that placement interrupts the common content found in C 5 and C 7.⁸³

Overall, while there are certainly pieces of the puzzle missing, it appears that the ancient *testimonia* have provided a majority of the original text from *Aletheia*, a good sense of the material under discussion, and adequate grounds for reconstructing the relevant fragments in a linear order. Overall, this section seems mostly complete. Unfortunately, this is not the case for *Doxa*.

⁸¹ λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόωι παρεόντα βεβαίως. Though the senses are not explicitly mentioned, the sense of the passage seems to be that they are not to be used in this inquiry, as one is supposed to “look upon” things that are absent with one’s mind, just as one would “look upon” them were they actually present.

⁸² οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχθεσθαι / οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον / οὔτε συνιστάμενον. My translation. Notice how the Greek places the two substantive participles (τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος), which refer to what cannot be separated, in the middle of the line next to each other, and unseparated.

⁸³ Some might think C 6 (DK 4) to be more controversial in its assignment to *Aletheia*, as it shares some common imagery and language that are more at home within the *Doxa*. Most notably, it uses the word “order” (κόσμος), which is otherwise found only in the extant fragments at 8.52 and 8.60. Also, on Kurfess view that C 1. 31-32 should be moved to the beginning of the *Doxa*, and based upon how similar “παντὸς παντα” of C 1 is to the “πάντη πάντως” of C 6, one might think that C 6 should also move to the *Doxa* with it—of course, the opposite would hold if C 1.31-32 are to remain in *Aletheia*. In any case, given the emphasis in this fragment on the investigation of what-is, via *reason/thinking alone*—as opposed to considering empirical/sensory data, which seems to be the hallmark of mortal opinions—it is best kept here.

iii. *Doxa*: Summary

Doxa has traditionally been estimated to be far longer than the previous two sections combined.⁸⁴ This is due to the far more fragmentary nature of the section (only 44 verses, largely disjointed and/or incomplete, are attested), and the apparently wide disparity of topics treated, which would seem to require a great deal of exposition to properly flesh-out. However, the entire supposition that *Opinion* would have required a lengthy explication in order to adequately address its myriad of disparate topics may be overstated. As Kurfess has recently argued, there is nothing in the *testimonia* indicating any significant additional content belonging to the *Doxa* beyond that which is explicitly mentioned in the extant fragments.⁸⁵ Thus, though the *Doxa* would still be far longer than the quite limited sampling that has been transmitted, it need not have been anywhere near as extensive as has been traditionally supposed.

Whatever its original length, the incompleteness of this section allows for somewhat less confidence regarding the arrangement of its fragments, and even less clarity concerning the overall meaning of the section. As a result, the assignment of certain fragments to this section has faced more opposition. Nevertheless, the internal evidence and *testimonia* provide good reasons to accept the traditional assignment of fragments to this section, as well as their general arrangement.

⁸⁴ Diels even estimated that 9/10 of *Aletheia*, and only 1/10 of *Doxa*, are extant, which would have the poem spanning some 800-1000 lines. This is degree of precision is highly speculative, to say the least.

⁸⁵ (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources" Test. 177-89). On the other hand, contra to Kurfess, I have found at least one such reference by Simplicius (Coxon Test. 207), in which he says Parmenides' creator-goddess of the *Doxa* is responsible for conveying souls from the visible to invisible realm, and back again. An account of soul transmigration is not at all hinted at in the extant fragments, though the *Proem* can be read as hinting at it. One can embrace this general argument for a more limited *Opinion* without also accepting Kurfess' related advocacy of a reincarnation myth in Parmenides, along the lines of Plato's "Myth of Er." I certainly do so.

Having completed the metaphysical arguments of *Aletheia*, the goddess ends her “trustworthy account and thought about truth/reality,”⁸⁶ and commands the youth from there on, “hearing the deceptive arrangement of her words,” to learn mortal opinions (C 8.50-52).⁸⁷ The content that follows ranges over: metaphysical critiques of how mortals err in “naming” things, particularly in terms of a Light/Night duality (C 8.51-61, 9, 20); programmatic passages promising a detailed account of the origin of celestial bodies (C 10, 11); a theogonical account of a goddess who rules the cosmos and creates other deities, beginning with Love (C 12, 13); cosmogonical and astronomical descriptions of the moon and its relationship to the sun (C 14, 15), along with an apparent description of the foundations of the earth (C 16); some consideration of the relationship between the mind and body (C 17); and even accounts related to animal/human procreation (C 18-19).

iv. *Doxa*: Grounds for Reconstruction

Doxa certainly begins with an explicit account of how mortals are supposed to err in their understanding, at the end of C 8. The error of mortals is grounded in their “naming” (i.e. providing definition descriptions and predications), and thus distinguishing between opposites (i.e. Light/Fire and Night), when in fact it is not right to do so.⁸⁸ That mortals err by “naming” things is first introduced at C 8.34-41 on the traditional reconstruction.⁸⁹ Here, the goddess relegates anything mortals erroneously think to be real, but which violate the perfect predicates

⁸⁶ ἐν τῷ σοι παύω πιστὸν λόγον ἠδὲ νόημα / ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης.

⁸⁷ Δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας / μάνθανε κόσμον ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.

⁸⁸ Admittedly, the Greek is ambiguous as to whether it is not wrong for mortals to use both (or any) names, or if naming just one of these opposites is wrong and the other acceptable.

⁸⁹ For a proposal to relocate these lines to *Opinion*, see Palmer's discussion of “Ebert's Restoration.” (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 352-9)

of *Aletheia*, to the status of [mere] “names.”⁹⁰ As C 11 expounds upon this “naming error,”—averring that the opposites of Light and Night *have* been named, and the relevant powers of each have been granted to their objects, which have also been named accordingly—C 11 certainly belongs in the *Doxa*.⁹¹ C 20 appears to be a concluding passage for both *Doxa* and the poem overall, stating that only according to (presumably mistaken) belief—things came-to-be in the past, currently exist, and will ultimately perish; and that men have given a name to each of these things (and/or states of existence). If this is truly a concluding passage, the content of *Doxa* that at first seemed quite disparate can be unified as a treatment of mortal errors with respect to naming, which the section uncontroversially began with. From these grounds, the other fragments traditionally assigned to *Opinion* can be linked (directly or indirectly) to this section, based upon parallels in content/imagery, and/or through contextual clues in the ancient *testimonia*.

Both C 9 and C 10 variably promise that the youth will learn about the generation/origins of the aether, along with many of its components (sun, moon, stars, etc.). The prefatory and programmatic nature of C 9 (i.e. “you will understand...you will learn”) recommend an early

⁹⁰ ...τῶ πάντ' ὄνομ' ἔσται. My brackets. The Greek does not include this modifier, but adding it seems to better capture the derogatory sense that is implied concerning mortal naming, as the phenomenon do not actually exist, and thus when mortals speak of them, they are using empty words which do not refer to any actuality.

⁹¹ C 11 was DK 9, and on that reconstruction immediately followed the discussion of the “naming error” at the end of C/DK 8. This placement makes some sense. The perfect tense of C 11 suggests that all discussion regarding the naming and assignment of powers along the Light/Night dichotomy has taken place. If one takes the final lines of C 8 to have accomplished this, then it should directly follow. However, it seems that the actual cosmogony/theogony would be a required part of this discussion (that the entire *Doxa* should be concerned with expounding the Light/Night “naming error,” which is clearly implied by making C 20 the last fragment!) and the further discussion needed would not be satisfied by the merely prefatory fragments (C 9-10) which Coxon assigns to come between C 8.61 and C 11. Thus, a much later placement for C 11 would be required. It should be noted that C 11 could conceivably be read as immediately preceding the apparent conclusion offered in C19. Unfortunately, all we have from Simplicius (our sole source for this fragment) is that it is certainly part of the *Doxa*, and came a “short time” after C 8.53-59 in the poem (Coxon 215). Though often overlooked, the placement of this fragment, in conjunction with C 19, do have implications for what the *Doxa* is about overall, and thus the arrangement of both should be carefully considered by any interpretative model. αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νύξ ὀνόμασται / καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρως δθνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσι τε καὶ τοῖς, / πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου / ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρωι μέτα μηδέν.

placement in the *Doxa*.⁹² C 10—though the verb is missing—otherwise seems to promise learning a very similar set of cosmological facts, and is explicitly attested to begin the *Doxa* in the *testimonia*.⁹³ Certainly, these passages must be placed prior to any discussion of the cosmological entities themselves outlined within them, as well as prior to discussion of their origins. Since C 12-16 seem to provide this very account, C 9-10 must precede them.

C 12 can also be reliably placed in the *Doxa*, based upon Simplicius' explicit testimony to the fact.⁹⁴ As this is one of the most substantial fragments in the entire section, it is worth considering in its entirety here:

C 12: For the narrowest rings became filled with unmixed fire,
The outer ones with night, along which spews forth a portion of flame.
And in the middle of these is a goddess, who governs all things.
For in every way she engenders hateful birth and intercourse
Sending female to mix with male, and again in turn,
male to mix with the more feminine.⁹⁵

The content contained in this fragment can serve to tie many of the remaining fragments together, and secure their position in the *Doxa*. For example, the single dactylic line in C 13 has a verb that requires a singular subject “[...] contrived Love first, of all the gods.” The unnamed “goddess who governs all things,” introduced here at C 12.3, is the only likely candidate amongst the extant fragments. This is further supported by Simplicius' own explicit testimony, as he quotes these two passages in the same relative order, and uses the goddess of C 12 as the subject

⁹² C 9.1...9.5: “εἴση δ’...εἰδήσεις δὲ...”. C 9 (DK 10) is quoted only by Clement, who provides no context for its placement in the poem (Coxon Test. 130).

⁹³ Simplicius quotes C 10 (DK 11) to prove that Parmenides did not deny generation entirely, as he clearly accepted it in relation to perceptible things (i.e. earth, sun, etc.), explicitly noting that this passage begins Parmenides' “account of perceptibles” (Coxon Test. 203). If this “account of perceptibles” is the *Doxa* itself (which it seems it must be), then C 10 should certainly be placed here.

⁹⁴ Simplicius makes it clear that this passage followed the Light/Night dichotomy, that it was part of Parmenides' “treatment of the sensibles,” and that C 13 followed it (Coxon Test. 204, 07).

⁹⁵ αἱ γὰρ στενότεραι πληντο πυρὸς ἀκρήτοιο, / αἱ δ’ ἐπὶ ταῖς νυκτός, μετὰ δὲ φλογὸς ἴεται αἴσα· / ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ· / πάντα γὰρ ἢ στυγεροῖο τόκου καὶ μίξιός ἄρχει / πέμπουσ’ ἄρσενι θῆλυ μιγῆν τό τ’ ἐναντίον αὐτίς / ἄρσεν θηλυτέρωι.

for C 13.⁹⁶ Thus, the relative ordering of C 12-13 is firmly established. It is important to note here that, based upon these two fragments, and taking these to be the beginning of the accounts promised in C 10-11, any “cosmology” on offer in the *Doxa* must be at least partially based upon a theogony.

C 14 and C 15 are also closely related in content, with both describing the properties of the moon as, respectively, “an alien, night-shining light, wandering around the Earth,”⁹⁷ which is “always looking towards the rays of the sun.”⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the *testimonia* fail to provide any explicit commentary on the position of these lines in the poem.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, a location can be inferred. Since C 9-10 must be near the beginning of the section, and promise an understanding of the origins of the moon and its “migratory deeds,” this must be at least part of that account. However, moons are later developments in Greek cosmology—the more basic aether and heavens must first come-to-be, which were also promised in C 9-10. By providing just such an account—the very beginning of a theogonical cosmogony, in which the most basic structures of the cosmos are formed (e.g. the rings of fire and darkness/night in the aether), and the basic principles for generation are devised (Love)—C 12-13 should succeed C 9-10, and precede C 14-15.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ (Coxon Test. 207)

⁹⁷ πρῶτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσαστο πάντων.

⁹⁸ αἰεὶ παπταίνουσα πρὸς αὐγὰς ἡελίοιο.

⁹⁹ Plutarch is the only source for both moon fragments, and he offers no context for the location of the passages in the poem (Coxon Test. 109, 12, 14).

¹⁰⁰ Though no extant fragments explicitly identify Eros as one of the generative principles, this inference is likely. Consider how Hesiod’s *Theogony* (which is strongly echoed in both Parmenides’ *Proem* and *Doxa*) makes Eros one of the earliest primal forces. Only after Eros is on the scene can sexual love result in further generation of deities, and there is no further role or description of activities of this deity beyond this function in Hesiod, though its effects persist throughout the poem *Theogony* 116-125; 201. Furthermore, Plato in the *Symposium* has Phaedrus quote Parmenides in his speech on love, pointing out how Parmenides agrees with Hesiod that Eros is one of the most ancient gods 178b-c.

Similar considerations apply to C 16, which is not even an incomplete line, but rather a single word (ὕδατόριζον).¹⁰¹ This is usually translated as “rooted in water,” and the context of the *testimonia* implies that it is being predicated of the earth. While it is likely that cosmological accounts of the Earth and its satellite would come together, there is no necessary reason to prefer one account as preceding the other. Thus, this grouping (C 14-16) seems appropriately placed, even if their internal order is ultimately interchangeable.

So far, the content of the *Doxa* is not all that novel. In many ways, the theogonical cosmology is quite reminiscent of Hesiod’s own *Theogony*, in addition to certain Milesian cosmologies.¹⁰² However, the final three fragments (C 17-19) focus on the relationship between the mind and body, as well as sexual reproduction in animals. They seem to be tied to the previous fragments in that they are an extension of the theogonical/cosmogonical account, which has moved on to offer an account of earthly matters—the origin of animals and their mental activity—yet remains under the direction of the goddess “who governs all things.”

¹⁰¹ (Coxon Test. 220)

¹⁰² The goddess that “controls all things,” and the description of the cosmos as alternating rings of fire/heat and night/cold are reminiscent of Anaximander’s physics, which are controlled by the divine *arche* (Aristotle *Physics* 3.4 203b10-15; Psuedo-Plutarch *Miscellanies* 2; *Aetius* 2.16.5 and 2.21.2; Hippolytus *Refutation* 1.6.3-7). Aristotle ascribes the very similar claim that the Earth “rests” (κείμεθα) on water to Thales (*De Caelo* 294a28; *Metaphysics* 1.3, 983b21-22). Love (Eros) is amongst the earliest, most primordial gods in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, preceded only by Chaos, Earth, and Tartarus (116-120). Love’s existence is of course necessary for all later births amongst the gods via sex, as well as human sexual reproduction. After Night comes into being asexually from Chaos on Hesiod’s account, Night (in conjunction with Erebus) is the first god said to have given sexual birth to progeny (Day and Aether). While no extant fragments attest to further procreative acts by the gods, this certainly sets the stage for the animal reproduction that is explicitly discussed in C 18-19. In Plato’s *Symposium*, Phaedrus endorses the commonly held traditional views of Hesiod, Parmenides, and the late-6th/early 5th c. BCE mythographer Acusilaus regarding Love’s relative primacy amongst the gods (178b). Though Eros had been almost entirely relegated to a secondary status (son of Aphrodite) in the Greek pantheon by the time Pausanias wrote in the 2nd c. BCE, not only can he point back to Hesiod as placing Love amongst the earliest gods, but he also references the (now lost) poetry of the Lycian Olen, purportedly the originator of Greek hymns, as saying similar things about Love. While we have no exact reports or evidence for when Olen wrote, it seems that based upon Pausanias’ claims, in conjunction with Herodotus’s description that the Delian hymns based upon Olen’s poetry—which Herodotus describes as “ancient” even then (Herodotus 4.35)—we must push his works back to at least the mid-7th c. BCE. Some hold that he even preceded Homer in the 8th c. Cf. Strassler, who skeptically recommends this latter date, if Olen was real at all (Herodotus 296, fn. 4.35.3A)].

C 17 was first quoted by Aristotle as an example of how earlier thinkers thought mental activity was caused by physical sensations, or bodily changes.¹⁰³ “For just as the temperament of the much-wandering limbs is present at each moment, so is thought present to man. For the same thing which thinks is the nature of the limbs for each and every man...”¹⁰⁴ Aristotle’s account does not provide any contextual clues, and implies that this is a view Parmenides positively endorsed. However, this need not be the case if the fragment truly belongs in the *Doxa*, and there is good reason to assign C 17 to that section: when Theophrastus provides this quotation with additional commentary, he describes the alteration of mental states occurring as a result of variations in the “hot and cold—which are almost certainly analogous descriptions of the “Light and Night” dualism, found only in *Doxa*.¹⁰⁵

There is also very good explicit evidence to assign C 18 and C 19 to *Doxa*. C 18 asserts that different sexes gestate on opposite sides of the womb (it is not clear if this is a cause of sexual differentiation, or merely an effect)—“boys to the right, girls to the left.”¹⁰⁶ C 19 attempts to explain why children are born well-formed, or not, by an appeal to whether the potencies of male and female (another set of dualistic opposites) mix properly. Most telling, these two passages clearly fit with lines C 12.4-6, as detailed accounts of what happens when the goddess directs the opposite sexes to come together and procreate.

Based upon their relevance to animal life, C 17-19 clearly belong together, and would logically come after the creation of the rest of the rest of the cosmos. However, their relative

¹⁰³ *Metaphysics* Γ 1009b22.

¹⁰⁴ ὡς γὰρ ἕκαστοτ' ἔχει κρᾶσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων, / τῶς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρίσταται · τὸ γὰρ αὐτό ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν / καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί · τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα.

¹⁰⁵ (Coxon Test. 45)

¹⁰⁶ Δεξιτεροῖσιν μὲν κούρους, λαιοῖσι δὲ κούρας. Galen’s commentary (the only source for the fragment) clearly provides the gestational context of this line (Coxon Test. 125).

arrangement is not at all necessary, or founded upon any good evidence. Though C 17 has traditionally been placed prior to C 18-19, there is in fact good reason to reverse the ordering. Prior to discussion of the mind/body relationship, it would make sense to know the origin of bodies, which C 19 seems to begin to provide—explaining how embryos are formed by the mixture of male and female seeds, and the sorts of balance between opposites that is necessary for healthy offspring. Any more specific gestational claims, such as C 18’s explanation for how sex is determined, would seem to logically follow, not precede, discussion of the embryo’s origin itself. In short, any discussion of the relationship between mind and body (C 16) would seem most likely to occur only after the generation of biological entities—the things which possess minds—has already been outlined.

Taken together, these considerations make a strong case for Coxon’s reconstruction (or, again, one *very* similar to it, such as Diels-Kranz’s), with the exception of some possible minor adjustments, as I have suggested. While some other relatively minor changes may also prove acceptable, any attempts to make major changes face significant obstacles, both in terms of internal evidence from the content of the text, as well as evidence for arrangement based upon the ancient *testimonia*. In any case, the burden of proof should rest on those who would advocate for an unorthodox arrangement, and such attempts will be considered further in Chapter Three.

v. Positive Aletheia. Worthless Doxa?

Given the overall reconstruction of the poem as it stands, there appears to be a counter-intuitive account of “reality” offered in the central section (*Aletheia*)—one which describes some entity (or class of entities) with specific predicational perfections: eternal—ungenerated, imperishable, a continuous whole, unmoving, unique, perfect, and uniform. This is then

followed by a more traditional cosmogony, suffused with traditional mythopoetic elements (*Doxa*)—a world full of generation, perishing, motion, etc., which seems incommensurable with the account in *Aletheia*. That *Aletheia* is positively endorsed is uncontroversial. That *Doxa* is negatively presented in relation to *Aletheia* is equally clear. However, there is significant uncertainty regarding the ultimate status of *Doxa*. Is it supposed to have any value at all? And if so, what sort of value?

While most passages in the poem are consistent with a completely worthless *Doxa*, they do not necessitate that valuation; even the most obvious denigrations of *Doxa* itself (or mortals and their views) are not entirely clear regarding the exact type or extent of its failings. Even more troubling, there are two passages which *might* suggest some degree of positive value for *Doxa*—however, the lines are notoriously difficult to understand. Depending upon how the passages outlined below are read/interpreted largely determines what degree/kind (if any) of positive value should be ascribed to *Doxa*. Thus, it is helpful to examine more closely the passages where the relationship between the sections is most directly treated.

Consider the goddess' programmatic outline for the rest of the poem at the end of the *Proem*:

“...And it is necessary for you to learn all things,
Both the still-heart of persuasive reality,
And the opinions of mortals, in which there is no trustworthy persuasion.¹⁰⁷

From the very beginning of her speech, the goddess presents the opinions of mortals (i.e. *Doxa*) negatively in relation to *Reality*. However, it does not necessarily follow from these lines that *Doxa* is entirely false or valueless. At most, all that seems entailed here is a comparative lack of epistemic value, or certainty, in relation to *Aletheia*.

¹⁰⁷ C/DK 1.31-32. χρῆν δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι / ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεμῆς ἦτορ ἠδὲ βροτῶν
δόξας / ταῖς οὐκ ἐνὶ πίστις ἀληθείης

However, falsity may be implied at the transition from *Aletheia* to *Doxa* (C/DK 8.50-52), when the goddess ends her “trustworthy account and thought about reality,” and in contrast charges the youth to “learn about the opinions of mortals, hearing the *deceptive arrangement of my words*.”¹⁰⁸ This deceptive arrangement could be understood to apply only to the goddess’ *presentation* of the account.¹⁰⁹ However, as *Aletheia* is described as a “trustworthy account,” and there seems to be no doubt that it is the content (as well as the presentation) that is trustworthy, the parallel should hold for *Doxa* as well.¹¹⁰ Accepting that it is the content of *Opinion* that is deceptive (at least, in addition to the presentation), one of the most difficult interpretative questions regarding *Doxa* remains. Is the extent of the deception supposed to apply to: a) every proposition within *Doxa* (e.g. Parmenides wants to say it is actually false that the moon reflects sunlight), or b) only some significant aspects of its content (e.g. basing an account on opposites like Light/Night)? Either way, C/DK 1.30 and 8.50-2 make it clear that *Opinion* and the “opinions of mortals” are lacking in *both* veracity and epistemic certainty—at least to some extent.

Mortal beliefs are also unequivocally derided in-between these bookends to *Aletheia*, though in slightly different terms. At C 5, the goddess warns the youth from the path of inquiry upon which “...mortals with no understanding stray two-headed...by whom this has been accepted as both being and not being the same, and not the same.”¹¹¹ C 5 not only claims mortal

¹⁰⁸ ...δόξας δ’ ἀπο τοῦδε βροτείας / μάνθανε κόσμον ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. (Mourelatos 226 ff.)

¹¹⁰ It is also possible to think the deceptive account only extends so far as line 8.61, reading the goddess’ reasoning for providing her “likely” or “fitting” account as referring not to what comes after (the rest of *Doxa*), but only to the brief description of the “naming error” outlined since the *Doxa* began at 8.50. This is a very unusual reading, and is almost certainly incorrect, as passages later in *Doxa* continue to discuss the “naming error.” Cf. (Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*).

¹¹¹ Coxon’s translation. ἦν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν / πλάζονται δίκρανοι · ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν (5) / στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον · οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται / κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τθφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φύλα, / οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτον νενόμισται / κού ταῦτον, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος. (9)

views are in error, it identifies the source of their error—confusing being and non-being. C 7 then further identifies the reason mortals tend to fall into this confusion—by relying upon their senses, rather than rational accounts: “But do keep your thought from this way of enquiry. And let not habit do violence to you on the empirical way of exercising an unseeing eye and a noisy ear and tongue, but decide by discourse the controversial test enjoined by me.”¹¹² Both passages strongly suggest that mortals are not just relying upon epistemically untrustworthy methods, but that they are deeply mistaken in their views about how things truly are, and thus their accounts are also veridically challenged.

Finally, the goddess’ criticism of the “naming error” of mortals—which seems to be the primary criticism offered in *Doxa*—further the case for *Doxa*’s complete lack of veracity. At the first mention of the “naming error” on the traditional arraignment, the goddess says, “...To these things all will be a name, which mortals establish, having been persuaded they are real: to come to be and to perish, to be and not to be, and to change location and exchange bright color throughout.”¹¹³ That mortals have been persuaded to believe in the reality of the objects and phenomena they “name” clearly implies here that the counterfactual is supposed to be true, and that any such phenomena which do not correspond with the properties advocated in *Aletheia* are mistakes. Immediately following the goddess’ transition to her “deceptive account,” C 8.53-56 makes it clear that the activity of “naming,” and “distinguishing things in opposition,” contrary to the unity of *Reality*, is the initial mistake of mortals:

“For they established forms to describe their two judgments
(Of which [judgements] one is not right, in doing which they are deceived)

¹¹² Coxon’s translation. ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ’ ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἶργε νόημα / μηδέ σ’ ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω, / νωμᾶν ἄσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἠχήεσσαν ἀκουήν / καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον (5) / ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.

¹¹³ Coxon’s translation. (C. 8.38b-41). τῷ πάντ’ ὄνομ’ ἔσται / ὅσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο, πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ, / γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὀλλοσθαι, εἶναι τε καὶ οὐκί, (40) / καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροῶ φανὸν ἀμείβειν.

but they distinguished two opposites in substance,
and established predicates separating each from one another.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ (C 8.53-56a). My translation. μορφάς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν, / τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεῶν ἔστιν, ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν, / ἀντία δ’ ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ’ ἔθεντο / χωρὶς ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων. This translation is novel (though Cordero seems to have a similar approach), particularly 8.53-54, and perhaps somewhat controversial (N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 156-7). First, I have translated ὀνομάζειν as “describe” rather than “name,” as Parmenides seems to clearly associate “naming” with providing a robust description of a thing’s properties, or a definite description, not just establishing an arbitrary sign with which to refer to a thing, both here at C 8.55-56, as well as at C11 (“Now since the entirety of Light and Night have been named, and they (Light and Night) [have been named] according to their powers upon these things and those other things...”; αὐταρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νύξ ὀνόμασται / καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δθνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσι τε καὶ τοῖς...). As for the rest, my translation seems to make better sense of both syntax (the closeness of μορφάς and κατέθεντο versus γνώμας ὀνομάζειν), grammar (it is more common for the understood subject of a subordinate clause to be the last thing mentioned in the prior clause, i.e. the τῶν should refer to γνώμας rather than picking up an understood subject from the infinitive ὀνομάζειν), as well as the general context. Translations typically read along these lines: “For they resolved to name two Forms...” (Coxon) and “For they fixed their minds on naming two forms...” (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*). Note how the common reading has mortals exercising their minds to name the forms (or, in Coxon’s translation, dropping γνώμας from the translation entirely), whereas I have reversed the order, so that mortals establish the conception of the two forms (Light and Night, as the ensuing lines make clear) in order to provide an explanation (or rather, a description) for their competing judgements—which as is clear from other passages, are founded upon their sense perceptions of opposites in the world which confuse being and non-being. This translation also eliminates a confusing aspect in C 8.54 on orthodox translations. By interpreting the passage as “naming two forms,” this makes the names of the forms the subject for the next line, which then literally reads “of these one is not right [to be named], by means of which they are misled.” It is easy to see how erroneous judgments about what-is, and developing conceptual and linguistic elements for such, would be misleading. On the other hand, if “names” were the subject, it is very hard to see why naming just one form (Light instead of Night, or vice-versa) would be at all acceptable. How would one be misleading, and not the other? Especially when both require thinking non-Being, in that they are opposite to each other, and thus not-like the other. In an attempt to avoid this apparently arbitrary selection, commentators have often taken the line to mean “of these *not* one of which should be (named)...”, which if both forms are errors, and therefore misleading, would make more sense. This straightforward solution suffers from the obvious problem that the Greek provides no grounds for translating “not one,” as it completely violates the word order. Similarly, Coxon’s translation “of which it is wrong to name *only* one...,” implying that both names *should* be given (at least according to *Doxa*) is also not supported by the Greek (no grounds for imputing “only”). Again, with my translation, the subject of line 8.34 is the judgments (or opinions) of mortals, and it has already been made thoroughly clear throughout *Aletheia* that there is one judgment that mortals are misled by—positing “what-is-not,” or “not-being.” To attempt to get the same effect on orthodox translations, one could begin by inferring that one form is analogous to not-Being (the most likely candidate being Night); yet, this still would not be sufficient to resolve the textual problem. This is because the subject of 8.54 would still be the *naming* of Night that is supposed to be misleading in the orthodox translations, and *all* naming by mortals (beyond the predications outlined in *Aletheia*) seems clearly derided by the goddess, as describing either form results in implying its opposite, and thus thinking about non-Being. It might be thought that my translation similarly suggests an implied association between Light and Being, and Night with non-Being. This is not correct. It is not that Being should be identified with Light, and that Night—as the “absence of light”—is to be associated with non-Being. Rather, the names/descriptions of *both* Light and Night imply opposition (and thus Being and non-Being), as well as other properties denied by *Aletheia*. It is the judgment that non-Being accompanies Being that misleads mortals into the Light/Night dichotomy, and thus the “naming error”—and *any* descriptions of *anything* based upon this erroneous judgment that not-being *is*, denying the description of what-is offered in *Aletheia*, commits this error.

The “judgements” mortals have made can be inferred from the description of mortal failures in C 5, where they are similarly described as “lacking judgment” (ἄκριτα) in that they confuse being with non-being, thinking them to be simultaneously identical and not identical. The particular (single) judgement that deceives them in the context of understanding what-is is taking non-being to be genuine, perhaps even a necessary accompaniment to what is, for understanding the world as they perceive it. Following this path is what leads mortals to confusion and a lack of understanding (of what-is), and thus, it seems, they end up with false accounts of what-is.

Given the passages outlined so far in this section, there appears to be quite a substantial case for taking *Doxa* to be entirely false and lacking any value whatsoever, though the scope of *Doxa*’s falsity remains uncertain. However, this may not be the entire story. It is important to stress that while these passages seem to strongly suggest (and one may argue that they even entail) *Opinion* is false (to some degree), the goddess never actually says it is “false” (ψευδής). Though strongly suggested throughout, it does not seem to be strictly entailed. It is possible for an account to be untrustworthy and unpersuasive, yet correct (true conclusions in invalid arguments), or even held for the wrong reasons without a proper understanding, but still be true (i.e. accidental true belief). This would be a lacking of knowledge, but not truth. Similarly, accounts can also be “deceptive” in their ambiguity, but turn out to be perfectly true. The apocryphal stories surrounding the purportedly divine predictions offered by the Oracle at Delphi, and how humans mistook their (“true”) meanings and fell into ruin, might be seen as paradigmatic parallels to Parmenides’ division between divine *aletheia* and mortal *doxa*. Thus, while it is certainly possible that Parmenides meant the “opinions of mortals” to be considered false—as all of these adjectives strongly suggest, and as the vast majority of modern interpreters have inferred—it is not obviously clear this is *precisely* the failing at issue. Furthermore, there is

at least some textual evidence that *might* be understood to suggest *Doxa* should not be treated as negatively as the passages considered so far would suggest.

As noted in the summary of the *Proem* above, there are two particularly difficult lines (C 1.31-32) which may be understood as suggesting some positive value for *Doxa*, despite its clear inferiority in comparison to *Aletheia*. However, even if the Greek is read along these lines, it remains to be determined whether this value is based upon some substantial value in the account itself (there is some sense or perspective in which it is true), or merely some pragmatic and/or instructive value (e.g. it is worthwhile to know what is wrong and why, so as to avoid not falling into such errors).

In any case, even *if* there is some positive reason for learning *Doxa* provided in these lines, this could hardly contradict the epistemic inferiority (“no trustworthy persuasion”) just asserted at C 1.30, just as it is quite difficult to deny the falsity implied from lines C 8.50-52. At most, these lines could only soften the negative treatment of mortal views. Nonetheless, the possibility should be admitted that upon certain variant readings C 1.31-32, the status of *Doxa* and its value could be more complex and ambivalent than other passages suggest.

Only one further extant passage remains which might offer some reason to think *Doxa* maintains some positive value, and this is the passage most commonly appealed to for this purpose. At C.8.60-61, the goddess seems to offer an explicit rationale for providing the youth with her “deceptive” account: “I declare to you this entirely “likely” (ἐοικότα) arrangement so that you shall never be surpassed by any judgment of mortals.” The key word here is the apparently positive participle (ἐοικότα) which does not obviously reconcile with the otherwise negative treatment of *Doxa*. The participle ἐοικότα can have the general sense of “likely,” in the

sense of “probable,” as well as “fitting/seemly” in the sense of “appropriate.”¹¹⁵ Either translation could suggest at least the possibility of veracity and/or value in *Doxa*. That is, the account in *Doxa* could “likely” be true, though it is epistemically uncertain whether it is or not. Or, the account could be “fitting,” given the *type* of account it is—one which seeks to explain the world as it appears to the senses, which is still worth knowing, even if it is not consistent with the way the world truly is. On either of these readings, though *Doxa* is inferior to *Aletheia* in some regards, and even deceptive, it can be positively endorsed in its own right as Parmenides’ own version of “mortal-style” accounts. If it is then understood that Parmenides’ “cosmology” is superior to all other possible mortal accounts of this kind, the goddess’ promise to the youth that learning this account will insure he is never be surpassed by any other mortal judgments can be explained (C 8.60b-1).

However, it is quite difficult to see how the the cosmology offered in *Doxa* by Parmenides is intended to be superior to all other mortal views. Not only is this more positive spin in tension with the clear negative treatment of *Doxa* throughout the text, it is implausible on more general grounds—how can any account grounded upon fundamentally incorrect assumptions be “superior” in any substantial sense? Some have attempted to claim that *Doxa* satisfies this on account of its dualistic nature, which is second-best to *Aletheia*’s monistic claims. However, this defense fails to account for how the particular account in *Doxa* could possibly be averred to be superior to any other dualistic account.

¹¹⁵ Coxon argues that epic usages of this participle in absolute terms must result in “likely.” However, this “absolute” usage seems to depend on erroneously treating *διάκοσμον* as a nominative subject instead of the accusative object it is, as indicated by his translation: “This order of things I declare to you to be likely in its entirety....” Once this is corrected, there is no necessity to translate in this way, as there are alternative translations also attested in ancient poetry, particularly Homer. There is also no grammatical necessity to deny reading these lines as a purpose clause, as the context makes evident. Cf. (Smyth 2203)

Furthermore, it is just as easy to understand the account offered in *Doxa* as being “likely” in the sense that it is indicative of the sort of account a deranged mortal relying upon their senses might be prone (“likely”) to offer, which is hardly an endorsement. Since mortals are incorrect in their accounts, the particular account offered in *Doxa* could be representative of such accounts, and presented didactically—as an example of the sorts of accounts that should *not* be accepted. If the youth can learn to recognize what is fundamentally mistaken in this representative account, any alternative or derivative account offered by mortals which includes the same fundamental errors can be recognized and resisted. This seems to be far more consistent given the treatment of *Doxa* overall, and certainly fits better with the claim that *Doxa* is “deceptive” at C 8.60b-1.

Given all of this, it is undeniable that *Doxa* is lacking in comparison to *Aletheia*. It is certainly epistemically inferior. That *Doxa* is also inferior in terms of veracity seems likely—though the extent of this failing (all content, or its fundamental premises and assumptions?) remains an open question. Navigating the Scylla and Charybdis of: a) taking the negative, yet often ambiguous and/or ambivalent, treatment of *Doxa* in the text seriously, while b) avoiding apparently absurd interpretative outcomes, is what makes understanding its relationship to *Aletheia*, and thus developing an acceptable interpretation of the poem overall, so very difficult.

3. The A-D Paradox: Attempted Interpretative Solutions

...τίς μηχανή σθμφύρειν εἰς ταῦτον τὰ περὶ τῶν νοητῶν δόγματα ταῖς δοξαστικαῖς ἐπιχειρήσεσιν;

“What means is there to blend into a single thing the doctrines about intelligibles together with the arguments that have to do with opinion?”¹¹⁶

Having outlined the paradoxical accounts offered in the central and ultimate sections of the poem, as well as the unclear status of *Doxa*, the problems involved in understanding the poem’s overall meaning should now be clear. The question remains: how can a) the unreservedly endorsed, counter-intuitive conclusions of *Aletheia*—that in some way “reality” is necessarily lacking in generation, perishing, motion, change, time, etc., possibly be consistently and coherently reconciled with b) the more ambivalently presented, ensuing “cosmology” presented in *Doxa*, which makes use of the very phenomena just denied in *Aletheia*. As these accounts seem contradictory, reconciling them seems difficult at best, impossible at worst. Based upon the Greek terms for these respective sections (*Aletheia* and *Doxa*), I will refer to this as the “A-D Paradox”

In this section, some of the more common and/or influential approaches by modern scholars to address this paradox are considered, along with general objections to each strategy. The relevant interpretative details across commentators are far too extensive and variable for even a fair representative—let alone exhaustive—treatment here. Rather than setting forth a selection of authors as representative foils, I will instead outline the most common and influential interpretative strategies, with references to representative authors who employ them, alongside general objections to the strategy. This approach provides a more universal

¹¹⁶ Proclus *Platonic Theology*, I, 9, 35-36. (Coxon Test. 184)

appreciation of the A-D Paradox, allowing the reader a broad appreciation for why various interpretative approaches to the poem have yet to yield a convincing resolution to this problem. As it is concluded that no compelling solution is on offer given traditional assumptions and reconstructions, this suggests more radical approaches should be explored.

A. A Mistaken Assumption?

Faced with the apparently disparate content between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*, one might initially be tempted to deny that there are any commonalities between them at all—that the subject matter treated, and/or the methods and tools of inquiry in each, are so radically different that there is not only no hope of reconciling the accounts, it could not have ever been intended that such be attempted in the first place. No such simple dismissal of the problem can be had, however. To adopt this approach would require ignoring the unified nature of the poem, and its clearly contrastive nature between the account endorsed by the goddess and how mortals go astray in their own respective accounts. In order for these contrasts to make any sense, both sections *must* be taken to deal with the same basic subject matter. Fortunately, no modern commentators have attempted to resolve the poem’s central interpretative puzzle in such a manner. Thus, I take it as uncontroversial that both sections must be addressing the same subject—the truth of *Aletheia*, and how mortals get that very same truth wrong. Far more difficult to determine, however, is *what* exactly that subject is supposed to be, and how both *Aletheia* and *Doxa* can possibly address it consistently and coherently.

B. Strict Monism & Worthless Opinion

The most persistent approach to understanding the poem is to accept that for some reason—perhaps merely following where logic led him, no matter how counterintuitive the results—Parmenides has concluded that *all* of reality is really quite different than it appears to

our senses. On this view, when Parmenides talks about “what is,” he is referring to what exists, in a universal sense (i.e. all of reality), and making a cosmological conclusion on metaphysical grounds—that all that exists is truly a single, unchanging, unified whole. This conclusion is arrived at through *a priori* logical deduction rather than empirical or scientific evidence, and is thus certain, following necessarily from avoiding the nonsensical positing of “what is not.” Any description of the world that is inconsistent with this account defies reason, and is thus false. That mortals erroneously believe otherwise is a result of relying on their fallible senses instead of reason. Thus, the account in *Opinion* lacks any intrinsic value, and its inclusion in the poem must be explained in some practical way. It can be explained dialectically, as an exercise in explicating opposing views.¹¹⁷ It can also be explained didactically, as an example of the sort of views that are mistaken, and should be rejected.¹¹⁸ This strict monism has been the most common way of understanding Parmenides’ thesis, from early times into the mid-twentieth century.¹¹⁹

The text repeatedly sets forth its claims in universal and/or exhaustive contexts (e.g. “It is necessary for you to learn *all things*,” “And *only one story* of the way remains, that it-is...”). The arguments of C 8 all describe a singular subject in a way that suggests only it can exist, and at least one passage can be read and translated in such a way that all other existence is denied—“for nothing else either is or will be except what-is...”—though the broader context and alternative Greek readings undercut this interpretation.¹²⁰ The broad range of topics in *Doxa*

¹¹⁷ (G. E. L. Owen)

¹¹⁸ (Tarán; Anthony A Long)

¹¹⁹ Select notable advocates of this interpretative view include: (Tarán; Anthony A Long; Wedin; G. E. Owen; Guthrie; Furth; Nehamas “Parmenidean Being/Heraclitean Fire”; Coxon).

¹²⁰ C 8.36b-37a. Palmer’s translation of the following Greek: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἢ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται / ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος. The clause that completes the sentence is ἐπεὶ τό ηε Μοῖρ’ ἐπέδησεν οὔλον ἀκίνητόν τ’ ἔμμεναι (“Since Fate has bound it to be complete and unmoved”). On this additional context alone, πάρεξ should not be translated as “except,” so as to avoid the misleading implication that any existence other than *Being* is denied. Instead, it should be translated as “before” or “outside” or “alongside of” to make clear the passage’s proper

seems to be intended as an exhaustive (thought mistaken) account of the world, which the abstract, singular subject of *Aletheia* stands in corrective contrast to. Perhaps the most significant driving force for understanding Parmenides' subject in this way is due to Plato's ascription to him the thesis that "all is one," and Aristotle's subsequent similar treatment.¹²¹

If this commonly accepted universal subject is correct, and if *Doxa* is taken to hold no intrinsic value (as its negative treatment strongly suggests), strict material monism follows. There is only one thing in the world—the *Being* with all the perfect predications described in *Aletheia*. Any description of the world that is inconsistent with this account, including all descriptions of the world as it appears to mortals, is false. Not only is the account false, but every aspect of the world mortals believe exists is merely an illusion!¹²² On this view, it would seem that the only reason for *Doxa* to be provided to the youth would have to be dialectical and/or didactic—an exercise in explicating opposing views, and/or an example of the sort of views that are mistaken, and should be rejected. This has been the most common way of understanding Parmenides' thesis, especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries.¹²³

While this view is pervasive and perhaps even defensible, many have found it hard to countenance, given its radical and absurd entailments. Not only is the external world experienced by mortal senses denied reality, the very beings who are supposed to be misled by their senses are also denied existence—including Parmenides himself, as well as the spokes-goodness! Thus, this view results in the "mad," self-denying position that Descartes would

contribution to the argument for completeness of what-is rather than the existential denial of anything besides what-is. Furthermore, there are variances in the transmission of C 8.36, and Coxon might very well be right to correct one variation to "οὐδὲ χρόνος" ("And time is not nor will be...") instead of Diels' choice of "οὐδὲν γὰρ" ("For nothing is nor will be..."), and thus completely avoiding the otherwise implied existential denial of all things.

¹²¹ *Parmenides* 128a10. *Sophist* 242d5-6, ff. *De Caelo* iii.1 298b14-24. *Physics* i. 2-3, *Metaphysics* A3, 984a30-b5; B4 1001a29-b1; *On Generation and Corruption* i.8, 325a2-17

¹²² If they can even be that, for that is some manner of existence...

¹²³ For some of the best representative and influential examples of this view, see: (Tarán; G. E. L. Owen)

famously show later was the one thing we could never deny as thinkers—our own existence. Furthermore, how can a non-existent and illusory mind fall into the delusional errors ascribed to mortals in the poem? If there is to be any didactic purpose to the poem overall—i.e. the youth is to learn how to not fall into the errors of other mortals, and/or Parmenides wishes to share his insight with his mortal peers—the existence of mortals must be a given. As this view entails they do not exist, the poem’s apparent purpose is entirely undercut. While it may very well be possible and even fruitful to “follow the logic” wherever it may lead, no matter how counter-intuitive the outcome, to have arrived at such a self-defeating and logically inconsistent outcome without realizing it would itself be a failure to adhere to that guiding principle.¹²⁴ It is difficult to accept that Parmenides was really so mad as to deny his own existence, or so daft that he failed to recognize his criticism of mortal beliefs made the criticism impossible.

These are not the only difficulties faced by a strict-monist view. It is also difficult to reconcile the apparent length and detailed specificity characteristic of the account offered in *Doxa* (as well as the *Proem*), if it is supposed to be entirely lacking in veracity. *Prima facie*, it seems rather perverse that Parmenides—having completely denied motion, change, generation, etc., so succinctly in *Aletheia*—would then provide such a lengthy exposition dependent upon those very phenomena, as a demonstration of what is completely false. Why provide such a detailed exposition of mortal views in a traditional cosmology, just to dismiss it entirely, rather than continue to argue against mortal views by deductively demonstrating their principles to be incorrect, on the argumentative model in *Aletheia*? Certainly he could have deductively shown

¹²⁴ For the originator of the “following the logic” defense of Parmenides’ material monism, Cf. (G. E. L. Owen). Also, see Miller’s defense against the charge of madness, that Parmenides was: “a philosopher whose nobility of intellect drives him to accept conclusions, even if they oblige him to regard the obvious or trivial as nonsense, and even if they force him to throw away the ladder he has used to reach those conclusions” (F. D. J. Miller 253). Of course, this still fails to deal with the problematic entailments identified here.

mortal principles to be in contradiction to *Aletheia*'s conclusions, and this would have been sufficient to serve any didactic purpose.

It seems strange for Parmenides to have written an extensively detailed cosmogony and theogony based upon mistaken principles, just to make the point that the underlying principles are wrong, and by extension, every detail of the account.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the common response that Parmenides wished to provide such a detailed account of mortal errors on the grounds of providing a dialectical opposition to his central thesis is simply speculative and weak.¹²⁶

Interpretations along these lines should be set aside as convenient *ad hoc* solutions imputed upon the author in order to explain away the textual difficulties. It should also be noted that, much like the dismissive treatments of the *Proem*, such treatments deny any substantial purpose for the *Doxa* in relation to the presentation of *Aletheia*, and thus problematically imply a lack of unity to the overall poem—a poem whose central thesis concerns some perfectly unified entity.

Though the strict monist view remains pervasive in textbooks, contemporary scholars have tended to abandon it on account of these worrisome entailments. Yet, there seems to be no way to avoid these problematic entailments of the poem overall if: a) Parmenides' subject in *Aletheia* making a universal existential claim, and b) the account offered in *Doxa* is treated as inherently worthless. Thus, alternative accounts tend to challenge one or both of these assumptions.

¹²⁵ This is Cordero's explanation for Parmenides' *Doxa*, before he proposed rearranging the text—I imagine the obvious inadequacy in this explanation, when confronted with the diversity and apparent length of *Opinion*, largely motivated his proposed rearrangement. This objection should be understood to apply to more “linear” compositional structures. If Parmenides' poem is a ring-composition, as will be argued in Ch. 5, then there would be good structural reasons for such an extensive and detailed account, even though it is false.

¹²⁶ Owen is also the original defender of *Doxa* as a mere dialectical exercise (G. E. L. Owen).

C. “Two-World’ (or, “Aspectual”) Views

If the problems of strict monism are to be avoided while maintaining the apparent universal, existential subject (i.e. “*all* of reality”), it makes sense to seek some redemptive value for *Doxa*, so that Parmenides neither: a) denies the existence of the world as mortals know it, nor b) provides an extensively detailed account of that world just to dismiss it as entirely worthless. The primary strategy for redeeming *Doxa*’s value has been to emphasize its epistemic inferiority in relation to *Aletheia*, while denying its complete lack of veracity. Such approaches also tend to simultaneously downplay any ontological/existential claims made in the poem.

Emphasizing the epistemic distinctions, it can be pointed out that the conclusions offered in *Aletheia* are reached through *a priori*, deductive reasoning—a methodology which can provide certainty of the conclusion, given the premises. The Greeks tended to associate certain knowledge with divinity, and thus the conclusions in *Aletheia* can also be understood as “divine knowledge”—an association supported by the fact that this knowledge is gained in the poem itself via divine assistance (the poem’s spokes-goddess), in a divine setting “far from the path of mortals.”¹²⁷ In contrast, there is no “true trust,” or reliability to mortal accounts, either in the traditional divine v. mortal distinction, nor in Parmenides’ poem.¹²⁸ Parmenides seems to attribute this failing to the fact that mortals rely entirely upon fallible, *a posteriori* sense experience. By passing along the goddess’ *logos* via his poem, Parmenides has shown how mortals can overcome the traditional division between divine (certain) and mortal (fallible) knowledge.

However, while mortal accounts may be epistemically inferior to divine (deductive) knowledge, and thus uncertain and fallible, such accounts may still be true, and thus so may the

¹²⁷ C 1.27

¹²⁸ C 1.30

account in *Doxa*. If it is just that *Doxa* is simply an account that is uncertain—but not necessarily false—then it can have intrinsic value. It can be “likely” in the sense that it is the best account that can be offered, based upon the uncertain empirical methodology mortals are normally stuck with. Recognizing that an account along these lines can be valuable despite its lack of certainty, Parmenides is providing his own best attempt at more traditional cosmological speculation.

Emphasizing the epistemological differences between these sections is not altogether wrong, as the epistemological hierarchy between these accounts in the poem is explicit and undeniable. However, holding that the sole failing of *Opinion* to be its lack of epistemic certainty can hardly be the entire story if Parmenides’ subject in *Aletheia* is truly “all of reality.” The description of the entire world as described in *Aletheia* would remain irreconcilable with the account in *Doxa*. Mortals would still not exist, and thus could not learn from Parmenides’ poem, nor engage in constructing speculative and uncertain empirical accounts of the otherwise non-existent world. Furthermore, other aspects of the poem are not adequately addressed at all if the only failing is *Doxa*’s epistemic uncertainty. How is *Doxa* supposed to be both intrinsically valuable (some degree of veracity being possible) as well as a “deceptive” account (false), based upon merely being epistemically uncertain? While mortals *might* be misled by fallible senses, they also might *not* be wrong and not know it—epistemic uncertainty cuts both ways. Furthermore, how exactly do mortals err by accepting *being* and *not-being* to both be actual, and by “naming opposites”? If *Doxa* is misleading on account of relying on a dualism and/or including phenomena contradictory to the predicates outlined in the strict-monism of *Altheia*, then everything built upon these (seemingly, the entire *Doxa*) would also be false. Even if it is granted that reliance by mortals on their senses can result in these errors, it seems that any lack

of error on these points would once again lead back to strict monism and its world-denying entailments. It remains a paradoxical, if not contradictory, for the accounts in *Aletheia* and *Doxa* to simultaneously be true.

Given these failures (there are arguably others) to adequately account for the various claims in the text, it seems that attempts to resolve the A-D Paradox in terms of epistemological inferiority alone cannot be successful if Parmenides is addressing the entirety of reality.¹²⁹ To address these concerns, an ontological hierarchy seems needed to complement the epistemological hierarchy. This is generally accomplished by taking the account in *Aletheia* to reveal with deductive certainty what the world must fundamentally be like, while admitting that the world as mortals experience it also “exists” in some ontologically inferior manner, no account of which can be certain. Mortals have erred in thinking that the way the world appears exhausts or accurately represents the entirety of reality, and thus they should learn the account in *Aletheia*. However, since mortals actually live in this lower ontological level, learning the best account of reality at that level remains important and intrinsically valuable, despite its failure to represent reality as it fundamentally and genuinely is. In short, such views trade upon a distinction between: a) an unexperienced though genuine reality, which corresponds with divine

¹²⁹ Cosgrove has very recently proposed an interpretation that does end with Parmenides having made an epistemological distinction between reality and the world mortals live in, without going on to reconcile the ontological questions (Cosgrove "What Are 'True'doxai Worth to Parmenides? Essaying a Fresh Look at His Cosmology"). However, he freely admits that this position is unstable, and that Parmenides' position would then beg for the sort of ontological resolution that makes sense of the phenomenological aspects of mortal experiences, which I suggest is required here. For Cosgrove, Parmenides separates theory from practice, so while his metaphysical conclusions mean there is no real reliability to scientific knowledge, pragmatically, one does not take this seriously in life. One might think of this view in an analogy. Consider the religious biologist who compartmentalizes matters of science and faith. Her professional work *qua* scientist explicitly relies upon taking unguided evolution as a fact, yet her worship is dependent upon taking creationism (in some sense, and to some degree) as true. These are mutually exclusive viewpoints, and thus the scientist is inconsistent. However, this does not stop human beings from rationalizing such inconsistencies, saying one view is scientific/pragmatic, and the other faith-based/genuine. While Cosgrove is clearly correct in that human beings often do hold such inconsistent position, and thus his interpretation is possible, I find it more charitable to think Parmenides was advancing a more internally consistent thesis in his sole major work, and thus will keep seeking to fit these competing and paradoxical accounts together, rather than dismiss their incompatibility in this way.

epistemic certainty (*Aletheia*), in contrast to b) a lower-level of “reality,” accounts of which are epistemically uncertain, as well as “deceptive” in that they tend to obscure deeper ontological truths (especially if these accounts are taken to describe all of reality).¹³⁰

A number of objections can be raised to this interpretative approach. However, they tend to boil down to anachronistic worries about the “Platonization” of Parmenides—a tendency that likely extends back to Plato himself, and his successors.¹³¹ This was certainly the case with respect to the Neoplatonist Simplicius, the first to extensively advocate such a “two-world” interpretation of Parmenides. The ontological gradations posited on this view (in addition to anachronistic translations of Parmenides’ Greek along such lines) would suggest that Parmenides very closely anticipated the ontological and epistemological distinctions normally taken to be first developed in Plato’s Theory of Forms.¹³²

Interpretations of Parmenides dependent upon such advanced distinctions are almost certainly the result of interpreters reading Platonic distinctions back into Parmenides, rather than the distinctions genuinely being present in Parmenides’ own thought. If nothing else, this should be evident due to Plato’s own treatment of Parmenides (whether ultimately correct or not) as one who holds “all is one,” and denies any reality whatsoever to non-being, since *Being* is all there is. While it is clear that Plato held Parmenides in high regard, and that Plato was very likely deeply

¹³⁰ Representative supporters of on these lines include: (Nehamas "On Parmenides' Three Ways of Inquiry")

¹³¹ For criticisms of “two-world” approaches and their likely anachronism, see especially: (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled"; N.-L. Cordero *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* 152-54; N.-L. Cordero "Parmenidean 'Physics' Is Not Part of What Parmenides Calls 'Doxia'")

¹³² With respect to anachronistic translations, such two-world views commonly invoke C 1.31 (ἀλλ’ ἔμπης καὶ τὰτα μαθήσῃαι, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα) for support, translating τὰ δοκοῦντα as “things that seem,” or “appearances.” It is extremely unlikely that dok- words possessed the ontological distinction of “what appears to be the case” versus “what fundamentally and truly is the case” this early in the Greek corpus. This distinction, along with the rather negative connotation in dok- words (“untrustworthiness”) concerning mortal views, describing mere beliefs about what was apparent to the senses, but distinct from fundamental reality, is generally thought to be a later Sophistic use, a sense that was further developed and employed more specifically by Plato. In Parmenides’ time, dok- words most likely have the sense of “accepted” or “acceptable,” without the negative connotation of being “erroneous” or “not genuine.” This is why Parmenides has to make certain to include additional negative qualifiers whenever “the opinions (“things accepted by”) mortals are mentioned (Mourelatos 194-202).

influenced by him, the history of philosophy has to wait for Plato to parallel fine-grained epistemic distinctions with a corresponding ontological hierarchy. Though a pioneer in epistemology himself, it is highly unlikely that Parmenides would have had anything beyond the most basic epistemic distinctions to inform his own views.

Furthermore, there is no explanation whatsoever offered by Parmenides for how *Being* could possibly account for the world as it appears—how can motionless, changeless entities (one or more) possibly give rise to the appearances of such? In short, the pervasiveness of such “two-world” interpretative accounts that rely upon such an ontological hierarchy along Platonic lines likely says far more about Plato’s extensive influence—as well as the desperate search for some way out of the seemingly “mad,” world-denying entailments of strict-monism—than it does about Parmenides’ own novelty. And, even when accepted, they don’t really resolve the A-D Paradox, for they lack good explanations for how *Being* is related to, as a grounds or cause of, “appearances.”¹³³

There is also a common distinction with respect to the source of the account in *Doxa* between strict-monist and “two-world” views. While the former typically ascribe the original

¹³³ For a modern representative sample along two-world lines, see: (Thanassas “How Many Doxai Are There in Parmenides?”; Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*). Thanassas holds that *Aletheia* and *Doxa* both describe one world (denying two-world views), but are each separately accessible in terms of different modes of cognition, and mortals have only erred by failing to see the unity of opposites through mixture of light and night—the cosmogony/theogony and the “physics” found in the section known as *Doxa* are to be positively endorsed. Unfortunately, Thanassas’ attempt to save the *Doxa* from absurdity is far from compelling, requiring a number of questionable readings and translations (particularly C 8.53, C 8.60, and C 11.1-2), interpretations (e.g. positing a unified form of the δῖάκοσμος, distinct from discussion in *Aletheia*, and imputing an emphasis on the mixture of forms), and even arrangements (e.g. accepting the placement by Diels-Kranz of C 11/DK 9) of the text. Most problematic for Thanassas’ view is trying to take C 20 (DK 19) as a conclusion to a positively endorsed physics, when this fragment clearly continues the “naming error” which Thanassas has otherwise attempt to relegate to the content between 8.52-60, taking C 11 (DK 9) to immediately follow and end that discussion. Furthermore, even if the multi-faceted interpretation of *Doxa* was correct, it remains mysterious how *Aletheia* and *Doxa* could both be true accounts of the same world, accessed through different cognitive modes—either the world really is as reason reveals in *Aletheia*, or it is as it appears to the senses as related in *Doxa*. Some further ontological distinction remains necessary, and it is hard to see how the world-denying entailments will not follow without adopting Platonic distinctions between reality and appearances (which, Thanassas does), and thereby risking anachronism. Even still, such Platonic views do not explain how motion and change can occur if *Being* itself must be motionless and changeless.

source of that account to others (whether a particular account offered by some unnamed mortals, or a general account of what mortals in general tend to think), “two-world” views, in their attempt to offer some saving positive spin on *Doxa*, tend to make the account offered therein Parmenides’ own novel attempt at cosmology. In addition, they tend to claim that since Parmenides has gone to the trouble of creating this extensive account, it should then also have some superior value to competing cosmologies of the day (or, at least, Parmenides would have thought so) in terms of veracity.¹³⁴

Not only does this positive spin on *Doxa* seem to run afoul of the pervasive derisive treatment of that section in the text, it is quite difficult to offer a convincing explanation for what possible grounds Parmenides could have for ascribing any superiority to his own account in *Doxa*, in comparison to any other mortal offering of his time. The content certainly doesn’t appear to be “superior” on any obvious grounds. The echoes and parallels to other known accounts, such as Anaximander’s and Hesiod’s, are rather obvious and not at all novel. While his cosmological claims may contain some novel truths (the moon gets its light from the sun, the numerical identity of the morning and evening star, etc.), these claims are problematically cast in a deceptive framework—the “naming error” of mortals, which would seem to have Parmenides denying them. The naming error itself may be novel, but its basis and superiority remain mysterious.

Attempts to defend this view on the grounds that his account most closely mirrors the truth of *Aletheia* in some way are also unconvincing. For instance, claiming Parmenides’ account is superior on the grounds that *Doxa* is the simplest alternative account possible besides

¹³⁴ For a recent defense along these lines, see: (Tor). Palmer also holds a sort of “two-world” view and thinks *Doxa* to be Parmenides’ own attempt to offer a superior cosmology; however, he does not accept that Parmenides is attempting to describe all of reality in *Aletheia* (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*). Palmer’s novel view will be dealt with at length in Chapter Four.

the truth of *Aletheia*, as it relies upon a dualism of conflicting opposites rather than the truth of monism, fails to explain how Parmenides' account would be superior to any similar dualistic account. Nor does Parmenides' methodology for his account in *Doxa* appear to be superior in any way—for he has abandoned his pioneering deductive methodology in *Aletheia*, and resorted back to traditional mythopoetic appeals in *Doxa*. “Two-world” views might be able to justify the claim that, given the breadth and speculative length of *Doxa*, Parmenides' cosmology could be superior to other, then extant accounts the “world of appearances” in terms of comprehensiveness. However, unless Parmenides' account was truly thought to be completely exhaustive of all aspects of the “world of appearances”—which begs credulity—it could not be on these grounds that learning *Doxa* will insure the youth is never surpassed in judgment by other mortals (C 8.61), as a more comprehensive account would always be possible.

For these reasons, attempts to resolve the A-D Paradox in the “two-world” model generally suffer from significant objections, and fail to be compelling or satisfactory. Not only do they very likely rely upon Platonic anachronism, the attempts to impute too positive of a value to *Doxa* face a fundamental textual objection—they fail to take the extensive negative treatment of *Doxa* seriously. While the basic epistemic distinction driving these views may very well be correct—that Parmenides takes knowledge of *Aletheia* to be deductively certain, and the content of *Doxa* epistemically uncertain—allowing this to lead to imputing an ontological hierarchy between “fundamental reality” and its less-real “appearances” in Parmenides goes too far.

Also, as with strict-monist accounts, two-world views fail to incorporate the *Proem* in any meaningful way, and thus fails to offer any holistic treatment of the poem. While the *Proem* can be read as setting up the traditional epistemic distinction between mortal and divine

knowledge, in no way does the chariot-journey in the *Proem* prepare the reader to accept that the world as it appears to mortals is epistemologically and ontologically inferior to some more fundamental reality.

Furthermore, “two-world” views seem to commit an arguably more egregious impiety than strict-monist views. Strict-monism merely denies the existence of traditional gods wholesale—after all, anthropomorphic gods like the Heliades, Justice, and the unnamed spokes-goddess can no more exist on strict-monist views than mortals or chariots and mares can. On “two-world” views, however, such beings could still exist, but only at the level of “appearances,” and thus at a lower ontological level. Unless another hierarchical level is distinguished, this strangely seems to entail that divine beings occupy the very same inferior ontological level/status as mere mortals. If Parmenides is truly concerned with bridging the epistemic gap between divine (*Aletheia*) and mortal (*Doxa*) knowledge, it is quite strange that divine beings would be reduced to a lower ontological plain (*Doxa*) than that which divine knowledge (*Aletheia*) occupies.

D. Essentialist (or, “Meta-Principle”) Views

The constant problematic assumption in the interpretative views above is that Parmenides’ subject in *Aletheia* was “all of reality.” A promising suggestion by some recent commentators involves abandoning this commitment. Rather than drawing ontological conclusions about the entirety of existence, it is posited that Parmenides was instead focused upon more abstract metaphysical considerations. Such approaches impute a primarily predicative (rather than existential) usage of the Greek verb “to be” by Parmenides, particularly with respect to the deductive argumentation found in *Aletheia*. Thus, when Parmenides describes “what-is” by the deductions in C 8.1-50, rather than claiming “what all of existence is

like,” he is attempting to reveal the nature or essence of what *any* fundamental or genuine entity must be like, *qua* genuine entity.

Mourelatos was the first to advocate that Parmenides employed the Greek verb “to be” in a particular predicative sense—“the ‘is’ of speculative predication.” Mourelatos takes Parmenides to be attempting an exhaustive account of the necessary and essential properties for *any* fundamental ontological entity. That is, to say “X is Y” in this way is to predicate of X all the properties that necessarily belong to X, given the sort of thing X is.¹³⁵ Nehamas and Curd have both developed more recent proposals along similar lines.¹³⁶

A common upshot of Essentialist views is that, while it remains true that every fundamental entity that exists must be eternal, motionless, a unified whole, etc., this is consistent with there being a plurality of such fundamental beings. Parmenides’ view would thus not be quite so radical as it has seemed on the ontological, strict-monist approaches. Furthermore, this view can have welcome implications for the narrative of how Parmenides was received by his immediate successors (i.e. Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and the early Atomists). Rather than directly rejecting Parmenides’ strict monism in developing their pluralistic systems, they would be able to freely accept his conclusions regarding the nature of fundamental entities and develop pluralistic systems that simultaneously respected these conclusions while explaining our perception of the world. Such a change in narrative is an improvement if, as Curd argues, one thinks the lack of any explicit argumentation against Parmenides’ strict-monism by his successors is problematic, as it would entail later thinkers were guilty of “begging the question” against Parmenides.

¹³⁵ (Mourelatos 56-67).

¹³⁶ (Nehamas "Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms"; Curd)

Whatever the merits of this more limited and abstract thesis of *Aletheia*, such interpretations continue to face very similar, if not the same, problematic entailments and worries related to the value of the *Doxa*. First, there is a substantial objection particular to such accounts. If Parmenides were truly providing an account of what any genuine being should be like, and this in turn outlines the requirements any acceptable cosmology must meet, it would be expected that Parmenides' own cosmology (*Doxa*) would make use of these very principles. At the very least, one should expect some explanation for how such an essentialist account of being could be consistent with mortal accounts. However, there is not even a hint of such in *Doxa*. If *Doxa* (or at least its principles) is supposed to be commensurable with the criteria outlined in *Altheiai*, and thus *Doxa* is to be positively endorsed, intractable objections arise. Why then is *Doxa* so negatively treated throughout the poem? For what reason(s) is it "deceptive"?

In fact, though essentialist views do make the arguments in *Aletheia* in-principle consistent with a plurality of fundamental perfect beings, there seems to be no way such entirely motionless and changeless entities could be consistent with, or account for, the contrary phenomena found in the world of mortal experience. The plurality of fundamental beings themselves could never cause the appearance of change by themselves being moved or rearranged. If Coxon's textual restoration at C 8.36b is correct, such a plurality cannot even exist *in time*.¹³⁷ Furthermore, essentialist views like Curd's predicational monism may be stuck with a type-monism, as conceiving of fundamental entities of different types involves thinking "what-is-not" in relation to each other.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ (Coxon 333-34)

¹³⁸ Curd defines her predicational monism as: "each thing that is can be only one thing; it can hold only the one predicate that indicates what it is, and must hold it in a particularly strong way. To be a genuine entity, a thing must be a predicational unity, with a single account of what it is...the thing itself must be a unified whole. If it is, say, *F*, it must be all, only, and completely *F*" (Curd 66). The objection to varying types of entities is raised by (Sisko and Weiss)

Overall, it remains difficult to see how *Doxa* could be true in any way on the essentialist view, and any substantial existence of mortals and Parmenides is still under threat, along with the implications that follow. The purpose of the poem is still frustrated if mortals, Parmenides, and the spokes-goddess cannot exist. If *Doxa* is still entirely worthless, then the objections concerning its length and specificity also remain. Any attempts to introduce a “two-world” distinction into the essentialist reading would still face charges of anachronism. Attempts to explain *Doxa* positively as Parmenides’ own “best account” of the world continue to lack adequate justification, and negative readings still lead back to a world-denying view. And, once again, the *Proem* remains entirely irrelevant.

E. Conclusion: A Persistent Problem

On traditional reconstructions and interpretations, all commentators who have adopted a universal subject for *Aletheia*—whether from an ontological (“all of reality”) or essentialist (“every genuine entity, *qua* genuine entity”) perspective—have faced an interpretative Scylla and Charybdis. If the account of the *Doxa* is entirely negative, implausibility and absurdity seem to follow. Nothing thought by mortals to exist really does. Mortals are wrong about the world, even though they paradoxically do not exist—including Parmenides himself, who would have to be “mad” and/or “daft” to hold such a view. On the other hand, too positive of a spin on *Doxa* tends to resort to anachronistic distinctions, and/or fails to take its negative textual treatment seriously enough without falling back into a world-denying view.

Furthermore, these interpretative attempts all fail on two additional parameters that seem important. First, they persistently treat the *Proem* as interpretatively irrelevant, though its careful construction and clear parallels to the rest of the text strongly suggest it should be. Second, other than a shared poetical style (epic hexameter), some possible predicative similarities between

discussion of divinity and what-is, and perhaps a shared concern regarding the distinction between divine and mortal knowledge, there is little here to recommend the strong Xenophanean influence ancient sources suggest.

I can see no way of defending these interpretative strategies any more ably than other scholars have. Thus, I suggest abandoning them entirely at this point, along with the assumption that Parmenides' subject is as universal as commonly been supposed. In Chapter Six, I will consider Palmer's recent modal view—one which is quite promising, in that it offers a far more restricted subject for Parmenides' poem. In light of this interpretative impasse, however, it would also seem prudent to reconsider some fundamental assumptions about the poem.

While the problem faced in this inquiry is essentially philosophical in nature, philosophical interpretations must necessarily rest upon philological constructs. It should then be considered whether the current philosophical impasse is the result of philological errors. Perhaps the above defense of the poem's traditional reconstruction is more fatally flawed than it initially seemed, and there is some justifiable way to reconstruct the poem so as to resolve the A-D Paradox. Similarly, perhaps moderns have simply been reading the poem improperly, failing to adequately account for and consider ancient structural norms. These questions will be the focus of Chapters Four and Five, respectively.

4. Cordero's Unorthodox Reconstruction

τῶι πάντ' ὄνομ(α) ἔσται, | ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ,
 γίγνεσθαί τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι, εἶναί τε καὶ οὐχί, | καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροῶ φανὸν
 ἀμείβειν.

“Therefore all those things will be a [mere] name, which mortals, confident that they are real, suppose to be coming to be and perishing, to be and not to be, and to change their place and later their bright aspect to dark and from dark to bright.”¹³⁹

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, traditional arrangements of the Parmenides' poem are well-supported. Any major attempts to rearrange the poem will almost certainly face substantial challenges. However, given the persistent interpretative contentiousness surrounding traditional reconstructions of the poem, it is certainly worth considering whether the interpretative morass is the result of erroneous reconstructions. There are certainly a number of variant possible readings of the Greek in the transmitted sources, in addition to concerns about proper translations, which have not been decisively settled upon. It is also true that confidence in the connectedness, completeness, and internal ordering of the fragments in each section decreases significantly as one proceeds through the poem linearly: *Proem-Aletheia-Doxa*. Thus, more minor proposals for rearrangement might very well be tenable (i.e. they do not directly contradict otherwise reliable testimony), and may even be correct. Given these facts, it is not at all surprising that modern scholars have been regularly tempted to offer not only alternative readings and translations of the poem, but also significant changes in the arrangements of its constitutive parts. As *Doxa* is arguably the section scholars can be least confident of, and traditionally contains claims that seem to be in fact true, it is also not surprising that the assignation of passages to this section has been the most controversial.

¹³⁹ C/DK 8.38b-41. Coxon's translation, my brackets.

What is rather surprising is the relative dearth of attention proposals for unorthodox arrangements have tended to receive in the broader literature.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps orthodoxy is not easily challenged, and so it may be easy to simply ignore deviations. Or, perhaps scholars have tended to think such proposals so obviously incorrect as to not be worth taking seriously, or even acknowledging. Whatever the reasons for this lack of attention, as reconstructive details can matter greatly for interpretative accounts, it would certainly seem worth carefully considering the tenability and interpretative merits of alternative (or “unorthodox”) reconstructions. Such close consideration is particularly worthwhile when such alternative reconstructions promise to provide solutions to persistent interpretative problems faced by traditional reconstructions, such as the A-D Paradox.

Admittedly—whatever their tenability—most proposed changes to the poem’s reconstruction are far too minor on their own to have any significant impact on the A-D Paradox. Moving only C/DK 10 to the end of the *Proem*, as Bicknell once advocated, does not in any way change the overall content of *Doxa* itself, nor the paradoxical relationship between *Doxa* and *Aletheia*.¹⁴¹ The same is true for Hershbell’s suggestion that C 17/DK 16 should be included in *Aletheia*.¹⁴² Bicknell’s suggestion that C 6/DK 4 be understood as the final lines of the poem,¹⁴³ while technically possible and interesting, also does nothing to alleviate the paradox, any more

¹⁴⁰ Bicknell’s 1968 (Bicknell "A New Arrangement of Some Parmenidean Verses"; Bicknell "Parmenides, Fragment 10") and 1979 (Bicknell "Parmenides, Dk 28 B5"; Bicknell "Parmenides, Dk 28 B4") proposals were almost entirely ignored at the time, and continue to receive very little acknowledgment (if any) in the most influential monographs from the last several decades. Coxon even accepts the same move Bicknell advocates for C 2/DK 5, but never even mentions Bicknell in his defense, nor cites him at all. Ebert’s argument that lines C 8.34-41 had been transposed, and should instead succeed 8.52 (Ebert), apparently went unnoticed when first suggested by Calogero in 1936 (Calogero), and continued to be so overlooked in the ensuing decades that Palmer chastises certain scholars who published editions on Parmenides’ poem post-1990 for having “inexcusably failed to take account of it” (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 354, fn. 14).

¹⁴¹ (Bicknell "Parmenides, Fragment 10")

¹⁴² (Hershbell)

¹⁴³ (Bicknell "Parmenides, Dk 28 B4")

than his rather attractive proposal to locate DK 5 after C/DK 1, which Coxon has already adopted (C 2)/DK 5).¹⁴⁴ Though Ebert's proposed restoration of C/DK 8.34-41 between 8.52 and 8.53 would effectively bring together all extant passages which explicitly mention the naming error of mortals into *Doxa*, this move only further supports the negative treatment of *Doxa* with respect to the naming error, while in no way helping to explain how *Doxa* could be reconciled with *Aletheia*.¹⁴⁵ Kurfess' view that Sextus' block-quotation of C/DK 1 should be trusted in its entirety, and that Parmenides regularly repeated his ideas in very similar passages, only multiplies the extant passages of the poem, allowing the central content and tension between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* to remain.¹⁴⁶

While proposals such as these might help support a new interpretative model of Parmenides, they do not in-themselves suggest one, nor do they offer a hope of resolving the A-D Paradox, singly or in conjunction, on traditional assumptions about the subject and scope of the poem. On the other hand, there is one somewhat extensive and radical challenge to orthodox reconstructions on offer, recently proposed by Néstor-Luis Cordero, which does hold such interpretative promise were it to prove tenable.¹⁴⁷ An analysis of the tenability and interpretative lessons of this radical proposal will be the focus of this chapter.

¹⁴⁴ (Bicknell "Parmenides, Dk 28 B5")

¹⁴⁵ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 352-9)

¹⁴⁶ (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources"; Kurfess "Verity's Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, Dk B 1.29 (and 8.4)"; Kurfess "The Truth About Parmenides Doxa")

¹⁴⁷ Cordero's most recent publication advocating this view was in 2011. (N.-L. Cordero "*Parmenidean 'Physics' Is Not Part of What Parmenides Calls 'Doxa'*"). However, this essay was originally presented at an international symposium in 2007, and he has published a revised and extended version of this conference presentation in 2010 (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled"). An earlier version of the 2007 presentation was also presented in 2006 at the annual Eleatica Symposium, the proceedings from which were subsequently published in 2008 (Cordero, Rossetti and Marcacci). I will charitably take the article published in 2010 to be reflective of his most recent and well-considered position, as it avoids some significant overreaching in the former, and includes a major change in the proposed reconstruction—leaving C 12 in *Doxa*, instead of moving it to *Aletheia*.

A. Cordero: Traditional *Doxa* Dismantled.

Cordero claims that the traditional modern reconstruction of *Doxa* is a chimera—an imaginary construct by moderns that, while constituted by real parts (the fragments themselves), never actually existed in such an arrangement by Parmenides' authorship. Respecting the negative treatment of *Doxa* in the text, Cordero rightly does not attempt to save the truth of these claims by making the entire *Doxa* true or worthwhile in some inferior sense to *Aletheia*. Instead, far more controversially, he proposes removing them from the deceptive *Doxa* entirely. The upshot of Cordero's argument is that *Aletheia* should contain all the fragments traditionally assigned to it, in addition to the cosmological and physical accounts of the world traditionally assigned to *Doxa*.¹⁴⁸ The *Doxa*, on the other hand, should only contain passages directly related to the Light (Fire)/Night naming error.

The primary motivation for Cordero's rearrangement is to address a significant problem that, while distinct, is closely related to the A-D Paradox: reconciling the fact that Parmenides' poem seems to contain a cosmological account which makes scientifically true claims (i.e. the moon gets its light from the sun), which are set forth within a deceitful (and thus false) account of how mortals err.¹⁴⁹ By removing these passages from *Doxa* entirely, this problem would certainly be avoided. Also, as removing these passages would significantly reduce the content and scope of *Doxa*, a substantial objection to taking *Doxa* to be strictly false, as the text strongly suggests—that it would have been perverse for Parmenides to have gone on at length developing an entirely false account—would be disarmed. Overall, by reducing the content and scope of the

¹⁴⁸ Or, "quotations," as Cordero—rightly, though perhaps a bit pedantically—persistently insists on referring to Parmenides' "fragments."

¹⁴⁹ For a recent insightful overview of this particular problem and a proposed solution, see: (Cosgrove "What Are 'True' doxai Worth to Parmenides? Essaying a Fresh Look at His Cosmology") For an another innovative interpretative solution that touches on this problem by dividing the standard arrangement of the *Doxa* up into several distinct parts, not all of which are deceptive, see: (Thanassas "How Many Doxai Are There in Parmenides?"; Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*).

Doxa, it would no longer seem to be the case that Parmenides denied the existence of things in the world. For these reasons, Cordero's reconstruction could go a long way towards resolving the A-D Paradox, and thus its tenability is worth careful consideration here.

Despite this interpretative promise, Cordero's proposal has also yet to receive an extended and dedicated critical analysis.¹⁵⁰ Even if some scholars have thought his proposal to be obviously misguided, this is no reason to ignore it—the literature should still reflect this widespread rejection if it exists, rather than silence (and thus, the suggestion of implicit acceptance) on the matter, particularly given Cordero's well-regarded reputations and extensive publications (not only in the field overall, but especially—three versions—advocating this particular view). On the other hand, it may be the case that many ancient scholars—particularly those who are not very familiar with the ancient *testimonia* surrounding Parmenides—have been led to accept Cordero's claims regarding the general lack of evidence for the poem's reconstruction at face value, and thus think it to be at least tenable.¹⁵¹ Either way, Cordero's unorthodox reconstruction deserves close attention here, given the focus of this inquiry.

¹⁵⁰ The limited response to Cordero's proposals can perhaps be partially explained by their recentness, conjoined with the laggardly progress from writing to publication in academia (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled"; N.-L. Cordero "Parmenidean 'Physics' Is Not Part of What Parmenides Calls 'Doxia'"). In any case, only two authors have published journal articles since 2010 which include any analysis of Cordero's proposed rearrangement. The analysis by both authors has been relatively brief—included more out of the necessity to set aside and dismiss Cordero's competing approach to the respective authors' own proposals for dealing with the problem of scientific truths in Parmenides (Cosgrove "What Are 'True'doxai Worth to Parmenides? Essaying a Fresh Look at His Cosmology"; Bredlow). The only truly extensive treatment of Cordero's proposal to date has remained in relative obscurity, as it exists only as a Classics dissertation (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources"). Update: after completing this section and seeking publication for it, I learned that Kurfess' analysis was immediately forthcoming (Kurfess "The Truth About Parmenides Doxa").

¹⁵¹ I myself was initially tempted to adopt Cordero's proposal, at least in part (DeLong "Rearranging Parmenides: B1: 31-32 and a Case for an Entirely Negative Doxa (Opinion)"). That is, until I examined the *testimonia* more closely and, recognizing the problems, specifically set out to find the few publications that had addressed Cordero's proposals.

In what follows, I outline Cordero's primary reasons for challenging traditional reconstructions of *Doxa*, as well as his arguments for an unorthodox arrangement of the poem. I then offer my own analysis of Cordero's reasoning and conclusions, in conjunction with the few relatively brief treatments his proposal has already received in the literature. Overall, not only will Cordero's reasoning for his proposal be found lacking and inconsistent, the arrangement itself will face decisive rejection on both philosophical and philological grounds. The grounds for traditional reconstructions of Parmenides' poem—including *Doxa*—are simply far better and more extensive than Cordero has made it seem. Thus, Cordero's proposal will unfortunately not prove helpful in resolving the A-D Paradox, as it had initially promised.

i. “Doxa of Parmenides” as Historical Accident

Cordero first considers the general evidence for reconstructing the poem. He claims that we can only be certain that C/DK 1 begins the poem, since Sextus explicitly says the lines he quotes came at the beginning (*ἐναρχόμενος*) of the poem.¹⁵² However, he also admits that there is extremely good justification for accepting other facts concerning the poem's linear arrangement.¹⁵³

¹⁵² As Cordero has relied upon DK's arrangement, I always include both Coxon's and DK's reference numbers in this section. Note that Cordero's *only* certainty rests upon Sextus' block-quotation, which includes what scholars take to constitute almost the entire *Proem* (DK 1.1-30) (*Adv. Math.* vii, 213). Cordero does acknowledge that Sextus' quotation continues on afterwards, with lines traditionally thought to belong to C/DK 7. He also seems fully aware that it was DK who assigned the final six lines of Sextus' actual quotation to C/DK 7, instead of letting them remain and complete C/DK 1. However, Cordero seems to miss that in following this move, he himself actually does *not* entirely trust a significant part of that very same block-quotation he has just declared to be his one and only certainty with respect to placement. Such inconsistent trust of ancient sources, without any justification, will be shown to be a pervasive problem with Cordero's suggested reconstruction below.

¹⁵³ Why the following evidence is not just as “*certain*” for Cordero as C/DK 1, is beyond me. Just as C/DK 1 is declared “*certain*” on the grounds that Sextus explicitly claimed it began the poem, so then it would seem Cordero should extend the same certainty to C 20/DK 19, as Simplicius explicitly claims it ends the poem.

First, the poem should be divided into two sections (*Aletheia* and *Doxa*), as outlined in the *Proem* (Cf. 1.28b-30).¹⁵⁴ C 3/DK 2 picks up the first learning module (*Aletheia*) mentioned at 1.29, introducing two possible “routes of inquiry”—“is and cannot not be” and “is-not and must not be”—upon which one might approach understanding “reality.” Thus, it should be at the beginning of *Aletheia*. As C 5/DK 6 refers back to and completes discussion of these same two routes of inquiry—warning away from the route of “is-not and must not be,” as C 3/DK 2 does—it must follow C 3/DK 2. C/DK 7 continues the discussion of C 5/DK 6, once again warning away from the route of “is-not and must not be,” and as its final line seems to directly overlap with C/DK 8, it must immediately precede it. As Parmenides’ spokes-goddess clearly transitions from *Aletheia* to *Doxa* at C/DK 8.50, and before breaking off, includes discussion of how mortals err in naming opposites when they should not do so, *Doxa* must include discussion of the naming error. C 11/DK 9 and C/DK 12, in virtue of continuing the discussion of the naming error, as well as Simplicius’ testimony that they came “after” C/DK 8, also reliably places them in the *Doxa*. Finally, C 20/DK 19 should clearly be part of the *Doxa*, Cordero argues, as it specifically refers back to it by the phrase *κατὰ δόξαν*.

Cordero then claims that the remaining passages in *Aletheia* C 2, 4, and 6 (DK 3-5), and likely many traditionally placed in *Doxa* after C/DK 8 (C 9-20/DK 9-19), have been placed rather arbitrarily. Though the placement of C 2, 4, and 6 (DK 3-5) within *Aletheia* is admittedly somewhat arbitrary—they could easily be moved around within *Aletheia* itself—Cordero does not object to their assignment to that section.¹⁵⁵ Thus, so far, Cordero’s outline uncontroversially

¹⁵⁴ “...And it is necessary for you to learn all things, | both the still heart of persuasive reality (Ἀληθείης) | And the opinions of mortals, in which there is no reliable (ἀληθής) trust.” *χρεώ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι*, (28b) | ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ, | ἡδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.

¹⁵⁵ For an indispensable text on Parmenides that does arrange these very fragments differently than DK, and which also contains a more exhaustive treatment of *testimonia* with English translations, see: (Coxon)

follows traditional arrangements. What is controversial is that Cordero then rejects assigning C 9-10/DK 10-11, and C 13-19/DK 13-18 to *Doxa*.¹⁵⁶ I will refer to these as the “physics passages.”

Cordero’s first objection to placing the physics passages in *Doxa* is that he thinks this assignment is largely grounded in an historical accident, not any independent and objective analysis. Looking back nearly four hundred and fifty years, to the earliest modern compilations of Parmenidean quotations, Cordero points out that the fragments in these compilations were grouped together by their authorial sources.¹⁵⁷ By mere happenstance, Cordero claims, these compilations tended to place sources which provided quotations describing the natural world—or “physics”—near the end of their inventory. Cordero then speculates that this grouping by author accidentally suggested a grouping according to a “family-resemblance” between these passages—treatment of physical objects in the natural world. Cordero posits that it was this accidental suggestion which inspired Fülleborn when he developed the first topically-arranged reconstruction in 1795—dividing the poem into its three traditional sections, and grouping all the physics passages into *Doxa*.¹⁵⁸

Cordero admits that such an historical accident could have in fact resulted in an ultimately correct assignment of these fragments to the appropriate section of the poem. However, he also thinks that if traditional arrangements do depend upon accidental origins as he has argued, then this realization does recommend careful reconsideration of traditional assumptions, especially in light of the difficulty the placement of the physics passages in *Doxa* creates.

¹⁵⁶ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 231-32)

¹⁵⁷ As Cordero points out, the modern tradition of Parmenidean studies begins with Henri Estienne in 1573. (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 233)

¹⁵⁸ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 234)

ii. Anachronistic Categories

Under the interpretative position that whatever is in *Doxa* must be false, and recognizing the objection that it would be perverse for Parmenides to create such a lengthy and detailed false account, Cordero moves on to note that many passages in *Doxa* seem neither false or misleading, as the text suggests they should be. In fact, while some passages traditionally assigned to *Doxa* can be easily accepted as false (e.g. all things are comprised of Light and Night; the entire world is governed by a goddess), accepting the falsity of others is really quite difficult (e.g. the moon reflects the light of the sun, and revolves around the earth). Given these “internal contradictions,” Cordero concludes that the *only* reasonable conclusion is that the traditional reconstruction known as “The *Doxa* of Parmenides” must be a chimeric mistake.¹⁵⁹ Not only is this reconstruction likely the result of an historical accident, it is not a fortunate one.

Cordero further argues that the pervasiveness of this mistake is largely dependent upon anachronistically imputing thought categories to Parmenides’ poem.¹⁶⁰ The tendency to engage in this anachronism can be traced back to Simplicius. In his account, Simplicius explicitly describes the relationship between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* as, respectively, a distinction of intelligible versus sensible, and being versus appearances. Simplicius further claims that while *Doxa* is deceitful, it is not altogether false, since it provides an account of how things appear.¹⁶¹ These conjoined epistemic/ontological parallels are clearly anachronistic, paralleling Plato’s Theory of Forms (or, more specifically, the Divided Line). These metaphysical and epistemological distinctions, as well as the use of “*doxa*” words to mean anything like “appearances,” simply do

¹⁵⁹ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 236)

¹⁶⁰ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 236-37)

¹⁶¹ *Comm. Physics* 39,10-23.

not exist prior to the Sophists. Furthermore, they do not receive the sort of development Simplicius' interpretation is dependent upon until Plato.¹⁶²

However, once the fragments were so arranged by Fulleborn in such a way as to cement the “family-resemblance” of the physics passages, and given that “*doxa*” would later mean “appearances” in Sophistic and Platonic texts, it was extremely easy to follow Simplicius in adopting this lens, viewing the distinction between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* in terms of “fundamental reality” v. “appearances.” In fact, it would be quite difficult to see the distinction in any other sensible way given this arrangement, if one also accepts that Parmenides is talking about all of reality, and wishes to avoid the problematic entailments of strict monism. Thus, anachronistic and incorrect *testimonia* have resulted in a reconstruction that begs for anachronistic interpretations. For these reasons, Cordero thinks, the “*Doxa* of Parmenides” first contrived by Fulleborn has been so readily accepted, and persisted largely without question, amongst modern scholars. However, once these presumptions are seen objectively and dispensed with, Cordero thinks, no non-anachronistic justification nor sufficient reason remains for assigning the “arbitrary” passages on “physics” to *Doxa*. In fact, he avers, further evidence from the text suggests assigning them to *Aletheia*.

iii. Cordero's Principles for Limiting *Doxa*

Cordero holds that additional consideration of the text itself only provides further evidence that *Doxa* should in no way be taken to represent Parmenides' own positively-endorsed

¹⁶² (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 236-37). Cordero also relies upon his own somewhat unique views on the meaning of *Aletheia* here to support his point that Parmenides' thought in no way correlates to these Platonic categories. In attempting to consider his proposed rearrangement objectively, without prejudice grounded on interpretative differences, I leave this out of the summary of his argument here. In any case, my analysis and rejection of his proposal will be not depend upon challenging his point that Simplicius (and others who follow his lead) are at serious risk of anachronism in their interpretations of Parmenides along such lines. In any case, there are very good reasons to object to such anachronistic uses of *dok-* words, independently of Cordero's particular view of *Aletheia*. See: (Mourelatos 194-221)

account, and that this means the physics passages must belong to *Aletheia* instead. The first concern is the issue of personal address. Overall, the poem seems to progress linearly in the form of address it uses. While the poem begins with the first-person “I” being used to refer to the unnamed youth, once the goddess begins her speech, the first-person pronoun is exclusively reserved for her, and the youth is then always referred to with the second-person “you.” The beliefs of mortals are always referred to with the third-person “they.” It is undeniable that the spokes-goddess is Parmenides’ mouthpiece, delivering the didactic lessons—one of which is to be accepted (*Aletheia*), and the other to be rejected and avoided (*Doxa*). It is also uncontroversial that the focus of *Doxa* concerns the “naming error” of mortals. Since the naming-error is consistently referred to in the third-person—as things mortals erroneously believe—though the goddess is relating the account, she is not granting her authority to the account. Parmenides is thus not endorsing *Doxa* in any way, and it cannot be his own account.

Next is the restriction of *Doxa* to the “naming error. While the naming error is far more explicitly outlined at C/DK 8.38-41 and 8.50-61, and referred back to in C 11/DK 9 and C 20/DK 19, it is first hinted at in C 5/DK 6 and C/DK 7. This makes it clear that references to and discussion of mortal errors does not even properly begin—and thus should not be completely relegated to—the section “arbitrarily” called ‘*Doxa*.’ More importantly, it is clear that the “opinions of mortals” are always and only discussed in an explicit context directly associated with the naming error. There is simply no textual reason to ascribe any content or focus other than the naming error to *Doxa*. Thus, Cordero reasonably suggests, the content of *Doxa* itself should be restricted to *only* discussion of the naming error. Any passages which do not do so should then be relocated to *Aletheia*.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 238-40)

Cordero also takes the presence of knowledge-verbs to be an indicator that a passage belongs to *Aletheia* rather than *Doxa*. If a passage claims that *knowledge* of some physical truths will be delivered, since knowledge cannot be false, such passages cannot be found in *Doxa*. Also, the presence of such knowledge-verbs in *Doxa* seems particularly problematic if they contain a second-person address to the youth. The goddess would not mislead the youth to think he is truly gaining knowledge of some physical truths when he is not. Thus, such constructions as “you will know...” fit far more consistently with the knowledge-program developed in *Aletheia* than the deceitful *Doxa*.¹⁶⁴

Finally, in conjunction with these considerations, passages that seem to offer content that is “true and convincing,” without any hint of *doxastic* deception, should not be considered part of deceptive *Doxa*. Instead, they should be taken as indicative of a positive “Parmenidean Physics,” separate from the deceptive *Doxa* outlining mortal errors. Since these claims are true, they must also precede the end of the goddess’ reliable speech at C/DK 8.50.

iv. Cordero’s Proposed Arrangement

Following these considerations, C 9-10/DK 10-11 are the first passages to be denied inclusion in *Doxa* by Cordero.

C 9/DK10: You will **know** the origin of the aether, as well as the signs in the aether
And the unseen deeds of the flawless light of the brilliant sun,
And from whence they came to be. (3b)
And you will learn the wandering deeds of the rounded moon
And its origin. And you will **know** also the heaven which contains them,
And whence it came to be and how necessity led it and bound it,
To begin struggling to contain the stars.

C 10/DK11: [You will **know**?] how earth and sun and moon
And the general aether and heavenly galaxy and outermost Olympus
And the hot force of the stars began to come to be.

¹⁶⁴ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 240-41)

First, Cordero points to personal-address. These passages are not cast in terms of what “they” (mortals) erroneously believe. C 9/DK 10 includes only second-person (“you”) addresses, which must refer to the youth. Though C 10/DK 11 is missing the verb, as it closely follows the programmatic content of C 9/DK 10, a second-person verbal form and/or pronoun almost certainly belonged at the beginning of the line, as I have inserted in brackets.

Not only do C 9-10/DK 10-11 include second-person addresses that seem out of place in *Doxa*, the second-person addresses are included in forms of “knowledge verbs.”¹⁶⁵ In these passages the goddess appears to be providing a programmatic list of cosmological/astronomical content for the youth to not only learn in so far as mortals misunderstand it, but to gain *knowledge* of. Again, as knowledge cannot be false, Cordero sees a contradictory tension between the content of these passages and their inclusion in the clearly false *Doxa* is suggested.

Furthermore, C 9-10/DK 10-11 do not seem at all related to the mistaken views of mortals and the naming error. They certainly do not include any explicit mention of Light/Night dualism. The objects discussed in them are not said to be “named” in accordance with such principles, nor is discussion of them said to be part of understanding how mortals mistakenly take everything to be “full” of both Light and Night (Cf. C 11/DK 9).

Cordero then quickly expands this apparent disparateness in content with the naming error to the other physics passages he thinks should not be placed in *Doxa*. C/DK 13-15 also, Cordero avers, do not give any suggestion of tying into the naming error, or that the truths claimed within them are “mere opinions” instead of actual scientific/physical facts. Cordero also notes that several modern commentators have already suggested C 17/DK 16 belongs in *Aletheia*, on the grounds that it discusses the formation of human intellect—which Cordero thinks makes no

¹⁶⁵ Cf. C 9.1/DK 10.1 (εἶσθη) and 10.5 (εἰδήσεις). These forms of οἶδα must have the strong epistemic meaning of “know” or “understand.”

sense in the context of “mortal opinions. Though he provides no further explicit argument in relation to C 18-19/DK 17-18, it would seem similar considerations of content—particularly a lack of explicit relationship to the naming error—make them unfit for inclusion in *Doxa*.

In summation, given their lack of fit on these grounds, Cordero ultimately proposes moving C 9-10/DK 10-11 and C/DK 13-18 to *Aletheia*. In doing so, he maintains their relative positions to each other, while suggesting some minor changes in the other “arbitrary” passages (DK 3-5) in *Aletheia*, in order to better fit the new content.

Cordero’s Proposal: DK (1-3, 5, 4, 10-11, 13-15, 17-18, 6, 16, 7, 8, 9, 12, 19).¹⁶⁶

Cordero’s Proposal: C (1, 3, 4, 2, 6, 9-10, 13-15a, 18-19, 5, 17, 7, 8, 11, 20).

v. Cordero: Upshot and Interpretative Promise

At the very least, Cordero certainly makes important observations about the poem, and is probably correct on several interpretative fronts. *Doxa* probably should be understood exclusively in terms of the naming error—a consideration often strangely overlooked by commentators. Also, the very likely anachronistic “Platonization” of Parmenides, in an attempt to “save” the *Doxa* and its apparently true claims about physical reality, should be avoided. If Cordero’s proposal were accepted, then at least the temptation towards these views would also be eliminated. It is also certainly the case that the apparent tension he is focused on resolving—how Parmenides’ goddess can describe the *Doxa* and its contents as “deceitful” (and thus, “false,” it would seem) when some of its claims clearly are true of the world we experience—is worthy of further consideration and interpretative resolution.

¹⁶⁶ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 245). Cordero presents a slightly different arrangement in his 2011 publication (N.-L. Cordero "Parmenidean 'Physics' Is Not Part of What Parmenides Calls 'Doxia'"). However, again, I continue to take the 2010 publication as his most considered view.

It must also be granted that Cordero's radical arrangement would significantly change the content of the *Doxa*, and thereby enticingly promises to eliminate many of the interpretative puzzles Parmenidean scholars have found so pervasively vexing. Since the scope of the *Doxa* would thus be limited to the Light/Night naming error—and not a denial of common and obvious physical truths (e.g. the moon gets its light from the sun)—the negative characterizations of the *Doxa* throughout the poem can be far more readily taken seriously and literally. This reduction in scope also results in strict monism no longer being the most intuitive and obvious reading—Parmenides can instead be far more easily read as making some essentialist claims about the way *being* must be, and/or how all of existence must take part in *being*. Mortals could then be understood as ignorant of those facts about the nature of *being*, and the naming error is in some way supposed to make this error clear. Not only has the scope of *Doxa* been reduced on Cordero's view, it is markedly reduced in length. Thus, Cordero's arrangement would effectively disarm the challenge that Parmenides would not have gone on at such length to explicate an incorrect and deceptive account in *Doxa*. In short, many paradoxical tensions between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* would largely disappear—or, at least take on a very different character—by adopting this proposal.

Perhaps the most intriguing and novel upshot of Cordero's proposal is the identification of a specific *elenchus* for the goddess to refer to at C/DK 7.5, which in conjunction with his own views about *Aletheia*, result in a novel interpretation of the poem's message. By moving the discussion of physical objects (sun, moon, stars, animals, etc.) prior to the discourse on the necessary properties of *Being* in C/DK 8, the controversial *elenchus* which the Goddess asks us to judge by *logos* comes into explicit focus. The Goddess can now be read as arguing in C/DK 8 how, contrary to experience and common opinion, these particular objects of experience depend

upon, and must be realizations of, *Being* itself.¹⁶⁷ This would also provide much greater clarity with respect to what Parmenides' otherwise suppressed subject is supposed to be. It certainly seems less problematic, and far more fitting philosophically, to lay out the received opinion at lengthy detail before refuting it, as opposed to doing so afterwards.

Of course, if the rearrangement Cordero proposes is not defensible on its own, there is no further reason to consider this novel interpretation. Nor will his proposal be able to do any work in resolving the A-D Paradox. Unfortunately, this turns out to be the case. Despite its enticing interpretative entailments, Cordero's proposal faces such significant evidential obstacles that it simply must be dismissed as untenable.

B. Traditional *Doxa* Restored

i. Misguided Principles

The guiding principles Cordero uses to restrict passages from *Doxa* are problematic—overreaching, if not outright fallacious. The first clear objection is that Cordero seems to persistently beg the question against Parmenides regarding what Parmenides would have taken to be true or false. Cordero's entire proposal ultimately turns on the unjustified presumption: “the physics passages (which are true), cannot be in *Doxa* (which is false), because these propositions are true.”¹⁶⁸ One cannot simply assert what Parmenides historically held to be deceitful and/or false based upon his metaphysical conclusions, on the grounds of modern (or ancient, for that matter) scientific perspectives. This presumes that Parmenides did not in fact come to world-

¹⁶⁷ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 243)

¹⁶⁸ Cf. (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 236). Note that the “internal contradictions” that Cordero points to here only exists given this unjustified assumption, which he uses to generate the purportedly only possible conclusion—that the *Doxa* is incorrectly constituted by both false and true propositions.

denying conclusions in *Aletheia* traditionally ascribed to him, and that *Doxa* cannot possibly be a didactic example of such erroneous accounts—which is the very question at hand!

One might think that the ascription of truth to the physics passages is at least partially justified on the grounds that Parmenides seems to be providing novel cosmological truths. After all, if Parmenides had seriously engaged in astronomical studies to the point of realizing new scientific facts about the cosmos, he would certainly not want to deny the fruits of his own research, right? However, it is not at all certain whether Parmenides was in fact the source of these novel claims.

For example, consider the claim that the moon is illuminated by the sun, which Cordero claims there is “nothing truer” to proclaim. With respect to passages about the moon and its light source, Plutarch merely uses Parmenides’ poetical language to describe certain views, not to ascribe their origin to him.¹⁶⁹ Aetius even explicitly denies that Parmenides was the first to associate the moon’s illumination with the sun, ascribing the origin of this claim to Thales.¹⁷⁰ Another “novel” physical fact that might be pointed to is Parmenides’ belief in the numerical identity of the Morning Star with the Evening Star. However, Aetius only reports that Parmenides held this belief, not that he was the first to advocate this physical truth.¹⁷¹

On the other hand, this guiding interpretative principle of “clearly true claims belong in *Aletheia*” would seem to cut the opposite way in some cases. Some of the physics passages Cordero wishes to move from *Doxa* contain claims that are not actually true—though

¹⁶⁹ *Roman Questions* 76, 282, B5-11 (Coxon Test. 109). *Concerning the Face that Appears in the Orb of the Moon* 16, 929 A10-B1 (Coxon Test. 112). *Against Colotes* 15, 1116, A3-8 (Coxon Test. 114).

¹⁷⁰ Aetius ii, 28. *On the Illumination of the Moon*. (Coxon Test. 71). It should also be noted here that Thales at least has a reputation as an astronomer, unlike Parmenides. While it may be the case that ascriptions to Thales of astronomical discoveries may be as apocryphal as mathematical discoveries to Pythagoras, the same might hold true for Parmenides. At least Thales’ geographical and cultural background better fit the opportunity to engage in or be exposed to novel astronomical research.

¹⁷¹ Aetius ii, 15 *On the Order of the Stars* (Coxon Test. 65).

Parmenides or his contemporaries may very well have believed them, based upon empirical observation and speculation. For instance, Parmenides is said to have been the first to hold that female and male principles compete with each other in order to determine gender.¹⁷² In C/DK 13, Parmenides claims that Eros is the first of the gods to be created by the governing goddess. Is the same reasoning supposed to apply to passages about sexual selection, as his removal of them from the *Doxa* seems to imply? Cordero seems to vacillate (if not obfuscate) between relying upon: a) a standard of objectively true scientific claims to support the rearrangement of physics passages to *Aletheia*, and b) what Parmenides himself should reasonably be taken to subjectively hold to be true.

In any case, all of this misses the deeper objection. For, even if it were granted that Parmenides had in fact discovered and/or simply advocated for novel astronomical/physical facts at any point in his life, what has this necessarily to do with the outcome of his metaphysical conclusions? Nothing. Nothing prevents Parmenides from having made new empirical observations about the cosmos during his lifetime, and having later concluded through metaphysical argumentation that the account in *Aletheia* is what is actually true, and thus all scientific knowledge (including his novel contributions to it) is ultimately false. In fact, including his own novel views about physics in a section where he ultimately denies them would be the most honest way for him to demonstrate he was now fully committed to rejecting his prior scientific conclusions, if metaphysical study had indeed led him to reject the possibility of truth in such views.¹⁷³ In any case, the claim that the physics passages which are actually true must thereby belong in *Aletheia*, on pain of contradiction, is not justified in this context. As this

¹⁷² Varro *Logistoricus Tubero* (Dox. 191, 24-27; 193, 21-24) (Coxon Test. 51-52). Cf. DK 17-18.

¹⁷³ Cosgrove seems to reason similarly to my criticism here (Cosgrove "What Are 'True' doxai Worth to Parmenides? Essaying a Fresh Look at His Cosmology" 20-22).

assumption seems to be the primary motivation for moving the majority of the “physics passages” (C 13-19/DK 13-18) out of the *Doxa*, the argument is weak from its inception.

Now, this does not defeat the entire proposal, as Cordero can fall back on other interpretative principles to justify moving these passages. For instance, if *Doxa* should indeed be restricted solely to discussion of mortal’s naming error, then any fragments which clearly do not fit this standard should still be removed. Also, as the content of C 13-19/DK 13-18 arguably best complete the programmatic outline in DK 10-11, it would be reasonable to conclude that *if* C 9-10/DK10-11 belong in *Aletheia*, so should C 13-19/DK 13-18. However, these lines of argumentation will also fail to be compelling, as shown below.

The passages whose inclusion in *Doxa* Cordero argues most extensively against are C 9-10/DK 10-11. Unfortunately, these arguments also resort to question-begging. This is most clear when Cordero argues that the presence of “knowledge-verbs” are most consistent with passages belonging to *Aletheia*. First, the appearance of such verbs in C 9/DK 10 (and presumed existence in C 10/DK 11) could very well be the sole extant exception that undermines this correlation. Secondly, the two forms of the verb in question in C 9/DK 10 do not necessarily hold the strong epistemic sense of “knowledge” (i.e. that which cannot be false), but can simply mean “understand.”¹⁷⁴ In any case, nothing prevents the youth from being promised “knowledge” or “understanding” of these physical phenomena *in the context of what mortals erroneously think*. Knowledge and/or understanding can certainly include possessing objectively correct information and understanding about erroneous subjective beliefs.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. (Coxon)

DK 10 also includes a second-person verb meaning “you will learn” (πεύση).¹⁷⁵ This construction, in conjunction with the programmatic content, should recall the goddess’ opening summary of what the youth is to learn overall at C/DK 1.28-32. At 1.28, the goddess uses the aorist infinitive of the exact same verb.¹⁷⁶ Also, the goddess uses a synonymous (“to learn”) word in the future tense at 1.31,¹⁷⁷ which is then used in the present imperative at the beginning of *Doxa* (8.52), with respect to mortal beliefs.¹⁷⁸ The goddess is regularly calling on the youth to learn about *all* the content explicated in the poem, which includes the erroneous beliefs of mortals outlined in *Doxa*, in *both* sections of the poem. There is simply no good reason to think the goddess could not provide a similar, though more specific, programmatic outline of the content of *Doxa* within *Doxa* itself.¹⁷⁹ Finally, even if it is granted that there is a tension between the presence of knowledge-verbs and the misleading second-person address to the youth—this does not entail the lines do not belong in *Doxa*. The underlying premise that the goddess would not wish to mislead the youth has no force here, as the youth has been warned to guard against the entire account which follows (C/DK 8.52), as it is “deceptive.”¹⁸⁰ This could simply be another way in which the account fits this ascription.

These same considerations undermine Cordero’s points about personal address. It is true that *Doxa* is primarily focused on didactically outlining the errors of mortal opinions. It is also true that the proper development of these views should thus follow the third-person address otherwise associated with mortal beliefs in the poem. However, the existence of the second-

¹⁷⁵ From πεύσομαι, future of πυνθάνομαι.

¹⁷⁶ πυνθέσθαι

¹⁷⁷ μαθήσεαι

¹⁷⁸ μάνθανε

¹⁷⁹ Cf. (Bicknell "Parmenides, Fragment 10").

¹⁸⁰ ἀπατηλὸν

person exhortation to the youth to learn such content (C/DK 8.52) clearly shows that second-person addresses to the youth can be found in *Doxa* itself. Nothing requires the universal usage of the third-person in *Doxa*, as Cordero seems to suggest must be the case. Nothing prevents the goddess from directly addressing the youth in the second-person within this discourse to relate what will be discussed, any more than the first-person references by the goddess to herself are contrary to the program of the *Doxa*—of which there are also two uncontroversial instances at the beginning of *Doxa* (C/DK 8.50, 8.60), and one at the end (C 20.1/DK 19.1).

Overall, the guiding principles and reasoning offered for Cordero's rearrangement are far from compelling, and at times overreaching if not outright fallacious. Of course, fallacious reasoning in defense of a position does not defeat the truth of the position itself.¹⁸¹ The section that follows offers even more substantial and decisive objections to the proposed rearrangement itself. It demonstrates that though Cordero has charged the standard arrangement with "arbitrariness," his unorthodox arrangement is in fact far more arbitrary.

ii. Refutation via *Testimonia*

The deeper philological problem Cordero faces is that one either generally trusts the ancient *testimonia*—whose authors would most likely have possessed far better and more complete copies of the text—or one does not. If the *testimonia* are generally held to be

¹⁸¹ Nor will Cosgrove's recent criticism (Cosgrove "What Are 'True'doxai Worth to Parmenides? Essaying a Fresh Look at His Cosmology" 7). Cosgrove has claimed that since the content of the passages Cordero wishes to move to *Aletheia* discuss objects that fundamentally depend upon opposites—which simultaneously invokes "what is," and "what is not"—and since such principles do not satisfy the signs of "what is" as laid out in C/DK 8, they cannot be placed in *Aletheia*. The reconstructive principle that seems to guide Cosgrove here—that discussion of entities that do not fit the predications ascribed to "what-is" cannot possibly be discussed in *Aletheia* itself, is just as misguided as Cordero's assumption that any passage that asserts something ordinarily considered to be true must also belong in *Aletheia*. Both beg the question with respect to reconstructing the poem based upon questionable, absolutist presumptions of what was contained in each section. Cosgrove's rejection also depends upon Cosgrove's own interpretative view, which is grounded in traditional reconstructions—the very thing Cordero is challenging. There is no *a priori* reason to necessarily disallow Cordero's inventive suggestion that a "physics" could be offered as an *elenchus* for the deductions in C/DK 8 to refute, and thus be placed early in *Aletheia*—such would certainly not be contradictory to that section's aim or content otherwise.

trustworthy, the orthodox arrangement is quite difficult to challenge. If they are not, many possibilities are opened, but little guidance/evidence for any reconstruction remains, and genuine concerns over arbitrary placement quickly arise. Either way, it is certainly inappropriate to inconsistently and arbitrarily trust *testimonia* when it fits one's narrative, and not pay any attention to the countervailing evidence. While some sources may certainly be held more reliable, and others spurious, reasons for thinking so would have to be given—and Cordero has not provided any.¹⁸²

Consider the evidence Cordero does accept from the *testimonia*. He begins by accepting C/DK 1 on Sextus' explicit claim that these passages came at the beginning. However, Cordero ignores that Sextus continued his block quotation after C/DK 1.30 with passages (C/DK 7.2-7) traditionally assigned to C/DK 7. Admittedly, following DK, the separation of these passages has become standard, and Cordero does indirectly address the issue by noting that the lines in question do seem directly lead into C/DK 8. Yet, given Cordero's radical approach and skepticism towards the standard arrangement, it is strange he does not use this point to raise further skepticism against the *testimonia* themselves. If nothing else, as he proclaims the part of Sextus' account to be the sole "certainty" with respect to placement, a caveat that this certainty extends only to the section traditionally assigned to the *Proem* is warranted. None of this discussion about Sextus' account challenges Cordero's actual position, of course. At this point, I merely point out that this oversight as one example which demonstrates that Cordero has not adequately engaged with the *testimonia* in considering his proposal—a lacking that will only become more apparent with further consideration.

¹⁸² Many of the points made below are paralleled and/or informed by: (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources" Ch. 4).

Looking to the outline of *Doxa*, Cordero explicitly cites Simplicius' testimony that C 11/DK 9,¹⁸³ and also C/DK 12,¹⁸⁴ came shortly after DK 8. Cordero also cites Simplicius' testimony that C 20/DK 19 came after Parmenides' account of the "sensibles."¹⁸⁵ In concluding that these placements must be respected on the grounds of Simplicius' testimony, it is clear that Cordero takes Simplicius to be a reliable source. However, Cordero is simply wrong to claim that these three placements are the only constraints driving placement of fragments in the *Doxa*. Other passages are also explicitly placed in the *Doxa*, by reliable sources—including Simplicius himself, in the very same passages Cordero has himself cited.

Simplicius reports that Parmenides begins speaking "about sensibles"—clearly his Platonic way of referring to the content of the *Doxa*—with C 10/DK 11.¹⁸⁶ It is true that the source of C 9/DK 10 does not provide any contextual clues to its placement in the poem.¹⁸⁷ However, the very close similarity in content to C 10/DK 11—similarities which Cordero grants—suggests that C 9/DK 10 does (or at least *could*) belong in *Doxa*, contra Cordero, given Simplicius' own explicit testimony.

Even more difficult to explain, though Cordero accepts Simplicius' claim that C/DK 12 belongs in *Doxa*, he ignores the fact that *in the very next line*, Simplicius also explicitly describes the goddess who governs all things in DK 12 to be the subject who creates the god of love (Eros) in C/DK 13.¹⁸⁸ If Simplicius is taken to be a reliable source, C/DK 12 and 13 must be irrevocably tied together. It is hard to imagine what exercise in mental gymnastics could possibly lead one to conclude otherwise. Furthermore, as noted above, it is exceedingly strange

¹⁸³ *Comm. Physics* 180 (Coxon Test. 215).

¹⁸⁴ *Comm. Physics* 39 (Coxon Test. 207). Cf. *Comm. Physics* 31 (Coxon Test. 204).

¹⁸⁵ *De Caelo* 558 (Coxon Test. 203).

¹⁸⁶ *De Caelo* 559 (Coxon Test. 203)

¹⁸⁷ Clement, *Stromata* v, 14, 137 (Coxon Test. 130)

¹⁸⁸ *Comm. Physics* 39 (Coxon Test. 207). Cf. (Bredlow 8-9, fn. 13)

that Cordero considered the generation of Eros to fit with the other “physics passages” in the first place. It is particularly problematic given that the idea of a goddess governing the cosmos from its center is supposed to seem obviously false (and thus clearly part of *Doxa*), on Cordero’s view.¹⁸⁹

Theophrastus’ comments on C 17/DK 16 describe how the mind works in relation to Parmenides’ “two elements,” which he describes as “the Hot and the Cold.”¹⁹⁰ The two elements (Hot and Cold) are the Aristotelian names for Parmenides’ Light and Night—the duality that is only discussed within the *Doxa*. Thus, its placement in *Doxa* is hardly “arbitrary”—in fact, there is once again every reason on the evidence of the *testimonia* to associate C 17/DK 16 with the *Doxa*, rather than *Aletheia*, from the *testimonia*.¹⁹¹

This leaves C 18-19/DK 17-18, which also lack good evidence from their own sources with respect to placement. Thus, they might understandably be thought to have been “arbitrarily” placed due to a lack of guidance in the *testimonia*. However, once again, Simplicius provides good evidence that they belong in *Doxa*. For, after quoting C 10/DK 11, Simplicius goes on to say that Parmenides provides an exposition of things that come-to-be and perish, down to the parts of animals.¹⁹² The generation of animals discussed in C 18-19/DK 17-18 fit this description, and the passages would be quite mysterious if placed anywhere else.

One final report from the *testimonia* to be considered here ties all of the physics passages together, while simultaneously making it clear that they are only discussed by Parmenides in the context of the Light/Night duality—and thus are part of *Doxa*, as well as the naming error.

¹⁸⁹ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 236)

¹⁹⁰ Theophrastus *On the Senses* 1-4 (Coxon Test. 45)

¹⁹¹ Aristotle also quotes this passage in a discussion of thought versus perception, but includes no contextual evidence for its placement in the poem (*Metaphysics* Γ5, 1009b22).

¹⁹² *Comm. Physics* 559 (Coxon Test. 203). Cf. (Bredlow 8-9, fn. 13)

Plutarch states that Parmenides has created a “world-order” (διάκοσμον), the appearances of which are produced by a blending of Light and Darkness. In the next line, the main topics of Parmenides’ extensive “world-order”—which Plutarch claims leaves aside no matters of importance—are listed: the earth, heaven, sun, moon, stars, and origin of humans.¹⁹³ Though Plutarch goes on to relate this account to that which is “opinable,” almost certainly engaging in Platonic anachronism regarding the interpretation of Parmenides, there seems to be no good reason to doubt the veracity of his claims regarding the relationship of these physical passages to the Light/Night naming error, and thus their placement in *Doxa*.¹⁹⁴

How can this inconsistent adherence to the *testimonia* be explained? It seems that Cordero must either be: a) engaging in this inconsistency purposefully, cherry-picking whatever support in the *testimonia* supports his preferred narrative while denying that which counts against it, or b) has simply overlooked a plethora of evidence that counts against his proposal. It simply does not seem plausible that Cordero could have carefully and thoroughly considered the *testimonia*, as he certainly does not provide any reasoning to resist accepting this counterevidence. Whatever the case may be, if the *testimonia* are taken to be reliable—and again, Cordero gives us no reason to think they generally are not, let alone in particular—there is every reason to deny the proposed reconstruction wholesale, as philologically untenable.

iii. Non-anachronistic Family-Resemblance

Despite this inconsistency, Cordero’s proposal is still not completely untenable. For, one might very well take Cordero’s initial skepticism of the *testimonia* to its logical and extreme conclusion. One could deny any reliability to the *testimonia*, on the speculative grounds that

¹⁹³ *Adversus Colotes* 13, 1114 B5-C4 (Coxon Test. 113)

¹⁹⁴ I must thank Bredlow’s brief critique of Cordero’s proposal for reminding me of this passage in the *testimonia*. (Bredlow 9)

ancient scholars were in hardly any better position than modern scholars with respect to the text. Perhaps its arrangement was horribly corrupted early in its transmission, and *this* was the real reason why even Plato lamented that Parmenides might not ever be properly understood.¹⁹⁵

On these grounds, one could attempt to defend Cordero's proposal solely upon his other guiding interpretative principles. The principle that is most textually-grounded and not outright question-begging is that only passages which clearly treat the Light (Fire) v. Night naming error belong to *Doxa*. On these grounds, C/DK 8.50-61, C 11/DK 9 and C 20/DK 19 would thus all still be assigned to *Doxa*. Also, the very same physics passages which Cordero has suggested moving to *Aletheia* are left out of *Doxa*, as they do not explicitly mention Light (Fire)/Night, or the naming error of mortals.

However, without Simplicius' testimony, the grounds for placing C/DK 12 in *Doxa* are not so clear; it is not obviously part of the "naming error."¹⁹⁶ Though C/DK 12 does include explicit references to both fire and night (describing cosmic rings with different mixtures of each), imagery related to light/fire and darkness/night is quite common in, and fitting for, any ancient cosmology and/or physics. Yet, such references need not necessarily be associated with the naming error.

It turns out that any attempt to defend Cordero's proposal largely turns on C/DK 12. This is because C/DK 12 provides a contextual framework which brings the disparate content of the other physics passages together in a sensible way (without any anachronistic worries). C/DK 12 is certainly cosmological in nature, seeming to partially satisfy the promises of C 9-10/DK 10-11. The goddess of C/DK 12 is the only possible subject/agent in the extant fragments which

¹⁹⁵ *Theatetus* 184a. φοβοῦμαι οὖν μὴ οὔτε τὰ λεγόμενα συνιῶμεν, τί τε διανοοῦμενος εἶπε πολὺ πλέον λειπώμεθα.

¹⁹⁶ Recall that before, Cordero was able to rely upon both Light/Night references AND Simplicius' testimony, the latter of which is being suppressed as evidence here.

could cause the generation of Eros in C/DK 13. C/DK 14-15 almost certainly must be taken as part of the theogonical cosmology C/DK 12 begins to develop, and which C 9-10/DK 10-11 outlined. Furthermore, the goddess in C/DK 12 is explicitly described as initiating sexual unions, which leads the reader to expect the otherwise surprising embryological content in C 18-19/DK 17-18. Only the content of C 17/DK 16 is not explicitly or obviously included in this arrangement. However, it takes no great leap of speculation to conclude that its content also belongs in *Doxa*, as a description of mental activity arising from the animals whose birth is addressed in C 18-19/DK 17-18. The clear “family-resemblance” of this content cannot be ignored. Nor can it be easily dismissed as the product of an “anachronistic” grouping. No reference to “appearances” has been made to establish these connections—only shared subject matter within the fragments themselves. In short, wherever C/DK 12 goes, so must the other physics passages. Such considerations seem to be why Cordero did not include C/DK 12 in his earlier versions of this proposal.¹⁹⁷

Thus, if C/DK 12 is taken to be part of *Doxa*, Cordero’s arrangement is untenable. If Simplicius is thought to be reliable, his explicit inclusion of C/DK 12 in *Doxa* brings the rest of the physics passages back into *Doxa*. However, even if one denies the reliability of the *testimonia* and attempts to reconstruct *Doxa* based solely upon passages that fit the naming error, including C/DK 12 in *Doxa* still completely undermines Cordero’s proposal. The internal evidence of the passage itself still demands that the other physics passages be included in the same section.

On the other hand, denying the *testimonia* wholesale, and denying C/DK 12 assignment to the *Doxa*, does nothing to refute Cordero’s actual proposal. In fact, it only helps it, resulting

¹⁹⁷ (N.-L. Cordero “Parmenidean “Physics” Is Not Part of What Parmenides Calls ‘Doxa’; Cordero, Rossetti and Marcacci)

in a more radical and internally consistent view. If C/DK 12 belongs in *Aletheia*, then so should the passages that share its “family resemblance.” Also, its removal from *Doxa* only further strips that section of content, to a very general discussion of mortal errors. All that would remain within the extant passages would be: a) the claim that mortals have named all things in accordance with the forms Light and Night, b) an outline of the properties of these forms, and c) that it is a result of mortal beliefs and inappropriate naming that things seem to come-to-be and perish. There is no longer anything suggestive of a theogony, cosmogony, or cosmology. Nothing to base an anachronistic distinction between “reality” and “appearances” upon.

However, being so skeptical of the *testimonia* as to plausibly remove C/DK 12 from *Doxa* leads to far deeper worries. For, in completely denying the reliability of the *testimonia*—presumably due to significant transmission errors in the text’s early days—one risks denying any reasonable grounds for Parmendeian studies. If ancient sources cannot be trusted to report something as simple as the relative location of the fragments in the poem, how far can they be reasonably trusted otherwise? Must we not also then throw out all doxographical reports of context and interpretation as well? Why even trust that the fragments—or “quotations”—are not equally (if not more so) misreported, if the text was in such a lamentable state early on? If such an absurd skepticism ruled, Parmenidean studies would overall quickly become impossible. As Cordero himself points out, criticizing the fanciful emendations of another commentator—“the history of texts need not coincide with the desires of historians of philosophy.”¹⁹⁸ Similarly, no matter how interpretatively desirable Cordero’s reconstruction might be, textual evidence belies it at every turn, and the only way to salvage it would be require making a mockery of the text and its history.

¹⁹⁸ (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled" 235).

iv. *Doxa* as “Historical Accident”?

Finally, what about Cordero’s initial attempt to induce skepticism in the reader, when he claims that an “historical accident” led to a perceived “family-association” amongst the fragments? Since my analysis has concluded that the “*Doxa* of Parmenides” remains undismantled, did this “accident” just happen to be a fortunate one? Kurfess has already convincingly demonstrated at length that Cordero’s treatment of the historical origins of the poem’s reconstruction in the modern period are misleading on this point. As I have nothing substantial to add to his analysis, I encourage readers interested in the details to read the Chapter 4 of his dissertation.¹⁹⁹ I will only provide a hint here of how Cordero’s account is misleading.

While it is technically true that the first arrangements of Parmenides’ poem were arranged according to authorial source, this is only part of the story. It is also true that particular authorial sources tended to have particular doxographical interests, and thus some were more interested in physics passages, and others in metaphysical argumentation. It is also almost certainly the case that—contra Cordero’s claims—early modern philologists *were* paying close attention to the evidence from ancient sources in their arrangements (such as the evidence outlined above), and were certainly aware of the ancient divisions between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*.

Putting all of these facts together, a more accurate (or at least more plausible) story is that, when philologists first begin to collect the quotations, by following the division between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* (or perhaps, generally moving from the more philosophical to the more physical), along with internal evidence of the fragments themselves, since the different sources available were generally citing different parts of the poem, this also resulted in a tendency to group by authorial sources. It is likely that Cordero has mistaken the true “historical accident”—

¹⁹⁹ (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources"). Freely available at: <http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/16704/>

authorial groupings—for the cause of “The *Doxa* of Parmenides,” rather than recognizing that some far more evidence-based and considered reasoning behind these early arrangements are what accidentally tended to produce those authorial groupings.

C. Conclusions

As Cordero’s view had yet to receive any definitive rejection in the literature at the time of writing, it was important for this inquiry to seriously consider whether this recent proposal for radically reducing the content of *Doxa* might lead to a tenable solution to the A-D Paradox.²⁰⁰ Unfortunately, whatever one may think about modern reconstructions of Parmenides’ poem in general, Cordero’s proposed changes are untenable, and no solution to the A-D Paradox is forthcoming. However, this does not mean that Cordero is entirely wrong about all the elements of his interpretative approach. Nor does it mean that this inquiry has not gained any insights in the process.

First, Cordero seems correct to think *Doxa* is entirely focused on developing the naming error of mortals. While this point is strangely overlooked and/or minimized by many commentators, it seems undeniable given the clear placements of C/DK 8.52 and C 20/DK 19 by explicit and otherwise reliable *testimonia*. Taking the numerous derisive descriptions of *Doxa* seriously, the entirety of *Doxa*—including the “physics” passages—ought to be considered as falling under the deceptive lens the goddess ascribes to it, and be dealt with seriously in that location. Neither removing passages from, nor any minor additions to, *Doxa* can resolve the interpretative issues. Also, attempts to “save” *Doxa* with some positive spin, Platonic or otherwise, should be met with great skepticism.

²⁰⁰ After this chapter was composed, I learned that Kurfess’ criticisms of Cordero’s proposal were immediately forthcoming in the Spring 2016 issue of *Ancient Philosophy*.

The refutation of Cordero's proposal also serves as a further reminder of the importance modern reconstructions and perspectives owe to the ancient *testimonia*—which a great deal of interpretative philosophical work often takes for granted. The importance of this ancient evidence has been a common theme throughout this inquiry. In Chapter One, this evidence was used to suggest that Parmenides was significantly influenced by (perhaps even a direct pupil of) Xenophanes, and that interpretative models which reflected this influence might be granted further credence, *ceteris paribus*. Chapter Two also significantly relied upon the evidence of the *testimonia* to demonstrate how well-supported traditional arrangements of the poem are. The analysis in this chapter has provided additional support for this latter point, making it clear that major rearrangements of the text face serious challenges. Though minor refinements to the current reconstruction remain possible, the overarching structure which yields the paradoxical outcomes is so well-established that no rearrangements of the extant fragments can, in-themselves, provide any solution. Thus, solutions to the A-D Paradox must be sought along different lines.

So far, the A-D Paradox has evaded any compelling resolution along various philosophical approaches (Ch. 3), on both orthodox (Ch. 2) and unorthodox (Ch. 4—Cordero) philological reconstructions. At this point, it seems prudent to consider whether deeper interpretative assumptions might be the source of our interpretative ills. For instance, perhaps it is not the reconstruction itself that problematically leads to these paradoxical tensions, but modern assumptions regarding how such an arrangement should be read. In the next chapter, I propose that Parmenides' poem fits the criteria for an ancient structural arrangement commonly known as “ring-composition.” As such compositions require reading texts very differently than

modern “linear” compositions, if Parmenides’ poem truly does follow such an arrangement, recognizing this could provide invaluable new insights into his philosophical views.

5. Ring Composition

C 2/DK 5: ζυνὸν δέ μοί ἐστιν ὀππόθεν ἄρξωμαι ·
τόθι γὰρ πάλιν ἴξομαι αὖτις

“And it is all the same to me whence I shall begin;
For back to that place I shall return once again.”

A. Introduction

The enigmatic epigraph has been a relatively minor interpretative problem for scholars. Parmenides surely cannot literally mean his argument is “circular” in the fallacious sense, or that the arrangement of his exposition is immaterial. In this chapter, I suggest that there is a very meaningful way we can take this passage literally—as a direct indication of a circular compositional form, i.e. ring-composition. Recognizing this structural form promises to provide additional philological guidance for properly reconstructing the extant fragments of the poem. Furthermore, since ring-composition requires reading texts in a very different way, reading the poem in this way could offer substantial interpretative insights into Parmenides’ philosophical message, far beyond the relatively minor consideration of DK 5’s meaning. Thus, I hope to shed light on the major interpretative problem of the A-D Paradox by first resolving this relatively minor interpretative puzzle.

i. Ring-Composition: Basics

In recent decades, ring-composition has become a common and recognizable structural theme in ancient texts throughout the world. It is particularly evident in Mediterranean cultures between the eighth and fifth centuries BCE, including the epic works of Homer and the Torah. By “ring-composition,” I do not simply mean instances of chiasmus or antimetabole in successive lines—though these are certainly allowed. Rather, I am following Mary Douglas’

usage in her seminal work on the theory of ring-composition, “Thinking in Circles.”²⁰¹ On Douglas’ view, “ring-composition” refers to a framing device applied to an entire text.²⁰² A text so arranged introduces an outgoing ring-half, thematically building up to a main thesis at the center. A turning point is then reached, and the ensuing exposition leads back to and meets up with the beginning. The returning half consists of sections corresponding to those in the outgoing half, which thematically mirror each other across the central divide. Thus, the returning ring-half presents themes in reverse-order to the outgoing half.²⁰³ Perhaps most common is the “pedimental” form, with the central message standing at the apex of the composition, outside of the reverse-parallelisms on either side: A, B, C, B’ A’. However, there are other possible variants, such as: A, B, C, C’, B’ A’.

Grasping the full-meaning of a text arranged in this way requires close attention not only to the central thesis itself. A reader must also consider what the central thesis means in conjunction with the reverse parallels on either side of it, as well as the meanings of the contrasting parallels themselves.²⁰⁴ This structure cannot be read in a simple “linear” fashion—expecting the main idea to be presented and become clear at the end.²⁰⁵ Failure to recognize ring structure in a text tends to result in misunderstanding, usually accompanied by derisive dismissal on the grounds of ineptitude in literary talent.²⁰⁶ This mistake is so common by modern readers, Douglas avers, that she has come to see such derision of ancient texts as very likely indications of a hidden structure, usually a ring-composition.²⁰⁷ As Parmenides’ literary style has oft

²⁰¹ (Douglas). Also, Cf. (Stanley).

²⁰² (Douglas).

²⁰³ (Douglas 1-2)

²⁰⁴ (Douglas 6)

²⁰⁵ (Douglas 10-11)

²⁰⁶ (Douglas 10-11)

²⁰⁷ (Douglas 11)

received such disparaging evaluations, by ancients and moderns alike, it seems worthwhile to adopt her suspicion and investigate further.²⁰⁸

ii. Douglas' Rules

Mary Douglas has developed seven rules for identifying ring-compositions.²⁰⁹ Close adherence to these rules by a text should thus be sufficient to establish its presence. For ease of reference, I collect all of Douglas' rules here, though I will repeat most of them at key points in the outline which follows.

R1: Prologue. *There is normally an introduction, usually enigmatic, introducing main characters, setting the stage, and establishing main themes. Often it outlines a dilemma to be faced, command obeyed, doubt to be allayed, etc. It should anticipate the mid-turn and the ending (which parallels the opening).*

R2: Two Halves. *To complete a ring (end meets the beginning), the outgoing journey must reach a midpoint and "turn around." The turn will be at an identifiable "mid-point" (though textual bulk can vary on either side), creating a clear division for the text.*

R3: Parallel sections. *Both halves must parallel each other, in reverse order—i.e. what happens early in the outgoing journey happens late in the return—across the dividing line. Each section should have a reverse-parallel on the other half.*

²⁰⁸ While thinkers as early as Plato expressed fear that Parmenides' thought and style were so deep, he might never be properly understood, Plato clearly held Parmenides in high esteem as a thinker—φοβοῦμαι ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐτε τὰ λεγόμενα συνιῶμεν, τί τε διανοοῦμενος εἶπε ἢ πολὺ πλεον λειπώμεθα (*Theatetus* 184a). He certainly did not denigrate his literary ability. However, by the first century CE, both Philo of Alexandria (*On Providence* ii, 39, 42) (Coxon Test. 104-05) and Plutarch (*How A Young Man Should Listen to Poetry* 2, 16 C6-D1; *On the Correct Way to Listen* 13, 45 A10) (Coxon Test. 107-08) readily denigrated Parmenides' poetical ability. Moderns have tended to follow suit, blaming their frustration at understanding Parmenides on his poetical ambiguity and abstruseness. Perhaps what had changed between Plato and later thinkers is the shift from thinking and reading in archaic forms like ring-composition to more linear structures developed alongside literate culture, with a decline in the need for memorization of texts. On the other hand, it may very well be the case that Parmenides in fact did attempt a ring-composition, but did so in such a poor and/or enigmatic way that even ancient readers tended to miss the signs and their meanings. The thesis that Parmenides' poem is a ring-composition does not depend upon it being an excellent example of such.

²⁰⁹ These are perhaps more accurately called "guidelines," as Douglas herself qualifies her "rules" in the following way: "they are not rules in the sense of there being something hard and fast about them. Breach carries no penalties, but insofar as they are commonly observed they are like rules. They are responses to the technical problems of coming back gracefully to the start" (Douglas 35). On the other hand, despite this caveat of defeasibility, some of these rules certainly are such, and cannot be broken—i.e. a text that does not have the beginning and the ending meet certainly cannot be a ring-composition. In any case, for ease of reference and to avoid needless confusion, I will follow Douglas' terminology, and refer to the common elements of ring-composition as "rules," denoted by an 'R' and the appropriate number Douglas assigns them (Douglas 36-38). The descriptions for each rule provided in the text are close paraphrases of Douglas' words.

R4: Indicators to mark individual sections. *At beginning and ending of each section.*

R5: Central loading: *Ring-compositions set the central crisis and/or most important message in the center. Sections on each side lead up to (outgoing) or away from (returning) this crux. The center is usually indicated by the repetition of key lines/passages from the prologue. The central message should stand in meaningful concordance with both the outgoing and returning sections, and particularly the prologue and the ending, resulting in an interconnected unity.*

R6: Rings within rings. *Larger ring-compositions may contain or be constituted by smaller, self-contained rings. Each outgoing and return journey might be a ring in its own right. There can also be many far smaller rings interspersed throughout.*

R7: Closure at two levels. *The end must join up with the beginning, with closure at both structural and thematic levels, or there is no ring-composition. The prologue will have been intentionally designed to correspond to that ending, and will have anticipated it for the reader.*

iii. Motivation and Outline

Of course, it is not only commentators' literary criticisms that motivates this thesis.

Parmenides' poem is a *prima facie* prime suspect for ring-composition. It follows the epic-style of Homer and Hesiod, authors in which ring-composition is already well-established. It was also composed in a place and time in which ring structures are commonly found (c. 570 BCE, Magna Graecia). More importantly, the traditional divisions of the poem—*Proem*, *Aletheia* and *Doxa*—fit Douglas' rules quite well. It has an introductory prologue—the *Proem* (R1). The main thesis is centrally-located, rather than at the end (R5). The latter two sections are also generally considered the two main halves of the poem (R2). These various sections are even clearly delineated in the extant fragments (R4).

Though each of these points deserves closer consideration, the real test for ring-composition will be whether Parmenides' poem can be taken as satisfying the three remaining rules. Is there any evidence at all in the extant fragments for carefully constructed reverse-parallels in both outgoing and returning halves (R3)? Are there any “rings-within-rings” (R6)?

Most importantly, does the end adequately return to the beginning (R7)? Given the fragmentary nature of the extant text, there will of course be limits to the certainty of this thesis, as well as a fair amount of speculation. Such is generally unavoidable in Parmenidean studies. However, I will demonstrate below that these rules can all be sufficiently satisfied to the point of making ring-composition a tenable reading of Parmenides' poem, even if the evidence in the extant fragments is not as complete and compelling as might be wished.

In Section B, I outline how Parmenides' poem, given its traditional reconstruction by Diels-Kranz ("DK"), aligns with ring-composition. The point here is to establish—without reliance upon any controversial interpretative positions, translations, or reconstructions—that there is good reason to seriously consider the thesis that Parmenides' poem is a ring-composition. In Section C, I examine how adopting certain proposed modifications to orthodox reconstructions could provide even further support for the ring-composition thesis. Finally, in Section D, I consider some of the more important interpretative implications of reading the poem as a ring-composition.

B. Ring-Composition—DK's Reconstruction

***i.* Beginning**

a. The Proem in General

RI: Prologue. *There is normally an introduction, usually enigmatic, introducing main characters, setting the stage, and establishing main themes. Often it outlines a dilemma to be faced, command obeyed, doubt to be allayed, etc. It should anticipate the mid-turn and the ending which parallels the opening.*

Douglas could hardly have written a more apt description for R1 if she had Parmenides' own *Proem* (DK 1.1-32) explicitly in mind. Few introductions are as enigmatic as the *Proem*'s description of an unnamed youth on a cosmic journey from mortal to divine realms (Cf. the outline of the *Proem* in Ch. 2Ai). There is certainly no immediately obvious relevance to the

upcoming philosophical content. The *Proem* does clearly introduce the two main characters—the anonymous youth-pupil (generally understood to symbolize Parmenides himself) and his didactic goddess-master (Parmenides’ mouthpiece). It also introduces two minor characters (or cosmic forces) which will reappear later in *Aletheia*—Right (Themis) and Justice (Dike).

b. C/DK 1.1-23: From Mortal to Divine

The *Proem* also clearly establishes a setting, though as noted in Ch. 2A, scholars are divided on what that setting is. Fortunately, either interpretative view is consistent with, as well as indicative of, ring-composition. If the chariot journey is understood as an ascent into the heavens/light as a metaphor for achieving enlightenment, since it is indicated that the youth will eventually return to the mortal realm, his journey promises to ultimately be circular, ending where it began.²¹⁰ This can be understood as anticipating and symbolizing the ring structure of the poem itself. On the other hand, if the journey is taken to be a descent (*katabasis*) as I hold, not only is there the promised completion of a circular journey upon the youth’s return to the mortal realm, the description of the Heliades’ journey comprises a completed circle, ending where they began (House of Night).²¹¹ In this way, the *katabasis* interpretation provides even further indication to the reader/listener to expect a ring-composition.

²¹⁰ That the youth will return to the mortal realm is largely inferred, and not explicitly stated. First, it would be highly unorthodox for a mortal to remain in a divine realm. Furthermore, when the goddess begins her account, she charges the youth to preserve it for later (DK 2.1)—presumably when he is not in her presence any longer, and perhaps even for transmission to others. Similarly, the goddess’ reasoning for presenting *Doxa* is so that the no mortal will ever surpass the youth in judgment (DK 8.60-61). The hypothetical condition of being challenged in his learning by mortals implies the presence of mortals.

²¹¹ And I do mean circular literally, in this case. From the House of Night—far below the center of the Earth—the Heliades would pass through the Gates of Night and Day, following an ascending arc to the eastern edge of the Earth where the sun/moon rise. They would then continue following the diurnal pathway upwards across the heavens to apogee, at some point picking up their mortal charge from Earth, and then continuing to follow the path of the sun, setting in the west, and eventually arriving back in the underworld at the Gates of Night and Day. Cf. Appendix A.

In the process of outlining these respective journeys, Kurfess has noted that the *Proem* contains several chiasmatic structures.²¹² For instance, consider C/DK 8.1-4:

ἵπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι,
πέμπον, ἐπεὶ μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι
δαίμονος, ἢ κατὰ πάντ' ἄντην φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα·
τῇ φερόμην· τῇ γάρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι

The sequence of terms <ἵπποι-φέρουσιν-πολύφημον-φέρει> in lines 1.1-3 is repeated in reverse order in line 1.4 almost exactly in homonymous rhyme, in A, B, C, D, D', C', B', A'.

Standing at the center, between the central variants of φέρω, εἰδότα φῶτα is thus

emphasized, standing outside the paralleled ring-structure as a pediment.²¹³ This seems to be one clear instance of Parmenides' poem satisfying R6:

R6: Rings within rings. *Larger ring-compositions may contain or be constituted by smaller, self-contained rings. Each outgoing and return journey might be a ring in its own right. There can also be many far smaller rings interspersed throughout.*

Kurfess further argues that though the final ἵπποι appears to close off a chiasmatic ring, it also appears to be the beginning of a new ring, introducing the Heliades and describing their circular journey.

τῇ φερόμην· τῇ γάρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι
ἄρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὁδὸν ἠγεμόνευον. 5
ἄξων δ' ἐν χνοίησιν ἴει σύριγγος αὐτήν
αἰθόμενος - δοιοῖς γὰρ ἐπέιγετο δινωτοῖσιν
κύκλοις ἀμφοτέρωθεν -, ὅτε σπερχοίατο πέμπειν
Ἥλιάδες κοῦραι, προλιποῦσαι δώματα Νυκτός,
εἰς φάος, ὡσάμεναι κρᾶτων ἄπο χερσὶ καλύπτρας. 10
ἔνθα πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἥματός εἰσι κελεύθων,

²¹² (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources" 38-50)

²¹³ It should also be noted that the phrase εἰδότα φῶτα is also played upon in the description of the moon in C/DK 14 as being an ἀλλότριον φῶς. The latter is a Homeric phrase normally used to indicate an "alien man" (φῶς), but the synonymous (φαός) is used here to mean "alien light." That this wordplay is found in both the *Proem* and the end of the *Doxa* is another minor way in which the end meets back up with the beginning.

καί σφας ὑπέρθυρον ἀμφὶς ἔχει καὶ λάινος οὐδός·
 αὐταὶ δ' αἰθέριαι πλῆνται μέγασσι **θυρέτροις**
 τῶν δὲ **Δίκη** πολὺποινος ἔχει κληῖδας ἀμοιβούς.
 τὴν δὴ παρφάμεναι **κοῦραι μαλακοῖσι λόγοισιν** 15
πεῖσαν ἐπιφραδέως, ὥς σφιν βαλανωτὸν ὀχῆα
 ἀπτερέως ὥσειε πυλέων ἄπο· ταὶ δὲ **θυρέτρων**
 χάσμ' ἀχανὲς ποίησαν ἀναπτάμεναι πολυχάλκους
ἄξονας ἐν **σύριγξιν** ἀμοιβαδὸν εἰλίξασαι,
 γόμοις καὶ περόνησιν ἀρηρότε· τῆ ῥα δὲ αὐτέων 20
 ἰθὺς ἔχον **κοῦραι** κατ' ἀμαξιτὸν **ἄρμα** καὶ **ἵππους**.
 καὶ με θεὰ πρόφρων ὑπεδέξατο, **χεῖρα** δὲ χεῖρὶ
 δεξιτερὴν ἔλεν, ὧδε δ' ἔπος φάτο καὶ με προσηύδα

The central emphasis is not quite as easily identified here. Standing at the end of 1.15, exactly between the parallel variants of θύρετρα (door), is κοῦραι μαλακοῖσι λόγοισιν πεῖσαν, describing the Heliades' persuasion of Justice by means of soft words. Both “persuasion” and its accompaniment by “logos” are key themes in the poem, and the entire theme of this ring is the Heliades' journey itself—which, as noted above, is clearly a circular journey on the *katabasis* interpretation, ending where it begins, just as a ring-composition does. On the other hand, the identification of Dike can also be taken as the revealed central thesis, a character that is not mentioned on either the outgoing or returning ring. Also, the actions of the Heliades here are in direct relationship to Dike herself.²¹⁴ Either way, on either side of the central lines (1.14-16), discussion of the Gates of Night and Day stand in clear reverse-parallel,

²¹⁴ Kurfess takes the central message to be emphasizing Dike. This is reasonable and possible, but I think the evidence on balance recommends taking the Heliades' journey as the emphasized message, though this journey and their mission are certainly to be identified with Justice, as the Goddess informs the youth upon his arrival that it is in accord with “Right and Justice,” not some “ill fate,” that has delivered him to her (Cf. 1.29). Kurfess also goes on to argue that another extensive chiasmus can be found by accepting Sextus' entire quotation as comprising the *Proem*, a reconstruction that is briefly considered in terms of support for overall ring-composition in 5Ci.

and the beginning and ending of the ring match with descriptions of the chariot and mares.²¹⁵

Thus, another ring is completed, further satisfying R6.

The completion of the Heliades' journey and the youth's arrival at his outgoing destination (C/DK 1.1-23) thematically imply the end of a minor section: "From Mortal to Divine." That this ought to be taken as a distinct section is further indicated by the change in the poem's speaker, from youth to goddess, at C/DK 1.24.²¹⁶ Together, these indicators satisfy R4.

R4: Indicators to mark individual sections. *At beginning and ending of each section.*

ii. Outgoing

a. C/DK 1.24-30: The Goddess' Outgoing Outline

If C/DK 1.1-23 is a distinct section, a new section must begin at C/DK 1.24. Here, the goddess welcomes the youth, making it clear that he is in a divine realm—"far from the path of men"—and lays out the two-fold learning program for him:

“...And it is necessary for you to learn all things, both the still-heart of well-rounded reality (Ἀληθείης), and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no reliable (ἀληθῆς) trust.”²¹⁷

In these lines, the goddess has indicated the two distinct halves of the poem (*Aletheia* and *Doxa*), simultaneously anticipating the crucial turning point, satisfying R2.

²¹⁵ The adjectives ἄξων and σύριγγος are, of course, alternately applied to the chariot's axle in the first instance, and the hinges of the Gates of Night and Day later on.

²¹⁶ Ending a section here is not to say the goddess' words that follow are not still part of the *Proem*. Rather, it is to recognize that there can be separate sections, and even rings, within larger sections (R6). Cordero has recently attempted to, in part, justify a rearrangement of Parmenides' poem on these changes of personal address (N.-L. Cordero "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled"). While Cordero's overall proposal is untenable, partly because it is wrong to claim the change in personal address is universal between sections, I think he is on to something in that they can signal divisions between sections in a ring-composition.

²¹⁷ χρεώ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι, (28b) / ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεμῆς ἦτορ, / ἥδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθῆς. On traditional reconstructions, these lines are followed by perhaps the most controversial passages in Parmenidean studies: ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεαι ὡς τὰ δοκεῦντα / χρῆν δοκίμιος εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περ ὄντα [περ ὄντα]. However, not only is their content controversial, so is their presence here—they are not part of Sextus' original quotation of the *Proem*, they are only inferred to belong here based upon Simplicius quoting them immediately after lines very similar to C/DK 1.28b-30. As these lines are not necessary for establishing the adherence to Douglas' rules, and as acceptance of ring-composition may recommend they be placed otherwise, I leave these difficult passages aside for now.

R2: Two Halves. *To complete a ring (end meet the beginning), the outgoing journey must reach a midpoint and “turn around.” The turn will be at an identifiable “mid-point” (though textual bulk can vary on either side), creating a clear division for the text.*

The goddess’ words here continue to closely follow the description in R1—i.e. the prologue will outline a dilemma to be faced, command obeyed, doubt to be allayed. The youth “must” (a command) learn about two things (a sort of “dilemma”), and in doing so, knowledge will be attained (and all doubts on the matter allayed). As the goddess’ words here outline the structure of the poem to follow, C 2/DK 5 probably best fits into this section as well, further indicating the overall structure the reader should expect (i.e. ring-composition).²¹⁸ Overall, this section serves to transition from the youth’s opening journey between mortal and divine realms, into the didactic portion of the poem. I refer to this section as: “The Goddess’ Outgoing Outline.”

b. C 3-5, 7.1-6a (DK 2-3, 6-7.6a): The Routes of Inquiry

The content of C 3-5, 7.1-6a (DK 2-3, 6-7.6a) all seem to share a common developmental theme—one which significantly diverges from the preceding outline (R4), by actually setting forth on the first half of the goddess’ learning program (*Aletheia*). It is worth reviewing these passages here. In C 3/DK 2, it at first seems there are only two possible, mutually-exclusive routes for inquiry to be chosen between. The first route introduced is the “path of persuasion,” which requires acknowledging only “what-is and must be,” and thus “attends upon reality” (*Aletheia*).²¹⁹ This is the route that is consistently endorsed throughout this section. The other route of inquiry is the “entirely inconceivable path,” which focuses on “what-is-not and must not

²¹⁸ This has essentially already been accomplished (DK 5 = C 2) by Coxon’s arrangement (Coxon). This move was first advocated by Bicknell (Bicknell "Parmenides, Dk 28 B5"). Ring-composition only provides further reason to support this move, which other independent evidence was already pointing towards.

²¹⁹ ἢ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι, | Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ)

be.”²²⁰ This route leads nowhere, as “what-is-not” can neither be known or spoken of.²²¹ This close association between the need for conceivability and following the path of what-is seems to be picked up in C 4/DK 3—“for the same thing is to be conceivable as well as to exist.”²²²

C 5/DK 6 continues: “It is necessary (or, “it is right”) to say and to conceive that “what-is” *is*, for it exists, and nothing does not.”²²³ The fragment then goes on to introduce and warn the youth away from another possible route of inquiry—a “mixed route” which confuses “what-is” with “what-is-not.” thinking them to be simultaneously the same and not the same.²²⁴ This is the path upon which “know-nothing mortals” ceaselessly wander.²²⁵ C/DK 7 then appears to end this thematic section, once again reminding the youth to keep to the route of inquiry which focuses on “what-is,” avoiding the other paths that have been identified (“what-is-not” and the “mixed path”).

Enjoining the youth to judge her “much-contested elenchus” via *logos*, the goddess goes on to say “but still one story of the way remains...” (DK 7.6b-7a). These lines overlap with the beginning of DK 8.²²⁶ What remains is to follow the path of “what-is” and discover what it reveals, which is precisely what will occur in DK 8.1-49. As only one way (route of inquiry) remains, the discussion of the possible routes of inquiry has concluded, thus demarcating C 3-5, 7.1-6a as a distinct section (R4): The Routes of Inquiry. This section should immediately (or at least quite soon after) succeed The Goddess’ Outgoing Introduction (C/DK 1.24-30). Its purpose

²²⁰ ἢ δ’ ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεῶν ἐστὶ μὴ εἶναι, | τὴν δὴ τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·

²²¹ οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐόν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν) | οὔτε φράσαις

²²² ...τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι. Given the context, and the repeated “modal” qualifiers in these passages (e.g. forms of *χρή*), the sense would seem to be best understood as “for it is necessary (or, “it is right”) that the same thing [i.e. the route of “what-is”] is thinkable (“for thinking”) as well as existent (“for being”).”

²²³ *χρή* τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ’ ἐόν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, | μηδὲν δ’ οὐκ ἔστιν

²²⁴ οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτόν νενόμισται | κού ταυτόν

²²⁵ ἦν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν | πλάττονται

²²⁶ μόνος δ’ ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο | λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν·

is to bridge the gap between that outline and the central message, by providing the necessary epistemological guidelines for further progress towards *Aletheia*.²²⁷

iii. The Center, Two-Halves, and The Turn

a. C/DK 8.1-49: The Central Message

At DK 8.1-49, by sticking to the path of “what-is”—and thus never thinking of “what-is-not”—the subject of *Aletheia* is infamously concluded to be: truly eternal—ungenerated and imperishable (8.5-21), a continuous whole (8.21-25), unmoved and unique (8.21-33), perfect and uniform (8.42-49).²²⁸ I take it as uncontroversial that these conclusions are the primary philosophical message of the text. That this exposition is also undeniably centrally-located, rather than at the end, satisfies the essential requirement for R5.²²⁹

R5: Central loading: *Ring-compositions set the central crisis and/or most important message in the center. Sections on each side lead up to (outgoing) or away from (returning) this crux. The center is usually indicated by the repetition of key lines/passages from the prologue. The central message should stand in meaningful concordance with both the outgoing and returning sections, and particularly the prologue and the ending, resulting in an interconnected unity.*

Admittedly, on C/DK’s arrangement, there is no extensive repetition of lines from the *Proem* signaling that the reader has reached central message. However, there are more limited instances that should be sufficient to satisfy this element. Most telling, *Aletheia*’s subject is described as both “still” (C/DK 8.4. ἀτορεμὲς) and “well-rounded” (C/DK 8.42. εὐκυκλέος), just as it was at C/DK 1.29. *Aletheia* and its attributes are also associated with both themis (C/DK 8.31-32)

²²⁷ C 6/DK 4 may also belong in this section as traditional reconstructions recommend. However, it does not obviously fit as well thematically, and could arguably belong in The Goddess’ Outgoing Outline. Thus, I will leave this fragment aside for the moment, considering it further in Section 3.

²²⁸ Cf. 2Ci.

²²⁹ That the “central crisis” of the text rests upon the decision between is or is-not, and choosing “what-is,” is even made explicitly clear at C/DK 8.15-19. ἡ δὲ κρίσις περὶ τούτων ἐν τῶιδ’ ἔστιν· ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν· κέκριται δ’ οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη, τὴν μὲν ἔαν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθὴς ἔστιν ὁδός).

and justice (C/DK 8.13b-15a)—terms which in the extant lines, only otherwise appear in the *Proem*.²³⁰ Other parallels could be developed at length,²³¹ and more extensive parallels might be had by adopting some minor modifications to C/DK’s reconstruction, as considered in Section 3.²³² However, even on C/DK’s reconstruction, I take this minor element of R5 to be satisfied.

It should also be rather clear that the preceding section (The Routes of Inquiry) appropriately “leads up to” the account in *Aletheia*, and that the content of *Doxa* clearly departs from the conclusions of *Aletheia*. It will take further argumentative work below to demonstrate what exactly the relationship is between the central message and the outgoing and returning halves. It is also yet to be determined whether all of DK 8.1-49 should be taken as a central section standing outside of the paralleled halves (A, B, C, B’, A’), or if the poem follows some other pattern (e.g. A, B, C, C’, B’, A’), and this content is itself also paralleled.

b. C/DK 8.50-52: The Turning Point

Having completed the metaphysical arguments of *Aletheia*, the goddess says:

“Now I cease for you the reliable account and thoughts about reality; and from this point learn the opinions of mortals, hearing the deceptive arrangement of my words.”²³³

These key lines not only continue to satisfy R4 in providing clear distinctions between sections, they simultaneously satisfy the very important R2—that the text be split into two clear halves at

²³⁰ It is on account of justice that *Aletheia* is “held fast in bonds,” prevented from coming-to-be or perishing (DK 8.13b-15a). At C/DK 8.31-32, “what-is” is argued to have to be complete, for to be otherwise would not be according to what is lawful (*themis*).

²³¹ At C/DK 8.34, the goddess says, “for the same thing is both for understanding and that because of which there is understanding” (ταὐτὸν δ’ ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα). Though not from the *Proem*, this very closely echoes an incomplete fragment near the beginning of the poem, at C4/DK 3: “For the same thing is both for understanding and for being” (τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι).

²³² For instance, taking Sextus’ entire report of what lines begin the poem as reliable, which could be taken to include all of C/DK 7 (or at least 7.2-7). If these lines appeared in the *Proem*, as well as right before C/DK 8 (as the overlap between C/DK 7.6-7 and 8.1-2 suggests), then there would be a clear duplication of lines from the prologue signaling the beginning of the central message. Cf. (Kurfess “Restoring Parmenides’ poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources”; Bicknell “A New Arrangement of Some Parmenidean Verses”; Kurfess “Verity’s Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, Dk B 1.29 (and 8.4)”).

²³³ C/DK 8.50-8.52. Δόξας δ’ ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροστείας / μάθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.

a midpoint, the first outgoing (towards the conclusions of *Aletheia*), the second returning (away from the truths of *Aletheia*).²³⁴ If the poem is indeed a ring-composition, the imaginary line between the two halves should clearly be drawn between DK 8.51a and 8.51b.²³⁵

Though at times the details have remained somewhat elusive, Douglas' rules have been rather easily satisfied so far. However, many texts could likely meet the more general rules (R1-2, 4, 5, 6). R3 and R7 are far more stringent, and ring-composition specific, guidelines:

R3: Parallel sections. Both halves must parallel each other, in reverse order—i.e. what happens early in the outgoing journey happens late in the return—across the dividing line. Each section should have a reverse-parallel on the other half.

R7: Closure at two levels. The end must join up with the beginning, with closure at both structural and thematic levels, or there is no ring-composition. The prologue will have been intentionally designed to correspond to that ending, and will have anticipated it for the reader.

The degree of difficulty is also elevated in this case, as the latter half of Parmenides' text is by far the most fragmentary and uncertain. Nevertheless, if the poem truly is a ring-composition, it should now begin to distance itself from the content of *Aletheia*, in reverse-order from how the text originally built up to it. While the extant text does not make this immediately obvious, I hold that this is precisely what can be found.

²³⁴ These lines also clearly echo C/DK 1.28b-30 (R1).

²³⁵ The "deceptive arrangement" of the goddess' words can also be taken as another direct reference to the ring-compositional structure, picking up on C2/DK 5, and thus in another way signaling a new section (R4). One might at this point begin to think that the "deceptive arrangement" of the goddess' words can now be taken seriously as referring only to the ring-composition, rather than the veracity of *Doxa*. Thus, reading the poem as a ring-composition has the benefit of allowing for a more positive treatment of *Doxa*. However, I do not think this will ultimately be the case. Not only are there still quite unambiguously scathing derisions of mortal views elsewhere (Cf. DK 6.4-9 in particular), ring-composition also requires understanding the poem as a whole, comparing the central message to the two parts leading up to it, and including the *Proem*. Once this is done, I believe *Doxa* will still be forced to be taken entirely negatively—that mortals do not understand *Aletheia*. At the very least, it must be noted that *Doxa* is a movement *away* from *Aletheia*, and thus away from its truth.

iv. Returning

The path of “what-is-not,” is inconceivable and leads nowhere (C 3.5-8/DK. 2.5-8). Following the path of “what-is” led the youth to knowledge in *Aletheia*. The only remaining path which could result in any conclusions—however incorrect with respect to *Aletheia*—is the mixed path of mortals, which confuses “what-is and what-is-not.” Therefore, it is only fitting that the goddess provides an exposition of this path when she sets out to teach the youth about the opinions of mortals in C/DK 8.53-9, and how they misunderstand *Aletheia*.²³⁶ Just as The Routes of Inquiry led to *Aletheia*, it should be expected that this mixed path would lead away from it, in reverse-parallel. This will prove to be the central theme of the returning half.

a. C/DK 8.53-61: The Naming Error

At C/DK 8.53-61, the goddess begins her “deceptive” account, outlining the “naming error” of mortals. Mortals begin to err by establishing two forms—Light and Night—to “name” their two judgements (C/DK 8.53).²³⁷ The “two judgments” of mortals must be their dual acceptance of both “what-is” and “what-is-not” on the mixed path.²³⁸ While mortals would have been correct to think only “what-is,” simultaneously accepting “what-is-not” leads them astray.²³⁹ Conceiving of either of these forms as being (“what-is”) requires simultaneously

²³⁶ Though Coxon’s changes have often anticipated the organization I am adopting for ring-composition, on this thesis, Coxon’s move of C 11/DK 9 away from C/DK 8.50-61 is incorrect. Though the apparent reasoning is understandable—that more explication would be required prior to the goddess claiming all things have been named in accord with Light and Night—this same reasoning should have recommended an even later placement, after the cosmology had been outlined. While there does seem to be a substantial amount of text missing between DK 8.61 and 9, it seems best to accept it is simply that—missing.

²³⁷ That mortals are led to suppose things exist that in fact do not, and are just “names,” was established earlier at (C/DK 8.38b-41). These include such phenomena as: coming-to-be, perishing, changing place, and changing their appearance between light and dark (C/DK 8.38b-41). Here, the goddess explains the naming error further.

²³⁸ This is further supported by the goddess averring that at least one of those judgments should not be named—the one in which they are led astray (C/DK 8.54). μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν· ἢ τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεῶν ἔστιν—ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν. Cf. 2Cv, fn. 115.

²³⁹ This reading is confirmed by close examination of DK 8.15-19, where the decision to leave the way of “what-is-not” both unconceived and *nameless* is made explicit. ...ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη, ἢ τὴν μὲν ἔαν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθῆς ἢ ἔστιν ὁδός).

thinking of their opposite, and thus thinking of not-being (“what-is-not). Thus, C/DK 8.53-61 and C11/DK 9 introduce the implications of following the mixed route, thereby falling away from the truth of *Aletheia*.²⁴⁰

As there is a significant change in content in the successive fragments (C 9-10/DK 10-11), C/DK 8.53-61 and C11/DK 9 must stand as the sole extant content of one distinct section of the return journey (R4). They should thus be understood as the inception of The Naming Error. In accord with R1, the content of “The Naming Error” has once again been anticipated by the *Proem*: the Light/Night dualism in *Doxa* parallels the paths of Day and Night in From Mortal to Divine. However, it still remains to determine what these passages best stand in reverse-parallel to (R3). Is it The Routes of Inquiry, or some portion of C/DK 8.1-49? This will require closer consideration of the content of these passages, particularly the descriptions of Light and Night.

C/DK 8.55-59 go on to provide the sorts of predications one might expect to be associated with each of these forms. Light is described as an aetherial flaming fire, yet mild and light of weight.²⁴¹ Night is described as unintelligent, dense, and heavy. While both are self-identical, neither are identical to their opposite (C/DK 8.58-59a).²⁴² C 11/DK 9 can be read as continuing and possibly completing these predications:

Since Light and Night have been named completely, and these things have been named according to their distinct powers, in addition to these and those, all is full of unified light and invisible night, both equally, since there is nothing beyond them” (C 11.1-4/DK 9.1-4).²⁴³

²⁴⁰ That *Doxa* and the naming error lead away from *Aletheia* can be made more clear by adopting Ebert’s proposed reconstruction (Ebert)—recently endorsed by Palmer (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*)—which purports to return C/DK 8.34-41 to their original location, immediately following DK 8.52. I return to this proposal in Section 3.

²⁴¹ τῆι μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ, | ἥπιον ὄν, μέγ’ [ἀραιὸν] ἐλαφρόν

²⁴² ἔωτῶι πάντοσε τωῦτόν, | τῶι δ’ ἑτέρωι μὴ τωῦτόν. The appropriate opposite here would seem to be not that Night is not self-identical, but that it is so with respect to itself, and but not the same as Light.

²⁴³ αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νύξ ὀνόμασαι | καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρως δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσι τε καὶ τοῖς, | πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου | ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρωι μετὰ μηδέν

These latter descriptions closely mirror descriptions of *Aletheia* itself. At C/DK 8.22-25, *Aletheia* is described as: indivisible, being “all alike (πᾶν ἔστιν ὁμοῖον)...all full of ‘what-is’ (πᾶν δ’ ἔμπλεόν ἔστιν ἐόντος)” and thus “all united (ξυνεχῆς πᾶν ἔστιν).”²⁴⁴ This closely echoes C 11.3/DK 9.3: “all is full of unified light and invisible night (πᾶν πλέον ἔστιν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου).” *Aletheia* is also described at C/DK 8.49 as being “equal [to itself] from every direction, and it attains a unity in its completion (οἷ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἴσον, ὁμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει).”²⁴⁵ Not only does this continue the parallel in terms of “unity” (ὁμῶς), it mirrors the descriptions at C/DK 8.57 of Light (and Night, implicitly) being equal to itself in every direction (ἐωυτῶι πάντοσε τωῦτόν). That there is nothing beyond Light and Night (C 11.4/DK 9.4: ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρωι μέτα μηδέν) also mirrors a description that there is nothing beyond *Aletheia* itself (8.36-37: οὐδὲν γὰρ ≤ἡ≥ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος).²⁴⁶ Whereas *Aletheia* is said be “all full of what-is” (C/DK 8.24),²⁴⁷ in *Doxa*, all things are equally full of both Light and Night (C 11.4/DK 9.4).²⁴⁸

That these two forms are described in ways similar to *Aletheia* should not be a surprise. The mixed path of “what-is and what-is-not” has only just begun to mislead away from *Aletheia*, adding the judgment of “what-is-not” alongside “what-is.” Just as the truth about *Aletheia* was only steadily revealed along the outgoing path by following the way of what-is, so the return

²⁴⁴ οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἔστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ὁμοῖον· | οὐδέ τι τῆι μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἴργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι, | οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ’ ἔμπλεόν ἔστιν ἐόντος. | τῶι ξυνεχῆς πᾶν ἔστιν·

²⁴⁵ οἷ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἴσον, ὁμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει. Cf. C/DK 8.46-47: τό κεν παύοι μιν ἰκνεῖσθαι | εἰς ὁμόν. Cf. 8.5: ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν.

²⁴⁶ Reading ‘πάρεξ’ as synonymous with ‘μέτα’ in this context.

²⁴⁷ πᾶν δ’ ἔμπλεόν ἔστιν ἐόντος

²⁴⁸ Cf. fn. 43.

pathway leading away from *Aletheia*, relying upon problematic guidelines, (i.e. the mixed way), should slowly draw away from that truth.

It is tempting to simply assign all of 8.1-49 “pedimental status” (i.e. outside of the paralleling ring-halves; ‘C’ of an “A, B, C, B, A” structure), and set The Naming Error in opposition to The Routes of Inquiry as the expected reverse-parallel. However, there are no clear similarities to be drawn between those sections, while there are strong similarities between C/DK 8.1-49 and C/DK 8.53-61, 11/9. Thus, it would seem—at least on C/DK’s reconstruction—that the following structure be adopted so far: A (From Mortal to Divine), B (Goddess’ Outgoing Outline), C (Routes of Inquiry), D (Central Message), E (Turning Point: C/DK 8.51), D’ (The Naming Error). As the ensuing fragments in *Doxa* are going to clearly match B rather than C, it would seem at this point that C’ is entirely missing from the extant fragments. On the other hand, it may not have ever existed, as a rehashing of the possible routes of inquiry would be otiose at that point in the poem. In that case, it may very well be (which is possible in ring-composition) that D’ was intended to parallel both C and D. This latter suggestion will be considered further in Section 3, with respect to the restoration proposed by Ebert.

b. C 9-10/DK 10-11: The Goddess’ Returning Outline

Though the lack of a reverse-parallel for C (Routes of Inquiry) might be construed as a challenge for this thesis, the fact that ring-composition predicts exactly the reverse-parallel that is found next seems far more important. The Goddess’ Outgoing Outline (DK 1.24-30) preceded The Routes of Inquiry. Thus, moving in reverse and skipping over C’, a very similar programmatic outline should be expected to follow. It would be especially fitting were the

goddess to directly address the youth in providing this outline. All these criteria are clearly met by C 9-10/DK 10-11.

The content of C 9-10/DK 10-11 can be summarized together. In conjunction, they command the youth to learn about and understand the origins of: the earth, the sun and its invisible deeds, the moon and its migratory deeds, the universal aether and its signs, the surrounding heaven, the heavenly galaxy, extreme Olympus, the stars, and how necessity forced the heavens to control the stars. Despite the content difference, the programmatic structure and manner of address to the youth should now be obvious parallels to the Goddess' Outgoing Outline (R3). As the content of DK 12-19 develop the outline in C 9-10/DK 10-11, these latter two passages again constitute the sole extant fragments from this distinct section (R4)—“The Goddess' Returning Outline.”²⁴⁹

v. Ending Meets Beginning?

As the return arc of the text has passed by the Goddess' Outgoing Outline, ring-composition demands that there now be a reverse-parallel to the youth's cosmic chariot-ride (From Mortal to Divine). What would be particularly fitting is for the youth to explicitly take some similarly mystical journey back to the land of mortals, armed with his knowledge from *Aletheia*, to be shared with others. It would also seem appropriate for the youth to once again become the spokesperson in the poem.

²⁴⁹ If Kurfess is correct, and Simplicius' quotation that is currently assimilated into DK 1.28-32 is indeed a new fragment, its placement here would certainly help support the parallel between these outlines (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources"; Kurfess "Verity's Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, Dk B 1.29 (and 8.4)"). Perhaps Bicknell's proposal to move DK 10 to the *Proem* should also be considered further, for similar reasons (Bicknell "Parmenides, Fragment 10"). These points will also be taken up again in Section 3.

However, only C/DK 12-20/19 remain from *Doxa*, and these “physics” passages offer no such obvious reverse-parallel to the youth’s cosmic journey.²⁵⁰ This is a major concern. For, if the ending does not come back to the beginning, there simply cannot be a ring-composition. R7 cannot be reduced to a suggestion; compliance is *necessary*.²⁵¹

Douglas offers some important advice as part of her description of R3 (parallel-sections) which would seem relevant here:

In practice, the matching of sections often contains surprises; items are put into concordance that had not previously been seen to be similar...When the reader finds two pages set in parallel that seem quite disparate, the challenge is to ask what they may have in common, not to surmise that the editor got it muddled.²⁵²

While ring-compositions are most often indicated by clear repetition of similar passages, or even very similar stories, this is not necessary; the reverse-parallels can also be more abstract and thematic. I argue that there are at least two substantial, thematic reverse-parallels to the *Proem* found in C/DK 12-20/19, which should be sufficient for R7. Once these thematic similarities are properly identified, the end is effectively brought back to the beginning, and the central message makes good sense in conjunction with these paralleled themes.

a. C/DK 12-20/19: Back Again—From Divine to Mortal

Whatever the youth’s ultimate destination, his journey undoubtedly moves from mortal to divine realms. A thematic reversal of this journey is evident in the content of From Divine to

²⁵⁰ The content of these fragments ranges over: a theogonical account of a goddess who rules the cosmos and creates other deities (DK 12-13); cosmogonical/astronomical descriptions (DK 14-15a); some consideration of the relationship between the mind and body (C/DK 17/16); and even accounts related to animal/human procreation (C/DK 18-19/17-18). C/DK 20/19 is a concluding passage, which ties all of this apparently disparate content back to the naming error.

²⁵¹ It is of course possible to suggest that the parallel passages for the Proem are simply missing. It is merely an historical accident that these passages were not transmitted, just like so many others are clearly missing. This response is not entirely unreasonable. However, no matter how reasonable, this would leave the ring-composition thesis entirely unconvincing. Furthermore, this approach simply multiplies the problem. For, if the appropriate parallel passages for the Proem are missing, then it must also be concluded that there are missing passages at the beginning of the poem which fail to parallel the theogony and cosmogony of From Divine to Mortal.

²⁵² (Douglas 36)

Mortal. Recall that C/DK 12 describes concentric cosmic rings of pure and mixed fire, at the center of which and controlling all things (particularly sex), is an anonymous, cosmic-goddess.²⁵³ In C/DK 13, this same cosmic-goddess initiates a theogony, creating Eros, first of all the gods. C/DK 14-16/14-15a indicate a transition from theogony to a cosmology, with descriptions of the moon and earth. This is followed by commentary on the physical causes of human mental activity (C/DK 17/16).²⁵⁴ By C/DK 18-19/17-18, the content has moved on to the most mundane and exclusively mortal topics—sexual reproduction. C/DK 20/19 aptly concludes this sequence, reminding the reader that these accounts depend upon the naming error of mortals, a result of following the mixed path away from *Aletheia*. By transitioning from discussion of the cosmic-goddess controlling all things to the sexual reproduction of divine creatures, From Divine to Mortal has accomplished what ring-composition demands—transitioning from divine to mortal realms, in direct reverse-parallel to the geographical journey of the youth. In the next section, it is argued that these parallels are not only operant at the level of spatio-temporal location.

b. Mortal Naming and Divinity

As the *Proem* progresses, there is a transition from explicitly named (Heliades, Justice) to unnamed (spokes-goddess) divine agents.²⁵⁵ Again, consider how similarly C/DK 12 begins with an anonymous cosmic-goddess, who goes on to create named deities (Eros, etc.). The clear reverse-parallels between anonymous and named divine entities can hardly be accidental. Furthermore, just as the youth meets up with the anonymous goddess at the furthest point

²⁵³ Note the continuation of the Light/Night imagery, another pervasive theme in the *Proem*.

²⁵⁴ While it might make normally more sense to place human mental activity after the discussion of sexual reproduction in general, as mental activity tended to be more closely associated with divine activity, its placement by DK before that discussion might be more fitting with the progression away from divine traits to more earthly and exclusively mortal considerations.

²⁵⁵ That the youth is unnamed is probably not particularly relevant. An identity would be automatically imputed by the listener to the bard, or the reader to the identified author, for the “I” which corresponds to the youth.

(midpoint of his own journey) from the starting location of his own cosmic journey, so the reader discovers the truth of *Aletheia*—an entity that is free of all mortal “naming”—at the end of the outgoing path (midpoint of the poem).²⁵⁶ The returning half of the poem itself again moves away from the truth about *Aletheia* and the cosmic-goddess, in preparation for and anticipating the youth’s own return to the mortal realm, which will require leaving behind the divine spokes-goddess. This, again, is hardly likely to be coincidental.

Accompanying this move away from mortal naming towards anonymity, there also seems to be a possible correlative reduction in anthropomorphic descriptions (bodily activities). The Heliades are much like mortals—driving chariots and even wearing clothing (veils). Justice more statically guards the Gates of Night and Day, with no bodily description. Though the spokes-goddess welcomes the youth by taking his hand, afterwards, she is otherwise only a vocalized mind.

On the other hand, the cosmic-goddess in *Doxa* engages in an act of creation (Eros), which would seem, given the evidence, a mentally-caused creative act (or perhaps by fiat). It certainly is not sexual genesis, or any other sort of mortal (bodily) activity. That there could be similar parallels to the *Proem* along these lines in the ensuing passages requires reevaluating some long held assumptions.

Parmenides’ discussion of the sun, moon, etc. are traditionally considered “physical” descriptions. However, this may very well be a mistake. First, the content of this section clearly begins with a theogony. Just as the *Proem* invokes Homeric and Hesiodic language and imagery, why should a theogony at the end of Parmenides’ poem not be supposed to closely

²⁵⁶ Even if it is argued that the spokes-goddess can be identified with Night—and thus able to be identified and “named”—Night is one of the most primordial of divine forces in Hesiods’ theogony, and one of the least commonly anthropomorphized entities in the Greek pantheon.

follow Hesiod's own, rather than moving on to more "cosmological" topics? Given this, why should 'γαῖαν' or 'ἠελίοιο' be so confidently read as "earth" rather than "Earth" (Gaia), or "of the sun" instead of "of the Sun" (Helios)? After all, Parmenides does ascribe some rather anthropomorphic sounding activities to these "physical objects." For instance, Moon is described as not only as getting its light from the sun, but also "wandering" around Earth in C/DK 14.²⁵⁷ Similarly, it is described as "gazing" towards Sun in C/DK 15. Not only are these same objects (Moon and Sun) able to be associated with the divine Day/Night imagery implicit in the *Proem*, they also appear to travel similar paths across/around the earth as the youth seems to have traveled with the Heliades (who, it almost goes without mentioning, are divine daughters of Sun). Lest it be overlooked, the cosmic-goddess is also explicitly said to control sexual reproduction (C/DK 12). Thus, even the passages about sexual selection in C 18-19/DK 17-18 continue to discuss how mortals (erroneously) believe divine agency to be operant in the world.

If these divine attributions were allowed, it could make better sense of the anthropomorphic activities attributed to them (i.e. their "deeds"), rather than writing such off as poetic descriptions. It would also seem to provide further evidence of a reverse-parallel in terms of increased anthropomorphic divine activity as the ending draws closer in its return to the mortal realm, and further from *Aletheia*. While this evidence is still admittedly paltry, that is again to be expected from the state of the poem. However, there is at least *some* evidence that

²⁵⁷ Note also the wordplay in C/DK 14 on ἀλλότριον φῶς. The latter is a Homeric phrase normally used to indicate an "alien man" (φῶς), but the synonymous (φαός) is used here to mean "alien light." This wordplay recalls and mirrors a similar play on words at the opening of the poem, where εἰδῶτα φῶτα can be read as "knowing man" or "knowing lights." This is another minor way in which the end meets back up with the beginning. I believe that both are intended to be read as forms of φαός, tying imagery of light/sun to both sections. Rather than describing the youth as a "knowing man" in lines 1.3, the line should be understood as claiming that the "knowing lights" of the sun—which are "knowing" because they see all things below on earth—are carried to all cities along the "path of the god" (Sun's pathway across the sky). Cf. (Cosgrove "The Unknown 'Knowing Man': Parmenides, B1. 3")

C/DK 12-16/15a not only move from anonymous to named divine entities, but that the further along The Mixed Path one travels, and thus the closer to the mortal realm one gets, the more anthropomorphized and active in body divine beings are described to be by Parmenides (and *mutatis mutandis*). In these same passages, as well as those concerning sexual reproduction, there is good reason to think the overarching theme is how mortals are led astray by the naming error to believe incorrect things about divine activities in the world. That anonymity and a lack of “mortal naming” are associated with divine beings and *Aletheia* I take to be well-established by the discussion above.

c. Summary

It seems that appropriate reverse-parallels have been identified to satisfy R7—that the end meets with the beginning in a fitting and meaningful way. This greatly furthers the ring-composition hypothesis. The overall structure on DK’s reconstruction has ended up as: A, B, C, D, E, D’, C’?, B’, A’.²⁵⁸ The parallels identified in this section are quite suggestive when considered in conjunction with the central message (*Aletheia*) and the naming error. Before following through with this further, however, I would like to briefly consider some possible alterations to DK’s arrangement, and how they might further bolster the ring-composition thesis.

C. Ring-Composition—Revisions to DK’s Reconstruction

While I do think a reasonable case for ring-composition has been made above, it seems that some minor alterations to C/DK’s reconstruction could further support the thesis.²⁵⁹ In this section I will only briefly point to select proposed alterations in the literature, and consider how

²⁵⁸ A (From Mortal to Divine), B (Goddess’ Outgoing Outline), C (Routes of Inquiry), D (Central Message), E (Turning Point), D’ (The Naming Error), C’ (Empty, or part of D’?), B’ (The Goddess’ Returning Outline), A’ (From Divine to Mortal). See Appendix B.

²⁵⁹ I have already mentioned these minor changes in passing in the introduction to Ch. 4.

they might make ring-composition more compelling. In the end, I consider how the overall ring-structure would be altered if all of these proposals were adopted.

Adopting ring-composition suggests that one should expect repeated lines throughout the poem, just as was common for the epic poets Parmenides imitates. However, modern philology has tended to work directly against this tradition, in at least some notable cases. When very similar quotations have been discovered in the *testimonia*, it has tended to be assumed that at best one of those quotations is correct, and the rest are errors in transmission, inaccurate paraphrases from memory, etc. Accepting that Parmenides' poem would share in the repetition of its epic predecessors, the opposite should be considered—perhaps these variant quotations are in fact reliable, and that the authors are quoting different (though similar if not qualitatively identical) passages.

i. Reliable Sextus

That modern philology conflated independent reliable reports may very well be the case with Sextus' quotation of the *Proem*.²⁶⁰ Sextus originally quoted C/DK 1-30 and 7.2-7 altogether, and explicitly claimed they belonged at the beginning of the poem.²⁶¹ Notably, Sextus not only appears to have added C/DK 7.2-7 to the *Proem*, he did not include C/DK 1.31-32, as modern reconstructions almost universally do. These lines were added in by Diels based upon Simplicius' quotation of C/DK 1.31-32 immediately following lines very similar to (Sextus') C/DK 1.28-30. Then, as C/DK 7.6-7 overlap with the opening line from Simplicius'

²⁶⁰ Christopher Kurfess has recently argued for accepting Sextus' quotation in full based upon this sort of reasoning (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources"; Kurfess "Verity's Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, Dk B 1.29 (and 8.4)"). Bicknell has also advocated for accepting Sextus' quotation in full as part of the *Proem*, in addition to Simplicius' report of 1.31-32, and Plato's report of 7.1 (Bicknell thinks Sextus merely skipped over these lines in his transcription) (Bicknell "A New Arrangement of Some Parmenidean Verses").

²⁶¹ *Adversus Mathematicos*, 111-114. (Coxon Test. 136)

quotation of C/DK 8.1-2a, it was decided by Kranz to break C/DK 7.2-7 off from the *Proem* entirely. Following these changes, scholars have rather strangely been willing to completely trust Sextus' report that the lines he quoted were found at the beginning of the poem, except for the last 5 lines. Recognizing the likelihood of a chiasmatic structure, it is entirely possible that Simplicius was indeed quoting from a different portion of the poem.²⁶²

Taking both Sextus and Simplicius to be entirely reliable, C/DK 1.31-32 do not belong in the *Proem*, and C/DK 7.2-7 should immediately follow C/DK 1.30 as S 1.31-6.²⁶³ This would obviously add content to “The Goddess’ Outgoing Outline.” It would be clear from the very beginning that the opinions of mortals—an “empirical way of inquiry”—are to be learned about, but not followed. Also, the goddess’ injunction to test her account via *logos* is also now found in this section (Cf. R1—another command). Most importantly, however, this could further satisfy an important aspect of R5 (as well as R4) later on. This is because while Sextus’ quotation of C/DK 7.2-7 is now located at the beginning, it also seems like it must have come right before C/DK 8. At the very least, the overlap between C/DK 7.6-7 and 8.1-2 still exists—“only one story of the way still remains.” Either way, the repetition of key passages from the *Proem* immediately prior to C/DK 8.1-49, thus signaling the main thesis, was an element of R5 that was found to be somewhat lacking on DK’s arrangement. Furthermore, as Kurfess argues, this opens the possibility for at least one “new” fragment—Simplicius’ quotation that closely mirrors C/DK

²⁶² Simplicius does not provide any guidance regarding the location he was quoting from. However, like all other ancient commentators save Sextus, he demonstrates no familiarity with the *Proem* beyond 1.28b-30. Also, Simplicius’ quotation introduces variants in line 1.29, particularly the reading of εὐκυκλιτος instead of the far more widely attested εὐπειθέος. While this further differentiation can be taken to further suggest a different passage is being quoted, there would be some trade-offs in accepting this move for ring-composition. Most importantly, while there would be an increase in parallels between the outlines of the goddess on both halves of the poem, the loss of Simplicius’ description of *Aletheia* in C/DK 1.29 of the *Proem* leads to a loss of explicit parallels between the *Proem* and C/DK 8.1-49.

²⁶³ And perhaps even DK 7.1 should go here as well—it is entirely possible Sextus skipped a line. It is also quite possible that all of these lines belong here—it would have been very easy for Sextus to begin copying 1.28, which begins with ἀλλ’ ἔμπης, and his eyes skipped down four lines, picking up ἀλλὰ σὺ at DK 7.2.

1.28-30, but includes C/DK 1.31-32. This heretofore unrecognized fragment would seem to fit nicely in The Goddess' Outgoing Outline, before C/DK 9-10/10-11, providing an even more obvious repetition and parallel between those sections.²⁶⁴

ii. Ebert's Reconstruction (C/DK 8.34-41):

Another change which would have similar implications has been advanced by Ebert.²⁶⁵ Ebert has argued that C/DK 8.34-41 seem to have very little to do with the surrounding discussion. C/DK 8.29-33 have claimed that “what-is” is all by itself and complete. C/DK 8.42 seems to provide the logical continuation of that discussion, arguing for the complete perfection of “what-is.” Sandwiched in-between, C/DK 8.34-38a closely echoes the content of DK 3, seeming to claim that whatever can be understood is also that same thing which causes understanding to occur, and that thing is “what-is”—which is complete, unmoved, and solitary.²⁶⁶ C/DK 8.39b-41 goes on to provide the first discussion of the naming error of mortals in the extant fragments, making it clear that mortals beliefs in certain phenomena—coming-to-be, perishing, simultaneously being and not-being, changing location, changing in brightness or darkness—are not real, but mere names.²⁶⁷ Thus, lines C/DK 8.34-41, in their traditional position, seem to be a strange aside.

²⁶⁴ (Kurfess "Restoring Parmenides' poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources" 172-3)

²⁶⁵ Though Ebert's proposed restoration is from 1989 (Ebert), it was actually first proposed by Guido Calogero in 1936, but subsequently ignored thereafter (Calogero). A.A. Long, in 1963, also noted the close relationship between these lines, but likewise appears entirely unaware of Calogero's proposal. (A. A. Long 97-99). My knowledge of Ebert's (and Calogero's) work is based upon Palmer's discussion and endorsement of this view (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 352-4).

²⁶⁶ ταὐτὸν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα. | οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφατισμένον ἐστὶν | εὐρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν· οὐδὲν γὰρ <ἦ> ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται | ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν | οὔλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμμεναι·

²⁶⁷ τῶι πάντ' ὄνομα ἔσται, | ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ, | γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι, εἶναι τε καὶ οὐχί, | καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροά φανὸν ἀμείβειν.

On the other hand, when these lines are placed immediately after C/DK. 8.52 (after the goddess transitions to *Doxa*), the discussion of mortals naming dark and light things is immediately picked up again at C/DK 8.53-59. Furthermore, C/DK 8.34-41 provide an appropriate transition that is otherwise lacking between C/DK 8.52-53. It is now made clear that mortal errors arise from assigning names to (or describing) “what-is” in ways that are antithetical to the conclusions of *Aletheia*. Whatever positive upshots there may be for this move on linear readings, the implications for ring-composition are most evident in the echoing of C/DK 4/3 in C/DK 8.34. As C/DK 4/3 comes near the beginning of “The Routes of Inquiry,” it is fitting that a similar passage be found at the beginning of “The Naming Error,” providing a reverse-parallel to that section that is otherwise absent in the extant fragments on traditional reconstructions.

iii. Bicknell and C 9/DK 10

Bicknell long ago argued that C/DK 9/10 should be moved from *Doxa* to the end of the *Proem*, somewhere after C/DK 1.31-32.²⁶⁸ He based this primarily on the reasonable grounds that Parmenides could hardly have repeated such identical lists of cosmological subjects so close together, in both C 9/DK 10 and C 10/DK 11. Since C 10/DK 11’s position is explicitly established in the *Doxa* by Simplicius,²⁶⁹ and C 9/DK 10 is not,²⁷⁰ it became the default candidate for rearrangement. As with the other alternate arrangements in this section, if C/DK 9/10 was moved from The Goddess’ Returning Outline to The Goddess’ Outgoing Outline, yet another clear parallel between these sections would be available.

²⁶⁸ (Bicknell "Parmenides, Fragment 10")

²⁶⁹ Clement *Stromata* v, 138. (Coxon Test. 130)

²⁷⁰ Simplicius *Cael* 559. (Coxon Test. 203)

iv. C 6/DK 4?

The only fragment that has yet to be placed or considered in terms of ring-composition is the enigmatic C 6/DK4, which commands the youth to:

Nevertheless, gaze upon absent things, being steadfastly present to the mind. For you will not sever “what-is” from clinging to “what-is,” neither dispersing in all ways everywhere according to an arrangement, nor coming together.²⁷¹

The *testimonia* provide no guidance for its placement. There are also no clear parallels in any other extant passages. The fact that it contains a command for the youth suggests it could fit in one of the goddess’ outlines. Since it includes an injunction to engage in *a priori* reasoning rather than any sort of empirical observation, and its subject is certainly “what-is,” it seems best placed in the outgoing ring-half (*Aletheia*). However, as a number of other suggestions of Bicknell’s have been favorably set forth in this inquiry, I will acknowledge that his suggested rearrangement is also possible.²⁷² C 6/DK 4 could be set at the very end of the text, after C/DK 20/19, as a final summation of how mortals err in their thinking about *Aletheia* by following the mixed path, thinking that the nature of *Aletheia* allows for it to be separated from itself. These lines can also certainly be read as echoing DK 1.32.²⁷³ Thus, if Kurfess’ placement of Simplicius’ quotation in the Goddess’ Outgoing Outline is correct, there would be another possible parallel indicating the beginning and ending of From Divine to Mortal.

v. Conclusion

While these proposals might bolster the ring-composition thesis, accepting ring-composition in Parmenides’ poem does not necessitate accepting any of the modifications

²⁷¹ λεῦσσε δ’ ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόοι παρεόντα βεβαίως | οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι | οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον | οὔτε συνιστάμενον

²⁷² Bicknell advocates that the interaction of Light and Night could be understood as part of an eternal cycle, and thus Parmenides is anticipating Empedocles (Bicknell "Parmenides, Dk 28 B4"). That this would be yet another erroneous view mortals held is my own—Bicknell seems to hold a more positive view of *Doxa*.

²⁷³ C/DK 1.32 (παντὸς πάντα περῶντα/περ ὄντα) may mirror C/DK 6/4 (παρέοντα...πάντη πάντως)

considered in Section 3. There are certainly objections that can be raised to all of them. On the other hand, insofar as ring-composition suggests extensive chiasmatic structure, and each of these proposed modifications tend to make such a structure more evident, these theses are in many ways mutually supportive. It is also interesting that all of these proposals have been advanced without consideration of ring-composition in mind, on independent evidence, and yet they all seem to promote the case for such a structure in their own ways. In any case, none of these proposals will be essential to the interpretative views I advance in the section that follows.

D. Interpretative Significance

There are several important interpretative upshots to this thesis. First, accepting ring-composition could provide additional philological guidance for refining and/or reconsidering the poem's reconstruction. This thesis has also offered a straightforward resolution to the minor interpretative issue of DK 5's meaning. More important philosophically is how reading the poem in this way departs significantly from more linear readings, providing new perspectives and insights into the poem's overall meaning. Ring-composition promises to dissolve the A-D Paradox entirely on its own.

First, this structure emphasizes that Parmenides is endorsing one thesis—the truth of *Aletheia*—which is only realizable by exclusively following the path of “what-is,” abandoning the interpretative framework of mortals. Thinking “what-is-not” only leads one away from this truth, back to mortal beliefs (and inaccurate predications, or “names,” for *Aletheia*). This structure also requires taking the positive endorsement of *Aletheia*, and the likewise consistent denigration of *Doxa*, entirely seriously. *Aletheia* must be some particular sort of divine knowledge, far removed from the mortal realm, and mortal ways of thinking. *Doxa* is not an

additional thesis that Parmenides has also endorsed as “second-best” for mortals—it is a deep mistake, with relation to understanding *Aletheia* itself.

This compositional structure also requires a more holistic approach. More linear approaches have tended to gloss over and quickly dismiss the theological content in the *Proem*, focusing on the metaphysics and logic in *Aletheia*, and only then moving on to consider *Doxa* as a less interesting, but nevertheless important, secondary thesis. Acknowledging the ring-compositional structure, the meaning of *both Proem* and *Doxa* must inform the meaning and subject of *Aletheia*. This includes considering what the parallel ring-halves—particularly the reverse-parallels between the beginning (From Mortal to Divine) and ending (From Divine to Mortal)—seem to mean in conjunction with The Central Message—as well as the central error in this case (The Naming Error).

Tracking the parallels on both halves, ring-composition more readily reveals the extent to which *Aletheia* is bookended by theological content. Recognizing this and following through leads to the most radical suggestion of ring-composition. Progress along the outgoing ring-half (“The Way of What-is”) towards the truth of *Aletheia* involves a movement away from mortal naming. Moving away from mortal naming also seems closely related to movement away from mythopoetic and anthropomorphic conceptions of the divine (Homeric and Hesiodic). Movement away from *Aletheia*, following the mistakes of mortals (The Way of What-is and What-is-Not), involves a movement towards mortal naming, as well as a return to mythopoetic and anthropomorphic views of the divine.

Overall, this thematically suggests that the truth of *Aletheia* stands in direct contrast to more traditional, mythopoetic human conceptions of the divine. Admittedly, the change in treatment of divine subjects might be dismissed as part of how all of reality is to be viewed differently on

Parmenides' thesis. However, this only leads back to all the problems treating the subject of *Aletheia* universally have always led to. Fortunately, the ring-structure goes further. The youth's arrival in the divine realm with the anonymous goddess of the *Proem* is an outgoing ring-half in-itself. As the prologue of a ring-composition is supposed to anticipate for the reader what will happen in the overarching ring, the fact that the youth's outgoing journey ends with meeting an anonymous goddess can be understood as paralleling and symbolizing the outgoing ring-half of the entire poem—a journey which by following The Way of What-is, culminates in knowledge of *Aletheia*. The youth symbolizes the philosophical reader, and the anonymous goddess is a symbol for the subject of *Aletheia* itself-- a divine nature which no mortal "names" apply to. Thus, a far more limited and fitting subject is anticipated. The youth is not going to learn the truth about the nature of "all of reality," but rather the truth about the nature of divinity itself.

Understanding the subject of *Aletheia* in this way, all the conclusions reached in *Aletheia* should be restricted to divine nature. It is divine nature that is: truly eternal—ungenerated and imperishable (8.5-21), a continuous whole (8.21-25), unmoved and unique (8.21-33), perfect and uniform (8.42-49). Similarly, the erroneous opinions of mortals—thinking there is coming-to-be, perishing, changes in location and in bright/dark aspects (C 8.38-41)—are mistakes in understanding divine nature and its activities, not the nature of the cosmos itself. No longer is Parmenides at risk of inconsistently denying the existence of the very mortals who are mistaken about reality, and "madly" denying his own existence. Nor is there any need to desperately seek to "save" the *Doxa* via Platonic distinctions in ontological genuineness, and thus risking anachronism while simultaneously failing to take *Doxa*'s denigration in the text seriously. Both

sections can be read as correct and incorrect views of one subject, without any tension or problematic entailments, and thus the A-D Paradox disappears.

While failure to recognize the ring-composition has, I believe, understandably led many commentators astray, this also does not mean their views are entirely wrong. The insight that *Aletheia* is knowledge about divine nature can be most readily and best incorporated with a modified version of Palmer's modal view, which holds Parmenides' thesis to be about *necessary* being.²⁷⁴ It is a very small step to conclude that Parmenides would have associated necessary being with the nature of the divine. Though Palmer has not gone so far to identify the subject of *Aletheia* as divine, he does acknowledge that it can be seen as an analogue to other entities in various Pre-Socratic systems which were identified with divinity. However, there are also some things I believe are deeply mistaken on Palmer's view, particularly with respect to his rather Platonic and positive take on *Doxa*. In Chapter Six, I consider how a modified version of Palmer's view can complement and complete the insights gleaned from ring-composition.

²⁷⁴ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*)

6. Palmer's Modal View

ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι...
ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεῶν ἔστι μὴ εἶναι.

On the one hand, that which is and is not possible not to be
And on the other hand, that which is not and must not be.²⁷⁵

While the presence of modal language in Parmenides has long been recognized, this fact has largely escaped scholarly attention, other than to evaluate whether any fallacies have been committed.²⁷⁶ Only in Palmer's recent monograph has its presence been taken seriously enough to warrant full-fledged interpretative account, addressing the relationship between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*.²⁷⁷ In some ways, Palmer's approach is quite similar to Essentialist interpretations. The account in *Aletheia* is still intended to provide a thorough analysis of the essential properties of some kind of being. However, the *kind* of being is more narrowly prescribed. Rather than an account of what *any* fundamental entity must be like, Parmenides is taken to explicate in *Aletheia* what any *necessary* being must necessarily be like, *qua* necessary being.

A. *Aletheia* on the Modal View

i. Two Modal Routes of Inquiry

The inspiration for this approach is found in C 3/DK 2, where Parmenides introduces the initial two routes of inquiry. The first is the way “that which is and is not possible not to be.”²⁷⁸ To be such that something is “is not possible not to be” is equivalent to “cannot not be,” or “must

²⁷⁵ C3/DK 2.

²⁷⁶ (Lewis; G. E. L. Owen 94, fn. 2). More recently, a lengthy paper on Parmenides' routes of inquiry from a modal perspective has also been published (Wedin).

²⁷⁷ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*)

²⁷⁸ C 3.3/DK 2.3. ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι.. Palmer translates: “that is, and that it is not not to be.” However, it is probably better to take the ἔστι as impersonal “it is not possible,” rather than “it is not.”

be.” Therefore, the first path concerns that which necessarily exists—i.e. necessary being. The second way of inquiry is clearly the contrary—“that it is not and must not be,” which can be understood as inquiring into necessary non-being.²⁷⁹ As Palmer makes clear, Parmenides is not to be understood as inquiring into logical properties or possible worlds. For Parmenides, these modal descriptions are to be understood as ways of inquiring into “modes of being”—how a thing that has to exist necessarily must be in its nature, given the kind of thing it is and the mode in which it exists; and *mutatis mutandis* for what necessarily cannot be in actuality.²⁸⁰ Palmer describes this as an “actualist” perspective, rather than a treatment of truths across possible worlds. Inquiry into that which necessarily is will discover the nature of that which is now, and always has been and will be, existent in the world, given its nature. Inquiry into that which necessarily is-not results in no object being discovered, for it has not ever, and never could be, actualized.²⁸¹ Knowledge along these routes of inquiry alone will be “fixed,” as these natures never change in any way.

While Parmenides regularly points back to these very same routes of inquiry throughout the poem, he notably never uses the full modal descriptions of the “way of what-is” and the “way of what-is-not” again. This may in part explain why so little attention has been paid to these modal qualifiers. Palmer’s crucial insight is to suggest that, given the length and awkwardness of the modal construction (even in prose, let alone poetry), Parmenides continues to refer to these modal ways of being in his own form of shorthand.²⁸² This is evident as he undeniably goes on to explain the second route (necessary non-being) as one which is impossible to think upon, or to

²⁷⁹ C 3.5/DK 2.5. ἡ δ’ ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεῶν ἔστι μὴ εἶναι.

²⁸⁰ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 86-105)

²⁸¹ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 99-105)

²⁸² (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 103-05)

point out, referring back to it as “τό...μη ἔόν.”²⁸³ Similarly, Parmenides should be taken to refer to the first route (necessary being) as “τό ἔόν.”²⁸⁴

This modal reading depends upon translating *χρεών ἔστι* (and forms of *χρή* in general) as “must be,” or “necessarily is,” and thus in an existential rather than a normative sense—an existential sense which some significant scholarship has denied for these cognates in Archaic Greek.²⁸⁵ However, novelty has to occur at some time. That Parmenides is engaging in a novel usage is even suggested by his not using *χρεών ἔστι* in his description of the first route. Instead, he first uses a more standard construction, making his intention to describe what “must be” clear enough, without relying upon a cognate of *χρή* to do so. Assuming this usage to be non-standard, we can surmise that only after he made his message clear enough in his description of the first path of inquiry was he then free to make use of *χρεών ἔστι* in contrast, and be confident its meaning would be understood appropriately, as “necessary.” Whatever the general state of this term’s usage in the limited Archaic compositions scholars are aware of, Parmenides’ own apparent use must ultimately trump any general semantic analyses.²⁸⁶

That Parmenides’ thesis so well fits this particular usage is, of course, the most compelling argument for it. It is quite difficult to make sense of the second route of inquiry if *χρεών ἔστι* is read on more traditional Archaic senses. The normative sense simply raises more questions: “that it is not, and it is right/fitting that it not be.” What would make it “right” for

²⁸³ οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μη ἔόν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν) | οὔτε φράσαις

²⁸⁴ Rarely, and more controversially, Palmer takes other forms of *ἔστι* besides the substantive participle to also serve as shorthand for the modal descriptions, as needed (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 125-33).

²⁸⁵ For further reading, Cf. (Mourelatos 206-9; Appendix III; Cosgrove "Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy (Review)")

²⁸⁶ None of this requires that Parmenides universally use only this sense of *χρή* throughout his entire poem; just that it seems he must be doing so here, and in similar contexts.

what-is-not to not be? More to the point, why would something “rightly” not existing be “unknowable” or “unspeakable”? The counterfactual sense has similar issues: “that it is not, and that it is not is what should be.”

Yet, if the second route is taken to be necessary non-being, a philosophically meaningful answer is readily forthcoming. Rather than importing the likely anachronistic parallels to modern philosophy of language—particularly Russellian concerns with negative existential statements—Parmenides can be understood as inquiring into the nature of these modalities.²⁸⁷ Following the route of necessary non-being, and inquiring into the nature of such a thing, will always result in exactly nothing—no object or coherent thought—and this is why it leads nowhere. No description beyond “nothing at all” describes this nature, and no thing with this nature can ever be pointed out in actuality. Though Parmenides should not be taken to be thinking of that which is logically impossible, such entities would be amongst the class of things that fit this description. For example, a square-circle cannot be coherently thought of, nor will one ever be pointed to in actuality. Given all of this, it is readily understandable why knowledge of the nature of these modes of being is entirely trustworthy and stable for Parmenides—the nature of such entities must have certain essential properties which can be readily deduced (e.g. eternally existent or not), given the sort of things they are. The description of the nature inquired into on the second route is quickly exhausted, however—nothing at all, always.

This modal reading of the second route of inquiry also helps make good sense of C/DK 4/3, which likely immediately follow the end of C/DK 3/2: “the same thing is for understanding and for existing” (...τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι). Without the context that

²⁸⁷ As Palmer further argues, the association between inconceivability to impossibility is a far more likely inferential consideration to have been recognized in the historical context than the problem of negative existential statements (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 76-82; 102).

Parmenides is inquiring into necessary being and non-being, as those modes of existence in which “fixed” understanding is alone to be found, and thinking he is only concerned with bare existence and its relationship to thought, this line can be far too easily read on the highly implausible and uncharitable Gorgian reading of Parmenides: that whatever can be (or actually is) thought of must also exist.²⁸⁸ Under the modal view, however, this line can be read as providing the corollary to the criticism of inquiring into the nature of necessary non-being.

While inquiry along the second route leads to a nature that has no conceivable content, nor can it be pointed out in actuality, that which is “for understanding”—knowledge of which does not “wander”—is also that which must exist. Only with respect to modalities are conceivability and existence so easily and naturally linked.²⁸⁹

ii. Necessary Being *qua* Necessary Being C/DK 8.1-49

Perhaps most compelling, Parmenides seems far more entitled to some of the deductions of C/DK 8.1-49 on the modal approach than on other models: truly eternal—ungenerated and imperishable (8.5-21), a continuous whole (8.21-25), unmoved and unique (8.21-33), perfect and uniform (8.42-49).²⁹⁰ While it directly follows by definition that any necessary being could not come-to-be or perish, this can also admittedly follow if there is an injunction which simply

²⁸⁸ Gorgias is clearly responding to Eleatic-style argumentation and deploying a *reductio* against them when he writes: “For if things that are thought of are things-that-are, all things that are thought of are—indeed, however anyone thinks of them. But this is apparently false. For if someone thinks of a person flying or chariots racing in the sea, it is not the case that forthwith a person is flying or chariots racing in the sea. And so, it is not the case that things that are thought of are things-that-are.” DK B3. Translation from: (Cohen, Curd and Reeve)

²⁸⁹ While the modal reading fits well with the remaining passages leading up to C/DK 8, as they are only mentioned to be recommended or warned against, there is nothing particularly substantive added by this interpretation over others, and thus I skip them here for brevity.

²⁹⁰ C/DK 8.33-41 do constitute a significant detraction from the main program outlined at 8.1-3a, introducing the mortal naming error, and this is why they are not mentioned in the outline. These are the lines Ebert has proposed restoring between 8.52-3, a move which Palmer avidly endorses. I remain somewhat ambivalent with respect to this proposal. While it does eliminate the problematic aside in the middle of *Aletheia*, it also places some passages that seem part of *Aletheia* after the goddess’ transition to *Doxa*, and thus under the scope of her “deceptive” account. In any case, I follow Palmer’s lead here, as it is not particularly relevant to the inquiry at hand. I have also already suggested how Ebert’s restoration might serve to bolster the case for ring-composition in Ch. 5Cii.

disallows thinking “not-being” in any way. However, Parmenides’ later deductions are far more problematic on this reasoning. For instance, *Aletheia* is argued to be “perfect” at (C/DK 8.42-9), which includes being limited in spatial extent, and uniform throughout. To think of something as spatially limited seems to require thinking of it as “not-being” beyond its own limits. To think of something as “uniform throughout itself” also seems to imply these very same properties not existing beyond itself—again, thinking “not-being.” On the other hand, if Parmenides’ thesis is to explicate what a (spatially extended, material) necessary being must be like on account of its modality alone, it is perfectly reasonable to think of a (spatially extended, material) necessary being as discrete entity, which must possess its modal nature uniformly throughout itself, but not beyond itself. The demand to keep to thinking of a necessary being as “what cannot not be” does not prevent thinking of not-being beyond itself, but only with reference to itself, in its own mode of existence.

As I cannot summarize Palmer’s interpretation of C/DK 8 more succinctly and accurately than he already has in his SEP entry, I quote him at length here:

It is difficult to see what more Parmenides could have inferred as to the character of what must be simply on the basis of its modality as a necessary being. In fact, the attributes of the main program have an underlying systematic character suggesting they are meant to exhaust the logical possibilities: What Is both must be (or exist), and it must be what it is, not only temporally but also spatially. For What Is to be (or exist) across times is for it to be ungenerated and deathless; and for it to be what it is across times is for it to be “still” or unchanging. For What Is to be (or exist) everywhere is for it to be whole. For it to be what it is at every place internally is for it to be uniform; and to be so everywhere at its extremity is for it to be “perfect” or “complete.” Taken together, the attributes shown to belong to what must be amount to a set of perfections: everlasting existence, immutability, the internal invariances of wholeness and uniformity, and the invariance at its extremity of being optimally shaped. What Is has thus proven to be not only a necessary but, in many ways, a perfect entity.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ (Palmer “Parmenides”; Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 159)

Palmer seems to be correct, in that it is far more reasonable to think Parmenides is entitled to attribute these qualities to a necessary (spatially extended) being than to conclude that all of reality must be as described in *Aletheia*, on the grounds that thinking “what-is-not” in any way is unacceptable. Palmer’s point that Parmenides’ general conclusions about what the nature of necessary being must be like *qua* necessary being is also well-taken, and will not greatly differ from later philosophical views along these lines, setting aside the spatial-temporal descriptions. Thus far, Palmer’s modal reading of the subject of *Aletheia* is quite compelling in how well it explains the text, with the only notable objection being the worry that $\chi\rho\epsilon\acute{\omega}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota$ did not mean “necessary” in the relevant sense at the time.²⁹² That this sense tracks so well with the conclusions in C/DK 8 is, I believe, sufficient to warrant dispelling that objection for Parmenides, however.

iii. Summary of Modal Subject of *Aletheia*

Though the modal view seems compelling in many ways with respect to *Aletheia*, the same might be said of other interpretative views when considered in relation to *Aletheia* alone. However, as this view far more closely tracks the implications of *Aletheia*’s meaning on ring-composition (divine being), with its own similarly restricted and ultimately compatible subject (necessary being), this proves an additional mark in its favor. At this point, I endorse Palmer’s modal subject of *Aletheia*, both as a tenable independent and competing thesis, as well as a possible reading that can be incorporated with the divine subject suggested in ring-composition.

Of course, the main question for this inquiry overall is whether the modal view can resolve the “A-D Paradox”: successfully explaining the metaphysical conclusions in *Aletheia*,

²⁹² I will note here that while I accept most of Palmer’s views on *Aletheia*, I do not follow him in holding that the necessary being described therein must exist “everywhere,” extended throughout the cosmos coextensively with contingent being. I will comment further on this view below.

while also providing a compelling and meaningful answer for the inclusion of both *Doxa* the *Proem*. As *Aletheia* on this view only explicates the nature of necessary being rather than “all of reality,” its conclusions no longer so obviously risk world-denying or “mad” entailments.

However, there can still be better and worse explanations for what Parmenides’ purpose is in *Doxa*, and the relationship between it and *Aletheia*. This involves determining just what the subject of *Doxa* itself is overall, as well as what status to impute to it—is it ultimately positive or negative?

B. Palmer’s Contingent *Doxa* and the A-D Paradox

i. The Third Route of Inquiry

The two paths introduced at C 3/DK 2 cannot be understood as the only two “conceivable” paths—which is a common way of translating αἴτερο ὁδοὶ μούνα διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι. For, Palmer rightly claims, this implies that the two routes outlined in C/DK 3/2 are exhaustive, when Parmenides clearly introduces a third distinct “route of inquiry” in C/DK 5/6 and 7. The third route of inquiry is, of course, the “mixed” path; the one upon which mortals, knowing nothing and depending entirely upon their senses, erroneously think “that which ‘is and is not’ are the same and not the same.”²⁹³

To solve this problem, Palmer advocates translating νοῆσαι (and its cognates) by emphasizing the original dative significance of the infinite: “for understanding.” Thus, as noted above, the first two routes are described straightforwardly as the *only* “routes for understanding” (νοῆσαι), rather than the *only* routes “conceivable.” However, the third route does not share this description. Instead, it is described as a “wandering” (πλάττονται) route, which results in

²⁹³ οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτὸν νενόμισται | κού ταῦτόν.

a “wandering mind” (πλακτὸν νόον) for mortals. In this way, Palmer avers, a distinction is made that explains why these routes are discussed separately, while avoiding any inconsistency on Parmenides’ part.

On Palmer’s modal view, the route of necessary non-being always and immediately leads to just one destination—the conclusion that there is “nothing at all”—and thus one’s knowledge of it is fixed (i.e. does not wander). The route of necessary being, on the other hand, leads to an *a priori*, logically certain, and exhaustive understanding. This is achieved by understanding the kind of being under discussion, in its mode of being. Such knowledge is similarly “fixed,” remaining the same in all circumstances. This is the knowledge Palmer takes to be explicated in *Aletheia*. Mortal opinions, on the other hand, will lack this sort of deductive certainty, as they “wander” by confusing what-is and what-is-not.

Some explanation for this apparent inconsistency in the text—claiming there are only two routes, when there are clearly three distinct routes discussed—is certainly required. Palmer is also certainly right that attempts to conflate the third route (mixed) with the second (necessary non-being) are clearly untenable. I also have no principled objection to his suggestion that when νοῖσσι modifies the first two modal routes, that it be translated as “for understanding.” Though I would not insist on this translation, it seems harmless enough, and even quite useful at times.²⁹⁴

Neither do I have any strong objection to Palmer’s distinction between “fixed” and “wandering” routes serving as the distinction that justifies Parmenides’ separate treatment. I even think Palmer is correct in that mortals, following the mixed path recommended by their empirical observations, have been misled to think of all things in the framework of contingent

²⁹⁴ It proves useful not only in distinguishing the difference between these routes, but also at the particularly difficult passage C/DK 8.34, helping to avoid strict monist implications.

and changeable modes of being. Where I do think it is important to push back is how Palmer further makes use of this epistemic distinction between routes, as outlined in the next section.

ii. Contingent Being and *Doxa*: A Resolution to the A-D Paradox?

Palmer thinks that if Parmenides' central thesis in *Aletheia* is to explicate the essential characteristics of necessary being, there is no barrier to him acknowledging the existence of non-necessary (i.e. contingent) beings as well. Therefore, there is nothing to prevent him from continuing on, to provide an extensive account of those beings in *Doxa*. Unlike necessary being, contingent beings do come-to-be, change, move, change their aspects (brightness and darkness), etc., at different times and places, and from different perspectives. Thus, knowledge of these entities does "wander," changing in accord with alterations apparent to the senses, and over time. This does not mean contingent beings are any "less real" than necessary being; they just lack the sort of fixed and certain epistemic status that necessary being enjoys. In this way, Palmer takes Parmenides to anticipate Plato's epistemological distinctions (the possibility for a fixed knowledge about some unchanging things, versus wandering opinions about contingent things), without also mirroring the parallel ontological hierarchy (really-real world versus imitations). As a result, Palmer's view does avoid the implication that the error of mortals is to think that contingent beings exist when they do not, or that they are "less real" than necessary being.

On Palmer's view, the overarching error of mortals is that, by relying solely upon their senses instead of reason, they erroneously think contingent beings are *all* that exist in the world. Thus, they have no understanding of anything that does not wander, when they could, following Parmenides' lessons. Mortal views about contingent beings are not in-themselves mistaken; they simply do not share the same unwavering epistemic certainty which knowledge of necessary being enjoys. Nor can they, as the very nature of contingent beings prevents this. However, as

the contingent world does exist, there is certainly value in knowing what one can about it. And, since the goddess herself is going to explicate an account along the mixed path of mortals—as Palmer emends the text of C/DK 5/6 to make clear—Palmer thinks “it is apparently not altogether wrong to follow it.”²⁹⁵ In the end, Palmer avers that *Doxa* is Parmenides’ own best attempt to explain the world of contingent being, and thus is positively endorsed for what it is, despite the fact that inquiry on this route can only result in the epistemically inferior understanding which wanders.

This view is tempting in numerous ways. Not only does it drastically reduce the scope of the conclusions in *Aletheia* to necessary being (thereby avoiding the worrisome entailments that all of reality is entirely static), by making *Aletheia* and *Doxa* entirely separate accounts of different sorts of entities, the tensions between *Aletheia* and *Doxa* are dissolved, and the A-D Paradox would seem to be avoided entirely. While there is some reason to worry about anachronistic Platonization in the epistemological distinctions, as this distinction is relatively basic and not accompanied by a corresponding ontological hierarchy, the concern is not nearly as troublesome as “Two-World” views. Nevertheless, Palmer’s view of *Doxa* and its relationship to *Aletheia* do face significant intertextual challenges, as well as interpretative lacunae, that I hold to be substantive strikes against it. I outline these problems in the next section.

C. Challenges for Palmers View of *Doxa*

As with any interpretative account, there are numerous challenges that can be raised against the details of Palmer’s reading. With respect to this inquiry, the central concerns are twofold. First is the claim that *Doxa* is supposed to be (at least in part) positively endorsed by Parmenides. Closely related is the claim that the error mortals have committed is merely failing

²⁹⁵ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 106)

to appreciate the fixed mode of being and understanding available by inquiring into necessary being. While Palmer's epistemic distinctions between fixed and wandering understanding can account for a great deal of the negative treatment of *Doxa*, this error ultimately fails to satisfy the central challenge of the naming error. The naming error does not just require that mortals be wrong about *something* closely related to *Aletheia* (i.e. Palmer's view—mortals are wrong to think only contingent beings exist). The naming error requires that mortals actually misunderstand the subject of *Aletheia* itself. The sections below outline how Palmer's view ends up in this situation, as well as what prevents him from adopting the obvious solution—identifying *Aletheia* with divine being.

i. Positive *Doxa*?

As explicated above in Ch. 2Cv, there is no doubt that the Parmenides treats *Doxa* negatively. The only question was how negatively it should be taken—does it have any value, or none at all? Here, the question is whether the epistemic lacking Palmer ascribes to *Doxa* is sufficient to satisfy taking its negative treatment seriously.

Recall that Parmenides describes *Doxa* as having “no true trust” (C/DK 1.30). Palmer's claim that the objects treated in *Doxa* being contingent (and thus changeable) things, lack a “fixed” certainty, would seem to satisfy this. His view can also be taken to satisfy the stronger assertion that the account in *Doxa* is “deceptive” (C/DK 8.52). As “deceptiveness” is not outright “false,” and since contingent beings can be viewed in different aspects, at different times and from different perspectives, claims about them under any perspective can be “deceptive” in the sense that they fail to provide complete and unchanging understanding.²⁹⁶ The account in *Doxa* can also be taken to be “deceptive” in that it implies that all things are contingent, ignoring

²⁹⁶ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 114-18)

the existence of necessary being. That mortals “know nothing” (C/DK 5/6.4) can be understood along similar lines.²⁹⁷ Though it is possible to challenge these points more stringently, it would not be unreasonable to think the epistemic inferiority of mortal views satisfies these negative aspersions.

On the other hand, if Parmenides wants to positively endorse the account in *Doxa*, the goddess should not universally enjoin the youth from following the mixed path upon which they wander. However, this seems to be exactly what the goddess does at both C/DK 5/6 and 7. Palmer argues that the apparent injunction in C/DK 5/6 against following the route mortals take is an incorrect reading, depending upon a dubious emendation by Diels in line 3 of the fragment. Having corrected this by adopting a more positive emendation, Palmer recasts the goddess intent, turning these lines into a programmatic outline. Palmer then strangely takes this to be evidence that the mixed route is “not altogether wrong to follow,” bolstering his view that *Doxa* can be taken as positively endorsed.²⁹⁸ The worry here is that Palmer’s exposition relies upon highly questionable alterations and readings of the text to make his positive spin on *Doxa* seem more reasonable than it truly is.

Here is the injunction against following the mixed path in C/DK 5/6:

It is necessary to say and understand that this is (necessary) being, for it is for being,
 And nothing (“necessary non-being”?) is not. These things I urge you to consider.²⁹⁹
 For first ***I restrain you*** from this path,
 And thereafter from this other path, the one which mortals, knowing nothing
 Wander, two-headed...

²⁹⁷ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 163). Though Palmer’s view seems inconsistent on this point by claiming mortals can “know” things about the contingent world in his treatment of cosmological claims (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 180). Though this is a clear inconsistency, it is relatively minor to the other challenges Palmer’s view faces.

²⁹⁸ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 106)

²⁹⁹ χροῖ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ’ ἐὼν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, | μηδὲν δ’ οὐκ ἔστιν· τὰ σ’ ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα. | πρώτης γὰρ σ’ ἀφ’ ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος <εἰργω> | αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ’ ἀπὸ τῆς, ἦν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν. | πλάττονται, δίκρανοι. My emphasis.

Diels provided the otherwise missing, bolded verb [εἴργω—“I restrain”] at line three, based upon a parallel at C/DK 7.2, in which the youth is also commanded to “restrain thought” (εἴργε νόημα) from the path of mortals. As emended, the text seems to continue outlining the first route of inquiry (that “which is”), and then to advise the youth against the second route of inquiry which leads nowhere (apparently referenced by “nothing”)—though these references are admittedly less clear than they could be. The fragment seems to go on and emphatically deny that the youth should follow the mixed path of mortals, which is described negatively in detail afterwards:

For a lacking in their breasts
guides the wandering mind. And they are borne along
deaf and blind alike, wondering, a tribe without judgement,
To whom to be (“come-to-be”) and not to be are thought to be the same
And not the same. And it is a backwards-turning journey for all of them.³⁰⁰

Palmer rightly notes that the identification of the first two routes of inquiry is rather strained in the first two lines of this fragment, and that the text is difficult. Rather than think “nothing is not” is sufficient for identifying the second route of necessary non-being, he takes the entire opening description to be a further defense of the first route (necessary being) alone. However, the goddess could hardly be warning the youth away from that route. Thus, Palmer also takes exception to Diels’ emendation at line 3. Rather than have the goddess “restrain” the youth from the first route of inquiry as well as the mixed path of mortals, Palmer emends the text himself to have the sense “I shall begin (ἄρξω) for you first from this (the route of necessary

³⁰⁰ ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν | στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται | κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε,
τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φύλα, | οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτόν νενόμισται | κού ταῦτόν, πάντων δὲ
παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος.

being), and then from this other route (mixed route), upon which mortals wander.”³⁰¹ Thus, the goddess is not denying the youth will travel this route—which she herself will explicate—but further providing a programmatic outline anticipating the two main sections of the poem to come.

However interpretatively attractive Palmer’s programmatic reading, the Greek emendation proposed is extremely unlikely. It is a common rule that in Greek, the active verb ἄρχω means “rule.” The verb normally only carries the meaning of “begin” in its middle form (ἄρχομαι). It is also something of a stretch for Palmer to read lines C/DK 5/6.1-2 as pointing back to the route of necessary being, reading μηδὲν δ’ οὐκ ἔστιν as a variation on the description at C/DK 2.3, as this requires Palmer to imagine the subject of this clause as “necessary being” itself, thus rendering “nothing it (necessary being) is not,” or “necessary being is not nothing.” Not only is this reading strained, Wedin seems to have definitively shown that this reading does not logically match the description of the route of necessary being, but rather that of necessary non-being at C/DK 2.5.³⁰² Overall, Palmer’s extensive treatment of these lines is far from convincing.

There are possible responses to these objections, of course. It may be possible to find some other positive emendation besides ἄρχω that does not so obviously violate the rules of grammar, which would be just as reasonable as Diels’ own. As C/DK 5/6.1-2 do not clearly satisfy any reading in their current state, it would seem no significant and compelling interpretative import can really hang on these lines. Also, if the point is to open room for a more

³⁰¹ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 65-67; 112-14). Palmer’s adoption of this emendation follows: (N. L. Cordero Ch. 3; N.-L. Cordero "Les Deux Chemins De Parmenide Dans Les Fragments 6 Et 7"; Nehamas "On Parmenides’ Three Ways of Inquiry" 103-05)

³⁰² (Wedin 48, fn. 66)

positive endorsement of *Doxa*, and the goddess' injunctions not to follow the mixed route of mortals is what stand in the way, one could far more simply argue that both injunctions prior to C/DK 8 are limited in scope—that they only maintain their force as long as the Way of What-Is is being followed, so that *Aletheia* can be properly understood. They need not apply as negative aspersions to following the mixed path of mortals at all times.

In any case, given that there is a clear parallel injunction to avoid the mixed path of mortals in C/DK 7 that Palmer does not challenge,³⁰³ and that it is rather uncontroversial that the goddess will eventually explicate the mixed path of mortals in *Doxa*, it is hard to see why Palmer takes the exact details of this passage in particular to be so crucial. Even if accepted, his reading ultimately provides no further reason to think *Doxa* is supposed to be more positively endorsed than others, as the goddess still thoroughly denigrates mortal views in the lines that follow the controversial emendation. In any case, his reading of C/DK 5/6 can hardly serve as a justification that following the route of mortals, and their wandering understanding, is “not altogether wrong.”

Another pro-*Doxa* claim which Palmer does not seem entitled to is that Parmenides' treatment of the cosmology in *Doxa* “promises to be a superior account of the nature, origin, and operation of the world's mutable entities.”³⁰⁴ This claim is primarily based upon translating ἐουκότα as “fitting and entire” in C/DK 8.60, taking the purpose of the goddess' explication of *Doxa* to be the provision of the very best account of contingent beings there could be, “so that no understanding of mortals may ever surpass” the youth's own understanding.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Palmer freely admits the goddess warns the youth away from this path at C/DK 7, even going so far as to argue that the entire fragment is a warning against the mixed route, rather than both the route of necessary non-being and the mixed route, as is most commonly understood (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 124).

³⁰⁴ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 117)

³⁰⁵ Palmer's translation. ὥς οὐ μή ποτέ τις σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσει.

Palmer is correct to take the goddess as supplying her primary motivation for explicating the *Doxa* here. However, the translation of εὐκότητα as “fitting” has already been shown to be ambiguous at best.³⁰⁶ The account being “fitting” can just as easily (and arguably far more so) be taken to be indicative of the sort of erroneous account the youth might very likely hear from other mortals, rather than implying it is the best account of contingent being that the youth could ever encounter.³⁰⁷ It is also certainly not required that the goddess’ explication of this account be taken as “granting her authority,” and thus reliability, to it.³⁰⁸ Explicating an erroneous account held by others, when it is clearly denigrated and explicated as what not to follow, is perfectly consistent for the goddess’ nature.³⁰⁹

It is also a very strong claim for the goddess to make, promising the very best account of all the contingent world. Beyond the words of the text, it is worth considering whether there are any plausible grounds Parmenides could ever have thought his “cosmology” in the *Doxa* to be in any way “superior.” Palmer is likely entitled to the view that the *Doxa* is in some sense “Parmenides’ own,” in the sense that the overall account is his own construction, and not borrowed from others.³¹⁰ Admittedly, Parmenides’ might also have made his own novel astronomical observations, and included them in *Doxa*.³¹¹ On those grounds, certain aspects of his “cosmology” could be considered “superior,” at least to other current accounts. However, could Parmenides have plausibly thought that his own cosmological views would never be

³⁰⁶ Cf. 2Cv.

³⁰⁷ Palmer’s translates πάντα as a separate adjective modifying διάκοσμον, rather than εὐκότητα, in order to capture the purported “exhaustiveness” of the goddess’ cosmology. It remains quite speculative to attribute such a great deal of missing content to *Doxa* following Diels’ estimate, as there is no mention in the *testimonia* of any subject matter that is missing in the extant fragments, and Parmenides’ verse is quite condensed.

³⁰⁸ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 162, fn. 35)

³⁰⁹ Palmer even admits Parmenides provides such an explicit warning against taking *Doxa* to contain knowledge that does not wander, in Ebert’s restoration (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 165-66).

³¹⁰ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 161-62)

³¹¹ Palmer seems committed to Parmenides being engaged in his own novel physical investigations (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 161-62; 67).

improved on by future discoveries? This stronger claim—that the account in *Doxa* will *always* prove superior—seems to be what Palmer’s reading requires. In the context of a the *Doxa*, which even on Palmer’s interpretation is one in which there is no “firm reliance” or “fixed understanding,” imputing such a degree of superiority seems highly implausible.

Furthermore, on what grounds is Parmenides’ theogony supposed to be superior to Hesiod’s? Unlike *Aletheia*, there is no novel methodology or source of knowledge evident for understanding these claims, let alone any argumentation.³¹² Palmer does not provide any grounds whatsoever for Parmenides’ theogonical superiority—in fact, he tends to conveniently overlook this content repeatedly, and its parallels to the *Proem*. If the claims to have provided the best ever cosmological account seems outrageous, it is even more difficult to imagine that Parmenides would have thought himself entitled to such a grandiose claim as having provided *the best ever* theogonical account. Overall, it is best not to ascribe such pretentiousness to Parmenides on such scanty grounds, when there are other good options available that do not require such a strong claim.³¹³ The promise that the youth, having learned the goddess account in *Doxa*, will never be surpassed by mortal understanding simply does not require the “most comprehensive and systematic account of the natural world, and such a claim is near impossible to plausibly defend.”³¹⁴ It is far better to understand the account as didactically negative, functioning as a representation of the crucial errors of mortals.³¹⁵

Palmer’s epistemic distinctions and his explanation of mortal errors do fit reasonably well with the general denigrations of *Doxa* in the text, at least those considered so far. The

³¹² Even if one wants to impute that his source is the spokes-goddess, this merely puts Palmer’s theogony at the very same level of justification as Hesiods (appeal to divine revelation via personal experience), for which there is no objective grounds to determine either to be “superior.”

³¹³ Again, the account can didactically negative, functioning as a representation of the crucial errors of mortals, rather than a perfect and exhaustive cosmology.

³¹⁴ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 163)

³¹⁵ Which is what I have already argued *Doxa* accomplishes in Ch. 5.

descriptions of mortal errors considered in the text so far do not require the content of *Doxa* to be false, or its objects non-existent. Epistemic inferiority can explain the “deceptiveness” and lack of “true trust” ascribed to mortal views. However, I think Palmer’s further development of the modal view to be repeatedly misled by his underlying assumption that *Doxa* was originally an extensive cosmology (ignoring its clear and relatively extensive theological content), and Parmenides a “natural philosopher,” who in this metaphysical poem was concerned with sharing his own cosmological theories.³¹⁶ For, even if it is granted that Parmenides did have astronomical interests and novel cosmological theories, it is not at all clear this is what he was concerned with endorsing in his philosophical works. Similarly, while the modal view of *Aletheia* does allow the existence of contingent beings, and while an account of them would be valuable in-itself, it simply does not follow that providing such an account is what Parmenides was attempting in *Doxa*. In fact, the evidence clearly points the other way, as the discussion below on the naming error makes clear. In fact, close attention to the what the naming error requires with respect to mortal views reveals that Palmer’s view also ultimately fails to adequately explain the relationship between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*—at least, as it stands. Fortunately, the requisite revisions are readily incorporated.

ii. The Naming Error

Palmer’s organization in his section treating the naming error is rather tortuous. Rather than follow his argument point-by-point, I move right to the central challenge that frustrates his entire interpretative view. Palmer has adopted Ebert’s restoration of C/DK 8.34-41 between 8.52 and 8.53. This may allow for some questionable inferences between the discussion on naming in 8.38b-41 and what follows in 8.53-9 that would not be possible on traditional reconstructions.

³¹⁶ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 160-61)

However, I will grant this restoration, charitably evaluating Palmer's explanation on his own reconstruction. The primary interpretative failing will persist either way.³¹⁷ I will also grant

Palmer his preferred reading:

to it all things have been given as names	8.38b
all that mortals have established in their conviction that they are genuine,	
both coming to be and perishing, both being and not	
and altering place and exchanging brilliant colour.	8.41
For they fixed their minds on naming two forms,	8.53
one of which it is not right to name, wherein they have wandered astray:	
but they distinguished opposites in form, and assigned them marks	
distinct from one another, for the one, the ethereal flame of fire,	
being gentle, most light, every way the same as itself,	
yet not the same as the other; but that one is in itself	
the opposite, dark night, dense in form and heavy.	8.59

The interpretative crux lies in the understood subject of 8.38b-41, which is uncontroversially the entity described in *Aletheia*, and thus necessary being on Palmer's view. It is to *that* entity mortals are said to have "given as names" all the attributions listed: coming to be, perishing, etc. Parmenides' use of "mortal naming" should be taken to mean "specifying the nature of x," rather than merely assigning an arbitrary sign of reference, as Palmer correctly notes.³¹⁸ That mortals "in their conviction" believe these names to pick out something "genuine" (ἀληθῆ) with respect to the subject of *Aletheia* clearly implies that mortals are in error to do so—that these phenomena do not correctly specify the nature of *Aletheia*'s subject. This is *the* central claim about mortal errors by the goddess, and it must be convincingly met.

It is undeniable that, in order for mortals to incorrectly specify the nature of *Aletheia*'s subject, mortals must have some conception of and familiarity with that relevant object (or type of entity). Palmer recognizes this himself, asking "How can mortals describe or misconceive

³¹⁷ And thus, it should be noted, Palmer's view cannot simply be saved by rejecting Ebert's Restoration.

³¹⁸ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 168-69)

What Is [necessary being] when they in fact have no grasp of it?”³¹⁹ The answer is, of course, that they cannot. This is why the structure of the poem does not allow for a secondary, positive thesis. The naming error of mortals—which I believe must be extended to the entirety of *Doxa* on account of C/DK 20/19—requires an account of how mortals get *Aletheia* itself wrong.

This latter point does not just cut against Palmer’s view of *Doxa* as containing a positively endorsed “cosmology,” though this easily follows as well. Far more importantly, Palmer’s entire account of how mortals err, along with his identification of *Aletheia* as explicating necessary being purely as a “mode of being,” are at risk of total failure. For Palmer has explained the error of mortals so far to be solely that—in their complete reliance upon their senses, and thus exclusive examination of contingent beings, which produces only a “wandering” understanding—mortals have never recognized necessary being (the “trustworthy object of thought and understanding”) as a mode of being at all. In other words, mortals have erred in thinking *only* contingent being exists, never considering the existence of necessary being. Palmer now realizes that he has to explain how mortals can have erred by thinking only contingent being existed, but also described necessary being incorrectly, when mortals purportedly never conceived of that mode of being as a possibility. This is his explanation, in direct answer to his question quoted above:

Apparently because mortals are represented by the goddess as searching, along their own way of inquiry, for trustworthy thought and understanding, but they mistakenly suppose that this can have as its object something that comes to be and perishes, is and is not (what is), and so on. Again, the goddess represents mortals fixing their attention on entities that fall short of the mode of being she has indicated is required of a proper object of thought.³²⁰

³¹⁹ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 172). Palmer further admits (implicitly, at least), that the naming error requires mortals getting something wrong about their conception of *Aletheia* itself—and not just that they are ignorant of that mode of being—when he notes that mortal naming is “meant to express the way mortals typically, though misguidedly, conceive of things” (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 167).

³²⁰ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 172)

There are clearly quite speculative points in this response that go far beyond the text. For instance, while Palmer may very well be able to justify the goddess depicting mortals as “wandering” in their own way of inquiry, and seeking “fixed” and “reliable” knowledge about the objects available to their senses, there are no grounds in the text for imputing upon mortals a search for “trustworthy thought and understanding” *about* necessary being itself. In any case, the real issue is that this answer is no answer at all to the clear requirements of mortal errors established in the naming error. Erroneously thinking that contingent beings can provide “trustworthy thought and understanding” may indeed be *an* error of mortals; yet, this is certainly not the same as error as mortals thinking that which is explicated in *Aletheia* can be properly described in ways contrary to its nature (i.e. coming to be, perishing, etc.), which is precisely the error the goddess insists they commit.

There are other related interpretative moves by Palmer that likely warrant further consideration, and even rejection. However, I will only mention them here in passing. In particular, I have already suggested that his restriction of the naming error to only C/DK 8.50 through 11/9, and not on to C/DK 20/19 is quite problematic and dubious.³²¹ This is not to say that the modal view has to accept the cosmological claims in *Doxa* as false, or that the cosmological objects in that account do not exist. The point is that in this poem, in *Doxa*, Parmenides is not interested in positively recommending his own physics—rather, the naming error makes clear that he is interested in explaining *how* mortals get *Aletheia* wrong.

Palmer ultimately concludes that for Parmenides, there is only one necessary being, which is coextended but not consubstantial with all of contingent being.³²² Or, in other words, necessary and contingent being are co-present. Some substantial philosophical objections to this

³²¹ Cf. 4C.

³²² (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 180-88)

view have already been recently noted by Sisko.³²³ However, I simply deny these to be entailments of *Aletheia*. The arguments of the Essentialists have long ago demonstrated that there is nothing in *Aletheia* that requires there be just one such actual entity meeting those requirements, nor that such an entity be so fully extended spatially as to be a plenum. Nor is there any requirement that necessary being occupy the same spatio-temporal location as any contingent being. Palmer's worry that *Aletheia* is so greatly extended is frankly based upon very weak analogies between the descriptions in *Aletheia* and *Doxa*, which only arise at all on account of his insistence on taking both accounts to be positively endorsed, which I have denied above for good reasons. If *Doxa* is taken negatively, the problem disappears. In short, that co-presence is just one possible way of understanding the physical relationship between necessary and contingent being. It is not required by adopting a modal reading of *Aletheia*. As this inquiry is primarily focused on resolving the tensions between the accounts of *Aletheia* and *Doxa* in the text, and not the physical relationship between their respective objects, I return to the central issue at hand, rather than be further diverted by these secondary considerations.

If the mode of necessary being as *Aletheia*'s subject cannot be linked up appropriately to the naming error of mortals, then the entire framework of the modal interpretation is at risk. This includes all the apparent interpretative progress gained in understanding *Aletheia* itself along these lines. The question, then, is whether there might be some way to preserve Palmer's modal view of *Aletheia*, while providing a means for it to hook-up appropriately with the naming error of mortals? The answer is "yes," and the obvious solution is one that Palmer himself seems to have come very close to adopting.

³²³ (Sisko and Weiss)

D. Negative *Doxa* and Modal Theism

Palmer holds that Parmenides is a type of “generous monist.” A “monist” in the sense that there is just one perfect, necessary entity. “Generous” in the sense that he accepts the existence of many other, non-necessary (contingent) beings. Leave aside the existence of contingent beings, as well as the questionable requirement that there be just one such entity. When the existence of any perfect and necessary being is posited, moderns normally think that if any such being existed, it would also be divine. Could this be the case with Parmenides as well? If so, this would provide a straightforward solution to Palmer’s interpretative problem. For, if divine being, properly understood, is by definition also a necessary being (divine being = necessary being), since mortals certainly have conceptions of divine beings, *Aletheia* can be taken to be an account of how the gods should be properly conceived of (or, God). More to the point, the naming error can be straightforwardly read as how mortals have mistakenly described god(s), in anthropomorphic and mythopoetic ways.

Palmer flirts with this idea at some length.³²⁴ Palmer does admit that there *are* significant analogues between Parmenides’ *Aletheia* and other Presocratic views of divinity, particularly Xenophanes, whom Palmer is willing to grant most likely had *some* influence on Parmenides’ views.

One cannot ignore the fact that What Is, in [Parmenides’] system, is the analogue of the greatest god [of Xenophanes], the Sphere under Love/the divine mind [of Empedocles], and Mind in the systems, respectively, of Xenophanes, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras.³²⁵

Nevertheless, and perhaps with some ambivalence it would seem, Palmer ultimately denies the identification for two basic reasons. First, Parmenides simply never refers to *Aletheia* as a god in the extant fragments. Second, *Aletheia* possesses none of the attributes normally

³²⁴ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 324-31)

³²⁵ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 331)

associated with religious entities. He (rightly) denies that *Aletheia* is described as possessing any mental faculties, or having any efficacious purpose with respect to the rest of the cosmos. Thus, overall, Palmer thinks Parmenides' *Aletheia* is best understood as a secular metaphysical construct, free from religious overtones.

There are some worrisome entailments if Palmer resists identifying necessary and divine being already, in direct relation to how the modal view treats the divine. As noted in Ch. 3C, Two-World views seem to commit an arguably more egregious impiety than strict-monist views. While strict-monism merely denies the existence of traditional gods wholesale, Two-World views relegate them to the inferior ontological level, separated from the divine knowledge that is supposed to occupy the higher ontological and epistemological level. While Palmer's view admittedly does not incorporate the ontological hierarchy of Two-World views, there are similarly troubling implications for traditional religion and conceptions of divinity that arise from accepting Palmer's view of *Doxa* which Palmer does not seem aware of, so intent is he on viewing the *Doxa* as a "cosmology" above all else.

That Palmer takes *Doxa* to be Parmenides' own superior account about contingent beings, and since this account includes extensive discussion of divine entities, it certainly follows that Parmenides is taking traditional divine entities to belong to the realm of contingent being. That mortal understanding of these entities would likewise have to be backwards-turning and wandering is not necessarily problematic—mortals can readily be cast as failing to truly understand the gods, if they fail to understand anything. Furthermore, given that these divine entities likely possess divine knowledge, they likely recognize necessary being and its fixed understanding (which seems to be cast as a "divine" sort of knowledge, in contrast to that which mortals ordinarily possess) in addition to the wandering understanding of mortals. Again, by

itself, this is not terribly problematic—even mortals, learning from Parmenides, can now lay claim to knowledge of both. Perhaps more strangely, however, these divine entities would also seem to necessarily have a “wandering understanding” not only with respect to the rest of the world (aether, planets, animals, etc.), but with respect to their own divine-yet-contingent selves.

While not an outright contradiction, this view runs afoul of what might be fitting to ascribe to divine beings. Here, one might object that such rationalism with respect to religious views is entirely out of place in Archaic Greece—one should not have expected Parmenides to have ever considered this implication. However, this seems to entirely miss the point. For Parmenides regularly, extensively, and carefully includes references to divine entities that stand in parallel at both the beginning and ending of the poem, not to mention throughout as his mouthpiece. It is not as if he was not thinking about divinity at all—he was clearly focused closely on it in his poem. It is actually more charitable to Parmenides to accept that this was at least part of his criticism of human accounts in *Doxa*—that by relying solely upon their empirical senses, thinking all things that exist are contingent, mortals also take divine beings to be contingent, ascribing (“naming”) them anthropomorphic qualities.

Furthermore, as indicated above, to cast all divine beings as contingent is to stand outside of his entire historical context and intellectual tradition, as if Parmenides blindly accepted traditional religious views. It is to beg the question against Xenophanes, whom we have good reason to think he was heavily influenced by (Ch.1), and who claimed it to be as heretical to claim the gods are born as to claim they die. It is to be unaware of the story of Epimenides of Crete, who similarly claimed it to be wrong to think Zeus died, as the gods are truly eternal. This position stands in contrast to every prior Pre-Socratic known, who if they are known to have

broached the subject, invariably associated divinity with something eternal, in far more naturalistic contexts, than traditional mythopoetic and anthropomorphic views.

It has been held throughout this inquiry that any successful interpretative view should incorporate the content of the *Proem* in a meaningful way. Palmer spends a full ten pages addressing variant interpretative accounts of the *Proem*, extensively denying alternative interpretations and ardently defending his own *katabasis* view, with the upshot of identifying Parmenides' spokes-goddess as Night.³²⁶ However, he then relegates the interpretative import to nothing more than the appropriateness of Night delivering the poem's central message in *Aletheia*. He even explicitly claims that nothing in the *Proem* can serve as a "key" for understanding the poem's message—not only due to our lack of understanding of the cultural context it is based upon, but likely not even with far greater knowledge of that context.³²⁷ Palmer does not seem to ever deliver on his promise that by the end of the inquiry, Night will be understood as the most appropriate agent to deliver Parmenides' message. In any case, Palmer's view does not further incorporate the *Proem* in any meaningful way. There is no substantial discussion of the clear parallel imagery between it and *Doxa*. There is no hint that the journey of the youth can be taken as allegorical for the journey of the reader to *Aletheia*. More importantly, there is nothing in the *Proem* that helps anticipate the distinction between necessary being (*Aletheia*) and contingent being (*Doxa*). However, it does anticipate the pervasive theological themes, which Palmer denies.

All of these concerns, and more, are immediately resolved of course, by taking the truths in *Aletheia* to be about both necessary and divine being. While Palmer might not be willing to take that next step, I think it is unavoidable for him, given my analysis of the naming error.

³²⁶ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 51-61)

³²⁷ (Palmer *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* 61-62)

Palmer's ambivalence and hesitation on this point seems to be based more on a commitment to maintain Parmenides as a "serious metaphysician"—and thus one who was not overly concerned with religious matters—rather than follow the implications of the evidence all the way through. If nothing else, while Parmenides may not have ever called *Aletheia* a god, the clear theological parallels bookending *Aletheia*, as explicated in Ch. 5, show that theological considerations were certainly central to his thought. And one does not need to endorse ring-composition to accept this—the parallels remain, either way.

While Parmenides' *Aletheia* does not include a thinking, living entity engaged in controlling the world as Xenophanes would have it, the other descriptions (e.g. eternal, non-anthropomorphic, not engaged in immoral activities, unchanging, motionless) are clear and undeniable.³²⁸ It is not a great next step for Parmenides to deny the remaining anthropomorphisms (thinking and interacting with the world) in Xenophanes' view. Conceiving of divine nature as lacking mental capacities in-itself is even apparent in earlier Presocratic thought; Anaximenes' *aer* is described as divine, and though it is in some sense "active" in the world, there is no hint of intentionality to this underlying, naturalistic substance.³²⁹ Even Anaximander's conception of the *apeiron*, as a divine being which is eternal and indestructible, though it is said to "steer all things," seems to do so from natural necessity rather than intentionality.³³⁰

Thus, the fact that Parmenides' "God" doesn't *do* much of anything can also be seen as part of the attractiveness of this move, rather than a drawback. That Parmenides' criticism of the

³²⁸ DK 11, 12 26. There is also a case to be made, I think, that Xenophanes' major work on this topic is arranged quite closely in structure and content as Parmenides' own. Unfortunately, examination of these parallels must remain for a future project.

³²⁹ This divine substance also comes to be and is unlimited, unlike Parmenides' more Xenophanean conception. Nevertheless, nothing prevents Parmenides' from combining these conceptions. DK A10.

³³⁰ DK A15.

mythopoetic tradition was so radical as to completely eliminate all anthropomorphic attributes and activities (including mind) from divine nature is consistent with the overarching Presocratic move away from traditional conceptions of divine nature. Seeing Parmenides as describing the true nature of divine essence makes him a progressive following this trend, rather than a reversion back to tradition. Overall, given the additional internal evidence set forth earlier in this inquiry regarding the importance of theological themes for Parmenides' poem, in addition to how easily the otherwise insurmountable interpretative problem would be resolved, taking the very small step to identifying *Aletheia* with divinity is worth serious further consideration by Palmer. Not only could this save the modal view from imminent failure, it promises to offer a far more holistic and complete interpretative result in the end.

7. Conclusion: Parmenides' Theistic Metaphysics

Βόηθος τὸν αἰθέρα θεὸν ἀπεφήνατο.
 Παρμενίδης τὸ ἀκίνητον καὶ πε-περασμένον σφαιροειδές.

Boethus declared the aether to be God.
 And Parmenides [declared] the unmoved, limited, spherical entity [to be God].³³¹

A. Modal Theism on Ring-Composition

The purpose of this inquiry was two-fold. The primary goal as to identify the reasons for the persistence of the A-D Paradox, and find an interpretative solution in which *Aletheia* and *Doxa* might be consistently and substantially reconciled. Secondly, a successful interpretation should also incorporate the *Proem* in a meaningful way. An interpretation that could accomplish both of these tasks should then provide the sort of compelling and holistic approach to the poem scholars desire.

In Chapters 5 and 6, two distinct approaches to Parmenides' poem were considered. Ch. 5 considered whether modern assumptions about textual structure might be the reason that the A-D Paradox had persisted. Analyzing the poem as a ring-composition required approaching the poem from a more holistic perspective from the beginning, and resulted in making more evident the significant theological bookends to *Aletheia*. This holistic contrast in turn suggested another distinct strategy that could help resolve the A-D Paradox: understanding *Aletheia* to be concerned with providing a rational account of divine nature, in contrast to mythopoetic views of the traditional gods.

The conclusions of Ch. 5 led to a closer consideration of Palmer's recent modal view of the poem, which already possessed a similar limited-scope reading of *Aletheia*: necessary being.

³³¹ Aetius. (Coxon Test. 56)

Palmer's modal reading proved quite compelling in its analysis of *Aletheia* itself, superior to earlier views in many ways. However, his insistence on treating *Doxa* positively resulted in a failure to adequately address the tension between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*. More importantly, the restriction of Parmenides' thesis to the nature of necessary being alone could not be that which mortals wrongly "named," and thus Palmer's view currently fails to adequately account for the naming error. Though associating *Aletheia* with necessary, *divine* nature, and taking *Doxa* to be account of how mortals have erred in describing that nature, would resolve this issue, Palmer does not seem to have recognized this, and has resisted the identification. Thus, a second approach to Parmenides' poem proved to be not only consistent with, but positively aided by, identifying *Aletheia* with divine nature.

As the approaches in both Ch. 5 and 6 can help to avoid the A-D Paradox by taking *Aletheia* to be a radical rethinking of divine nature, each can be developed further independently, without necessarily adopting particular aspects of the other. However, given how they dovetail, it would be best to combine them. Thus, I think Parmenides' poem is best understood as a ring-composition, with divine, necessary being as the topic of the outgoing ring-half, and the errors of mortals in understanding divine nature as the theme of the return-half.

On this combination view, the reader/listener obviously first encounters the *Proem*, which introduces and anticipates the upcoming themes. By paying careful attention, they will be quickly clued into the ring-compositional structure, hearing the rings-within-rings chiasmi in the opening lines, and recognizing that the journeys described (the youth's and the Heliades') are circular in nature (ending where they began) and thus allegories for a ring-composition. The divine agents (Heliades, Sun, Day, Justice, Night?) and locations (Gates of Night and Day; House of Night) will be recognized, and in conjunction with the Homeric phrasing, mythopoetic

accounts of the divine will be foremost in the mind. The youth's journey to a divine realm can also be understood as anticipating and symbolizing the journey the reader will take in the poem, with the destination being the central message of the poem, symbolized by the anonymous goddess herself, who stands in generically for divine nature.

These structural and thematic elements will be further made clear in what immediately follows. The goddess provides a bifurcated learning program, naturally dividing the poem into two ring-halves. Her discussion of the routes of inquiry which are "for understanding," in their treatment of necessary modes of being, can be easily incorporated into the divine content related so far—divine nature is actually the nature of necessary existence. Though the mythopoetic tradition is not consistent on these points, nevertheless, the most common attributes of the traditional gods are their indestructible and imperishable nature, which is also what any necessary being must be like, by its very nature. The injunctions against following mortal understanding which "wanders," focused exclusively on empirical content, can also begin to be understood as the origins of mortal errors, and how they have gone astray understanding these topics. As it will turn out, the injunctions against the mixed, third path of inquiry will turn out to be against following the mythopoetic views of the divine, which again were first and foremost on the mind due to the content of the *Proem*. However, this is not likely to be fully grasped until the return ring-half (*Doxa*).

The correction of mortal views in *Aletheia* finally comes together in C/DK 8.1-49. The majority of the descriptions of this mode of being includes descriptions that would only otherwise have been ascribed to divine nature (i.e. being eternal and perfect), and thus should be rather easily associated on those terms. However, these will appear alongside otherwise new descriptions that are mutually exclusive to the mythopoetic tradition. Once the naming error has

been explicated, however, it should then become clear that mortals have gone astray by ascribing these descriptions “names” to divine (and thus, necessary) being(s).

The conclusions of *Aletheia* were only achieved by sticking to the route of inquiry which only considered what necessary being, in virtue of what its nature must be, must be like. Mortals are confused about this mode of being (and thus divine being as well) because they have not stuck to this route in thinking about divine beings, but following the mixed route which confuses being with non-being (as is to be expected for contingent beings), and thus wrongly imputes both to divine nature, missing its necessary existence. This latter route is what the goddess begins to provide an account of after completing *Aletheia*. Mortals conceive of the most primordial of divine forces in terms of fundamental opposition, by which they can also explain changes in the physical world: Light and Night. However, while there is no need to deny the very real existence of these phenomenon, it is a mistake to think about them as divine. Divine things are perfect in-themselves, and do not change in any way.

After outlining the further physical objects to be explicated in the Goddess’ Outgoing Outline (Sun, Moon, Stars, Aether, Olympus, etc.—all of which have divine associations in addition to naturalistic identifications), a theogony begins, with another unnamed goddess controlling and creating all things (and thus, a more anthropomorphized divine agent than the primordial Light and Night). The parallels to both Hesiod and Homer are again evident here. Thus, as the explication of the mixed path continues, it becomes clear how ascribing the very phenomenon and activities to divine nature that were denied in *Aletheia*, mythopoetic views became possible, and widely accepted. This theme continues to the very end, in the discussion of animal reproduction, which the anonymous cosmic goddess is said to be in control of.

Overall, Parmenides is denying that divine agents in any way control the cosmos, and perhaps especially not its most mundane aspects (i.e. sex).

C/DK 20/19 reminds the reader/listener of the negative context of this entire discussion, as these continue to be ways in which mortals have “named” all things. Though naming is not explicitly presented in derogatory terms in the fragment itself, as there is *no* other discussion of “naming” that is ever taken positively, the negative context from earlier should be taken to persist throughout. As the end has now returned to mortal topics, it has met the beginning (the origin of the philosopher youth’s journey), and it is clear that the criticism of mortal views on divinity must also apply to the fantastical description in the *Proem*. This does require also denying the existence of the divine spokes-goddess. However, it is relatively easy to discard this ladder as a poetical delivery system, which metaphorically stood-in for the main subject matter.

The novel metaphysical advancement by Parmenides’ is that he recognized the possibility of a necessary mode of existence, and that he carefully and deductively argued for it. However, he also advanced the philosophy of religion, naturally identifying divine nature with the necessary mode of being. It is quite likely this identification was directly influence by following Xenophanes’ view that it is just as impious to say the gods come to be as to claim they can die, and perhaps even Epimenides’ criticism of Cretans’ claim that Zeus died. As the divine must be a necessary being, and as such beings must also possess the essential nature of that mode of being, this resulted in direct entailments against the mythopoetic tradition of Homer and Hesiod. Thus Parmenides provides the most radical and complete rejection of anthropomorphic views of divine nature that can be found in ancient Greek philosophy.

B. Interpretative Tests: Summary

As is fitting, understanding Parmenides as advancing a rational, modal theism fits all the interpretative parameters established along the way. In Ch. 1, it was concluded that Xenophanean influences upon Parmenides were quite likely, as well as extensive. Furthermore, it would seem that any interpretative approach that explained this close association would have an additional mark in its favor. By identifying *Aletheia* as a radical rethinking of divine nature, standing in contrast to mythopoetic, anthropomorphic accounts of the traditional gods, this parameter could hardly be satisfied any better.

Ch. 2 outlined the poem in terms of traditional reconstructions, and it was concluded that given the ancient *testimonia*, while minor adjustments could be made, the overarching structure seemed to be on solid grounds. Ch. 3 examined how that structure led to persistent interpretative problems, most notably the A-D Paradox, given the sorts of universal subjects which modern interpreters were wont to apply to *Aletheia* (e.g. “all of reality,” or “every genuine entity”).

Given the persistent interpretative issues on the traditional framework, Ch. 4 considered a radical challenge to the poem’s reconstruction (and thus the conclusions in Ch.2) as a possible solution. Though Cordero’s attempt to extensively reduce *Doxa* proved untenable, analyzing his proposal made it more clear that the entirety of *Doxa* should be focused on the naming error, including the “physics” passages. Thus, Parmenides cannot be endorsing these passages in any way, at least not for the purposes of the poem. This does not necessarily require that the content of *Doxa* be false, or that its objects be non-existent. The structure of the poem only requires that everything after *Aletheia* be in service of explicating how mortals are wrong about *Aletheia* itself.

Understanding *Aletheia* as divine seems to best accord with all the evidence overall. It allows the poem to be about just one thesis—the nature of the divine, and how mortals get it wrong—rather than two more disparate topics (e.g. Palmer’s view: positive accounts of necessary being and contingent being). It is possible to take the negative treatment of *Doxa* in the text itself seriously, without any world-denying entailments. It is consistent with all evidence for reconstruction from the *testimonia*, as well as the *testimonia* that impute a theological subject to Parmenides’ thought, and closely associate him with Xenophanes. A theistic subject has been shown to work on both ring-composition” and “linear” readings (when it is understood that even without “ring-composition,” a centrally revealed truth must still be read back into claims in the past as well as those upcoming). Again, this subject also fits Parmenides’ historical context well, in light of the criticisms of traditional religion offered by his successors and contemporaries (e.g. Xenophanes and Epimenides). Setting a theological theme at the center of the poem yields interpretations that are far more holistic, allowing the mythical imagery in the *Proem* to be meaningfully incorporated, rather than summarily passed over for more “philosophical” content. Finally, this thesis even suggests a substantive reason why Parmenides may have chosen to write in such ambiguous and enigmatic way: challenging deep cultural traditions, particularly religious views, can be very sensitive, perhaps even dangerous, activity.

A final test can now be considered: how well the nature of metaphysical thesm accords with the perplexing lines traditionally assigned to the end of the *Proem* (C/DK 1.31-2):

ἀλλ’ ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεται, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
 χοῦν δοκίμως εἶναι, διὰ παντὸς πάντα περ ὄντα.³³²

³³² I read περ ὄντα instead of περ ὄντα. Not only is this form far better-attested, the latter also tends to suggest that the way things are includes something pervading through all things (and thus Palmer’s co-presence), for which there is no evidence in the apparently complete argumentation of *Aletheia*. At best, this conception of “pervading throughout” would be applicable were these lines to be taken as belonging to the *Doxa*, as part of the Goddess’ Outgoing Outline. According to Mourelatos, the particle περ is most commonly used in a concessive sense (“although”) in archaic Greek, and he is correct that this sense would ruin any attempt at translation (Mourelatos

“But nevertheless, you shall also learn these things, how the things accepted to be ought to have been accepted, just completely being [necessarily], throughout [its] entirety.”³³³

What has made these lines particularly difficult in the past is that, when the subject of *Aletheia* is understood universally (i.e. “all of reality” or “all fundamental beings”), these lines seemed to further require the world-denying entailments.³³⁴ The sense seemed to be that all mortal opinions about the world were mistaken, and that all things were truly as described in *Aletheia*—unchangeless, eternal, perfect—and singular (strict monism). Furthermore, the concessive nature of the conjunction ἀλλ’ ἔμπης (“but nevertheless”), in conjunction with the positive adverb

214, fn. 59). Fortunately, there are other ways to read this particle. Cf. (Denniston and Dover 481-90) Here, the particle ‘περ’ is probably best understood in what Denniston refers to as the “determinative” sense, which is closely related to and implicitly includes the “intensive” sense. Mourelatos’ description of this sense is particularly apt, coming close to the philosophical use of the Latin *qua* “just as” or “as such” (Mourelatos 214-16). The particle is enclitic, and in this sense generally intensifies the word immediately preceding it, often an adjective or adverb. In Homer, it is commonly found between an adjective/adverb and participle, comprising a complete clause (e.g. Iliad 1.352: μητερ ἐπει μ’ ἔτεκες γε μινυθᾶδιόν περ ἔόντα—“all shortlived as I am.” LSJ).

³³³ I follow Mourelatos’ understanding of ὄντα as a “circumstantial participle of manner,” in conjunction with the determinative particle περ (Mourelatos 214-15, fn. 63). While the participle ὄντα is technically plural, this is likely based upon its need to agree with τὰ δοκοῦντα. It need not imply there are plural necessary beings (which I take the participle to be shorthand for here, following Palmer). However, again, there is nothing in *Aletheia* to require there be only one such being. In fact, the reason that the participles are usually in the singular in the rest of the poem is that it is the nature of divine, necessary being (a singular thing) which is under discussion. So, even if this is translated in the plural, it can then be consistently taken as pointing to a possible plurality of beings with that nature. In any case, the singular use here should not be controversial. As Mourelatos points out, Parmenides seems to remain as neutral as possible regarding the ontological number of *Aletheia* prior to the arguments of DK. 8, using the both singular and plural indiscriminately to refer to *Being* in DK. 4 Others have also adopted singular translations here: (Curd; G. E. L. Owen; Owens). Though I follow Mourelatos this far, I differ on some other issues. I take the particle to be modifying πάντα and then ὄντα together, yielding the sense of “completely being” (“in every way” + intensifier + “being” = “entirely” or “completely”). The prepositional phrase διὰ παντός literally means “throughout the whole.” However, in retrospect, as there is again no reason to ascribe extension of “being” to all limits of the cosmos, this seems better understood as continuing to refer to the perfect and complete nature of being itself, in its manner of existence. Thus, it is a “complete” being, in that it is being throughout itself, in its own entirety.

³³⁴ Though I have changed my views on Parmenides’ subject-matter, and thus the conclusions do not hold, I have extensively discussed these lines previously in: (DeLong "Rearranging Parmenides: B1: 31-32 and a Case for an Entirely Negative Doxa (Opinion)"; DeLong "Parmenides 1.31-32 and the Status of Opinion: A Case for the Negative Reading on Orthodox and Unorthodox Arrangements").

δοκίμως (“acceptably”) has tended to suggest some degree of positivity to mortal views (τὰ δοκοῦντα). Yet, this has proven quite difficult to reconcile with the rest of the text overall.³³⁵

On the other hand, with a more limited subject (divine, necessary being), these worries are eliminated. The “things accepted to be” by mortals can be taken to apply to mortal view of divine nature alone, and the description which follows can thus correct these views along the conclusions of *Aletheia*, without denying the entire world.³³⁶ By following the first path of inquiry, the mythopoetic views of the gods become the “things accepted to be,” which are shown to be wrong in that they fail to properly understand necessary being as the proper mode of being for divine entities. This should not be taken as indicative of some “third learning program” to be explicated in the poem itself, but rather the understanding the reader/listener will attain, implied by properly understanding *Aletheia* and its relationship to *Doxa*.

With this final consideration, I end this inquiry into the A-D Paradox in Parmenides, and my proposed modal theism as a solution. As conceded from the beginning, certainty is simply not to be had in interpreting Parmenides’ poem. However, I do hope the discussion resulting from this inquiry, particularly reading Parmenides’ poem as a ring-composition which advances a form of modal theism, will result in further fruitful dialogue on this enigmatic yet fascinating text.

³³⁵ Thanassas summarizes the issue well, from his own perspective: “The only certainty in these verses seems to be the fact that, while the subjective opinions themselves (*doxai*) lack conviction, their objects, the appearing things (*dokounta*), are granted a certain positivity (“acceptably,” *dokimôs*) to [sic.]. But how far does this positivity extend?” (Thanassas *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation* 23)

³³⁶ Admittedly, in its traditional location, the reader/listener will not be able to understand the shorthand reference to necessary being at this point in the poem, nor that the manner of being itself is what is being discussed in the preposition phrase—the lines will still have to be understood retrospectively. However, this need for retrospective analysis seems common enough in Parmenides poem on many other aspects discussed above. Furthermore, if these lines are taken to be a “new” fragment, as Kurfess has argued, then a later placement (e.g. in the Goddess’ Outgoing Outline) avoid this problem entirely (Kurfess “The Truth About Parmenides *Doxa*”).

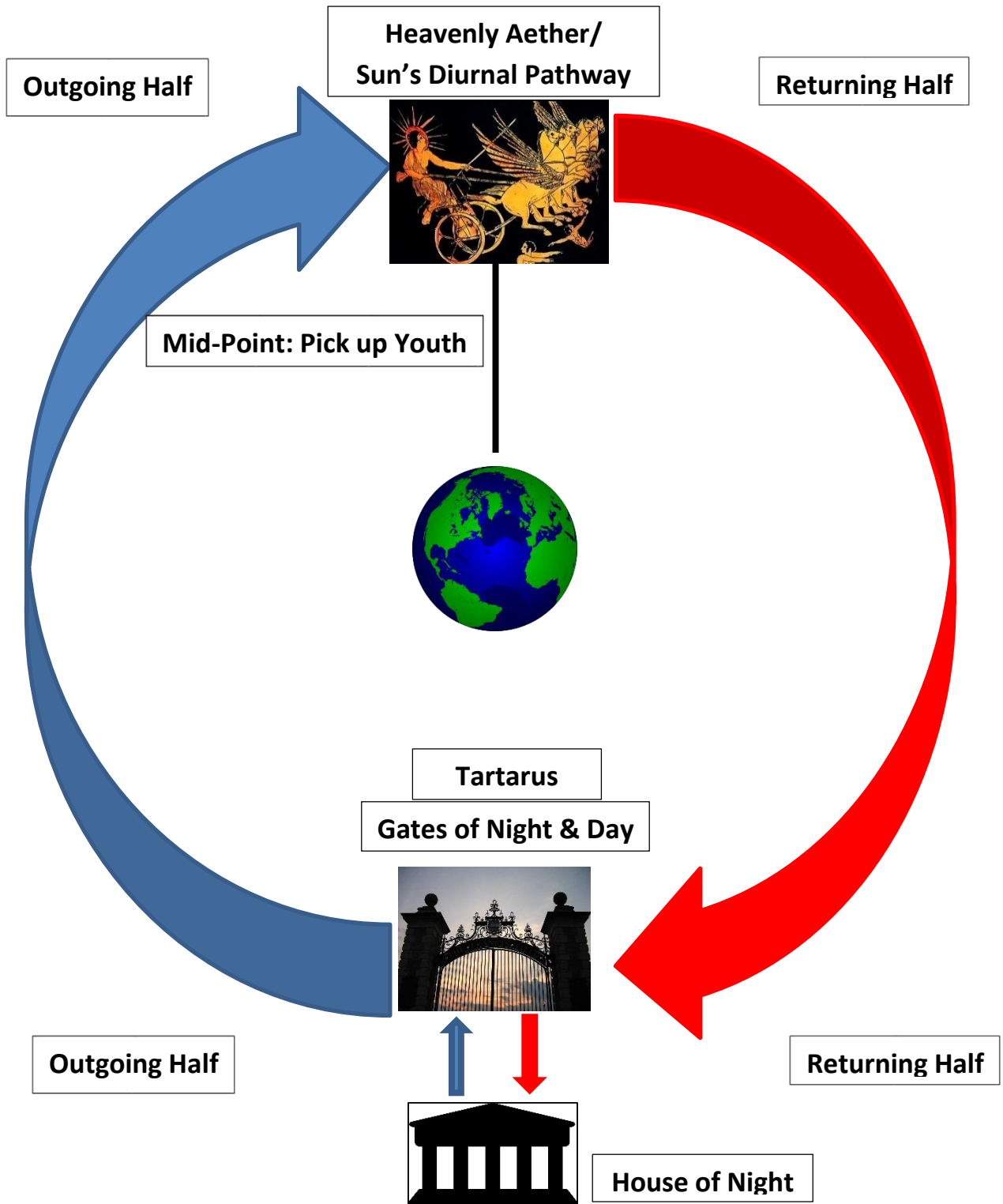
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Appendix A: Heliades' Journey



Appendix B: Ring-Composition (DK)

