

# We are IntechOpen, the world's leading publisher of Open Access books Built by scientists, for scientists

6,900

Open access books available

186,000

International authors and editors

200M

Downloads

Our authors are among the

154

Countries delivered to

TOP 1%

most cited scientists

12.2%

Contributors from top 500 universities



WEB OF SCIENCE™

Selection of our books indexed in the Book Citation Index  
in Web of Science™ Core Collection (BKCI)

Interested in publishing with us?  
Contact [book.department@intechopen.com](mailto:book.department@intechopen.com)

Numbers displayed above are based on latest data collected.  
For more information visit [www.intechopen.com](http://www.intechopen.com)



## Appearance and Reality in Parmenides\*

Kenneth Dorter  
University of Guelph  
Canada

### 1. Introduction

Of all the Presocratic philosophers it is Parmenides who continues to attract the widest interest among contemporary philosophers, but the reasons for that interest vary considerably from reader to reader. Virtually every sentence of the remaining fragments of his book has become a bone of contention among his interpreters because the relative weight given to them leads to antithetically different pictures of what he thought. Part of the problem is that, "Like the thought, so too the language is new and it was created as the language of this thought. The individual term, as a linguistic expression, is thus to a great extent unknown and unprecedented."<sup>1</sup> Parmenides has been read as a materialist on the strength of descriptions like, "it is complete on all sides, like the bulk of a well-rounded ball, evenly balanced in every way from the middle; for it must be not at all greater or smaller here than there" (B8.43-5).<sup>2</sup> But he has also been read as an idealist, or as a phenomenological ontologist, in the light of statements like, "the same thing is for thinking and for being" (B3).<sup>3</sup> Again, he is read as a logician who believes we can discover the truth about reality only through abstract reasoning, by following the implications of the laws of non-contradiction ("in no way may this prevail, that things that are not, are", B7) and excluded middle ("it is or it is not", B8.16).<sup>4</sup> Or as a philosopher of linguistic

---

\*An earlier version of this essay was presented as 'Sense Perception and Reason in Parmenides', at the Canadian Philosophical Association meetings at Concordia University, Montreal, June 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Hölscher 1968, 90. My translation.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Burnet 1930, 178-9; also Finkelberg 1986, 303-17. But cf. Cornford 1939, 45; Palmer 2008, 3.5. Unless otherwise specified translations from the Presocratics follow those of McKirahan 1994, occasionally modified.

<sup>3</sup> Thus Reinhardt writes that for Parmenides "muß diese ganze Welt notwendig falsch sein, das heißt subjektiv sein, griechisch ausgedrückt, sie kann nur νόμος und nicht φύσει existieren." "Über die Schwierigkeit hinwegzuhelfen hat er sich freilich nur durch einen ungeheuren Sprung gewußt; aber wo gibt es einen Idealisten, der über dieselbe Frage glatt hinübergekommen wäre?" (1977, 30 & 81). For the phenomenology-influenced interpretation of Heidegger see Heidegger 1957, 73-133 *passim*, and Heidegger 1954, 231-256. For discussion of the materialist and idealist interpretations see Tarán 1965, 195-201.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Cornford 1939, 28: "Parmenides is the prophet of a logic which will tolerate no semblance of contradiction" (29); "he will set all common sense at defiance, and follow reason". For a recent variant of this view see Lewis (2009) who argues that Parmenides' rejection of the ordinary view of reality derives from an illicit modal inference.

predication, on the basis of statements like “That which is there to be spoken and thought of must be” (B6).<sup>5</sup> And he has been read as a mystic for whom we can know the truth only by the grace of a divine revelation, like that of the goddess who addresses to him the words of his poem.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these five models, interpretations are also divided by the variety of strategies for reconciling the two parts of Parmenides’ book. The most influential strategy in the twentieth century, and which continues to be defended today, regards Parmenides as distinguished both by the rigor of his logic and the naivety of his judgment: on one hand the father of western analytic philosophy, the first to use explicit logical reasoning in the service of philosophical inquiry, subtle enough to have anticipated Descartes’ cogito demonstration (although in the service of “it is” rather than “I am”<sup>7</sup>) while on the other hand a rigorous adherence to inadequate logical principles is believed to have led him unknowingly toward a conclusion that is neither reasonable nor Cartesian, namely that nothing ever changes and that he himself, along with the rest of the world, does not exist.<sup>8</sup> Cornford does not put it strongly enough when he writes that Parmenides “seems to suggest that mortals are responsible for the apparent (though unreal) existence of sensible qualities... Why the senses delude us, how false appearances can be given, he cannot tell” (1939, 50). The problem on this view is not merely how mortals are deluded, but how the multitude of changing human beings can be said to be deluded if they do not exist.<sup>9</sup> It is widely believed that although this is a fatal difficulty, Parmenides’ failure to recognize it can be excused by his early date:

What Parmenides has not succeeded in establishing is any logical relationship between the truth and its counterfeit, or any logical status for the world of seeming... It is hardly a criticism of Parmenides to say that in the very moment of a discovery which changed the whole face of philosophy there was not also revealed to him a means of accounting for the false semblance of reality exhibited to mortals by the world of appearances, nor of bringing the two worlds into any logical relationship again without contravening the new and austere canons of thought which he himself had just laid down.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Mourelatos 1970, Nehamas 2002, Curd 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bowra 1937; Verdenius 1949; Lagan 1982; Kingsley 1999 esp. 49-149, and 2003 esp. 17-294; Geldard 2007; Gemelli Marciano 2008; Granger 2010, 35-36; also see the discussion in Guthrie 1969, 7-13.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Owen 1975, 48-81, 60-61.

<sup>8</sup> Although the most widely held view of Parmenides there have been numerous dissenters. Heidegger, for example, connects appearance with Being rather than with nonbeing: “Sein und Schein zusammengehören stets beieinander sind und im Beieinander immer auch den Wechsel von einem zum anderen und damit die ständige Verwirrung und aus dieser die Möglichkeit der Verirrung und Verwechslung anbieten” (1957, 83). Previously Reinhardt reconciled the ways of truth and appearance in terms of the oppositions out of which the physical world is constructed: Parmenides’ opposites, like Empedocles’ elements, are themselves eternal and unchanging; only the things formed by their combination are transitory (1916/1977 esp. 70-81); also see Miller 1978, 12-35; and Finkelberg 1999, 233-48. More recently Curd reconciles them by what she calls predication monism (“each thing that is can be only one thing; and must be that in a particularly strong way”) 2004, 5 & 80n38.

<sup>9</sup> “More serious is the denial of reality to Parmenides himself and all men if the sensible world is entirely false. Yet it is not clear that this troubled Parmenides himself or later Eleatics” (Long 1975, 82-101).

<sup>10</sup> Guthrie 1969, 75-6. Cf. Verdenius 1942, 58; Kahn 1969, 705; Stokes 1971, 142.

Nevertheless if Parmenides failed to notice a difficulty so devastating, or if he saw the problem but was not bothered by it, and even if he was bothered by it but saw no way to resolve it, then Guthrie is too generous, for it should be very much a criticism of Parmenides that he was oblivious to such a fundamental objection, or that he continued to promote in the most uncompromising terms a philosophy that he saw no way to reconcile with our experience of reality. We do him no favor by excusing his lapses until we have done our best to make certain that they really are lapses. In the case of a work so incompletely preserved we may need to look more intensively than usual at the possible implications of what remains, which is something we are less likely to do if we are too ready to excuse any difficulties. I shall try to show that Parmenides' ideas are not only fully defensible but illuminating even today.

In John Palmer's (2008) terminology, the previously mentioned view of Parmenides as unable to account for multiplicity and change is the strict monist interpretation. Prior to it the most widespread view, going back to Parmenides' earliest interpreters, is what Palmer calls the aspectual view, the view that being and appearances are two aspects of the same reality. Before returning to this view in more detail I want to consider Palmer's own approach which he calls the modal interpretation, and which is based on the principle that "Parmenides was the first philosopher rigorously to distinguish what must be, what must not be, and what is but need not be" (Palmer 2008, 3.5). Unlike the aspectual interpretation, according to which the same reality can be seen as necessary and unitary in one aspect, but contingent and multiple in another aspect (like Spinoza's *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*) Palmer believes that Parmenides is referring to two kinds of reality, the world of contingent beings and a necessary being which permeates it the way Anaxagoras' *Nous* permeates all things. B4 constitutes "an apparently insurmountable difficulty" for the aspectual view, Palmer believes. I shall show later why I do not believe that to be the case, but another fragment, B16, lends itself to the aspectual interpretation far more readily than Palmer's modal interpretation:

For as each person has a mixture of much-wandering limbs,  
so is mind [νόος] present to humans. For that which thinks [φρονέει] –  
the nature of the limbs <combined in the body> – is the same  
in all people and every one; for the full is thought [νόημα].<sup>11</sup>

The first sentence presents us with an analogy: mind is present to human beings the way people are related to their body parts: diverse human beings are unified within the same mind the way diverse limbs are unified within a single body. The second sentence explains: although our limbs themselves differ from one person to another, their nature is the same in each of us, and that nature manifests itself in mind (that which thinks) which is therefore the same in all of us. The phrase, "the same in all people and every one" [ἀνθρώποισιν καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί] makes the point both collectively and distributively. Distributively it means that each of us has the same mental nature as every other. Collectively it means that all humans together are unified and have their nature as parts of the same rational nature, the way our limbs are unified and have their nature as part of the same person. In the same way that hands and feet have their function only as part of a body, each of us has our function only as part of the rational whole.

<sup>11</sup> Words in angle brackets added. This difficult fragment is extensively discussed in Mourelatos 1970, 253-9.

And in the same way that what unites the limbs of our body is life, what unites all individuals in Being is rationality.<sup>12</sup> All of this is summed up in the final clause: “for the full is thought”, which recalls B4: “things which although absent are securely present to the mind [νοεῖν]. For you will not cut off what is from clinging to what is”. This explains what the goddess meant at the end of B1 when she said, “the things that appear must be in an acceptable sense [δοκίμως] because they permeate all things completely.”<sup>13</sup> Just as there is no body without its constituent limbs, there is no Being without the things that appear and permeate everything. And just as our limbs lose their separateness in the realm of life as part of a living person, all things that appear to our senses lose their separateness in the realm of the timeless and spaceless.<sup>14</sup>

An examination of the various themes in Parmenides book will show how this aspectual interpretation accords with the fragments as a whole. There are five overlapping sections: 1. The Status of Appearances; 2. Being, Nonbeing, and Change; 3 Space and Time; 4. Logic and Mysticism; 5. Existence and Value.

## 2. The status of appearances

Parmenides’ book is traditionally divided into two parts, *Alêtheia* or Truth, and *Doxa* or Appearance (or Opinion). In the earlier part the goddess argues, first, that what-is can not have come into being:

For what birth will you seek for it?  
How and from where did it grow? I will not permit you to say  
or to think <that it grew> from what is not; for it is not to be said or thought  
that it is not. What necessity would have stirred it up  
to grow later rather than earlier, beginning from nothing?  
Thus it must either fully be or not. [B8.6-11]

In other words, what-is can not have come into being for it would have had to come from what-is-not, but what-it-not is nothing, and nothing comes from nothing. “In this way coming to be has been extinguished and destruction is unheard of” (B8.21). There is no explicit argument against destruction. Parmenides evidently believes that it follows from the argument against coming-to-be, which may be what he meant by saying, “On this way there are signs exceedingly many – that being ungenerated it is also imperishable” (B8.2-3). One of those signs is that nonbeing has been shown to be impossible – it cannot be conceived or described – but what-is cannot become something impossible. Another is that since what-is could not have come into being it has always existed, and the only explanation for its existence is that it exists necessarily.<sup>15</sup> But if it exists necessarily, it cannot cease to exist.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mourelatos 1970, 258: “thought is the whole (cf. οὖλον), the all-together-one (cf. ὁμοῦ πᾶν ἓν), the cohesive (cf. συνεχές), the fullness of what-is (cf. ἐμπλεον ἐόντος), the consorting of what-is with what-is (cf. B8.25).”

<sup>13</sup> “permeating all things completely” is Gallop’s translation of διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα. McKirahan 1994, following Owen’s text, has “being always, indeed, all things.”

<sup>14</sup> Like most assertions about Parmenides, the spatiality of reality is debated on both sides. See, for example, Granger 2010, 29&n34.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. B8.16-19: “But it has been decided, as is necessary [ἀνάγκη], to let go the one road as unthinkable and nameless (for it is not a true road) and that the other is and is genuine” and B8.30-31: “For mighty Necessity [Ἀνάγκη] holds it in the bonds of a limit.”



The impossibility of coming-to-be implies not only the impossibility of destruction but also the unreality of change:

Fate shackled it  
to be whole and unchanging [ἀκίνητον]; wherefore it has been named all things  
mortals have established, persuaded that they are true –  
to come to be and to perish, to be and not <to be>,  
and to change [ἀλλάσσειν] place and alter [ἀμείβειν] bright color. [B8.37-41]<sup>16</sup>

As with the inference from the impossibility of coming-to-be to the impossibility of destruction, the inference to the impossibility of change is not explicit. The point here seems to be that to change place is to come-to-be somewhere from previously not-being there, and to change color is for a color to come-to-be from previously not-being there; but Parmenides has shown that nothing can come to be from having not been.

The goddess who is instructing Parmenides introduces the second part of the book, Appearance, with the words:

At this point I stop for you my reliable account and thought  
concerning Truth; from here on, learn mortal opinions [δόξας],  
listening to the deceitful ordering of my words...  
I declare to you all the ordering as it appears [εἰκότα],  
so that no mortal judgment [γνώμη] may ever overtake you. [B8.50-52, 60-61]

What follows is a meticulously detailed explanation of the principles by which the world of changing appearances operates, an explanation that is believed to have been at least twice as long, and perhaps far longer, than the account of Truth.<sup>17</sup> Does this mean the goddess is offering a third road that softens the stark alternatives between the necessary Way of Being ("It is") and the impossible Way of Nonbeing ("It is not")? If so, why did she deny the reality of change in B8, and why did she say in B2 that "the only roads of inquiry there are for thinking" are "that it is and that it is not possible for it not to be" and "that it is not and that it is necessary for it not to be"? Why would the goddess say these are the only roads of inquiry if the Way of Appearance is meant to be taken at all seriously?

Because of this difficulty it is usually assumed that there is no difference between the Way of Nonbeing and the Way of Appearance: whatever is not Being is nonbeing. It is only our ignorance and lack of critical judgment that leads us to think that appearances are anything other than absolutely non-existent.<sup>18</sup> There are, however, two problems for this interpretation. First and most obviously, why would Parmenides have devoted his life and energies to changing people's (non-existent) minds to the view that change is only an illusion, and in a book that is an allegorical account of his own life-changing discovery, a book which denies the possibility of motion or change but is presented as a journey and

<sup>16</sup> For a recent discussion of some interpretive problems regarding these lines see McKirahan 2010.

<sup>17</sup> See Gallop 1984, 21 & 29n8.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Tarán: "any difference from Being is absolute non-Being, and as such unthinkable" (1965, vii *et passim*); also Owen 1975, 51; Mourelatos 1970, 91; Cordero 2004, 147. Contrast Reinhardt 1977, 46.

refers throughout to truth and Being as a road (ὁδός) to set out on?<sup>19</sup> The other problem is how to reconcile the fact that at least two thirds of his book is spent in an explanation of how things change, with the goddess's warning against such thinking.

The usual answer to the first problem is that when people are led by their reasoning to conclusions that inhibit practical activity, they tend to ignore the discrepancy in order to be able to live in the world, however incoherent the result. On this view, just as Hume who rejected the reality of causation conceded that we must nevertheless live as though causality were a fact, Parmenides who rejected the reality of changing things had to live as if he believed that the changing appearances were real. But this would be a far greater incoherence than Hume's since Parmenides denies not merely the objective basis of a perceived relationship (cause and effect) but the objective existence of any changing being including, by implication, Parmenides himself.

The severity of the second difficulty – why the goddess would spend as least twice as much time earnestly instructing Parmenides in a teaching that she regards as not only false but illusory, as she did in teaching him the truth – is attested by the lack of any consensus among its proponents as to how to render it plausible: according to various views, the goddess either includes the Way of Appearance hypothetically, “to explain how mortals came to accept as reality the unreal sensible world;”<sup>20</sup> or as the best of a bad lot so that “no mortal will ever give an account of appearance which presents fewer violations of the laws of Truth;”<sup>21</sup> or else to inoculate Parmenides against the false views of mortals;<sup>22</sup> or to “show the disciple what the error consists in;”<sup>23</sup> or she is mocking this view by presenting it with irony and sarcasm.<sup>24</sup> But in the fragments that have come down to us there is nothing to indicate that the goddess shows how the specific cosmology she presents is to be decisively rejected. Nor would we expect her to: since she has already demonstrated in B2-B8 that there can be neither multiplicity nor motion or any other kind of change, why would she need to demonstrate it again with reference to any particular cosmology? The goddess's argument there was an *a priori* argument. It showed that any change, no matter how conceived, would be incoherent and must therefore be illusory. Given an all-conquering *a priori* argument, there is nothing to be gained by refuting an individual cosmology on its own terms. Such a refutation would have to make use of the *a priori* argument in any case,

<sup>19</sup> This aspect of the poem is extensively discussed by Cherubin 2001 and Barrett 2004. It is hard to reconcile Mourelatos' view that Parmenides denies the existence of motion and change with his recognition that “The route ‘\_is\_’ is *essentially* a route; it is not a route by poetic license or the purposes of rhetorical effect” (1970, 134, emphasis in original). On the question of whether the poem is allegorical see Bowra 1937; Granger 2010, 33-36.

<sup>20</sup> Tarán 1965, 207, cf. 216.

<sup>21</sup> Stokes 1971, 147-48; McKirahan 1994, 174-5.

<sup>22</sup> Gallop 1984: 23.

<sup>23</sup> Cordero 2004, 32.

<sup>24</sup> “[A] case study in self-deception, indecisiveness, and confusion” (Mourelatos 1970, 222-8, 260). Thus too Mourelatos' student Austin (1986). I am more inclined to agree with Reinhardt, who writes, “Ich halte es für eine Täuschung über den Ton, den Stil, die Stimmung, glaube man aus ihren Worten Eristik, Ironie, Polemik und den ganzen schlecht verhehlten Ärger eines angegriffenen Schulpflichters herauszuhören” (1916, 27-8). Cf. Cornford's judgement that the Way of Appearance is presented “without a hit of irony, caricature, or criticism” (1939, 49); and Verdenius: “There is, however, no trace of any controversial, critical, or ironical flavour” (1942, 45).

and given that argument, all merely particular refutations are redundant. If we can prove that any house built in a particular area will necessarily sink into quicksand, we do not need to examine the blueprints for the best possible house to show that it too will get swallowed up.

The fragments following B8 not only contain no refutations, nor any trace of mockery or sarcasm, but on the contrary, are presented in the language of a teaching meant to be taken as in some sense true rather than as wholly misguided. B10, for example, says:

You shall know the nature of the aether and all the signs in the aether  
and the destructive deeds of the shining sun's pure  
torch and whence they came to be,  
and you shall learn the wandering deeds of the round-faced moon  
and its nature, and you shall know also the surrounding heaven,  
from what it grew and how Necessity led and shackled it  
to hold the limits of the stars.

Passages like this read as expressions of a view that the goddess holds to be true at some level, rather than as an opinion with which she does not agree.<sup>25</sup> But if Parmenides recognizes the existence of changing things, does this not save him from absurdity only at the price of consistency? There is, however, a way of reading Parmenides that does not render the implications for our existence nonsensical, his behavior inconsistent with his beliefs, and the largest part of his text redundant. Let's look more closely at his argument against change.

### 3. Being, nonbeing and change

On the basis of his axiom that "it is or it is not" (B8.16) Parmenides concludes that either it always is or it never is: since nothing can come from what is not, "if [*per impossibile*] it came into being, it is not." Thus there is neither nonbeing nor becoming, but only being. But what is the referent of the implicit "it" that always is and never comes into being?<sup>26</sup> If the reference is to any given individual, then Parmenides would indeed be saying that all change is an illusion. But if it refers not to individuals but to reality as a whole, the argument is not incoherent – neither internally nor with our experience.<sup>27</sup> In that case we can see Parmenides as building on a tradition that goes back to Thales, according to which reality as a whole has a single unchanging character of which all individuals are local transformations,<sup>28</sup> like our own view that we are all temporary and partial arrangements of

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Reinhardt on B8.50: "Ich gestehe, daß es mir schwer fällt zu begreifen, wie man angesichts dieser Worte von Hypothese reden kann. Er redet ganz und gar nicht hypothetisch, sondern so apodiktisch wie nur möglich, was er kündigt, ist die volle Wahrheit" (1916, 25); also Verdenius: "Generally speaking, no one can read this part of Parmenides' work with unbiased mind without being struck by its sincere and apodeictical tone, which shows beyond doubt that the substance of this doctrine emanates from the writer's own conviction" (1942, 48).

<sup>26</sup> In the Greek, ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ("is or is not"), the subject is only implied. Cf. Lagan 1982, 43.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Robinson 1979, 54-60 esp. 58-59.

<sup>28</sup> It does not diminish Parmenides' contribution, as some have argued, to see him as heir to a previous tradition. What he makes of that tradition is original and important enough that it is unnecessary to deny the influence of others to secure his stature.



energy. On this view Parmenides is not embarking on the incoherent project of changing people's minds to recognize that there is no change, and bringing new writings into being to prove that there is no coming into being. It is not that nothing ever changes, but that the kinds of things that do change are not real in the way he is using the term.

Everything depends on what is meant by "real", or in Parmenides' terminology, "is" (ἔστιν).<sup>29</sup> What changes, perpetually becomes other than it was, and so it never simply is. Given Parmenides' stark alternatives between is and is-not, then, what is changing is-not. However, Parmenides softens this stark opposition by apparently speaking of a third way<sup>30</sup> – in addition to the reliable way of "it is" and the unviable way of "it is not", namely the Way of Appearance which is the locus of change. Appearances "are not" because they involve the coming to be and passing away that are characteristic of change. But their nonbeing is not the same as the radical nonbeing that Parmenides warns us against in the second way. That nonbeing, Parmenides repeatedly tells us, cannot be conceived nor put into words:

this I point out to you to be a path completely unlearnable, for neither may you know [γνοίης] that which is not (for it is not to be accomplished) nor may you declare it [φράσαις]. (B2)

<sup>29</sup> I share the traditional view that "is" functions in Parmenides in the existential sense, rather than the fused existential and veridical sense defended by Kahn (1969) or the predicative sense defended by Mourelatos (1970, 47-61, 79; cf. Mourelatos 1979, esp. 8-10), and in a different way by Sanders 2002. For an extended defense of the existential interpretation against its rivals see Gallop 1979; cf. Granger 2010, 20-21. Additional discussion of ways of construing ἔστιν can be found in Tarán 1965, 32-40; and Cordero 2004, 44-57.

<sup>30</sup> Whether there is a third way is a matter of considerable dispute, and Cordero is certainly being hyperbolic when he says ruefully that "99 percent of works on Parmenides speak of a third way" (2004, 138). B2 speaks of the road of Being and the road of nonbeing as two different roads, and B6 is usually supposed to be referring to "the road of mortals" as a third way in addition to the other two, but that depends on accepting Diels' proposal of εἴργω ("I restrain [you]") for the missing verb in line 3:

Χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἔδν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι,  
μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν· τὰ σ' ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.  
Πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος <εἴργω>,  
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῆς, ἣν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν  
πλάττονται, δίκραναι·

That which is there to be spoken and thought of must be. For it is possible for it to be,  
but it is not possible for nothing to be. I bid you consider this.

For <I restrain> you from this first way of inquiry,  
but next from the way on which mortals, knowing nothing,  
two-headed, wander.

On this view three ways are spoken of: the Way of Being ("That which is there to be spoken and thought of must be. For it is possible for it to be"), the Way of Nonbeing ("it is not possible for nothing to be"), and the Way of Appearance ("the way on which mortals, knowing nothing, two-headed, wander"). And when the goddess restrains Parmenides from "this first way of inquiry" she is referring not to the first of the two ways she just mentioned (the Way of Being), but to the first of two to be avoided (the Way of Nonbeing). But if we accept a different proposal for the missing term, such as Cordero's ἄρξει ("you will begin") (2004, 105-124), B6 would not be speaking of three different roads. Cordero's book is the most extended argument in favor of there being only two roads (especially 125-49 but *passim*). Nehamas takes a similar line, but proposing ἄρξω instead of Cordero's ἄρξει (1981, 105).

That which is there to be spoken [λέγειν] and thought [νοεῖν] of must be. (B6)

it is not to be said [φατὸν] or thought [νοητόν] that it is not. (B8.8-9)

[What is not is] unthinkable [ἀνόητον] and nameless [ἄνόνημον]. (B8.17)

Appearances, by contrast, are never presented by Parmenides as unthinkable, ineffable, or unlearnable. The goddess says:

There is need for you to learn all things –  
both the unshaken heart of persuasive Truth  
and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true reliance.  
But nevertheless you will learn these too – that the things that appear  
must genuinely be, permeating all things completely.<sup>31</sup> [B1.30-32]

This is the task of the longest part of the book, Appearance, which demonstrates, however we interpret it, that unlike the Way of Nonbeing the Way of Appearance can both be conceived of and spoken about. Instead of being unutterable (B2), unsayable (B8.8), and nameless (B8.17), it is the realm of our “sounding ear and tongue” (B7). Rather than reducing to the Way of Nonbeing, the Way of Appearance stands somehow between the Ways of Being and Nonbeing. In that case we can take the words just quoted (B1.30-32) to say that Parmenides must learn the opinions of mortals *and also* learn that “the things that appear must be in an acceptable sense [δοκίμως] because they permeate all things completely.”<sup>32</sup> There is good reason then to believe that for Parmenides change is not simply nonexistent.

If the Way of Nonbeing is distinguished by its inability to be verbalized or even conceived, what distinguishes the Way of Appearance is that although it *can* be conceived and expressed in words, it is apprehended not by reason but by sense perception:

For in no way may this prevail, that things that are not, are.  
But you, bar your thought from this way of inquiry,  
and do not let habit born from much experience [πολύπειρον] compel you along this  
way  
to direct your sightless eye and sounding ear and tongue,  
but judge by reason [λόγῳ] the heavily contested refutation spoken by me. [B7]

In other words, because in our experience the things that appear to our senses come into being, change, and are destroyed, we are in the habit of thinking that all existence is characterized by transience. We fail to recognize that there is another sense of reality, perceived by reason rather than the senses, for which this is demonstrably false.<sup>33</sup> On the usual view, to be (εἶναι) is to be an individual. But although individuals appear to sense perception they do not appear to reason, they cannot be defined but only described.<sup>34</sup> But if,

<sup>31</sup> See above, n. 13.

<sup>32</sup> For other ways of construing this passage see Mourelatos 1970, 194-221, and Gallop 1984, 21 & 53.

<sup>33</sup> Also see Verdenius: 1942, 57-8; 1949, 131.

<sup>34</sup> The problem of universals in Aristotle arises because in his view a being (οὐσία) is an individual (τόδε τι) but individuals cannot be known rationally by definition (*Meta. Z.15. 1039b27-1040a8*), so the relation between what is (individuals) and what can be known (universals) becomes problematic.

as Hegel later put it, “the real is the rational and the rational the real”, then individuals are no longer real in the precise sense of the word (knowable by reason), they have mere existence (*bloße Existenz*). It is clear from B7 that what Parmenides means by “to be” is what is there for reason, not what is there for the senses. But what is there for the senses is not the same as what is not there at all (nonbeing). When the goddess said in B2 that there are only two ways of inquiry, she added the words, “for thinking” (νοῆσαι), as she does again when she tells Parmenides to restrain his thought (νόημα) from this way of inquiry. This does not exclude the possibility that there exists something that appears to the senses but is not intelligible, not knowable by reason (νόος).<sup>35</sup>

This is how Parmenides was interpreted by Aristotle, who had the entire book before him:

For, claiming that, besides the existent, nothing non-existent exists, [Parmenides] thinks that of necessity one thing exists, viz. the existent and nothing else (on this we have spoken more clearly in our work on nature [*Physics* 1.3]), *but being forced to follow the observed facts*, and supposing the existence of that which is one in definition, but more than one *according to our sensations*, he now posits two causes and two principles. [Meta. A.5.986b29-34, emphasis added]

That is, according to reason all things are one, but according to the senses there is multiplicity and opposition, so Parmenides developed a two-level ontology. Simplicius too, who like Aristotle had the whole book before him, and to whom we are indebted for preserving most of the text that remains, says:

He calls this discourse ‘appearance’ [δοξαστόν] and ‘deceitful’, not as outright false, but because the sensible world has fallen from the intelligible reality into the domain of manifestation and appearing [φαινόμενον καὶ δοκοῦν].”<sup>36</sup>

But what of Plato’s *Sophist*? Plato too had the whole text available to him, and does not the Eleatic visitor say it is necessary to refute Parmenides in order to accept the existence of a multiplicity of things that are different from one another,<sup>37</sup> and does he not go so far as to confess that he is a kind of parricide for having to overthrow the philosophy of his intellectual father Parmenides? And what about Parmenides’ disciple, Zeno of Elea?<sup>38</sup> Did he not defend Parmenides by arguing that motion is impossible even in the sensible world?

In the case of Plato’s *Sophist*, although the Eleatic visitor’s remark is often recalled as a confession of parricide, in fact what he says is the opposite: “Do *not* suppose that I am becoming a kind of parricide,” he tells Theaetetus (241d). He does speak of attacking (ἐπιτίθεσθαι) and even refuting (ἐλέγχειν) Parmenides’ words (241d-242b), however the attack and refutation are directed not against Parmenides’ ontology itself, but only against his statement (λόγος) quoted at 237a, “For in no way may this prevail, that things that are not, are” (B7.1). If Plato thought that this was not merely a semantic correction, as I believe it is, but a refutation of Parmenides’ whole ontology, then the Eleatic visitor would indeed be

<sup>35</sup> For the meaning of νόος in Parmenides’ day see Guthrie 1969, 17-19; also Verdenius 1942, 9-10.

<sup>36</sup> Diels-Kranz A34 from Simplicius’ Commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics* (*Comm. Arist. Gr. IX*, 39), Gallop translation (1984, 115), modified.

<sup>37</sup> See for example Cordero 2004, 133-4. This view is pervasive in the literature on the *Sophist*.

<sup>38</sup> Cordero questions whether Zeno was a disciple of Parmenides (2004, 182).

a parricide in the figurative sense used. The visitor's assurance that he is not a parricide, as well as the subsequent discussion, shows that it is only Parmenides' stark formulation, and not his ontology, that is under attack.<sup>39</sup>

As for Zeno's paradoxes, in the absence of their original context it is possible to interpret him to be arguing that all activity is impossible, but it seems unlikely that he would have been nonplussed by a pre-Socratic Samuel Johnson who walked across the room and said, "Thus I refute Zeno", or by someone who pointed out that Zeno himself is engaging in the activity of bringing new arguments into existence, attempting to change people's minds, and going about the ordinary activities of life. The usual reply is that he would say it is all an illusion, but what exactly would that mean and who exactly is deluded? It is less problematic to read him as denying not that change exists but that it is rational. Whatever we may think of their validity, the implication of his arguments is not that motion does not exist, but that it exists only for the senses and not for reason. When we superimpose the logically contradictory categories "is" and "is not" onto the sensible world of change, in which "is" and "is not" converge in "becoming", the lack of fit will always leave space for paradoxes.<sup>40</sup> So if we wish to understand the nature of reality in a logically coherent way we must look beyond the world of our senses and be guided by abstract rationality.

#### 4. Space and time

Corresponding to the epistemological difference between truth and appearance, where truth is perceived by reason and appearance by the senses, there is an ontological difference according to the presence or absence of space and time. The senses tell us that reality is composed of innumerable individuals spatially and temporally separate from one another. Reason tells us that reality is an indivisible unity, and what is absent from our eyes may be present to our mind:

But gaze upon things which although absent are securely present to the mind.  
For you will not cut off what is from clinging to what is,  
neither being scattered everywhere in every way in order nor being brought together. [B4]

In other words, although space exists for the senses it does not exist for reason.<sup>41</sup> Time exists for our changing thoughts as well as our senses, but still not for reason in which logical and mathematical truth, at least, is constant. The senses and our changing thoughts present reality as transient, coming into being, changing, and passing away. Reason, on the other hand, showed that reality must always have existed, is unchanging, and can never be destroyed. B8 combines the language of time and timelessness:

On this way there are signs  
exceedingly many – that being ungenerated it is also imperishable,  
whole and of a single kind and unshaken and complete.  
Nor was it ever nor will it be, since it is now [vūv], all together

<sup>39</sup> Also see Bormann 1979, 30-42, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Including the problem of universals in Aristotle (see above, n34) and the Buddhist paradox of *anicca*.

<sup>41</sup> Here ἀπείοντα (absent) and παρῥόντα (present) can be interpreted temporally as well as spatially (see Tarán 1965, 46). Kant's arguments against the reality of space and time similarly appeal to their knowability only by the senses and not by the intellect. See for example *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, section 13.



one, continuous. [B8.2-6]

When we distinguish time into past, present, and future, we designate the present as “now”, but that distinction is rejected here, because we would never say of the past “nor was it ever” or of the future “nor will it be.” The now that is “all together one, continuous” collapses the distinction between the parts of time into a timeless present: since what-is as a unity never changes, past and future have no meaning for it; it is beyond time, as in B7 it was beyond space.<sup>42</sup>

The difference between Being and Appearance, then, is that appearances are the manifestations of Being to our senses in space and time. But space and time, whatever they are in themselves, are not intrinsic to Being which is simply “now” and indivisible. The Way of Truth is to use reason to see beyond the particularity of temporality and spatiality to the timeless unity of what is. This sense of timelessness is difficult for us to understand, it is “far from the beaten path of humans” (B1.27), but writers have spoken of it in all cultures and all ages, it is not limited to the “unsophisticated” beginnings of philosophy. The nineteenth century English poet and literary critic John Addington Symonds, for example, describes his own experience of

a gradual but swiftly progressive obliteration of space, time, sensation, and the multitudinous factors of experience which seem to qualify what we are pleased to call our Self... At last nothing remained but a pure, absolute, abstract Self. The universe became without form and void of content. It served to impress upon my growing nature the phantasmal unreality of all the circumstances which contribute to a merely phenomenal consciousness.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> As Hoy points out, this timeless unity must be more than a fourth dimensional whole because there is an internal differentiation within the latter that is denied of the former (1994, 592-8). The question of timelessness in Parmenides is a matter of considerable controversy; it would mark the first reference to timelessness in western literature. See Tarán 1965, 175-188; Guthrie 1969, 26-30, 45, 49; Kahn 1969, 716; Mourelatos 1970, 105-11; Stokes 1971, 128-30; Manchester 1979; Gallop 1984, 13-14; Cordero 2004, 171. Tarán believes that the apparent reference to timelessness in line 5 – οὐδέ ποτ’ ἦν οὐδ’ ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πάν (‘Nor was it ever nor will it be, since it is now, all together’) – is incompatible with the words with which the sentence concludes in line 6, ἓν, συνεχές (‘one, continuous’) (177). But συνεχές literally means ‘holding together’, and can be applied to what is timeless in the sense of ‘indivisible,’ as in B8.22 Parmenides says, ‘Nor is it divided, since it all is alike’. Cf. Owen: ‘that συνεχές can have a temporal sense needs no arguing’ (1975, 63). Tarán does not deny that Parmenides’ doctrine entails atemporality, but only that Parmenides was aware that it did: ‘The denial of difference makes all process impossible; the logical connection between time and process would require, if Parmenides was aware of it, that he deny duration, too’ (1965, 175, cf. Tarán 1979, 43-53). Others have argued that Parmenides’ use of the term ‘now’ is incompatible with timelessness because ‘now’ is a temporal term. See Mourelatos 103-11; Stokes 1971, 129-30; Miller 1978, 27. But ‘now’ has been used throughout history to refer to timeless immediacy as well as to present time.

<sup>43</sup> Brown 1895, 29-31, abridged. Cited by James in 1901-02, Lecture 16. Also see Verdenius 1949, 124&n46. In ‘Burnt Norton’ T.S. Eliot similarly writes that we cannot sustain such an experience very long because ‘human kind / Cannot bear very much reality’ (I.44-5). ‘I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time... / Time past and time future / Allow but a little consciousness. To be conscious is not to be in time’ (II.22-39).



This testimony, among countless others, shows Parmenides to be far from alone in the view that only the timeless spaceless unity is fully real, and that in its light the temporal world of becoming dims to something less than real without however being nonexistent.

The Way of Appearance does not reduce to the Way of Nonbeing, which is simply the *reductio ad absurdum* of attempting to speak meaningfully about absolute nonexistence. The Way of Appearance is to be deceived by the senses (by “habit born from much experience”) into thinking there is nothing more to reality than what appears in time and space, and that the transience characteristic of sensible reality is characteristic of reality absolutely. This is what the goddess refers to in B6 when she restrains Parmenides from the road of mortals “for whom both to be and not to be are judged the same and not the same” and in B7 when she tells him to restrain his thought from the road according to which “things that are not, are”. At the end of B8 she explains the problem that underlies the deceptiveness of the Way of Appearance: “they made up their minds to name two forms, of which it is not right to name one – in this they have gone astray” (B8.51-54). This is the most ambiguous and disputed line in the poem.<sup>44</sup> Is the goddess referring to two specific forms that mortals name, or does she mean dualities generally? Does “of which it is not right to name one” mean it is not right to name even one of them, or that one of them may be named but not the other? And have mortals gone astray in making up their minds to name two forms, or in making up their minds that they ought not to name one of the forms? She proceeds to distinguish the two forms of day and night:

and they distinguished things opposite in body, and established signs  
apart from one another – for one, the aetherial fire of flame,  
mild, very light, the same as itself in every direction,  
but not the same as the other; but that other one, it itself  
is opposite – dark night, a dense and heavy body. [B8.55-59]

Wherever we happen to be it is either night or day: one of this pair exists and the other does not. Later the first no longer exists and the other has come to be. Where mortals err is in believing that at any given time it is right to name only one of these two – either day exists and night does not, or night exists and day does not. This is how it necessarily appears within time, and the error of mortal thinking is not to realize that if night and day were Being rather than appearances, they could never cease to exist, and if they did not exist they could never come into existence. Night and day appear at one time or another, but time is only the medium of appearance, the medium in which timeless Being appears to mortals, to temporal beings. A similar point was made by Heraclitus:

God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger, but changes the way <fire,> when mingled with perfumes, is named according to the scent of each. [B67]

The perfumes are a metaphor for the moments of time: in the truest reality the opposing states that alternate in time are all present simultaneously and indistinguishably. Only when they are mixed with the moments of time, i.e. “the fitting times [ῥαγ] which bring everything” (B100), do they separate out and alternate with each other. God in itself is

---

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Cornford 1939, 46; Hölscher 1968, 103-7; Miller 1978, 17-21; Gallop 1984, 10.

unchanging and timeless, but seen at particular times appears as one state or another.<sup>45</sup> The relationship between the unified timeless Being that is apprehended by reason and the spatio-temporal appearances apprehended by the bodily senses can be seen also in B16, which was discussed at the end of section 1, above.

If Being is beyond time and space, apprehensible only by reason, and appearances are spatio-temporal manifestations of Being, apprehensible only by our senses, what is the status of space and time themselves? They cannot be features of Being, since it is clear from B8 that what-is is without internal distinctions. Nor can they be separate principles (as for Plato the Receptacle is distinct from the formative principle of the Good) since B2 insists that anything apart from what-is is nothing. As a monist the one path open to Parmenides would be some form of self-differentiation, in which the first principle, although undifferentiated in its original nature, subsequently differentiates itself in a metaphysical analog of atomic decay or the dispersal of light, the result of which is a logical or ontological hierarchy rather than a temporal sequence. This is evidently Simplicius' interpretation when he says, "the sensible world has fallen from the intelligible reality into the domain of manifestation and appearing" (n38 above). But the fragments afford no clue to Parmenides' answer, or even whether he had considered the question.

## 5. Logic and mysticism

We began by noting the various views of Parmenides as a materialist, idealist, logician, and mystic. On the present interpretation he was no materialist. He might be considered an idealist on the strength of the words, "the full is thought" in B16, but he was not an idealist in the usual sense of believing that only individual minds are real. What is most distinctive about him is the way he combines logic with mysticism. Mysticism and logic are traditional antagonists, the one finding truth in what is unconceptualizable and undifferentiated, the other finding it in what is clear and distinct.<sup>46</sup> Mystics may of course try to render as clearly as possible experiences that they find to be ultimately wordless, but for Parmenides the connection was not merely instrumental – logic for the sake of communication – but intrinsic. What interested him was the convergence of logic and mystery in the realm of spaceless and timeless abstraction.<sup>47</sup> Unlike Aristotle, Parmenides' concern with logic was not in its power to extend our knowledge of the temporal world beyond what our senses tell us, but in its power to abstract from the temporal world altogether. The importance of logic to Parmenides is that when we concern ourselves with it not in order to milk the information latent in our sensory experiences, but to appreciate the significance of its absolute disjunction between "is" and "is not," we leave behind time, space, and becoming, in favor of the timelessness of Being.

<sup>45</sup> Taking the perfumes to refer to moments in time is not open to Kahn's objection against interpreting the metaphor as fire and incense, namely that unlike the whole and its parts "the altar flame is of course distinct from the incense or spices that are thrown upon it" (1979, 280)..

<sup>46</sup> Thus Kingsley 2002 and Gemelli Marciano 2008 downplay the rational element in Parmenides' poem. For a reply to their arguments and a defense of the role of Parmenides' logic, see Granger 2010.

<sup>47</sup> For other defenses of Parmenides as taking a compatibilist view of the relation between logic and mysticism, see Bowra 1937; Verdenius 1949; Granger 2010, 35-36.

It is comparable to the interest of the Platonic dialectician in astronomy and music not for the sake of actual physical sounds and heavenly bodies, but only for the abstract rational principles that underlie them (*Republic* 529b-531c). Parmenides' procedure is a forerunner of the procedure that Socrates employs to raise us out of the Cave. Socrates explains that

some sense perceptions don't call upon reason [νόησιν] to examine them because they are sufficiently evaluated by sense perception itself, while others summon reason in every way to examine them because sense perception produces no sound result.<sup>48</sup>

For example, Socrates says, if we look at three fingers of different sizes, sense perception does not need reason to tell it that they are fingers. But when we notice that the middle-sized finger is both big and small as we compare it to the smallest and largest ones, we need reason to determine how something can be both big and small in apparent self-contradiction. Since it is impossible for something to be opposite to itself, the fact that the finger is both big and small requires the rational faculty to distinguish its bigness and smallness as two, even though the sense of sight regarded the finger as one. And since the intellect and sense perception are thereby in opposition to each other, the visible and intelligible realms must also be two rather than one (524c).<sup>49</sup>

The logic of non-contradiction functions in a similar way in Parmenides' poem. In restraining Parmenides not only from the Way of Nonbeing but also from the Way of Appearance the goddess refers to it as,

the way on which mortals, knowing nothing,  
two-headed, wander. For helplessness  
in their breasts guides their wandering mind. But they are carried on  
equally deaf and blind, amazed, hordes without judgment,  
for whom both to be and not to be are judged the same and  
not the same, and the path of all is backward-turning. [B6]

It is sometimes suggested that this criticism is directed only at Heraclitus and his fondness for paradox, but her language suggests that she is speaking of humanity generally. Why, however, would she describe us in these terms? We certainly do not believe that to be and not to be are the same and not the same. We believe that they are not the same. But just as for Plato in a world of multiplicity an object can possess contradictory attributes such as large and small depending on what it is compared with, for Parmenides in a world of becoming things are both the same and not the same as themselves at different times, and everything is backward-turning because it changes from what it was not to what it is, and then from what it is to what it was not. We see this most obviously in birth, life, and death, but also in any other change. In growth our present size is not what it was earlier, and will not be later what it is now. And in motion something is not where it was earlier, and will not be later where it is now. Mortals are as little aware of these paradoxes as they are of Socrates' paradox of finger sizes, but once we are motivated by what Plato calls wonder and

<sup>48</sup> 523a-b. Translations from Plato are my own.

<sup>49</sup> In Book 4 Socrates pointed out that "the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we'll know that we aren't dealing with one thing but with many" (436b). Here the same principle is applied not to the soul's motivations but to its cognitions.

what Parmenides calls spirit (θυμός, B1.1) we become dissatisfied with conceptual discrepancies and seek the distinctions that make our experience coherent.

For Parmenides as for Plato, simple logic tells us that if for sense perception “to be” and “not to be” are the same and not the same, while reason tells us that nothing can both be and not be, and things cannot be the same and not the same, then reason and the senses stand in contradiction to each other and must inhabit different realms.<sup>50</sup> Corresponding to Plato’s later designation of these realms as the intelligible and the visible, Parmenides calls them the Way of Truth and the Way of Appearance. We can understand from this why Plato held Parmenides in such high esteem. It was Parmenides who first made the distinction that will become in Plato the difference between 1) Being, which is perceived by reason and is the object of knowledge but is not perceived by the senses, 2) becoming, which is perceived by the senses and is the object of opinion (δόξα) but is not perceived by reason, and 3) nonexistence, which is neither perceivable nor conceivable.<sup>51</sup> Again, Parmenides’ view that appearances are the manifestations of eternal Being to our senses in space and time would have been highly regarded by a philosopher for whom time is the moving image of eternity (*Timaeus* 37d). Even the Demiurge who is responsible for the world of becoming in the *Timaeus*, has his counterpart in Parmenides:

For the narrower [rings] were filled with unmixed fire.  
The ones next to them with night, but a due amount of fire is inserted among it,  
and in the middle of these<sup>52</sup> is the goddess who governs all things. [B12]

If the goddess who instructs Parmenides personifies truth and timeless Being, the goddess that she speaks of here personifies the governing principle of the temporal world-order, much like Plato’s Demiurge. If Parmenides believed that the world of becoming was entirely illusory and nonexistent it does not seem likely that he would assign a deity to preside over it.

## 6. Existence and value

Why did Parmenides put his teaching into the mouth of a goddess instead of speaking in his own voice like his predecessors? Is the goddess simply a literary device with no further significance than to give to Parmenides’ words an aura of authority, like an invocation of the muse, or is there a connection between the eternal being that the goddess speaks of and the immortal goddess herself? In fact the goddess, like Being, is portrayed not only as eternal but also as beyond time, since her abode is beyond the gates that separate night from day (B1.11-22).<sup>53</sup> And like Being she is beyond space as well as time, for the road that leads to her

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Hölscher: “Erkenntnis findet statt, indem das Feurige in uns das Lichte ergreift, das Nüchtlige in uns das Dunkle und Feste (nämlich je nach dem überwiegenden Bestandteil im einzelnen Organ).” “Alles ist Licht oder Nacht. Das Dünne, Leichte ist nicht Nichtsein, sondern Licht; das Unsichtbare ist nicht Nichtsein, sondern Nacht” (1968, 113&129). Previously Hölscher suggested taking τὰὐτὸν δ’ ἐστὶ νοεῖν in B8.34 in a Platonic sense as meaning that only what is self-same is knowable: “‘Das Selbige kann erkannt werden’, nämlich weil es ein Selbiges und mit sich selbst identische Bleibendes ist... Das μὴ τὰὐτόν’ ist unerkennbar” (1968, 101).

<sup>51</sup> *Republic* 5. Also see Verdenius 1942, 60; and Robinson 1979, esp. 58-59. For a different view see Cordero 2004, 31.

<sup>52</sup> In the absence of the full context of this passage, “in the middle of these” may mean either the middle of the rings or the middle of things as a whole, i.e. the universe. See Tarán 1965, 247-8.

<sup>53</sup> This is a difficult passage. In B1 Parmenides says:



goes through all cities (B1.2-3) and yet is “far from the beaten path of humans” (B1.27).<sup>54</sup> The road is an image of the reality that is dispersed yet immediately present, “things which although absent are securely present in thought” (B4). It is far from the beaten path of humans because the beaten path is the way of sense perception, not the way of thought. The goddess then, beyond time and space, is a personification of Being, and not just a vehicle of its description. She is a personification of the intellectual experience in which the characteristics of Being disclose themselves to Parmenides.

But why personify this experience, and why choose a divinity? Is anything added to the concept of Being by calling it divine? When Xenophanes said that “Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods all deeds which among men are a reproach and a disgrace: thieving, adultery, and deceiving one another” (B11), he seems to be taking exception to the earlier view that divinity is compatible with immorality; and by the time of Heraclitus the divine was explicitly connected with wisdom, beauty, goodness, and justice (B32, B48, B102). An identification of Parmenides’ conception of Being with the goddess has a significance that is more than literary if it is meant to suggest that Being is the source of value as well as existence. Existence alone has no moral significance, no connection with value. Parmenides conceives of Being and the goddess, however, in terms of value as well as existence. The keys to the doors that lead to the goddess’ realm are controlled by Justice (Dike) (B1.14), and the goddess tells Parmenides that “it was not an evil [κακή] destiny that sent you forth to travel this road ... but Right [Themis] and Justice” (B1.26-8). Dike and Themis reappear in the context of Being itself: “Justice [Dike] has permitted it neither to come to be nor to

---

8. the daughters of the Sun

9. were hastening to escort <me> after leaving the house of Night

10. for the light, having pushed back the veils from their heads with their hands.

11. There are the gates of the roads of Night and Day,

12. and a lintel and a stone threshold contain them.

13. High in the sky they are filled by huge doors

14. of which avenging Justice holds the keys that fit them.

15. The maidens beguiled her with soft words

16. and skillfully persuaded her to push back the bar for them

17. quickly from the gates.

The translation (by McKirahan) accepts Diels’ punctuation of lines 9-10, instead of alternatives on which the journey is from light to Night. At first it may seem that “leaving the house of Night for the light” means the road leads from the mortals’ realm of Night to the goddess’s realm of light (9-10). In that case the gates of the roads of Night and Day, referred to in line 11, could be understood to separate night from day, rather than separating the timeless realm of the goddess from the temporal world of night and day. But in line 9 the travelers have already left the house of Night and they do not arrive at the gates of the roads of Night and Day until two lines later. In that case the gates cannot be what separate night from day. Night and day must both be on our side of the gates, and the gates must lead to a realm beyond the alternation of the two. There are thus two boundaries: the door of the house of Night, which separates night from day; and the gates of the roads of Night and Day, which separate the timeless realm of the goddess from both sides of the duality of night and day. For further discussion of the interpretive problems in the proem see Owens 1979, 15-29; Granger 2008, 1-20, and 2010, 17n7; and Gemelli Marciano 2008, 21-48.

<sup>54</sup> The noun modified by παντ’ (“all”) is a matter of conjecture. “Cities” is the most common conjecture, but see Gallop 1984, 48n1 and Cordero 2004, 26-7. Since the path of Parmenides’ journey is “far from the beaten path of humans,” I agree with Tarán that “Parmenides did not intend his journey to be taken as a reality in any sense” – against those who interpret “through all cities” literally to mean he was an itinerant philosopher, or that it was an actual journey whose route may be discoverable (1965, 22-3, 30).



perish" (B8.13-14), and "mighty Necessity holds it in the bonds of a limit ... since it is not right [*themis*] for what is to be incomplete" (B8.30-32).<sup>55</sup> In light of the moral qualities that complement the ontological qualities of Being, the connection that Parmenides draws between Being and the divine has more than a literary purpose, and his poem has more than an ontological purpose. Moreover, since the world of appearance in space and time, too, is presided over by a goddess (B12), it has its own kind of value just as it has its own kind of existence.

## 7. Concluding remark

There is no need to make allowances for Parmenides' early date in order to appreciate his greatness and the continuing relevance of his insights. Rather than taking only the first few stumbling steps in formulating and applying the basic principles of logic, he was clear sighted enough to provide the basis for a coherent account of the relationship between complete reality taken in abstraction from local spatio-temporal variations, and the more ambiguous reality manifested by the spatio-temporal variations in all their multiplicity. In what we have of his work virtually all the fundamental concerns of metaphysics are already recognized and adumbrated, if not fully delineated – the one and the many, being and becoming, appearance and reality, space and time, existence and value – although the richness of his thought is obscured by the terseness of his writing and the loss of most of the original text. It is an obscurity made all the more intractable if Parmenides' early date makes us too ready to attribute the absence of detailed explanations to an absence of sophistication and insight.

## 8. References

- Austin, Scott. 1986. *Parmenides: Being, Bounds, and Logic*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Barrett, James. 2004. "Struggling with Parmenides". *Ancient Philosophy* 24, 267-91.
- Bormann, Karl. 1979. "Simplicius on Parmenides." *Monist* 62, 30-42.
- Bowra, C.M. 1937. "The Proem Of Parmenides." *Classical Philology* 32, 97-112.
- Brown, H.F. 1895. *J.A. Symonds, a Biography*. London.
- Burnet. 1930. *Early Greek Philosophy*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. London: Macmillan.
- Cherubin, Rose. 2001. "Λέγειν, Νοεῖν, and Τὸ Ἔόν in Parmenides". *Ancient Philosophy* 21, 277-303.
- Cordero, Néstor-Luis. 2004. *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing.
- Cornford, F.M. 1939. *Plato and Parmenides*. London: Routledge.
- Curd, Patricia. 2004. *The Legacy of Parmenides*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing.
- Diels, Hermann, revised by Walther Kranz. 1952. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. Berlin.
- Finkelberg, Aryeh. 1986. "The Cosmology of Parmenides". *American Journal of Philosophy* 107, 303-17.
- Finkelberg, Aryeh. 1999. "Being, Truth and Opinion in Parmenides." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 81, 233-48.

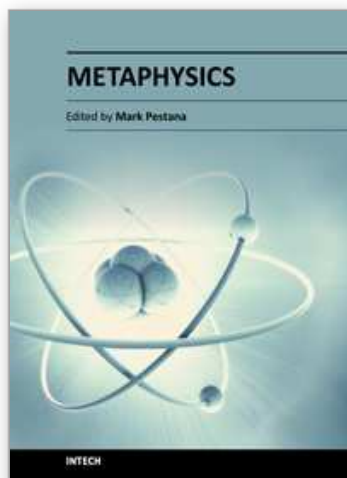
---

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Bowra 1937, 107-8. McKirahan's "not incomplete" appears to be an erratum.

- Fränkel, Hermann. 1975. "Studies in Parmenides". In R.E. Allen and David Furley, eds., *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, Vol. II, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1-47.
- Gallop, David. 1979. "Is' or 'Is Not'?" *Monist* 62, 61-80.
- Gallop, David. 1984. *Parmenides of Elea*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Geldard, Richard. 2007. *Parmenides and the Way of Truth*. Rhinebeck, NY: Monkfish.
- Gemelli Marciano, M. Laura. 2008. "Images and Experience: At the Roots of Parmenides' *Aletheia*". *Ancient Philosophy* 28, 21-48.
- Granger, Herbert. 2008. "The Proem of Parmenides' Poem". *Ancient Philosophy* 28, 1-20.
- Granger, Herbert. 2010. "Parmenides of Elea: Rationalist or Dogmatist?" *Ancient Philosophy* 30, 15-38.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. 1969. *A History of Greek Philosophy*, Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1954. "Moirai: (Parmenides, Fragment VIII, 34-41)". In *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Pfullingen: Neske.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1957. *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 2<sup>te</sup> Auflage. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Hoy, Ronald. 1994. "Parmenides' Complete Rejection of Time." *Journal of Philosophy* 91, 573-98.
- James, William. 1901-02. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. N.Y.: Modern Library, 1929.
- Kahn, Charles. 1969. "The Thesis of Parmenides". *Review of Metaphysics* 22, 700-24.
- Kahn, Charles. 1979. *The Thought and Art of Heraclitus*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.
- Kingsley, Peter. 1999. *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*. Inverness, CA: Golden Sufi Center.
- Kingsley, Peter. 2003. *Reality*. Inverness, CA: Golden Sufi Center.
- Lagan, William. 1982. "Parmenides and Mystical Reason: A Metaphysical Dilemma". *Modern Schoolman* 60, 30-47.
- Lewis, Frank. 2009. "Parmenides' Modal Fallacy". *Phronesis* 54, 1-8.
- Long, A.A. 1975. "The Principles of Parmenides Cosmology." In R.E. Allen and David Furley, eds., *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, Vol. II, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Manchester, P. B. 1979. "Parmenides and the Need for Eternity." *Monist* 62, 81-106.
- McKirahan, Richard. 1994. *Philosophy Before Socrates*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- McKirahan, Richard. 2010. "Parmenides B8.38 and Cornford's Fragment." *Ancient Philosophy* 30, 1-14.
- Miller, Mitchell. 1978. "Parmenides and the Disclosure of Being". *Apeiron* 13, 12-35.
- Mourelatos, Alexander. 1970. *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Image, and Argument in the Fragments*. New Haven: Yale.
- Mourelatos, Alexander. 1979. "Alternatives in Interpreting Parmenides." *Monist* 62, 3-14.
- Nehamas, Alexander. 1981. "On Parmenides' Three Ways of Inquiry." *Deucalion* 33/34, 97-111.
- Nehamas, Alexander. 2002. "Parmenidean Being / Heraclitean Fire". In V. Caston and D. Graham (eds.), *Presocratic Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Alexander Mourelatos*. Burlington VT: Ashgate.
- Hölscher, Uvo. 1968. *Anfängliches Fragen: Studien zur frühen griechischen Philosophie*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Owen, G.E.L. 1975. "Eleatic Questions." In R.E. Allen and David Furley, eds., *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, Vol. II. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Owens, Joseph. 1979. "Knowledge and *Katabasis* in Parmenides." *Monist* 62, 15-29.

- Palmer, John. 2008. "Parmenides." In the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/parmenides/>.
- Reinhardt, Karl. 1916/1977. *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Bonn, reprinted Frankfurt: Klostermann.
- Robinson, T.M. 1979. "Parmenides on the Real in its Totality." *Monist* 62, 54-60.
- Sanders, K.R. 2002. "Much Ado About 'Nothing': μηδέν and τὸ μὴ εἶν in Parmenides," *Apeiron* 35, 87-104.
- Stokes, Michael. 1971. *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy*. Washington D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Tarán, Leonardo. 1965. *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tarán, Leonardo. 1979. "Perpetual Duration and Atemporal Eternity." *Monist* 62, 43-53.
- Verdenius, W.J. 1942. *Parmenides: Some Comments on his Poem*. Groningen, reprinted Amsterdam: Hakkert 1964.
- Verdenius, W.J. 1949. "Parmenides' Conception of Light." *Mnemosyne*, 4<sup>th</sup> Series, 2, 116-131.

IntechOpen



## **Metaphysics**

Edited by Dr. Mark Pestana

ISBN 978-953-51-0646-3

Hard cover, 148 pages

**Publisher** InTech

**Published online** 13, June, 2012

**Published in print edition** June, 2012

It is our hope that this collection will give readers a sense of the type of metaphysical investigations that are now being carried out by thinkers in the Western nations. We also hope that the reader's curiosity will be peaked so that further inquiry will follow.

### **How to reference**

In order to correctly reference this scholarly work, feel free to copy and paste the following:

Kenneth Dorter (2012). Appearance and Reality in Parmenides, *Metaphysics*, Dr. Mark Pestana (Ed.), ISBN: 978-953-51-0646-3, InTech, Available from: <http://www.intechopen.com/books/metaphysics/being-and-appearance-in-parmenides>

**INTECH**  
open science | open minds

### **InTech Europe**

University Campus STeP Ri  
Slavka Krautzeka 83/A  
51000 Rijeka, Croatia  
Phone: +385 (51) 770 447  
Fax: +385 (51) 686 166  
[www.intechopen.com](http://www.intechopen.com)

### **InTech China**

Unit 405, Office Block, Hotel Equatorial Shanghai  
No.65, Yan An Road (West), Shanghai, 200040, China  
中国上海市延安西路65号上海国际贵都大饭店办公楼405单元  
Phone: +86-21-62489820  
Fax: +86-21-62489821

© 2012 The Author(s). Licensee IntechOpen. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

IntechOpen

IntechOpen