Parmenides of Elea. Annotated Bibliography of the studies in English: H - K

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Conclusions.
Parmenides seeks to demonstrate the impossibility of generation (and hence change) dilemmatically: on the one hand the notion of caused generation turns out to be incoherent, while the supposition of uncaused generation, on the other, makes it inexplicable. Neither arm of the dilemma is successful. One cannot simply invoke PSR [Principle of Sufficient Reason] in order to rule out uncaused change, since PSR is at best an empirical hypothesis and not some Leibnizian a priori law of thought; (53) and a suitably sophisticated analysis of the logical form of change, one which recognizes the ambiguity of 'from' in propositions such as 'x comes to be from y,' will dispose of Parmenides' bomb. But it needed an Aristotle to disarm it.
The basic principle involved, namely:
P1 Nothing comes to be from nothing,
is not original to Parmenides (it first occurs in a fragment of the sixth-century lyric poet Alcaeus, although we do not know in what context; (54) its early history has been ably traced by Alex Mourelatos (55) but its use in destructive argument certainly is. P1 is ambiguous between the causal principle
P1a Nothing comes to be causelessly,
and the conservation principle
P1b Nothing comes to be except from pre-existing matter;
and that ambiguity is not always patent. Indeed, distinguishing (P1a) from (P1b) is the first step towards solving the Eleatic puzzle, as Aristotle (certainly: *Ph. I.*7, 190a14-31; cf. *Metaph. V.*24; *GA* 1.18, 724a20-34) and Plato (possibly: *Phd.* 103b) realized. Moreover, as Hume was to show, neither version can be accepted as an a priori truth: both the causal principle and the conservation principle (at any rate crudely interpreted as asserting the conservation of matter) are rejected by the standard interpretation of quantum physics; and whatever else may be true of quantum physics, it is not logically incoherent." (p. 80)


"It is commonly supposed that Parmenides' statement of his philosophical principles is preceded by a "proem" of an allegorical nature (the precise symbolism of the allegory being in dispute) which describes the philosopher's inspired journey from
darkness to light.

(...) The first question to ask is whether it is proper to identify such a "proem" at all, as a separate entity in the poem. Would the author himself have recognized it as such?

(...) If, however, the motive in Sextus for first identifying and then explaining this allegory in Parmenides was itself unhistorical, modern criticism has two resources with which to correct him. It can supply a better interpretation of the "proem"; or it can conclude that the original identification of the "proem" as such was a mistake. It is in part to this more radical view that the present article addresses itself." (p. 133)  

"The foreground of Parmenides' imagination is occupied by Circe on Aeaea and the nymphs on Thrinacia all of them daughters of the sun. The latter he has converted from herdsmen into outriders, perhaps assisted therein by the common image of the sun's chariot. Both Teiresias and Circe forewarned him concerning Thrinacia, the sun's island. But Circe's warning held also a hint of promise: "You will come to the isle Thrinacia where feed many herds of the sun; and there is no birth of them nor do they pass away. Their herdsmen are nymphs . . . daughters of the sun."(56) In short, the island is involved with some implication of immortality; it holds a mystery which can be approached but not violated. The centrality of this episode in the memory of the philosopher and his audience was guaranteed by the fact that Homer had selected it from among all others for dramatization in the preface(57) to his epic as central to Odysseus' experience in the nostos. So Parmenides remembered how on that island coming to be and perishing had been banished. This provided his climatic poetic excuse for linking the daughters of the sun with the marvels of a mental journey which had taken the traveller into an absolute, where there is no coming to be and no passing away.(58) For the philosopher, this was where the nostos ended. The journey of his mind and thought had reached the mansions of home.(59)" (p. 140)

(56) Od. 12. 130.
(57) Od. 1. 7-9.
(58) Frag. 8. 21.
(59) The Odysseus theme may persist even into the "second part" of Parmenides' poem. The Homeric hero, so Circe had told him, while his ship "bypassed" the Sirens, was to be allowed the pleasure of hearing their song (Od. 12. 47 and 52; cf. also 10. 109). When they sing, they admonish him that to "bypass" without listening is impossible and that to listen is to learn of all things that happened at Troy and of "all that is born on the earth" (12. 186-190). So Odysseus listens, while the ship "bypasses" them (12. 197).

Correspondingly, Parmenides comes to the end of his "reliable discourse and thought" (Frag. 8, line 5o, equivalent to the "true" directives of Teiresias and Circe) and then allows his listener to hear a "deceitful composition of my epic tale" (Frag. 8, line 52), a story of how all things "are born and end" (Frag. 19). This story is told so that his audience may not be "bypassed" by any mortal type of intelligence (Frag. 8, sub fin.). Is the verb παρέλασση which he here uses a reminiscence of the corresponding verb which Homer had used four times? If so, the philosopher's poetic memory has transposed it in application.


"The topic under discussion is the relation between thinking and Being. In the first place we ought to observe that the text (VIII, 34-41) which ponders this relation
more thoroughly speaks of eon and not -- as in Fragment III -- about einai. Immediately, and with some justification, one concludes from this that Fragment VIII concerns beings rather than Being. But in saying eon Parmenides is in no way thinking "beings in themselves," understood as the whole to which thinking, insofar as it is some kind of entity, also belongs. Just as little does eon mean einai in the sense of "Being for itself," as though it were incumbent upon the thinker to set the non sensible essential nature of Being apart from, and in opposition to, beings which are sensible. Rather eon, being, is thought here in its duality as Being and beings, and is participially expressed -- although the grammatical concept has not yet come explicitly into the grasp of linguistic science. This duality is at least intimated by such nuances of phrasing as "the Being of beings" and "beings in Being." In its essence, however, what unfolds is obscured more than clarified through the "in" and the "of ". These expressions are far from thinking the duality as such, or from seriously questioning its unfolding.

"Being itself," so frequently invoked, is held to be true so long as it is experienced as Being, consistently understood as the Being of beings. Meanwhile the beginning of Western thinking was fated to catch an appropriate glimpse of what the word einai, to be, says -- in Physis, Logos, En. Since the gathering that reigns within Being unites all beings, an inevitable and continually more stubborn semblance arises from the contemplation of this gathering, namely, the illusion that Being (of beings) is not only identical with the totality of beings, but that, as identical, it is at the same time that which unifies and is even most in being [das Seiendste]. For representational thinking everything comes to be a being. The duality of Being and beings, as something twofold, seems to melt away into nonexistence, albeit thinking, from its Greek beginnings onward, has moved within the unfolding of this duality, though without considering its situation or at all taking note of the unfolding of the twofold. What takes place at the beginning of Western thought is the unobserved decline of the duality. But this decline is not nothing. Indeed it imparts to Greek thinking the character of a beginning, in that the lighting of the Being of beings, as a lighting, is concealed. The hiddenness of this decline of the duality reigns in essentially the same way as that into which the duality itself falls. Into what does it fall? Into oblivion, whose lasting dominance conceals itself as Lethe to which Aletheia belongs so immediately that the former can withdraw in its favor and can relinquish to it pure disclosure in the modes of Physis, Logos, and En as though this had no need of concealment. But the apparently futile lighting is riddled with darkness. In it the unfolding of the twofold remains as concealed as its decline for beginning thought. However, we must be alert to the duality of Being and beings in the eon in order to follow the discussion Parmenides devotes to the relation between thinking and Being." (pp. 86-87)
historical humanity. As for time, it signifies here less the point of time calculated according to year and day than it means "age," the situation of human things and man's dwelling place therein. "Outset" has to do with the debut and the emergence of thinking. But we are using "beginning" in a quite different sense. The "beginning" is what, in his early thinking, is to be thought and what is thought. Here we are still leaving unclarified the essence of this thought. But supposing that the thinking of a thinker is distinct from the knowledge of the "sciences" and from every kind of practical cognition in all respects, shell we have to say that the relation of thinking to its thought is essentially other than the relation of ordinary "technical-practical" and "moral-practical" thinking to what it thinks.

Ordinary thinking, whether scientific or prescientific or unscientific, thinks beings, and does so in every case according to their individual regions, separate strata, and circumscribed aspects. This thinking is an acquaintance with beings, a knowledge that masters and dominates beings in various ways. In distinction from the mastering of beings, the thinking of thinkers is the thinking of Being. Their thinking is a retreating in face of Being. We name what is thought in the thinking of the thinkers the beginning. Which hence now means: Being is the beginning. Nevertheless, not every thinker, who has to think Being, thinks the beginning. Not every thinker, not even every one at the outset of Western thought, is a primordial thinker, i.e., a thinker who expressly thinks the beginning.

Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus are the only primordial thinkers. They are this, however, not because they open up Western thought and initiate it. Already before them there were thinkers. They are primordial thinkers because they think the beginning. The beginning is what is thought in their thinking. This sounds as if "the beginning" were something like an "object" the thinkers take up for themselves in order to think it through. But we have already said in general about the thinking of thinkers that it is a retreating in face of Being. If, within truly thoughtful thinking, the primordial thinking is the highest one, then there must occur here a retreating of a special kind. For these thinkers do not "take up" the beginning in the way a scientist "attacks" something. Neither do these thinkers come up with the beginning as a self-produced construction of thought. The beginning is not something dependent on the favor of these thinkers, where they are active in such and such a way, but, rather, the reverse: the beginning is that which begins something with these thinkers -- by laying a claim on them in such a way that from them is demanded an extreme retreating in the face of Being. The thinkers are begun by the beginning, "in-cepted" by the in-ception; they are taken up by it and are gathered into it.

It is already a wrong-headed idea that leads us to speak of the "work" of these thinkers. But if for the moment, and for the lack of a better expression, we do talk that way, then we must note that their "work," even if it had been preserved for us intact, would be quite small in "bulk" compared with the "work" of Plato or Aristotle and especially in comparison with the "work" of a modern thinker. Plato and Aristotle and subsequent thinkers have thought far "more," have traversed more regions and strata of thinking, and have questioned out of a richer knowledge of things and man. And yet all these thinkers think "less" than the primordial thinkers." (pp. 7-8)


"In the silence that follows, Jean Beaufret notes: The text we just heard completes, as it were, the long meditation in which you have turned first towards Parmenides and then Heraclitus. One could even say that your thinking has engaged differently with
Heraclitus and Parmenides. Indeed, in *Vorträge and Aufsätze*, the primacy seemed to be given to Heraclitus. Today what place would Heraclitus take with respect to Parmenides?

**Heidegger:** From a mere historical perspective, Heraclitus signified the first step towards dialectic. From this perspective, then, Parmenides is more profound and essential (if it is the case that dialectic, as is said in *Being and Time*, is "a genuine philosophic embarrassment") In this regard, we must thoroughly recognize that tautology is the only possibility for thinking what dialectic can only veil. However, if one is able to read Heraclitus on the basis of the Parmenidean tautology, he himself then appears in the closest vicinity to that same tautology, he himself then appears in the course of an exclusive approach presenting access to being." (p. 81)


Translated by Richard Rojcewicz; this is a translation of a lecture course Martin Heidegger offered in the summer semester of 1932 at the University of Freiburg. The German original appeared posthumously in 2012 as volume 35 of the philosopher’s *Gesamtausgabe* (“Complete Works”).

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"We will start at once with the interpretation of Parmenides’s didactic poem. What the previous endeavors at interpreting Parmenides have accomplished will be mentioned when discussing the respective issues. For the rest, however, those works will not be presented in more detail. Not because they are insignificant but because they are so unavoidable that one cannot speak about them at first. Our concern is primarily with securing a philosophical understanding of the beginning of Western philosophy and only secondarily with initiating ourselves into the procedure of appropriating an earlier philosophy, i.e., into the method of interpretation. With respect to all previous interpretive attempts, even Hegel’s, it should be said that they made their work philosophically too easy, in part by invoking as a highest explanatory principle the view that the beginning is precisely the primitive and therefore is crude and raw—the illusion of progress! (In this regard, nothing further to say about the previous attempts.)

The interpretation of Parmenides is closely coupled to the question of his relation to Heraclitus, who presupposed Parmenides and contests against him. The notion that in essentials they are in the sharpest opposition is thereby presupposed as valid. In the end, however, this presupposition is precisely an error. In the end, Parmenides and Heraclitus are in the utmost agreement—as are all actual philosophers—not because they renounce battling, but precisely on account of their own respective ultimate originality.

For nonphilosophers, who adhere only to works, opinions, schools, names, and claims, the history of philosophy and of philosophers does of course present the appearance of a madhouse. But that can quietly remain as it is." (p. 77)

"What is the Poem about? As I have indicated—and contrary to out-of-date interpretations and the cursory definitions which typify the average works of reference—the Poem is not about the universe, existence, or the oneness-of-it-all. All of these rather lofty objectives are later inventions, even if they have been repeated ad nauseam for the last 2,500 years. Yet the verses themselves bear no evidence that such matters belong to Parmenides' actual concerns. They show, rather, that Parmenides' inquiries were less esoteric, without being less exciting, considering their fundamental ramifications for the integrity of human knowledge and communication, which indeed may also include our knowledge of the universe, existence, and so forth, and the mode we choose to explain them. Thus Parmenides focused on reasoning and speaking, and how to make both dependable, regardless of what in the end their object may be (as long as it is an expressible object). I like A. A. Long’s comment on this issue: “What Parmenides says is a continuous provocation to our own thinking about thinking.”(450)

There is a fine but very crucial difference to be made between the advancement of a cosmological theory and the demonstration of techniques of how to make an account reliable. Naturally, such an account may also be used to express a variety of things, including the universe and everything in it, but it is only reliable when such matters are addressed in their capacity as objects of thought (see frs. 4 and 7.3–6), and in a form that does not lead to self-contradiction (see fr. 8). In a nutshell, Parmenides' central problem was how to ensure the reliability of discourse. Statements had to be defended against self-contradiction as well as against the misleading plausibility of vagueness—regardless, ultimately, of what said statements were about. For both of these vulnerabilities, Parmenides introduces examples and methods to extricate the truth." (pp. 151-152)

(450) Long ['Parmenides on Thinking Being'] expands on Heidegger’s remark about Parmenides' Poem that it “continually deserves more thought.” p. 127.


"In Cordero’s work By Being It Is, chapter VI, p. 123, parallels are drawn between Parmenides' Poem and Plato’s Parmenides. Cordero focuses on the use of ‘I begin’ [arxomai] by the Eleatic thinker - found in B5 and also B8, when the Goddess announces a new beginning before commencing with the Doxa (8.50) - comparing it to how the argumentative exercises are introduced in the second part of the Parmenides (137a-b). Plato, in this latter work, is having his own Parmenides - the dialogues' protagonist - also state that he will 'begin' the demonstration that will follow, the one that addresses his hypothesis ‘that one is'. Cordero speculates that this allusion is not coincidental in Plato, suggesting that Plato was not only aware of the Parmenidean principle of circularity in argumentative proving, but that he used it deliberately in the Parmenides.
While working on the Parmenides, particularly on its translation, I had come to similar conclusions. The idea of returning to one’s initial premise by way of a challenge or test is at the heart of the Parmenidean method, an approach also used exhaustively by Plato in his Parmenidean dialogue. However, in Cordero’s presentation of this approach, one particular point has remained somewhat unclear or unaddressed, namely whether the circulatory proving has to be taken as germane to the whole account, or only to specific parts. That is, must the whole account of the Goddess return to its beginning, or is this only required of the individual arguments that compose it? Personally, I hold the latter view, as this can be fairly easily demonstrated both by the Poem and the Platonic dialogue." (p. 103)


"Five years ago, at the annual Arizona Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, Daniel Graham gave a first draft of a paper titled ‘Heraclitus and Parmenides.’ He was investigating the possibility of a Parmenidean response to the Ephesian, and he defended the idea quite vigorously. I, of course, was very much in Stokes’ camp, and as an avid and sometimes excessive student of Parmenides, had strong reservations. But Graham, very graciously, entrusted me with a copy of this early draft. Years passed and although I investigated other things, Graham’s paper, and in a way his challenge, was always at the back of my mind. So it is only fitting that now, after all these years, I’ve thought to complete the circle, in a truly Parmenidean fashion, and devote this paper to Graham’s observations.

A few brief remarks about Daniel Graham’s study: the paper has remained the last word on the subject of a Parmenidean response. The work is well-researched and detailed, each argument meticulously worked out; particularly the final or published version which has some substantial improvements on the original draft.(1) Graham has dug up parallels between Parmenides and Heraclitus that, to my knowledge, have remained largely unnoticed, and I have benefited greatly from this thoughtful study. All in all, Daniel has offered us an excellent defense of the “Parmenides answers to Heraclitus” theory (subsequently acronymed to “PATH theory”). Nevertheless, I have remained unconvinced.

To establish a link between the two thinkers, certain criteria have to be met:

1. The question of chronology.
2. The textual correspondence, parallels or similarities of both works.
3. The question of an equivalent subject-matter: is there a shared object of inquiry or discourse in the teachings of both thinkers?
4. The testimonia of subsequent commentators, their criticisms, interpretations of teachings, and general opinions on Heraclitus and Parmenides.
5. And finally, if the chronological question cannot be resolved, and if no thinker mentions the other by name, and if the testimonia let us down, but if nonetheless textual agreement or parallels can be found, we must find some other means of determining who influenced whom. Perhaps, in this case, we should also consider the possibility that neither thinker influenced the other, but that they both were responding to a third party. My modest survey indicates that this may indeed be the case, a possibility that took me quite by surprise, considering that in the beginning I was aiming to show that Parmenides was an entirely original thinker, and if in fact he answered to anyone,
then only to Xenophanes' epistemological challenge (B 34), (but certainly not to his theology). (2) (pp. 261-262)
(2) I am aware of the Homeric, Hesiodic and Orphic echoes in the Proem, but I don’t consider this a response in the same vein as Parmenides is said to have answered to Heraclitus. It is rather a utilization of familiar or popular themes, which allowed him to evoke a mythical atmosphere.

Summary: "Most scholars view Plato’s critique of Parmenides in the Sophist, particularly the observations surrounding the “parricide” remark, as quite apt and justified. The theory is that Parmenides deserves to be rebuked for failing to recognize that “What Is Not” can be understood in more ways than one, namely, not only in an existential sense, but also predicatively or, in the language of the Sophist, as indicating “difference.” I aim to show, nevertheless, that Plato’s indictment of Parmenides misses the mark in significant ways, allowing Parmenides to escape the so-called threat of parricide not once but twice.
For example, Parmenides’ abundant use of alpha-privatives (e.g., ἀγένητον)—as well as the negative οὐ (or οὐκ) when there is no a-privative form available—indicates that he was well aware of the difference between indicating “is not” predicatively versus existentially. Moreover, the Poem nowhere suggests that his strictures regarding the use of What Is Not are to be taken in the broadest possible sense, disallowing, in effect, the discrimination between the existential and the predicative case. Only when sought after as a “way of inquiry” does What Is Not—in contrast to the Way of What Is—fail to provide us with a graspable, expressible object. After all, the “Way of What Is Not,” lacks any sort of sēmata, or signs, that can be used to navigate it. As a “way of inquiry for thinking” (B2), it leads nowhere, lacking any sort of expressible or knowable object or goal. The complete absence of an object or result, however, does not hinder us from making statements to this effect, nor from uttering the words “What Is Not” or “Not Being.” Yet this fine distinction is lost to many who have criticized Parmenides for being inconsistent, careless, or simply ignorant. The move from the intellectual unavailability of an object that marks a defunct way of inquiry, to the claim that to even speak of such a “way” is both illegitimate and impossible—all the while insisting that Parmenides himself is to be blamed for such a monstrous fallacy—seems an egregious gloss-over, even if the perpetrator is someone of Plato’s stature. If my arguments prove sound, then Parmenides should be absolved of the charges leveled against him."

"At least three interpretations have been given to B16 of Parmenides' poem. It has been taken for a fragment of his theory of knowledge, of his doctrine of sense perception, and of his views on sensing and knowing.(1) Evidence for these interpretations is taken from Aristotle's Metaphysics and Theophrastus' De Sensibus. The fragment is usually assigned to the second part of the poem, the Way of Seeming or Opinion.
In this study it will be argued that B16 comes from the first part of the poem, the
Way of Truth, and that it is a statement neither of a theory of knowledge nor of sense perception, but an affirmation of the close relationship between thought and Being.(2) there can be no thought without that which is, or in Parmenides' words, "... neither can you recognize that which is not (that is impossible) nor can you speak about it" (B2, 78).(3)"


Finally, an interpretation of this fragment as Parmenides' views on sensing and knowing has been offered by H. Fränkel, "Parmenidesstudien," Göttinger Nachrichten (1930): 153-92, especially 170 and 174. See also H. Fränkel, Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens (Munich, 1955): 173-79.

In Anfängliches Fragen, Hölscher also maintains (p. 113) that Parmenides' teaching in B16 concerns "... Erkenntnis im allgemeinsten Sinne . . . , ohne zwischen Wahrnehmung und Denken, zwischen Trug und Wahrheit zu unterscheiden."

(2) This thesis is not wholly new. It is proposed, for example, by J. H. M. Loenen in Parmenides, Melissus, Gorgias (Assen, 1959). He writes (p. 58): "As to the place of fr. 16 we can by no means be sure that this really formed part of the doxa. On the contrary, there are good reasons for holding that fr. 16 belonged to the first part." My reasons for assigning B16 to the first part are, however, different. Moreover, we do not agree concerning particular details or the interpretation of Parmenides' poem as a whole.

(3) The expressions "that which is," "Being," and "existence" are used interchangeably in this study without any attempt to give them a more precise meaning. "That which is" is a translation of the substantive participle used occasionally in the fragments, e.g., B4, 2 and B8, 35. The most convincing interpretation of Parmenides' thought is that of G. E. L. Owen, "Eleatic Questions," CQ 54 (1960): 84-102.

According to him, the subject of Parmenides' poem is "what can be talked or thought about" (pp. 94-95).

I have accepted Owen's general interpretation for the purpose of this study.


"Although Plutarch is not a major source for interpretation of Parmenides' poem, he preserves several fragments: B1.29-30; B8.4; B13, B14 and B15, the last two of which would otherwise be lost.(1) He also makes observations on Parmenides' style and thought, and relates one biographical incident.(2) Scholars of Plutarch and Parmenides are divided, however, on at least two problems: (I) What was the extent of Plutarch's knowledge of Parmenides, e.g. did he possess a copy of the complete poem, or was he working with second-hand sources such as compendia ?(3) (II) How reliable and worthwhile is his interpretation of Parmenides?" (p. 193)

(3)
"A summation of Plutarch's treatment of Parmenides is now in order. First, Plutarch shows interest in Parmenides' biography, relating one incident possibly derived from Speusippus' Περὶ φιλοσόφων. Secondly, he shows interest in Parmenides' poem, and his observations are probably based on first-hand acquaintance with it. This seems especially so since Parmenides is mentioned with other ancient authors whom Plutarch knew well, and in his travels and study at some major cities of the ancient world, e.g. Athens, Plutarch could easily have had access to a copy of the poem. Further support for attributing to Plutarch direct knowledge of Parmenides' text is found in his discussion of B13 at Amat. 756E-F and his quotation of B14 and B15, not found in other sources. Thirdly, Plutarch seems familiar with both parts of Parmenides' poem. Although his discussion is Platonic in emphasis, his interpretation is not wholly unwarranted by the evidence. Parmenides does seem to have been the first thinker to make some kind of distinction between the 'sensible' and 'intelligible' worlds, even though the terminology is not his. At least the things perceived by mortals do not have the characteristics Parmenides ascribed to τὸ εὖν. Fourthly, there are no clear indications that Plutarch's quotations are inaccurate. Some difficulties, especially in connection with B8.4, can be explained by a copyist's carelessness or Plutarch's tendency to paraphrase Parmenides, possibly from memory. In any case, rather than positing a use of compendia by Plutarch (for which there is no evidence), it seems more plausible to maintain Plutarch's reliance on notebooks based on his direct acquaintance with the poem. Last, and perhaps most important, it would be erroneous to presume that Plutarch's quotations from and references to Parmenides are wholly disinterested. Several are found in anti-Epicurean and anti-Stoic contexts, a phenomenon which suggests, if nothing more, that Plutarch considered Parmenides an ally of the Academy." (pp. 207-208)

(1) The list of quotations in W. C. Helmbold and E. N. O'Neil, Plutarch's Quotations (Baltimore 1959) 53-54, is incomplete: B1.29-30 at 1114D-E and B8.4 at 1114c are not included.

(2) The Adv. Colot. has extended discussion of Parmenides' philosophy, and the biographical note is at 1126B. Remarks on Parmenides' style are at Quomodo adul. 16c-D, De rect. rat. aud. 45A-B, and De Pyth. or. 402F.

(3) Discussing the doxography on the moon in De fac. orb. lun. 929A-F which includes Parmenides, A. Fairbanks wrote: "it is quite possible that Plutarch was using some Stoic compendium which quoted freely from the earlier philosophers." See "On Plutarch's Quotations from the Early Greek Philosophers," TAPA 28 (1897) 82.


"Parmenides held that the only thing we can truly say in philosophy is "is" or, in a more idiomatic but also more misleading English, "it is," éstin. Even though this main thesis of Parmenides turns out to have more consequences and more interesting consequences than it might at first seem to promise, our first reaction to it is likely to be one of puzzlement. How can a major philosopher hold such an incredible, paradoxical view? The purpose of this paper is to make Parmenides' thesis understandable. I shall argue that, notwithstanding the paradoxical appearance of Parmenides' thesis, it is in reality an eminently natural consequence of certain assumptions which are all understandable and which can all be shown to have been actually subscribed to by Parmenides. Furthermore, Parmenides' assumptions are arguably not incorrect, either, with one exception. They are all of considerable
historical and systematic interest.

"Parmenides' first and foremost assumption is easier to formulate in terms of conceptual models or paradigms than in the form of an explicit premise. This model amounts to conceiving of thinking as a goal-directed process that "comes off" or "realizes itself" in its objects.

I shall first show how this conceptual model explains Parmenides' conclusion, and only afterwards return to my grounds for ascribing it to Parmenides and also return to its background and its corollaries in his work." (p. 5)


"Parmenides is often credited with discovering the category of timeless truths, and he is sometimes praised or blamed (along with Plato) for asserting that what is real can transcend time.(1) But besides positing a timeless reality for eternal truths to be about, Parmenides finds fault with beliefs about time and argues that time is not real: if temporal thoughts are inherently contradictory then reality cannot be temporal. In claiming time to be contradictory, Parmenides stands first in a line of philosophers (including Plato, Kant, and J.M. McTaggart) who find something unreal about time.

(...) In this paper, I shall suggest it is wrong to interpret Parmenides' position as hinging mainly on semantic issues centered on reference. I shall show how commentators who do so fail to do justice to his complaints about time. Instead, I shall reconstruct Parmenides' worries in terms of the recent conflict between "tensed" and "tenseless" views of time. From this perspective, Parmenides offers an early proscription on the contradictory beliefs that dog any metaphysics based on temporal becoming. It will also become clear how complete Parmenides' rejection of time was: why, for other reasons, he could not accept even the tenseless view, and why he should be suspicious of attempts to read him as discovering a new kind of "eternity." (pp. 573-574)


"To speak of *hybris* in the case of Parmenides seems hardly justified. He is addressed by the unnamed goddess to whose abode he journeys as Koupe, "youth" or "initiate", hardly a term of great respect in Greek usage. He is guided on his path, i.e., he has not found it by himself, and he receives a truth he never claims as his own. Could a mortal show greater awareness of his limitations? Yet, in an oddly disturbing way the distinction between the divine and the human is obliterated—the worst kind of *hybris* for Greek thought and feeling.

To charge Parmenides with *hybris* is paradoxical, to say the least, and yet perhaps illuminating. The philosopher's *hybris* has none of the traditional connotations of doing violence or injury to somebody out of wanton insolence and overreaching. On the contrary. His quest for enlightenment is sanctioned by divine power, by righteousness (θέμις) and justice δική(), and marked by almost complete self-effacement. And yet it contains features that would be clearly recognizable as *hybris* to traditional Greek thinking, and some of its results may well be seen as destructive. The Greek notion of *hybris*, overweening pride, connotes above all a failure of man
to maintain its opposite, proper pride, i.e., to understand and occupy his proper and rightful place in the cosmos. That place is defined for man most significantly in terms of his relationship with the divine, and therefore the Greek awareness of *hybris* points to the ever-present danger of a disturbance in this relationship. To charge Parmenides with *hybris* is then to charge philosophy with being double edged, a new source of enlightenment but also a new source of danger.

Transposing this notion from traditional Greek culture to philosophy may illumine how all ways of being human are perilous." (p. 451)


Contents: Preface VIII; 1 Introduction 1; 2 The Milesians 11; 3 Heraclitus 32; 4 Pythagoras and the Greek West 60; 5 Parmenides and Zeno 78; 6 The Age of the Sophists107; 7 Cosmology from Parmenides to Democritus 127; 8 Conclusion: the Study of the Presocratics 149; Notes 156; Maps: Black Sea, Aegean, Levant VI; Ionia 12; Magna Graecia 62; Index 165-168.

On Parmenides see pp. 78-99 and 128-130.

"Parmenides is the first Presocratic of whose thought we still have a nearly complete and continuous exposition in his own words. That this is so is due entirely to one man, the Neoplatonist scholar Simplicius. In his commentary on the Physics of Aristotle, written early in the sixth century A.D., Simplicius quotes large extracts from the poem of Parmenides, in illustration of Aristotle’s remarks on it, expressly because, as he says, the book had become scarce. It is therefore almost possible to approach Parmenides in the way intended by Parmenides himself; this chapter will follow that way as far as it can be established.

It is worth noticing that Parmenides expressed his thought in hexameter verses. This was not an odd or ridiculous thing to do, as it would be if a modern philosopher wrote in verse. Verse was still appropriate, and felt to be appropriate, for any pronouncement intended to be particularly memorable. Written books existed, and many states displayed their laws and decrees publicly in writing; yet the habit of relying on the written word was not widespread or of long standing. An educated man was one who had things by heart, and verse is more easily memorised than prose." (p. 78)


"Parmenides fr. 16 Diels-Kranz, notoriously, presents a tangle of textual and syntactic problems. This paper starts by by-passing these problems (though it eventually returns to them). The aim is to explore the possibility of a certain kind of reading of Parmenides' account of "mind" and "thinking" (νοός, νόημα, φρονέω) here.

In the rest of section 1, I consider the archaic (principally Homeric) usage of the words for "thinking" and "mind". Section 2 outlines the proposed reading of Parmenides’ theory in the light of these linguistic considerations.

Section 3 grapples with the greatest problem for that reading: the apparently contradictory testimony of Aristotle. Here it is necessary to use the rather different testimony of Theophrastus, and a general hypothesis about Aristotle's reading of the "materialistic" psychology of his predecessors.

Section 4 considers the earlier theories of "perception of like by like", of which Parmenides' is one. I aim to show that these can be understood as involving an "inner model". Finally, section 5 returns to Parmenides fr. 16, and shows how it may be read as an example of an "inner model" theory of mental activity." (p. 13)
"Shortly before his death, Reiner Schurmann [1941-1993] brought to completion his remarkable magnum opus, Des Hégémonies brisées,(1) “Broken Hegemonies.” (…)
"Because the book is only recently published, as yet only in French, and because it is almost 800 pages long, I shall take rather more time than usual in setting out as accurately as I can the fundamentals of Schurmann’s interpretation of Parmenides before turning to some remarks on the philosophic issues raised by that interpretation. Accordingly, the structure of this article will be as follows: after some introductory remarks, I shall, in part I, set out as best I can Schurmann’s interpretation of Parmenides. I shall from time to time make comments on very specific textual issues as they arise, but I shall limit my comments to the specifics of those texts. Then, in part II, I shall raise and discuss some of the broader philosophic issues raised by Schurmann’s thought-provoking interpretation. I might best prepare the reader for the striking originality of Schurmann’s interpretation of Parmenides by beginning with a word of clarification about my title. If we were to take as our standard some version of the orthodox interpretation of Parmenides (Parmenides as advocating a changeless, eternal, perfect, one Being and that alone, thereby denying all change, becoming, motion, or time; thus the father of the notion of a changeless, eternal Being of some sort), then indeed, Parmenides may have established a hegemony which has been, or perhaps still needs to be, broken. Or perhaps, Schurmann himself breaks that hegemony through his radical deconstruction of that orthodox interpretation. For in any case, the Parmenides that Schurmann reads is certainly no broken hegemony, because it is not a hegemony at all, at least not in the sense of establishing a single, exclusive, dominant and domineering law. As a final prefatory remark, let me indicate in advance how much I appreciate the originality of Schurmann’s interpretation. Unorthodox interpretations of a thinker that leave that thinker far behind by straying again and again from the text or by focusing only on a few lines of the text, those that suit one’s interpretation, are easy; unorthodox interpretations such as Schurmann’s that are accomplished by the most faithful adherence to the text as a whole and its spirit are always the most thought-provoking and challenging." (pp. 243-244)

"Sufficient remains of Parmenides' poem for its general pattern to be evident. It falls into four sections:
1. The Proem (DK6 28 B 1).
2. A discussion of principles, which lays down certain axioms and traces their implications (B 2, 3, 6, 7).
3. A delineation of the properties of reality, from the starting-point dictated by Section 2 and according to the principles there stated (B 8. 1 -49).
4. A cosmogony (B 8.50-61, 9 ff.).
There are two fragments whose position is uncertain: B 4 and 5. I shall be discussing frg. 5 at length in a moment. Frg. 4 has no implications disruptive of any conclusions that can be drawn from the other fragments, nor is its presence inconsistent with the general scheme of the poem. Its location is a problem, but one which, for the present, can be left on one side." (p. 15)
"It is my purpose to discuss two passages in the fragments from which conclusions are usually drawn which conflict with the general pattern of Parmenides' thought and argument. They appear in DK as:

B 1. 29: Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ
and B 5: Ξυνὸν δὲ μοί ἐστιν, ὁππόθεν ἄρξωμαι· τόθι γὰρ πάλιν ἱξομαι αὖθις.

These passages have received various interpretations, sometimes separately, sometimes in combination. I shall suggest that frg. 5 should be treated as a doubtful fragment and that at 1.29 the correct reading is εὐπειθεος not εὐκυκλεως."

(p. 16)

Abstract: "A reading of Parmenides fragments B1-B4 shows that Being and the Cosmos are related as model to likeness in a way that allows the Cosmos to have some degree of being and intelligibility. The cosmology that Parmenides defends reads as a precursor to the «likely story» of Plato’s «Timaeus» and, indeed, Proclus in his Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides had already argued for a similar reading of Parmenides’ poem."

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Furth suggests that, at the start of his argument, Parmenides is concerned to show the meaninglessness of negative "is" statements, whether "is" be taken in an existential or a predicative sense. One cannot say "Unicorns do not exist" meaningfully; for, in order for the word "unicorns" to be meaningful, there must be unicorns for the word to refer to. Therefore, negative existential statements are self-defeating, because they purport to deny a necessary condition of their own meaningfulness. Parallel considerations apply to the predicative sense of "is".
If "John is tall" is meaningful only if John is tall, or the fact of John's being tall exists, or the like, then the statement "John is not tall" would be meaningful only if, for instance, the fact of John's being tall did not exist, but if it did not exist, then, again, there is nothing for the sentence to refer to, and therefore the sentence must be meaningless." (p. 287)

"To summarize the course of the discussion, then. We have seen that, if we do not take Parmenides as postulating monism, the argument proceeds with considerable force to the conclusions that Parmenides claims, and does so without involving him in any direct fallacy, such as a failure to distinguish between an 'existential' and a 'predicative' sense of "is." For just as I can think of something, so I can think of something's being the case, and the same considerations will apply. Nor does he impose impossibly stringent restrictions on meaningfulness; if anything, he is over-liberal in his admissions of existence and being. Given acceptance of the claim that what can be thought of must be, his argument has force.(26)"

(26) Throughout I have assumed that νοείν is to be taken in its customary sense of "to think." C. H. Kahn ["The Thesis of Parmenides," The Review of Metaphysics, XXII (1969)], (pp. 703-711), however, has maintained that it is to be taken in the
stronger sense of "to know." This can hardly be so in view of the fact that Parmenides does ascribe νόος to deluded mankind, who, he claims, are totally enmeshed in δόξα, opinion (B 6.6; 16.2). Furthermore, he uses the expression "wandering νόον," and, had he meant "knowledge," this would be a striking 'contradictio in adiecto' (B 6.6).


"I am concerned in this paper with the philological basis for Greek ontology; that is to say, with the raw material which was provided for philosophical analysis by the ordinary use and meaning of the verb einai, 'to be'. Roughly stated, my question is: How were the Greek philosophers guided, or influenced, in their formulation of doctrines of Being, by the prephilosophical use of this verb which (together with its nominal derivatives on and ousia) serves to express the concept of Being in Greek?" (p. 16)


"If we except Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, Parmenides is perhaps the most important and influential of all the Greek philosophers. And considered as a metaphysician, he is perhaps the most original figure in the western tradition. At any rate, if ontology is the study of Being, or what there is, and metaphysics the study of ultimate Reality, or what there is in the most fundamental way, then Parmenides may reasonably be regarded as the founder of ontology and metaphysics at once. For he is the first to have articulated the concept of Being or Reality as a distinct topic for philosophic discussion.

The poem of Parmenides is the earliest philosophic text which is preserved with sufficient completeness and continuity to permit us to follow a sustained line of argument. It is surely one of the most interesting arguments in the history of philosophy, and we are lucky to have this early text, perhaps a whole century older than the first dialogues of Plato. But the price we must pay for our good fortune is to face up to a vipers' nest of problems, concerning details of the text and the archaic language but also concerning major questions of philosophic interpretation. These problems are so fundamental that, unless we solve them correctly, we cannot even be clear as to what Parmenides is arguing for, or why. And they are so knotted that we can scarcely unravel a single problem without finding the whole nest on our hands.

I am primarily concerned here to elucidate Parmenides' thesis: to see what he meant by the philosophic claim which is compressed into the one-word sentence "it is." I take this to be the premiss (or one of them), from which lie derives his famous denial of all change and plurality. I shall thus consider the nature of this premiss, and why he thought it plausible or self-evident. I shall also look briefly at the structure of his argument which concludes that change is impossible, in order to see a bit more clearly how such a paradoxical conclusion might also seem plausible to Parmenides, and how it could be taken seriously by his successors. Finally, I shall say a word about the Parmenidean identification of Thinking and Being." (pp. 700-701)


"For Burnet and for many scholars of his generation, Parmenides was essentially a
critic of earlier physical theories and the author of a challenge which provoked the atomist theory of matter as a response. Commentators today are more inclined to see him either as a philosopher of language in the style of Frege or Wittgenstein or, in the Continental tradition, as a metaphysician of Being in the manner of Hegel or Heidegger. It seems to me that Burnet was closer to the truth (even if his interpretation in detail is absurdly narrow), and that he and Meyerson were faithful to the deeper spirit of Eleatic philosophy in insisting upon a close connection between Parmenides' argument and the physical science of his day and ours. At all events, any interpretation must take account of the fact that his doctrine seems permanently relevant not only to speculative metaphysics and abstract ontology but also to critical reflection on the structure of natural science. Hence I am happy that Howard Stein was willing to publish his comments on the poem, since his unusual command of modern physical theory makes it possible for him to formulate a plausible reinterpretation of Eleatic doctrine within the framework of post-Newtonian or Einsteinian physics. I fully agree with him as to the historical and philosophical value of such a reconstruction, even if it cannot square with every facet of the archaic text under discussion. Simply as a commentary on the text, however, a one-sided interpretation fully worked out will often be more illuminating than a carefully balanced synthesis of different points of view. Once such an interpretation has been presented, it is the ungrateful task of the interlocutor to insist upon the appropriate qualifications. Stein's reconstruction gains in coherence by taking Parmenides' Being as "truth" rather than "thing," as "discernible structure in the world" or alles, was der Fall ist: the unique Sachverhalt but not the unique Gegenstand. But Parmenides himself is not so coherent, and part of the creative influence of his theory was due precisely to the fact that it can also be understood and was presumably also intended as an account of the only thing or entity or object that can be rationally understood. Hence it was that, the atomists could define the concept of indestructible solid body as their new version of Being (on), and empty space as the new form of Non-being (ouk on or oudén). In general, the Greek philosophers never succeeded in formulating a systematic distinction between thing and fact, between individual object and structure (although Plato's self-criticism and later development of the theory of Forms may involve a conscious shift, from one category to the other)." (pp. 333-334)

"I am grateful to Alexander Mourelatos for having tried to formulate my interpretation more precisely, and if he has not entirely succeeded that no doubt shows that my own exposition was not clear enough. I confess that I do not recognize my view in the complicated reduction sentences which he offers as a semi-formalization of my version of thesis and antithesis in fragment 2. I agree with him that any reading of the first and second Ways must construe them as contradictory, so that "the reason which compels rejection of the second route is the reason which enjoins strict and faithful adherence to the first route" (p. 736). I think my view can he shown to satisfy this condition, and to this end I shall indulge in a hit of rudimentary formalization." (p. 335)

"Mansfeld has given us one of the most penetrating and original discussions of Parmenides' poem since Frankel's Parmenidesstudien in 1930. The book consists of four chapters, each one of which might stand alone as an independent essay, but which together aim at a unified view of Parmenides' thought. Mansfeld develops his
interpretation with a wealth of detail, a careful, nearly complete, and on the whole judicious discussion of other views, which makes his book at once a commentary on the poem and a valuable survey of earlier scholarship." (p. 113)

"Thus Maansfeld does justice to the positive side of the Doxa, in the analogies with Being, and also to the negative side, in the original sin of positing two forms instead of rejecting the other as the non-existent. He goes farther than other interpreters in suggesting an epistemic or pedagogic function of the Doxa as a theory which permits the initiate (i.e. the philosopher) to find his way back to the origins of the manifold of experience in the positing of two basic forms." (p. 118)

Reprinted by Hackett Publishing, 2003 with new introduction and discussion of relation between predicative and existential uses of the verb *einai*.

"First of all, a word of clarification on the nature of the enterprise. My original aim was to provide a kind of grammatical prolegomenon to Greek ontology. First of all, a word of clarification on the nature of the enterprise. My original aim was to provide a kind of grammatical prolegomenon to Greek ontology. The notion of Being, as formulated by Parmenides, seems to come from nowhere, like a philosophical meteor with no historical antecedents but profound historical consequences. It would be difficult to overstate the influence of this new conception. On the one hand, Plato's doctrine of the eternal being of the Forms as well as his struggle with Not-Being both clearly derive from Parmenides' account of to on. On the other hand, not only Aristotle's doctrine of categories as "the many ways that things are said to be" but also his definition of metaphysics as the study of "being qua being" provide deliberate alternatives to Parmenides' monolithic conception of what is." (*Introduction* (2003), p. VII)


"Despite the silence of Aristotle, there can be little doubt of the importance of Parmenides as an influence on Plato's thought. If it was the encounter with Socrates that made Plato a philosopher, it was the poem of Parmenides that made him a metaphysician. In the first place it was Parmenides' distinction between Being and Becoming that provided Plato with the ontological basis for his theory of Forms. When he decided to submit this theory to searching criticism, he chose as critic no other than Parmenides himself. And when the time came for Socrates to be replaced as principal speaker in the dialogues, Plato introduced as his new spokesman a visitor from Elea. Even in the *Timaeus*, where the chief speaker is neither Socrates nor the Eleatic Stranger, the exposition takes as its starting-point the Parmenidean dichotomy. (1) From the *Symposium* and *Phaedo* to the *Sophist* and *Timaeus*, the language of Platonic metaphysics is largely the language of Parmenides. One imagines that Plato had studied the poem of Parmenides with considerable care. He had the advantage of a complete text, an immediate knowledge of the language, and perhaps even an Eleatic tradition of oral commentary. So he was in a better position than we are to understand what Parmenides had in mind. Since Plato has given us a much fuller and more explicit statement of his own conception of Being, this conception, if used with care, may help us interpret the more lapidary and puzzling utterances of Parmenides himself."
(1) Timaeus 27D 5: 'The first distinction to be made is this: what is the Being that is forever and has no becoming, and what is that which is always becoming but never being?' (p. 237)


"This seems a happy occasion to return to Parmenides, in order both to clarify my own interpretation of Parmenidean Being and also to emphasize the affinity between what I have called the veridical reading and the account in terms of predication that Alex Mourelatos gave in his monumental The Route of Parmenides.) It is good to have this opportunity to acknowledge how much our views have in common, even if they do not coincide. And perhaps I may indulge here in a moment of nostalgia, since Alex and I are both old Parmenideans. My article 'The Thesis of Parmenides' was published in 1969, just a year before Alex's book appeared. That was nearly thirty years ago, and it was not the beginning of the story for either of us. My own Eleatic obsession had taken hold even earlier, with an unpublished Master's dissertation on Parmenides, just as Alex had begun with a doctoral dissertation on the same subject. So, for both of us, returning to Parmenides may have some of the charm of returning to the days of our youth." (p. 81)

"I want to defend Parmenides' positive account of Being as a coherent, unified vision. And I think his refutation of coming-to-be if formally impeccable, once one accepts the premise (which Plato will deny) that esti and ouk esti are mutually exclusive, like p and not-p. And it is precisely this assimilation of the 'is or is-not' dichotomy to the law of non-contradiction -- to p or not-p' - that accounts for the extraordinary effectiveness of Parmenides' argument, its acceptance by the fifth-century cosmologists, and the difficulty that Plato encountered in answering it. However, if the rich, positive account of Being that results from Parmenides' amalgamation of the entire range of uses and meanings of einai turns out to be a long-term success (as the fruitful ancestor of ancient atomism, Platonic Forms, and the metaphysics of eternal Being in western theology), the corresponding negation in Not-Being is a conceptual nightmare. Depending on which function of einai is being denied, to mê on can represent either negative predication, falsehood, non-identity, non-existence, or non-entity, that is to say, nothing at all. The fallacy in Parmenides' argument lies not in the cumulation of positive attributes for Being but in the confused union of these various modes of negation in the single conception of 'what-is-not.' That is why Plato saw fit to criticize his great predecessor in respect to the notion of Not-Being, while making positive use of the Parmenidean notion of Being." (pp. 89-90)


"Parmenides was my first love in philosophy. I had once thought to write a book on Parmenides, but there always seemed to be too many unsolved problems. I conclude these essays by returning to three problems that do seem soluble, and that do not
involve the concept of Being: Parmenides' relation to natural philosophy, the direction of the chariot ride in his proem, and the epistemic preference for Fire." (p. 207)

Abstract: "G. E. R. Lloyd (1) has argued that Parmenides 'probably held that the sex of the child is determined by its place on the right or left of the mother's womb (right for males, left for females)'. It is the purpose of this paper to challenge this assertion by re-examining the primary evidence of fragments 17 and r8 of Parmenides as well as the tangled mass of testimony of the doxographers, Censorinus, Aetius and Lactantius. In so doing I shall consciously observe a sharp distinction between theories of sex differentiation and theories of heredity since I shall argue that the confusion of the two subjects has led to distortion of Parmenides' doctrines." (1) G. E. R. Lloyd, Polarity and Analogy (Cambridge, 1966) 17 and 50. It is interesting to note the change in wording from Lloyd's article in JHS lxxxii (1962) 60 where he uses the word 'apparently' instead of 'probably'. Other discussions on the problem of Parmenides' sexual theories within the last ten years include that of W. K. C. Guthrie, History of Greek Philosophy, vol. ii (Cambridge, 1965) 78 ff. and L. Tarán, Parmenides (Princeton, 1965) 263-6.
Tarán indeed asserts (264, note 98) 'sex, according to Parmenides, was determined by the female and not by the male'. Earlier work of importance in this field has been done by E. Lesky, "Die Zeugungs- und Vererbungslehren der Antike und ihr Nachwirken", Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jahrgang 1950, Nr. 19, 1272 ff.

"In his De caelo (3. 1, 298b4–24 = 28 A 25 DK) Aristotle makes a strange and puzzling statement about Parmenides and the Eleatics." [follow the translation of the passage] (p. 1)
(...)
"What I want rather to do is to suggest a way in which we can make sense both of Aristotle's remark in the De caelo and of Simplicius' comments. This can be done, I would argue, in the following way. Let us begin by assuming that all we have is the world of seeming. This, however, is seen to be defective in that it combines 'is' and 'is not', and we can know on the basis of the logical insight developed with devastating effect by Parmenides that only that which is can exist. We must accordingly proceed to a fresh analysis of the world of seeming. If we take this world at its own level, which is that of seeming, we can see that it contains, and so can be analysed into, combinations that change between two shapes or principles, light and darkness (Parmenides 28 B 8. 41, 53-9 DK). Thus, any physical object can be found both in the daytime and at night, and further it can be seen at any one time as combining what we might call reflectivity and light-absorption. We have thus the first step in a reductionist analysis. These two principles, however, can next be reduced to one—darkness is what is not light, and on the principles of Parmenidean logic what is not cannot exist. We need not ask whether the negative in 'is not light' is negating a copula or negating an existential sense of the verb 'to be'—in either case it is plausible enough to treat darkness as a negative principle. We are left then
with the one principle only, that which is. This principle can be regarded as something which is itself inside or within the world of seeming. But it will be better understood, I would suggest, as being not within the world of seeming but rather in a sense the world of seeming as such when this world is correctly understood and is stripped by the application of Parmenidean logic and cleansed of the plurality of names which mortals assign to it. For Simplicius this whole approach is to be seen as a mistake because it involves a denial of the dualism essential to Platonism, the dualism between the intelligible world and the (derived) world of appearances. But it may well have seemed to him to be a mistake which Parmenides was actually making." (pp. 6-7)


Abstract: "There is an interpretation of Parmenides' poem which has not yet had, but deserves, a hearing. It reconciles two of the most prominent views of the meaning of the verb 'to be' ('εἶναι') as it occurs in the poem. It agrees with the spirit of those who interpret 'εἶναι' as 'existence.' It agrees with the letter of those who interpret 'εἶναι' as the copula. The basic idea is to treat relevant syntactically incomplete occurrences of the verb 'to be' as meaning 'to be something or other.(1) In section I, I will explain and clarify the interpretation. In section II, I will dialectically support the interpretation by comparing it with other major interpretations. Weaknesses will also appear." (p. 167)

(1) To my knowledge the idea that such uses of the verb εἶναι' in Greek philosophy might be profitably interpreted in this way was introduced by G.E.L. Owen ('A Metaphysical Paradox' in Rendord Bambrough, ed., New Essays On Plato and Aristotle New York: Humanities Press 1965 71, n. 1). He originally suggested that for Plato to be is to be something or other but later ('Plato on Not-Being') in Gregory Vlastos, ed., Plato, I Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1971 266) he recants. As for the equation "to be is to be something," the negation of "to be something" is "not to be anything" or "to be nothing," which Plato holds to be unintelligible; and then it would follow from the equation that "not to be" makes no sense. But Plato recognizes no use of the verb in which it cannot be directly negated. The fact that Parmenides not only recognizes but demands a use of the verb 'to be' which cannot be meaningfully negated is a reason to attempt to understand his use of 'to be' as 'to be something other.'

As is well known, Owen himself interprets Parmenides' syntactically incomplete uses of 'eivai' as 'to exist?' ('Eleatic Questions',) Classical Quarterly 10 1960, 94).


"In The Presocratic Philosophers Vol. I: Thales to Zeno (London, 1979, pp. 155-175) Jonathan Barnes presents a formalization of an argument he finds in Fragments B2, B3 and B6 (148, 149 and 150 in Barnes' numbering). I am sympathetic to the enterprise but I think the execution is confused. After explaining the confusion, I present an alternative which I think preserves most of Barnes' interpretation." (p. 95)


"What is to be done when the scholarly author of a book is also a believer and writes in a style that seeks to convert the reader in two different senses of that word? Firstly, to convert the academic reader to the argument expressed, and secondly to convert the reader more generally to the belief system expressed in the book – in this case a wider mystical approach to life. Whilst doing this, Kingsley also suggests that the current point-of-view of the scholar may be nothing more than a dogmatic and
faith-tinged position anyway – so how should we read all this? These questions should be at the forefront of any reader’s response to In the Dark Places of Wisdom. Kingsley is a lauded academic and also a self-admitted mystic and this book is framed as a journey into a new take on reality." p. 118 (Christopher Hartney, Book Review of Peter Kingsley: In the Dark Places of Wisdom, "Alternative Spirituality and Religion=, 9, 2018, pp. 118-121)

"And that’s the purpose of this book: to awaken something we’ve forgotten, something we’ve been made to forget by the passing of time and by those who’ve misunderstood or—for reasons of their own—have wanted us to forget. It could be said that this process of awakening is profoundly healing. It is. The only trouble with saying this is that we’ve come to have such a superficial idea of healing. For most of us, healing is what makes us comfortable and eases the pain. It’s what softens, protects us. And yet what we want to be healed of is often what will heal us if we can stand the discomfort and the pain." (p. 4)

"You might be tempted to describe the way that Parmeneides and the people close to him have been treated in the last two thousand years as a conspiracy, a conspiracy of silence. And in a very basic sense you’d be right. But at the same time all these dramas of misrepresentation, of misuse and abuse, are nothing compared with what’s been done to the central part of his teachings— or the writings of his successors. And the dramas fade away almost into insignificance compared with the extraordinary power of those teachings as they still survive: a power that’s waiting to be understood again and used, not just talked about or pushed aside. This is what we’ll need to explore next, and start rediscovering step by step. So everything that’s been mentioned so far Parmeneides’ opening account of his journey to another world, the traditions about him, the finds at Velia—may seem a story in itself or even a story within a story. But the story is far from finished, and this book that you’ve come to the end of is only the beginning: the first chapter." (p. 231)


"The writings of Parmenides, and other people like him, survive in fragments. Scholars have played all sorts of games with them. For centuries they have experimented with distorting them and torturing them until they seem to yield a sense exactly the opposite of their original meaning. Then they argue about their significance and put them on show like exhibits in a museum. And no one understands quite how important they are. Even though they only survive in bits and pieces, they are far less fragmentary than we are. And they are much more than dead words. They are like the mythological treasure—the invaluable object that has been lost and misused and has to be rediscovered at all costs. But this is not mythology, or fiction. It’s reality. Fiction is like sitting on a goldmine and dreaming about gold; it’s everything that happens when you forget this. There is absolutely nothing mystical in what I am saying. It's very simple, completely down-to-earth and practical. We tend to imagine we have our feet on the ground when we are dealing with facts. And yet facts are of absolutely no significance in themselves: it’s just as easy to get lost in facts as it is to get lost in fictions. They have their value, and we have to use them—but use them to go beyond them. Facts on their own are like sitting on top of a goldmine and scratching at the dust around our feet with a little stick." (p. 21)

"Since Burnet at least (Early Greek Philosophy [third edition], 1920) pp. 179 and 181) it has been common to attribute to Parmenides the argument against motion described by Melissus in his fragment 7.

(...) It had occurred independently to the authors of this short paper that the matter deserved further clarification, and, having discovered in conversation that their views were closely similar, they submit them jointly." (p. 1)

"Thus the fragments of Parmenides contain not the slightest hint of the physical argument that motion is impossible because it entails the existence of a void to move in. But this physical argument is stated in Melissus fr. 7 § 7, after the assertion that void, as not-being, does not exist: 'Nor does it [sc. Being] move; for it has nowhere to withdraw to, but is full. For if there had been void, it would have withdrawn into the void; but since there is no void it does not have anywhere to withdraw to'. If it had not been for Plato Theaetetus 180 E 3-4, the attribution of this kind of argument to Parmenides, not merely to Melissus, would presumably never have been made." (p. 2)

"This whole field of possibilities deserves further exploration, but is shut off by the unjustified interpretation of those who attribute to Parmenides an argument invented probably by Melissus." (p. 4)


"Unless Parmenides' One Being is considered a corporeal unit, he cannot be said to have denied the existence of a void. And whether or not his monism can be regarded as materialistic is a matter of dispute." (p. 524)

"Descartes rejected the proposition that there can be a space in which there is no body only after he had demonstrated "The grounds on which the existence of material things may be known with certainty."(10) The Pythagoreans, after viewing their numbers as discontinuous, postulated a void to separate them."(11) Void appears then to be posterior to: some kind of phenomenalism, some kind of materialism, and some kind of pluralism.

The point here is that Parmenides' One Being excludes all of these. It seems, therefore, purely arbitrary to say that Parmenides denied the existence of void. The only way to answer Parmenides is to find some reasonable relation between Being and non-Being. Taking body as "what is" and void as "what is not" merely rejects the more original and more fundamental problem, How can non-Being be?" (pp. 527-528)


"In a kind of history of philosophy Shahrastani(1) draws up a list of seven philosophers(2) - Empedocles among them - whom he calls the "pillars of wisdom".(3) He approaches them with an unambiguous concern regarding the creator, namely to show his unity, and clearly formulated questions with regard to the creation of the world, namely "what and how many the primary principles are, and what the έσκατα are and when they come to happen".(4) As Franz Altheim and Ruth Stiehl convincingly show, Shahrastani took over the canon of the seven philosophers, as well as the problems he brings to them, from Porphyry.(5) The work that is to be considered in this context is his "φιλοσόφων ιστορία, of which fragments are preserved.(6)"

(...) "Parmenides is the thinker who exclusively argues on the basis of the conditions of
"The central term in the Parmenidean philosophy of history is Dike. All, by being unchangeable and motionless only as a whole, is actually unified and held together by her. One must therefore conceive of Dike as the supreme deity in Parmenides. Here the question arises, in what relationship to each other she and history, or rather eternal being and the world of seeming have to be seen." (p. 44)

(1) Muhammad B. 'Abd al-Karim Shahrastani was the principal historian in the oriental Middle Ages (1076-1153). The work that is relevant for the present paper is his *Kitab al-Mital wa'l-Nihal*, a treatise on religions and sects.

(2) Thales, Anaxagoras (= Anaximander), Anaximenes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato.

(3) Shahrastani; 253, 13.


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"Chapter Four is a consideration of Parmenides' fragments 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 in Heidegger's interpretation, which comes from different works of the middle and later period of his thought. Since for Heidegger all primordial thinkers speak essentially the same, in his reading of Parmenides, I encounter the same issues with which we are already familiar from earlier chapters. He does not set up any opposition between Heraclitus and Parmenides. Nevertheless, if in the study of Heraclitus his focus was on λόγος, and φύσις, now the foremost attention is given to ἀλήθεια. In Heidegger's view, ἀλήθεια is a basic character of beings, as well as the horizon within which the manifestation of what is present occurs. He claims that in the tradition of Western philosophy, the original Greek experience of ἀλήθεια has been misinterpreted and forced into oblivion. Consequently, for Heidegger, ἀλήθεια is what is most worthy of thought. Its question is, for him, inseparably bound up with the question of being. Heidegger's inquiry into ἀλήθεια in the Parmenidean poem takes us beyond the Greek experience of being, namely, to ἀλήθεια in the no longer Greek but Heideggerian sense as the openness of being. Further, since the openness of being refers to a situation with in history, the context of his interpretation of Parmenides becomes the history of being. Only in this context, I conclude, can we fully understand and appreciate the interpretation of Presocratic thinkers in his later works." (p. 21)


Abstract: "Abstract: This paper argues that the widespread impression of Parmenides as a poor poet has led to consequential errors in the reconstruction of his poem. A
reconsideration of the sources behind two of the more disputed lines in the standard arrangement of the fragments leads to the suggestion that modern editors have mistakenly treated what were similar but separate lines in the original poem as variants of a single verse. Seeing through that confusion allows us to see Parmenides in a better poetic light, and gives potential insight into how his manner of exposition relates to his philosophic message.


"In a recent article in this journal, Néstor-Luis Cordero has offered an interesting account of how scholars may have been misreading Parmenides' poem for centuries, as well as some provocative suggestions on how to correct that misreading.(1)

(...)

Cordero’s essay is a valuable reminder that the arrangements of the fragments that we encounter today are reconstructions by modern editors, a fact too easily and too frequently overlooked. However, his account of the history of scholarship on the Doxa calls for correction on some points, and his own proposed rearrangement of the fragments strikes me as at least as chimerical a production as the more familiar presentation that Cordero likens to the fantastic creatures of Greek myth. Thus, while I share with him a conviction that the orthodoxy about the Doxa is incorrect, my own view of where it goes wrong is rather different. In what follows, I begin by discussing several matters raised by Cordero that, though often neglected, are necessary preliminaries for a responsible reconstruction of Parmenides' poem. As we proceed, attending more closely to the ancient sources for the fragments and venturing into what might seem like alien terrain, a different way of viewing the Doxa, including a ‘new’ fragment, will emerge.

(1) ‘The “Doxa of Parmenides” Dismantled’, hereafter ‘Cordero 2010'. See also Cordero 2008, [Eleatica 2006: Parmenide scienziato? Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag] 78-80 and Cordero 2011b [Parmenidean “Physics” is not Part of what Parmenides calls “δόξα”]. References to Cordero 2010 in the main body of the text are by page number(s) alone, given in parentheses. The abbreviation ‘DK’ refers to Diels and Kranz 1951. Items such as ‘DK 10' or ‘DK 7.5' are shorthand for referring to the ‘B' fragments (and line numbers, if given) in the chapter in DK on Parmenides.
On the website "Theory and History of Ontology" (www.ontology.co)

Other Pages on Parmenides:

- Parmenides and the Question of Being in Greek Thought
- Critical Notes on His Fragments (Diels Kranz fr. 1-3)
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