

Ontology and Doxa

On Parmenides' Dual Strategies

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ABSTRACT: Starting from Reinhardt's interpretive instruction to take into account both parts of the poem of Parmenides in order to achieve a sufficient understanding of his philosophy, this paper aims to re-evaluate the state of recent scholarship, and to propose an approach that reveals the "dualistic methodology" at the heart of Parmenides' philosophy. The ontological monism of Truth emerges as grounded in the dualistic projection of the concepts of Being and Nothing. The dualism of *Doxa*, structured upon the forms of Light and Night, evolves by producing a further duality: the erroneous opinions that separate the two forms have to be replaced by the appropriate cosmological world-order of their mixture. Finally, the poem as a whole, in its two parts, reflects a deeper duality, which signifies the profound distance that separates the human from the divine. The importance of all these binary structures compels us to re-examine the consideration of Parmenides as champion of a blind monism.

KEY-WORDS: Parmenides; Monism; Dualism; Ontology; Truth; *Doxa*.

RESUMO: A partir das diretivas interpretativas de Reinhardt de levar em conta ambas as partes do poema de Parmênides para conseguir uma compreensão suficiente de sua filosofia, esse artigo quer avaliar novamente o estado da produção acadêmica recente e propor uma abordagem que revele a "metodologia dualística" no coração da filosofia de Parmênides. O monismo ontológico da Verdade emerge com base na projeção dualística dos conceitos de Ser e Nada. O dualismo da *Doxa*, estruturado sobre as formas de Luz e Noite, evolui na produção de uma dualidade adicional: as opiniões erradas que separam as duas formas devem ser substituídas por uma apropriada e cosmológica ordem-do-mundo de suas misturas. Finalmente, o poema como um todo, em duas partes, reflete uma dualidade mais profunda, que significa a profunda distância que separa o humano do divino. A importância de todas essas estruturas binárias nos obriga a examinar novamente a consideração de Parmênides como campeão do monismo cego.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Parmênides; Monismo; Dualismo; Ontologia; Verdade; *Doxa*.

I. Once More: Reinhardt's Principle

More than 100 years ago, Karl Reinhardt (1916, 17) formulated the indispensable methodological principle for any genuine and significant interpretive approach to the poem of Parmenides: “It is only out of the whole [poem] that the individual parts can be understood.” In my own first hermeneutic approach (Thanassas 1997), I attempted to adopt and closely apply this principle – probably, for the first time since its articulation; I mean that this principle has not even been properly followed by Reinhardt himself, as is clearly shown by the restrictive explanation he hastened to add to the above formulation: “the cosmogony can only be understood out of the doctrine on Being.”¹

For eight decades, and with very few exceptions, research on Parmenides was dominated not by Reinhardt's fundamental principle, but by this additional restriction, which eventually distorted the initial principle and resulted in the subordination of the second part of the poem to the first. The so-called *Doxa* section² either did not occupy scholars at all, or it was degraded to a mere appendix, of which the

¹ In the original German: “Nur aus dem Ganzen [des Gedichtes] kann das Einzelne, nur aus der Seinslehre die Kosmogonie verstanden werden” (Reinhardt, 1916, 17). – This essay was written mainly during a research stay at the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies (Princeton University), thanks to a generous Fellowship awarded to me in Summer 2019. For their helpful comments and suggestions, I would like to thank Prof. M. Miller, Dr C. Kurfess, and the editors of the present volume (N. Galgano and R. Cherubin). I also thank Dr. P. Larsen for smoothing out the prose of the present text.

² I use the terms *Aletheia* (or Truth) and *Doxa*, in capital letters and in the singular, only to refer to the first and second parts of the poem respectively, as divided at 8.49-50. I do not want to endorse any presumptions concerning the specific content, the epistemic status, or the possible polymorphy of these parts (in fact, I have argued elsewhere – and will repeat in the present text – that ‘the’ *Doxa* does not exist, except in an external, strictly textual sense). I do not even want to *a priori* exclude the possibility (proposed in recent scholarship) that some parts of what is usually called *Doxa* might have to be relocated into *Aletheia*.

content, role, and significance almost always constituted a kind of hermeneutic nuisance: Why was this second part necessary? Why did it have to be written?

Meanwhile, as anyone can easily observe, over the last two decades the focus of Parmenides scholarship has shifted to the *Doxa* section.³ I personally welcome this shift, to which some of my own work might have contributed (its impact being greater on the German-speaking research, and lesser on the Anglophone). The insight that the second, and apparently larger, part of the poem is not an unnecessary annex has seemed to gradually gain ground. And above all: it seems to have become clear that the possible existence of a Parmenidean cosmogony cannot be irrelevant for a reconstruction of the content of his ontological *Aletheia*.⁴

And yet, the methodological problems have not vanished. On the contrary, recent scholarship seems to be heading towards the other extreme and producing a reverse one-sidedness: Much of the research on *Doxa* is often undertaken on the basis of a fragmented approach, without taking into account the necessary compatibility of this part with Truth, thus ignoring the necessity of understanding the poem in its totality. This hermeneutic suspension often takes the form of an immersion into the 'self-evident': content, targeting, and philosophical significance of ontological Truth are often taken from the beginning as obvious, as unambiguously given – producing, thus, a series of clichés and platitudes, which then guide the examination of *Doxa*. If I were to cite an example here, I would quote a passage from one of the most

³ Cosgrove (2014, 2) even speaks of *Doxa* as “a new trend in scholarship.”

⁴ The only significant exception to this tendency in the past years confirms the validity of this observation: Wedin's book (2014), in its analytic primitiveness, is perhaps one of the worst books ever written on Parmenides – for reasons clearly documented in the relevant reviews authored by Palmer (2016) and Trépanier (2016). It is no coincidence that the entire book thoroughly, explicitly and flamboyantly avoids even the slightest reference to the second part of the poem, limiting itself to the crude articulation of the position that the cosmology included there is “totally false” (2014, 63, n. 89).

recent publications on *Doxa*, in which the author starts from a noble intention:

asking “What are true *doxai* worth to Parmenides?” is an especially useful and revealing way of posing anew the timeworn problem of the relation between the two parts of Parmenides’ poem, and in particular that of the philosophical status of the cosmology propounded by the goddess (Cosgrove 2014, 4).

In fact, however, what follows is a series of commonplace references to “the goddess’s elenchus,” to “the criteria laid down by the goddess for statements of what-is,” or to “the goddess’s signposts for ‘what is,’” in a way that obstructs any possibility of a positive evaluation of Parmenidean cosmogony, and thus finally returns to a slightly modified repetition of Owen’s thesis, arguing for the “dialectical” value and function of what the author sees as a unified, unique *doxa* (Cosgrove, 2014, 16, 26–27, and *passim*).⁵ In another recent text on *Doxa*, again, after the author’s attempt to reconstruct the positive cosmological content of this part of the poem, at least as far as “specific astronomical phenomena” are concerned (Gregory, 2014, 42), he confesses his reluctance to engage in matters of Truth – an attitude which does not prevent him from adopting (without any argument) the position of “numerical monism” (46). But if, according to this position, “all things are one thing,” how could “specific astronomical phenomena” (or phenomena in general) even exist?

I, therefore, believe that Reinhardt’s principle remains valid, reminding us now of the following: Just as for decades the study of Truth would lead to a dead-end because of the massive neglect of *Doxa*, so now the exclusive focus on *Doxa*, without a basic awareness and an

⁵ In another characteristic passage, the author argues that the “interplay of [...] the two contraries reduces to a combination of being and non-being” (Cosgrove 2014, 8); cosmology remains “permeated through and through by a reliance on ‘is and is not,’” and therefore “fatally flawed with regard to the signposts of Truth” (2014, 25) – as if the author had never been confronted with the possibility (a very likely one, in my view) that verses such as 9.4 (in the reading “Non-Being partakes in neither”) argue exactly for a protection of the cosmology against Non-Being.

explicit clarification of crucial aspects of Truth, can also produce parallel dead-ends. For the current state of research, this would be regrettable – given the progress made in the study of Parmenidean ontology, which tends to free us from the specter of numerical monism.

On the basis of that principle, in the present paper I will attempt to clarify, expand and deepen my interpretative positions on central topics of Parmenidean philosophy, repositioning them in the context of the research of the past twenty years; what follows, therefore, will undertake a circular movement between my own positions and a critical evaluation of recent publications. Initially (Section II), I will attempt to restate and endorse a position on the character of Parmenidean *ontological monism*. Then (Section III), I will turn to the *dualistic character* of both the system of false human opinions and the positive cosmology of the goddess, attempting to juxtapose them as two different versions of dualism. Next (Section IV), I will examine the dual structures of the poem as concrete instances of Parmenides' methodological approach that can be described as a *dualistic methodology*, and I will draw some conclusions that gesture toward a coherent understanding of the whole poem.

II. *Ontological Monism*

It was 40 years ago when Barnes (1979) and Mourelatos (1979) identified and challenged what is now commonly called “strict” or “numerical monism”: the notion that “exactly one thing exists” (Barnes, 1979, 2), or that “all things are one thing” (Mourelatos 1979, 4). Since then, the question of the meaning and character of Parmenidean monism has become key to understanding Parmenidean philosophy as a whole, serving, in some ways, as the crux of any interpretation of Parmenides. Was Parmenides a numerical monist? Did he really believe that “only one thing exists”, or did his philosophical conception leave room for a plurality of existing things? Obviously, these questions are of

great importance both for the reconstruction of ontological Truth *and* for the *Doxa*: According to numerical monism, there exists only a single being, there are no phenomena, there is no world, and hence there is no cosmology; if this is the case, then *Doxa* would have no positive cosmological content, and we might have to return to some old, obsolete theories that used to view *Doxa* as including foreign teachings, as fulfilling a dialectical project, and so on.

There are a number of passages, however, that seem to confirm the existence of many things, i.e., to exclude the option of a numerical monism. Leaving the thoroughly pluralistic *Doxa* aside, we can see the goddess insisting, already in the proem (1.32), on the necessity of a positive appropriation (δοκίμως) of the many δοκοῦντα. And in the *Aletheia*, the existing plurality of “absent” entities (ἀπρέοντα) has to be made “present” (παρέοντα) to Thinking (4.1); the (apparently plural) entities “hold fast” (4.2) or “keep close” to each other (8.25), and they are all equally “full of Being” (8.24), in a way that does not permit one of them to participate in Being any more than another (8.47–8).⁶ All these passages seem to refute the notion of numerical monism and validate the position that

(A) there exists more than one thing.

This position, however, seems in the opinion of many scholars to contradict a basic thesis articulated by Parmenides in 8.6:

(B) Being is one.

The position of numerical monism, therefore, continues to return, rarely but no less persistently, in recent interpretations,⁷ on the assumption that, together, propositions (A) and (B) constitute a contradiction, which must be resolved by rejecting (A) in favor of (B). This contradiction

⁶ Some of these passages have been pointed out in an excellent, but relatively neglected, paper by Miller (1979), who claims correctly that “the unity of being-as-such appears to include, not exclude, plurality”; Parmenidean ontology claims “a plurality in number and a unity of kind” (1979, 26). On this, and on the following passages of my text, cf. also Thanassas (1997, 31–33, 108–111, 152–153; 2007, 16–17, 57–59; 2011, *passim*).

⁷ Cf., for example, the works of Cosgrove (2014) and Wedin (2014) mentioned above.

arises, of course, only under a fundamental presupposition, which is implicitly accepted, but *never* explicitly stated. This presupposition maintains that 'Being is a thing.' Only on the basis of this tacit assumption could one be forced to choose between (A) and (B), and therefore (in this case) reject (A).

And yet, Being is not a thing. Being is not a spatially extended (Aristotelian) substance, not a chunk of matter, not a specific entity. Being is constituted by Thinking as, ultimately, the sole object of the latter, on a path of inquiry that allows us to recognize all things (alternatively: all phenomena/entities/beings) "as beings." The degradation of Being to a thing, on the contrary, precludes, from the outset, any possibility of understanding it. Being is not a thing, but rather a property of things, and indeed the only essential and ontologically significant property; it is, in this sense, a concept which essentially determines things. In the past I have attempted to bring out this character of Being by consciously seeking anachronistic analogies with the second $\delta\upsilon$ of the Aristotelian phrase $\delta\upsilon\ \eta\ \delta\upsilon$ (Thanassas 1997, 96–97; 2007, 45),⁸ or with a Platonic Form (Thanassas 1997, 97–102).⁹ In any case, propositions (A) and (B) are not contradictory, they are not incompatible, but absolutely compatible, and they both hold true.

⁸ The parallel is now tacitly endorsed by McKirahan (2020, 64, and *passim*). Further points of the "substantial agreement" (McKirahan 2020, 74) between our interpretations include: a. the suggestion that Parmenides neither affirms nor negates temporality, but only insists that it is "irrelevant" to Being (cf. Thanassas 1997, 125: "Irrelevanz der Zeit"; Thanassas 2007, 13, 47: "irrelevance of temporality for ontology"; McKirahan 2020, 66, 69: "its history and future prospects are irrelevant to its being now"); b. the overall parallelism of the poem's duality with the duality between ontology and sciences integral to Aristotle's oeuvre (cf. Thanassas 2011, 304: "questioning the legitimacy of this duality is as forceful as questioning the legitimacy of Aristotle's double attempt to establish not only ontology, but also physics (in the broad sense, including zoology, astronomy, etc.)"; McKirahan 2020, 72: "it was predictable and just as reasonable for him to give an account of the world as it appears to us as it was for Aristotle").

⁹ Cf. now also Kahn (2002, 195), who argues that "the metaphysical background for Plato's theory of Forms is provided not by the Pythagoreans but by Parmenides" (2002, 195). Kahn portrays Parmenides in the eponymous Platonic dialogue as "the true Platonic philosopher," and Plato himself "as a revisionist Eleatic" (2002, 196). For what it is worth, I might add here the anecdote that my own first, as yet unpublished public talk (SUNY at Stony Brook, 1995) was titled "Plato of Elea."

The attempt to emancipate Being from the understanding of it as a thing converges to some extent with that interpretive approach that has been called the “meta-principle interpretation,” which attributes to Parmenides a “predicational monism,” and is largely based on the works of Mourelatos, Nehamas, and Curd. In terms of the crucial scheme of this approach –“x is F”– I would now like to argue in favor of a decisive expansion of x and an equally crucial restriction of F: x is not (as in Curd’s version) exclusively a “basic entity” (1998, 40 and *passim*), an “entity of a certain kind” (1998, 39), but denotes and includes *all* entities, or all physical objects, or the entirety of δοκοῦντα. And F is not *any* predicate that reveals the “characteristic *nature*, true *identity*, intrinsic *reality*, or *essence*” (Mourelatos 1976, 52-53) of any x; in Parmenidean ontology, the *only* ontologically legitimate predicate, F, is the predicate “to be,” which only stresses that any given x simply *is*.¹⁰ Reading πάντα περ ὄντα at the end of the proem (1.32), taking there the participle ὄντα not as a copula but in an “absolutive” syntactic construction, and attributing to it the entire ontological weight and value of the verb “to be” that we encounter in other parts of Parmenides’ poem might be taken as the first revelation of this monolectic: “all

¹⁰ The possibility of such a modified version of Curd’s predicational monism was suggested by Rapp (2005, 292, 303), and it essentially coincides with my own insistence on the “monolectic affirmation of ἔστιν” (Thanassas 1997, 95, 150, 242 and *passim*) as the only content of this ontology. In another convergence, Bredlow now also identifies “the mere indeterminate mass of what-there-is, without any further qualification” as the only topic of Parmenidean ontology: “Whatever there is can, in principle, become or cease to be this or that; but nothing can ever come to be out of nothing or dissolve into nothing” (2011, 291). Cf. also Thanassas (1997, 51): “Ob das Haus brennt, ob der Mensch stirbt und das Wasser verdunstet, dies alles ist der Seiendheit gleichgültig: denn auch dem Dampf und den Überbleibseln des Hauses kommt sie zu, und ein Mensch ist auch als Toter [...]” Meanwhile, Pulpito has also formulated the same thought in nearly the same terminology: “If a tree burns and becomes ash, this does not mean it becomes a non-being. The tree-form disappears, but in its place a being always remains: the ash. Therefore, first there was a being, then there is a being again” (Pulpito 2011, 203-204).

appearing things *are*.”¹¹

In this sense, and against numerical monism, I would like to claim for Parmenides a concept of *ontological monism* that is distinct from ontical monism: The latter maintains that there exists only one thing, whereas former holds that ontological truth is (ultimately) constituted on the basis of a single *ontological category* (i.e.: Being).¹² In other words, ontical monism refers to the number of existing things, but ontological monism to the number of concepts in terms of which we comprehend things; within the framework of Parmenides' monolectic ontology, we only comprehend things in terms of Being, excluding any other concept or category. Yet, this ontological monism not only does

¹¹ See Thanassas (1997, 36–51; 2007, 23–26). Miller seems also to come very close to this reading, when he observes that the phrase $\pi\epsilon\pi\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\alpha$ “exhibits a use of ‘is’ on which we should expect Parmenides, with his keen attention to the ontological commitments [...], to seize” (2006, 13); unfortunately, this reading is not reflected in the translation which he proposes, and which eventually remains anchored in the conventional view of the participle in 1.32 as a copula: “just being all things” (2006, 14, 17). –

While proofreading the present text, I realized that another paper of the present collection tacitly endorses not only the syntactical construction of the passage and (essentially) the interpretation already presented in Thanassas (1997) and (2007), but even *–verbatim–* the translation offered there: “But nevertheless these you shall learn as well, how appearing things should be accepted: all of them altogether as beings” (Thanassas 2007, 25, and Fratticci 2020, 256; cf. also Thanassas 1997, 36–51). Further tacit congruences include:

- a. the author's reinforcement of the position that Parmenidean Being “does not lie in a transcendence isolated from the world of single things” (Fratticci 2020, 261); cf. Thanassas (2007, 82–83): Being “is not a “transcendent” object [...] but can only be thought and experienced along with the world of appearances” (cf. also Thanassas 2007, 26, and Thanassas 1997, 64, 70, 95, and *passim*);
- b. the assertion that Being “does not allow any degrees” (Fratticci 2020, 260); cf. Thanassas (2007, 51): “Being may exhibit no gradations or degrees” (cf. also Thanassas 1997, 133, 143);
- c. the interpretation of fr. 4 as stressing the thesis that “absence is not annihilation, but simply withdrawal from presence. Distant things do exist, the same as close things; the mind will think of them both as firmly grounded in Being. They belong in Being” (Fratticci 2020, 266); cf. Thanassas (2007, 58–59): “Thinking [...] views the many absent things as ‘present’ and thus inserts them into the unifying perspective of Being” (cf. also Thanassas 2007, 36, and Thanassas 1997, 69, 96, and *passim*).

In a reference to my work, the author criticizes my reluctance to draw a distinction between $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\omicron}\nu$ and $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\alpha$; according to his interpretation, however, “there is no such notion as two types of being”; but there is a “difference which does exist,” as a “methodological” one; and yet, “it is at the same time an ontological difference” (Fratticci 2020, 261).

¹² This claim goes against a general trend in scholarship to conceive of “ontological monism” as the thesis that “there is one and only one thing” (this was the formulation offered by Wedin 2014, 110 and *passim*).

not exclude multiplicity of things, but even presupposes it. Parmenidean Being can only be the Being of the many entities.

III. Cosmological Dualisms

As already mentioned in my introductory remarks, the *Doxa* part has become in recent years the epicenter of research on Parmenides. The overcoming (or at least the questioning) of numerical monism has opened up the possibility of taking the positivity of this part into account, with an emphasis on the originality of many of the scientific discoveries apparently made by Parmenides.¹³ Although *Doxa*'s positivity seems to resonate more and more, scholarship is still confronted with what we might call *the perennial problem of Doxa*. Our discussion of it here might prepare for the critical evaluation of some of the interpretations offered in the past years, as well as elicit the suggestion of a proposal to resolve this 'eternal' problem.

The problem lies basically in the tension, the discrepancy, the inconsistency, the contrast, or even the contradiction produced when, in the wider context of *Doxa*, we encounter:

(A) the negative attitude of the goddess, articulated in phrases such as: "no true conviction" (οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής, 1.30), "deceitful" (ἄπατηλός, 8.52), "they have gone astray" (πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν, 8.54);

(B) the positive notions of "acceptably" (δοκίμως, 1.32)¹⁴ and "appropriate" (ἔοικώς, 8.60), as well as the entirely positive tenor

¹³ Cf., among many others: Graham (2006; 2013), Mansfeld (2018), Mourelatos (2013).

¹⁴ According to my understanding of 1.32, and on the basis of the reading περ ὄντα, the goddess's call for an "acceptable" approach to δοκοῦντα amounts to their comprehension "as beings" and therefore does not belong to the scope of *Doxa* as such, but rather indicates its overall transcending towards *Aletheia*. But since this reading apparently has not found further support, I will argue here on the basis of the assumption (shared, as far as I know, by nearly all readers of the poem) that δοκοῦντα is *somehow* related with *Doxa* in general. For my own position, see the references in the Appendix.

in the presentation of the goddess in the fragments 9-19 (unanimously affirmed also by the testimonia).

For many decades, the dominant interpretive approach has been to ameliorate the tension between (A) and (B), which has resulted in a blurring approach, or even the conscious adoption of a blurring strategy. According to this strategy, “deceitful” is not actually deceitful, “no true conviction” is in fact positive and means a conviction which is quasi-true (though not... true enough). On the other side, the “acceptance” of *δοκίμως* is not a full-throated acceptance; and the “appropriateness” is subjected to a number of conditions and restrictions arbitrarily postulated by scholars and readers. If (A) announces falsehood and (B) proclaims truth, then the resulting tension might even be smoothed if we blend and merge these two features, arguing that *Doxa* is a “half-truth” (Hölscher 1986, 103). A milestone in this approach was the cliché, produced by Owen, which proclaimed the function of *Doxa* to be “wholly dialectical,” and which saw in it “no more than a dialectical device” (Owen, 1960, 9, 5). The cliché still finds some resonance, either unchanged, or in various permutations;¹⁵ nobody, however, has ever been able to explain the precise nature of this dialectical function, nor how it can be reconciled with the expanse, the scope, the positive value, and the overall positive-apodictic tone of the second part of the poem.¹⁶

A new version of that blurring strategy tries to fuse the opposing characters of deceptiveness and acceptability into the nebulous notion of the cosmos’ “likeness” to Being (see Johansen 2016, 20 and *passim*).

¹⁵ Owen’s position has recently been explicitly endorsed by Cosgrove (2014, 16, 26, and *passim*), who even consents to the proposal to see *Doxa* as “a species of ‘poetry or gardening’” (2014, 28) and warns us that the question of its status and topics “should not be asked” (2014, 17). Previously, but along the same lines, Granger saw in *Doxa* “nothing more than a parody, a burlesque, of Being” (2002, 102); “the cosmology of mortals is nothing more than a deception, [...] and there is no reason to search for something more than mere deception” (2002, 115). Cordero’s position on *Doxa* is similar when he tries to justify its “misleading character” through the “didactic character of the poem” (2010, 234; 2011, 100-101).

¹⁶ See the recent, documented and accurate critique offered against Owen’s position by Tor (2015, 4-5), who also refers to earlier critical evaluations given by Clark (1969, 24) and Nehamas (2002, 57).

Cosmos can then have its “model” in Being, and at the same time incorporate “both being and not being” (2016, 10). This *mélange* then leads to one of the most astonishing sentences ever written about the poem: “being and not-being together understood in the right way can be similar to pure being” (2016, 15) – as if we did not encounter in 6.8 a clear warning that a combination or blending of “being and not-being” constitutes the highest risk for Being, and as if we did not find in 9.4 an explicit, categorical refusal of such a blend.¹⁷ Finally, another version of that strategy unfolds as a persistent hermeneutic appeasement, trying to transform the utterly negative and rejective notions of (A) to a kind of compromising “limitation.”¹⁸

Against this background, it seems refreshing to return to Cherubin's (2005) clear and clarifying presentation of the opposing notions of deception and appropriateness in the part of *Doxa*. Indeed, both ἀπατηλός and εἰκώς or δοκίμως cannot and should not be weakened in their negative and positive significance, respectively. Yet, the full and conclusive acceptance of this tension does not necessarily result in the conclusion that the poem, or at least its second part, is a liar-type paradox, or even a paradox of any kind.¹⁹ It is true that notions (A) and (B) constitute a contrast that is difficult (or probably even impossible) to reconcile. But what if this contrast does not need to be reconciled, flattened, or blurred, but rather accepted, highlighted and explained? What if the two notions, while retaining their full significance, refer not to one but to two different, distinct projects articulated in the *Doxa* section?

¹⁷ The author even claims for the cosmos a “degree of being” (Johansen 2016, 18) – a deeply unparmenidean notion, which runs against the rigorousness of the Parmenidean concept of Being, as stressed in 8.47–48: “nor is Being such that it might be here more and there less than Being, since it is all inviolate.”

¹⁸ Cf. Tor (2015, 7): “*Doxa*’s theories [...] account correctly for their particular objects”; and yet, they bear a “fundamental limitation” which assigns to them “a decidedly inferior status.” But ἀπατηλός or πεπλανημένοι is not just a “limitation.”

¹⁹ This position of Cherubin (2017, 259–262) is possible only on the basis of her endorsement of numerical monism.

Since 1997, I have maintained in several texts: a. that *Doxa* is not false but utterly true; b. that *'the' Doxa* only denotes the wider framework of referring to the phenomenality of the world, within which the goddess unfolds a series of *multiple, divergent* undertakings, intentions, evaluations and perspectives. The basic distinction to be made is that between the concept of (1) *contrast and separation* of the two forms of Light and Night, and the concept of (2) the *mixture* of both forms. Structure (1) is articulated in 8.53–59: it is a system of human opinions that relies on the separation of the two forms, validates and reproduces this separation. In human conjectures, Light and Night are set in opposition, “a unity of which is not deemed necessary – wherein they have gone astray” (8.54; cf. Thanassas 2007, 65–67). Throughout these verses, phrases originating in military descriptions, such as “contrariwise” (ἀντία), “apart from one another” (χωρίς ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων) and “opposite” (τάντία), unmistakably emphasize the rigid separation, the strict isolation, the mutual exclusion and opposition of Light and Night.

This is, essentially, what Curd has successfully described as a system of “enantiomorphism” (1998, 104–110). This system, however, is not Parmenides’ last word.²⁰ In the divine cosmological διακόσμος (2), the separation of the two forms is eliminated, and the concept of mixture is presented – for the first time in the history of philosophy. This *diakosmos*, denoting both the world-ordering and its description, is introduced in the transition from the third person plural to the first person singular (cf. the emphatic ἐγώ in 8.60). In this divine world-ordering, the unity of both forms is now established in a cosmological system that allows them to run “through each other” (διά-); they are

²⁰ Having (correctly) insisted on the possibility of a positive cosmology and having laid out its conditions and requirements, Curd remained permanently exposed to an objection constantly addressed to her since then (see among others: Nehamas 2002, 61; Palmer 2009, 29–31; Cosgrove 2014, 8): If Parmenides could have produced a cosmology compatible with truth, why didn't he present it? This reasonable question, on which Curd remained silent, has, in my view, a simple answer: Parmenides *did* present such a cosmology. See the text below.

not “apart” (χωρίς) any more, but “together” (ὅμοῦ, 9.3); a fundamental, guaranteed equality (ἴσων, 9.4) seems to have banished any hostile attitude; and they now jointly participate in the world arrangement presented by the goddess. In fr. 12, world mixture (μίξις) is explicitly stated to be a process controlled by a goddess who “governs everything” and urges the sexes to “mingle” (μιγῆν) with each other. In accordance with this stance, the divine incarnation of mixture, Eros, appears as the “first of all gods devised” (fr. 13). In fr. 16, finally, mixture (κρᾶσις) occurs as the crucial concept that will allow for an explication and explanation of the way in which human thinking emerges.

Hence, what I propose is to accept and acknowledge *both (A) and (B) in their full negativity and positivity, respectively*; I propose that we abandon any effort to level or mitigate the contrast produced by them. But, at the same time (and above all), I insist on the removal of any suspicion that the poem is ultimately collapsing under the weight of a contradiction produced by (A) and (B); there is no contradiction, because (A) refers critically to (1), while (B) endorses affirmatively (2):

separation is deceitful <=> mixture is appropriate

I am pleased to notice that my proposal to distinguish between (1) and (2) –or even, less frequently, my proposal to associate them with (A) and (B), respectively– coincides (even if not explicitly recognized or adopted) with a number of other interpretations put forward in recent years. Despite the differences in the overall approach, more and more readers of the poem are willing to accept the notion of a “correction of the ‘opinions of mortals’ [...] in the *Doxa* section” (Miller 2006, 17–18), to (sometimes only gingerly) distinguish between the presentation in

8.53-59 and the following passages,²¹ to confirm that in *Doxa's* “two-fold approach” the goddess “both diagnoses the error [...] and develops a cosmology,”²² or even to attest a “radical change” in the style, attitude, and content of the goddess’s words from verse 8.60 onwards.²³

But my proposal has also received criticism; I will quote here the most recent and harsh piece of critique, formulated in a recent paper by S. Tor (2015, 7-8):

Thanassas isolates an erroneous (and pejoratively-framed) *Doxa*, identified with “mortal beliefs” and founded on separating Light and Night (B8.51-9), from an appropriate *Doxa*, founded on mixing Light and Night (B8.60-B19). To put it mildly, Thanassas reads against the text and the flow of the exposition. B8.50-2 indicates that the account about ἀληθείη is now complete and that “from this point” or “henceforth” (ἀπὸ τοῦδε) the subject-matter will be “mortal beliefs” (cf. B1.28b-30). There follows an introduction of the two opposite elements Light and Night (B8.53-9) and then a cosmology based on *the same* two opposite elements (B9-B19 and the relevant testimonia). B8.60 (τόν... φατίζω) is not a sudden and bizarrely compressed introduction of a new and competing cosmological

²¹ Graham assumed that “the mistake mortals commit is to produce a cosmology depending on two contrary principles, while taking their two principles as interdependent contraries. If instead we take them as independent and ‘equal’ realities, as Parmenides does in B9, we can produce a satisfactory account of nature” (Graham 1999, 168-169). Some years later, however, he returned to the traditional blur that the cosmology is “from the outset [...] flawed” (Graham 2006, 171). Leshner, again, stated laconically but clearly: “plausible’ (*eoikota*) [...] can hardly be referring to the erroneous conception of mortals just mentioned – for their view is hardly plausible at all [...] Her plausible arrangement can only be the combined light-night based cosmology that will be presented in B9-12, 14, and 15” (Leshner 1999, 240). But then, only a few lines later, he also deviates from this track: “no account of the cosmos, not even the one Parmenides is now putting forward, can be trusted completely” (1999, 241).

²² Sisko & Weiss (2015, 44, 50); their view of the content of the correction, however, differs radically from my own, since it presupposes an acknowledgment of Being as a “material substrate” (2015, 51).

²³ Rossetti (2010) has argued in the most decisive and categorical way for the ascertainment of such a “change ment radical” (2010, 219): “il se produit, *en cinq vers seulement*, un changement spectaculaire [...] dans l’attitude de la déesse” (2010, 218)! Awkwardly enough, though, Rossetti explains this divergence as the result of a Parmenidean decision to integrate into his poem “le précieux fruit d’une première phase de ses recherches” (2010, 220). Presenting Parmenidean cosmology as an example of an early, now abandoned, but for psychological reasons not explicitly discarded occupation, Rossetti becomes, as far as I know, the only contemporary scholar who attempts to bring this old Nietzschean approach of *Doxa* back to the foreground.

system. Rather, it announces the beginning of the same cosmological account whose central principles have *just now* been introduced.

I will try to reply to the key points of this critique, which might prove valuable in helping me reformulate and clarify my own position:

a. Attributing to me the notion of a positive cosmology based “on the same two opposite elements” is inaccurate; cosmology is based on “the same two elements,” which however are *not opposite* any more. The correction brought about by the goddess is precisely the removal of this opposition, as achieved in two ways: On the one hand, by means of the mixture of both elements, which indicates a relationship not of opposition any longer, but cooperation, or even of a quasi-erotic coupling. And, on the other hand, by approaching both forms from the ontological perspective; since neither of them entails Non-Being (9.4), their assumed opposition ultimately proves false.

b. The cosmology introduced in B8.60 does not entail “a competing cosmological system,” because human opinions never received the form of an initial, elaborate cosmological system; they only formed a framework for the erroneous sense perception of reality,²⁴ the character of which was, for the first time, brought to light only by the goddess, who then responded with her own, proper and appropriate cosmological presentation.

c. Arguments appealing to the “flow of the exposition” are –to put it mildly– always double-sided. I have already pointed out (and other scholars seem to tacitly follow me in this) that, in the midst of a seemingly smooth and unified flow, a spectacular shift in the substance and content of the goddess’s speech takes place: the enantiomorphic opposition is succeeded by amalgamation and integration, the segregation by mixture; and the tacit surrender to Non-Being is

²⁴ The character of erroneous *Doxa*, as a system proposed by the goddess in order to reconstruct and explain sense perception and sensibility as the fundamental human approach of the world, has been stressed in recent years by Cherubin 2005, 5–9, Miller 2006, 36–38, and Tor 2015, 17.

replaced by the emphasis on the Being of both forms. The terminology of a military confrontation is replaced with a vocabulary of erotic intercourse. I do not think, therefore, that any appeal on the “flow of the exposition” can hide this development and advancement from the criticized segregative human dualism to an endorsed integrative divine dualism as mixture of the forms. In Kantian terms, the goddess starts with “critique” and proceeds with her own “doctrine.”

I would insist, therefore, that what is called *Doxa* does not in fact exist as a unified undertaking, but entails a *multiplicity of themes and intentions*. To those two presented above

- (1) criticism of deceptive opinions and demonstration of their error;
- (2) presentation of a positive cosmology founded on the concept of mixture;

I would also add

- (3) the explanation of the genesis of deceptive opinions (fr. 16);
- (4) the ontological evaluation and refutation of deceptive opinions in the *Aletheia* (fr. 6, 7).²⁵

This plural strategy reveals the error of mortals, corrects it by opposing it with a cosmological system compatible with the truth of Being, explains the genesis of the error, and evaluates it in terms of ontology. This multiple strategy is, of course, in all its parts not false or misleading, but thoroughly true.

IV. Dual Strategies, and Some Conclusions

As paradoxical as it may sound, Parmenides, the alleged apostle of monism, has composed a poetic philosophical text that is full of dual

²⁵ At this point I cannot explore these two aspects further; I will only refer the reader to Thanassas 1997, 204–205 and Thanassas 2007, 80. In the first of these publications, I was adding a further, fifth point concerning the “overcoming of *doxai*”; I will tackle this in a different form in the next Section of the present paper.

structures. The dualism of *Doxa* was identified by Burnet (1930, 185), and has been repeatedly confirmed and emphasized in recent scholarship.²⁶ In order to understand this dualism, however, we should distinguish and recognize its double role and function; in the preceding section, therefore, I have attempted to show that the fundamental dualism of the *Doxa* section, the pair of Light and Night, fulfills a dual strategy and intention: On the one hand, the two forms act as hostile opposites, providing a systematic explanation of the nature of our sense perception of the world and its phenomena; a perception that remains false and deceitful, as long as it tends to associate Night's obscurity with Non-Being.²⁷ On the other hand, these same forms, explicitly purged from the contagion of Non-Being (to the extent that "Non-Being partakes in neither" of them, 9.4), function as basic components in a cosmology that describes the way in which both forms, having now overcome their antagonistic hostility, intermingle and interact in order to inaugurate the cosmic process of the *diakosmos*:

- (D) cosmological dualism: Light \Leftrightarrow Night
- (D1) deceitful dualism: separation of Light-Night
- (D2) appropriate dualism: mixture of Light-Night

While this cosmological dualism (at least in its basic form, D, but not in its dual function and accomplishment in the divergent versions, D1 and D2), has been repeatedly identified and emphasized in the scholarship, this is not the case with the binary structures emerging within the *Aletheia*. The specter of monism here has largely prevented the insight that the content of truth does not lie univocally in the concept of Being but is constituted as an opposing relationship between a pair of concepts: Being and Non-Being/Nothing. Already the first emergence of ontological truth in verse 2.3 takes the form of a relation between these two concepts: "[it] *Is* and [it] is impossible *not-to-be*".

²⁶ Cf. among others Graham (2006, 169), Granger (2002, 104), Miller (1979, 17-19), Nehamas (2002, 62).

²⁷ For this, see Thanassas (2007, 69-71).

More broadly, the ontological truth is not exhausted in the affirmation of Being, but essentially takes the structure of a crossroads, and preserves this structure throughout the poem. Passages such as 6.1–2 and 8.15–16 remind us that truth is not limited to affirming Being but is always accentuated as a rejection of Non-Being. While Parmenides portrays this Non-Being as the great enemy, as the greatest risk of ontological deviation, in fact, and performatively, he becomes the first to construct and present this concept, the first to create the ‘temptation’ of ontological nihilism – a temptation to which Gorgias seems to have later succumbed, in his treatise *On Non-Being*. The paradox, however, is only apparent: Parmenides alludes to the concept of Non-Being because he sees it as necessary in the formation of the very concept of Being; and this necessity arises on the basis of the insight that the determination of this concept (just as the determination of any concept in general) is constituted through *negation*. On the ontological level, the only concept to be set against εἶναι or ἔόν as available for negation is the concept of μηδέν or μὴ ἔόν.²⁸ Eventually, it is not paradoxical, but rather inherent in the very nature of the concept, that Being is constituted as a negation of Nothing, and that they both appear on both the first and the second “routes of inquiry.”²⁹ When the goddess continually proclaims the paradoxical, impossible possibility of Non-Being, she does so fully aware of its function as a necessary constituent of the concept of Being. In the first place, Being is nothing but the rejection of Non-Being – and in this sense, it needs the latter as a necessary counterpart in order to constitute its own determination. The way of truth (the way of ἔστιν), for its part, is nothing but the persistent and vigorous rejection of the deviation into the way of Non-Being; the risk of deviation, and the route that delineates it, is more easily avoided when it is constantly

²⁸ I have argued elsewhere for the semantic equivalence and identity of these pairs of notions and expressions; see Thanassas (2007, 44).

²⁹ As pointed out by Miller, however, the relation between Being and Non-Being remains asymmetrical: “the first route is essentially constituted as a response to the impossibility of the second” (Miller 2006, 3).

displayed before us.

Among the mass of recent scholarship, it is worth mentioning two publications by M. Miller, which, to some extent, emphasize and disclose the role of duality in the ontology of Parmenides, and in particular the role and contribution of the concept of Non-Being in the composition of *Aletheia*. In an earlier work, Miller (1979, 22-23) emphasized that “[B]eing emerges from the μηδέν, as that of which the μηδέν is the negation”; and that “the first [route] in some sense emerges from, as an overcoming of, the second way.”³⁰ In a more recent text, Miller stresses again that “the first route is essentially constituted as a response to the impossibility of the second [...] Thus, the first route bears an internal relation to the second” (2006, 3). And in view of μηδέν: “it is precisely by its referring, even as it itself fails to be constituted as an object, to the very being that it negates that it lets this being emerge and become manifest to mind” (2006, 24). In this text, moreover, the author seems to correct his previous (1979, 17, 19) general and unspecific degradation of dualism to an exclusively mortal perspective, confirming now that “the door should also be open to reading Parmenides as a dualist” (2006, 41).

Indeed, reading Parmenides as a dualist is not just a possibility but rather a necessity; for not only *Doxa*, but also *Aletheia* is constituted as a duality of dualities:

- (A) ontological dualism: Being \leftrightarrow Non-Being
 - (Aa) following truth (2.3-4): Being necessary \rightarrow Non-Being impossible
 - (Ab) “no tidings” (2.5-6): Non-Being necessary \rightarrow Being impossible

But the dualism of Truth can also take another, alternative, form, which sets it in a more obvious contrast to the dualism of *Doxa*. If we

³⁰ In the same text, however, the author will partially obscure the character of the ontological crossroads, claiming that “the second way, thought through to end, dissolves into the first” (Miller 1979, 24).

confront the dualism of *Aletheia* with the dilemma ‘mixture or separation?’, then the two “routes of inquiry” Aa and Ab appear as particular instantiations of a broader version:

– (A1): separation of ‘Being \Leftrightarrow Non-Being’

The importance of this separation or clear distinction and “decision” (κρίσις) is emphasized repeatedly in the poem, in passages such as 6.1-2 and 8.15-16. The mixing and merging of the two concepts, by contrast, is an instance of that blindness and deadlock commonly called “the third way,” as portrayed in the passages 6.4-9, 7.3-5 and 8.38-41.³¹

(A) ontological dualism: Being \Leftrightarrow Non-Being

– (A1): separation of ‘Being \Leftrightarrow Non-Being’ (in the forms Aa and Ab above; fr. 2 and *passim*)

– (A2): mixture of ‘Being \Leftrightarrow Non-Being’ (‘third way’)

Thus, whereas in the dualism of *Doxa*, separation and mutual exclusion of the two forms (D1) proved to be a fallacy, the dualism of *Aletheia* presents the uncompromising separation of Being and Nothing (A1) as the first necessary step of ontological truth, leading, in a quasi-direct way, to the affirmation of Being in (Aa): As soon as Thinking (voεῖν) makes the necessary distinction and disjunction, and conceives of the two concepts as mutually exclusive members of this disjunction, the option of Being emerges against Non-Being as the only possibility, and thus, as a necessity. And while in the dualism of *Doxa* the mixture of the two forms (D2) signified the correction of error and the shift from “deception” to “appropriateness,” in the dualism of Truth the fusion of the two ontological categories (A2) inevitably leads to an impasse and produces the aberration critically depicted as the “third way.” The delusion of mortals can, therefore, also be described as a delusion concerning separation: instead of separating Being from

³¹ For the character of this third quasi-way, and for the reasons that permit us to accept its existence without denying that there are “only” two ontological routes provided by Thinking, see Thanassas (1997, 198-202; 2007, 78-80).

Nothing according to Thinking, they separate Light from Night according to the senses; they substitute the ontological judgment with a sensory one.

Truth entails one more dual structure: the pair of Being and Thinking (νοεῖν – εἶναι). Due, in part, to a lack of space, but also because I have nothing to add to my previous treatments of the topic,³² I will avoid any further examination of this here, and will, instead, turn to a further level of duality. So far, we have distinguished:

1. the two fundamental pairs that constitute the ontological and cosmological dualism in Truth and *Doxa* respectively: Being and Non-Being, Light and Night;
2. the double ways of correlating these pairs, producing on the one side ontological truth (A1→ Aa) and cosmological appropriateness (D2), and on the other side ontological (A2) and cosmological delusion (D1).

To these two levels, however, a third should be added:

3. the overarching duality of Truth and *Doxa*, around which the whole poem is structured and composed.

This last duality has often been treated as a source of irritation or annoyance: Why was *Aletheia* not enough for Parmenides? Why did he add the apparently far more extensive *Doxa*? The question is as sensible and legitimate as, for example, the question: Why, in addition to his ontological treatise, *Metaphysics*, did Aristotle write the treatises *On the Parts of Animals*, *On the Movement of Animals*, or *On the Heavens*? In fact, the present text has already indicated the key reasons for which that hermeneutic nuisance should be regarded as meaningless and redundant; here I will limit myself to a brief synopsis of these reasons. *Aletheia* and *Doxa*:

- a. do not ultimately have two different objects as their topics, but one and the same: the world of phenomena;

³² Cf. Thanassas (1997, 80–92; 2007, 37–42; 2011, 298–299).

b. this object is specified and described in the *Aletheia* in the light of ontological monism, and in the *Doxa* for the purpose of providing an explanation of its inherent multiplicity;

c. while the manifold *Doxa* remains associated with the context of sensibility, the origin of Truth is Thinking (νοεῖν) as a complete release from the sensory framework;

d. as answers to two different questions, as projects that relate to a common object, yet following different goals and intentions, ontological truth and doxastic cosmology constitute two enterprises that remain autonomous (and, of course, both completely true). *Aletheia* and cosmology cannot be further reduced to one another, they do not arise from one another, nor is the content of the one the result of, or somehow produced by, the content of the other. The only possible nexus or mediation between them is the requirement that they be *compatible*. Parmenides seems fully aware of this demand, and he confirms the compatibility in the fundamental statement of 9.4: “Non-Being partakes in neither” of the two forms, upon which his cosmology will be built.³³

The first two of these remarks (a. and b.) are in line with what Palmer recently called the “aspectual interpretation,” showing also that this interpretation was dominant in antiquity (Palmer 2009, 38–42). The third remark (c.), in turn, opens up a further line of questioning, which is also reflected in the preface of the poem: What makes possible the transition from human sensibility, as field of a traditional cosmological inquiry, into a noetically inspired ontological venture, emphatically identified as divine? The key question, in this sense, is not why *Doxa* is added to Truth, but how it is possible to transcend the context of *Doxa*, a context eminently presented as *conditio humana*, towards a divine Truth. Or, as Tor puts it (2015, 8): “if we first asked ‘Why did Parmenides write *Doxa*?’ we will now ask ‘How *could* Parmenides have

³³ This statement already calls into question Cherubin’s position that Truth and cosmology are incompatible (Cherubin 2005, 15; 2017, 253–254).

written *Aletheia*?’.”

Tor's reading starts, in parallel with my own previous work, by emphasizing the distance between *Doxa* and ontology, as an instantiation of a more general and fundamental distance between the mortal and the divine. But while I have been emphasizing the gap, the chasm opened up by this rupture, Tor puts more emphasis on the possibility of its bridging – possibly in the direction of a temporary “*homoïōsis theōi*” (2015, 23), or a temporary “divinisation of the knower” (2015, 8). This interesting perspective is worthy of further consideration. I must, however, express a reservation concerning the precise nature of the author's methodological preference in ‘*Doxa* as origin,’ as well as the consequences of that preference – especially when it comes to the presentation of the noetic conception of Being as a mere evolution of those same doxastic physiological procedures described in fr. 16. Tor seems thus to replace the rupture between Truth and *Doxa* with a rather smooth continuity, and to conceive of ontological *Aletheia* as a modification of a physiological process which takes place within a commonly shared “physiological frame of mind” (2015, 31); the sharpness of the distance between mortal and divine, which made up the starting point for Tor's analysis, is thus dramatically reduced.

I am still convinced, therefore (as the fourth and final remark points out), that Truth and cosmology are two distinct, independent aspects of a dual strategy, representing a further aspect of Parmenides' overall *dualistic methodology*: Neither of them can be reduced to the other, neither is derived from the other, but they delineate two different answers to two different questions (although these questions refer to a common object: the world of phenomena). The only issue is, then, the compatibility of these two answers, which is manifestly demonstrated by Parmenides in passages such as 9.4. If this is the case –that is, if *Aletheia* and *Doxa* constitute two distinct, equivalent and independent projects– then any interpretation of the poem must include both of these perspectives (or at least take them into account); it is necessary to adhere

steadfastly to Reinhardt's methodological principle, from which the present text started, and the importance of which we emphasized at the beginning: "It is only out of the whole [poem] that the individual parts can be understood."

V. Appendix: Overlooked references

1. I will start with myself. One of the chapters of my first monograph was entitled "The δοκοῦντα are!";³⁴ in that chapter, I was proposing to read 1.32 as an appeal by the goddess to undertake the transition to ontological truth, which basically consists in conceiving δοκοῦντα, i.e. the phenomena of our world, not from the perspective of birth and decay, but "as beings" (reading περ ὄντα). I defended a similar interpretation of δοκοῦντα in Thanassas (2007, 24–26). It took me more than twenty years to come upon a short note by C.J. de Vogel (1969, 37), in which she expresses the same position: "the world of appearance is (τὰ δοκοῦντα εἶναι)." The author, of course, formulates this position in the process of following a very different path (she reads χρῆν δοκιμῶσ' εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα, and not χρῆν δοκιμῶσ' εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περ ὄντα, as I do). Furthermore, she does not provide any arguments in favor of this view, which is simply articulated in a brief note. Still, I wish I had encountered this note earlier and had been able to make reference to it. The same holds for the laconic, but in my opinion correct interpretation given by de Vogel of δοκοῦντα as phenomena: "τὰ φαινόμενα being a later formula for what to P[armenides] are τὰ δοκοῦντα" (1969, 37).

2. I also note that this same proposition (τὰ δοκοῦντα ἔστιν) is found in Falus (1960, 285–286). There, however, this position appears as the "fundamental fallacy of *doxa*" ("der grundlegende Irrtum der *Doxa*"), and in that sense it is diametrically opposed to my own interpretation.

³⁴ See Thanassas 1997, 36–51: "Die δοκοῦντα sind!".

3. With a long delay, again, I realize that a position that partially prefigures my own distinction between deceitful δόξα and true διάκοσμος (see above, III), was formulated 50 years ago in an important text by R.J. Clark (1969), which unfortunately has remained unexploited by the majority of Parmenides scholarship. The author states in this text a number of remarkable key points, which can be summarized as follows: a. In the poem, the goddess distinguishes between “right and wrong δόξα” (Clark 1969, 15). b. “Right δόξα can only have validity if its object has reality” (1969, 15); therefore, the δοκοῦντα are equivalent to the phenomenal world, τὰ φαινόμενα, the common-sense world of experience (1969, 20). c. The two parts of the poem distinguish “between sensory reality and rational reality”; or, “if it is the same world, Parmenides is describing it in two aspects” (1969, 27). Of course, this last point shows, in its indecisiveness, the main shortcoming of this study: it remains at an assertive level, reluctant to bring forth arguments or to undertake the essential conceptual clarifications. Clark does not identify the rupture and the essential difference in content between “right and wrong δόξα,” nor the significance of the transition from the model of separation to that of mixture. Hence, ultimately, he effectively revokes the distinction made between “right and wrong δόξα” and falls back into the position that the goddess’ *doxa* is “deceitful so far as the world of phenomena is deceitful” (1969, 30). He also consents to the position that “voεῖν and δόξα are incompatible, and that the second is deceptive” (1969, 29). Finally, it is worth noting that the phrase “the world of appearance is (τὰ δοκοῦντα εἶναι)” is presented by Clark as an “intolerable contradiction” (1969, 17). Nevertheless, I must acknowledge Clark’s initial recognition of the existence of a true *doxa*, and also his emphatic, convincing reminder of the old question: Why, if δόξα were deceptive, would Parmenides add this cosmological part to his ontology? (1969, 22-23). As I have argued, this question remains unanswered, not because of any weakness on the part of the many scholars who have asked and tackled it, but because of the intrinsic impossibility of

answering it. If *Doxa* is (as a whole) a misleading fallacy, then Parmenides' decision to incorporate it into his poem will necessarily remain inexplicable. In any case, it is unfortunate that I didn't encounter this text earlier – not only because I should have made reference to it, but also because a contrast with Clark's position would have contributed to a clearer formulation of my own.

4. Two recent notes, by Rossetti & Marcacci (2008, 19) and by Pulpito (2015, 289), point out that my interpretation of *Doxa* converges with earlier Italian works, and in particular with that of Ruggiu (1975). I have to accept this evidence, adding only that any omission here did not emerge as an intentional concealment, but was due to my ignorance of the Italian language, as a result of which I have been unable to follow the Italian bibliography.

5. But now I come to a reverse case of withheld reference or acknowledgment. My own interpretation of *Doxa*, focusing primarily on the need to distinguish between “deceitful” human opinions and “appropriate” divine cosmology, was first formulated in Thanassas (1997), and again, in a further elaborated version, in Thanassas (2005), and, in English, in Thanassas (2006). Until then, N.-L. Cordero maintained: “it makes no sense to speak of a Parmenidean ‘cosmology’” (2004, 160). At the *Eleatica* held in November 2006, Cordero still appeared to raise doubts about the legitimacy and validity of a reference to a Parmenidean “science” (cf. Cordero 2008, 33). Only in the “Conclusion” presented there, and in particular in a “Postscriptum” dated 2007, does Cordero recognize the existence of a cosmology distinct from the system of erroneous human opinions, suggesting, further, that the relevant passages be removed from the *Doxa* section and transposed into the first part of the poem (Cordero 2008, 74–80).

References to previous studies that proposed a very similar (if not essentially the same) interpretation are missing there, and this is, again, the case in his subsequent studies, such as the extensive elaboration in

Cordero (2010).³⁵ Yet, the key position defended by Cordero in his two related texts (2010 and 2011), namely the distinction between erroneous opinions and divine cosmology, had already been formulated in Thanassas (1997; 2005; 2006; 2007). In all likelihood, Cordero would attempt to underline the originality of his own position by emphasizing two further points:

a. While in his earlier texts Cordero unpretentiously spoke of “the Parmenidean *Doxa*” (“la *Doxa* parménidienne”; cf. 1997, 193, 212), he now suddenly insists on presenting it as an imaginary notion, as a monster corresponding to “Centaur, Sirens, Cyclops, and other such creatures [that] can be found everywhere in Greek mythology” (2010, 231). In less dramatic tones, however, what Cordero essentially argues for is that Parmenidean “physics” should not be confused with deceitful “human opinions”; he thus essentially repeats what had been emphasized by me already in 1997: “*the Doxa* does not even exist,”³⁶ i.e., speaking of *doxa* makes no sense, as long as we do not distinguish which of the several perspectives and projects included in it is intended. In my eyes, the only really crucial question is whether we should recognize the existence of a true Parmenidean cosmology – and this we both do: I since 1997, and Cordero since 2008. Whether this cosmology should be labelled exclusively as “physics” (as Cordero has been insisting recently), or if it can be called “true” or “appropriate” *Doxa* (as I permit myself to

³⁵ A single exception can be found in Cordero (2011, 102), who attributes to me “a desperate attempt [...] to find a good δόξα, the divine δόξα, and a bad δόξα, the δόξα described as something ἀπαιτητόν” – although in an article published in the same volume I emphasize that “the distinction I have been proposing in the last twelve years is not one between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ *doxa*, but rather between two different, but equally ‘good’ claims raised within *Doxa*” (Thanassas 2011, 300). – In the same volume, Pulpito also stresses, nearly in my own words, that “the error is corrected by recognizing the unity of the principles. In this way, coexistence is opposed to alternation [...] Duality may be maintained, as long as the fundamental error is removed by recognizing that the two principles, to remain such, must coexist” (2011, 205). In another passage of the same text, when distinguishing between “on the one hand, a *pars destruens* (opinions of mortals), on the other hand, a *pars construens* (correct theories),” Pulpito was generous enough to add in a footnote (2011, 202): “Thanassas [2006] is in agreement [sic] with this.”

³⁶ Thanassas (2007, 67); cf. also Thanassas (1997, 202): “vielmehr gibt es ‘die’ *Doxa* überhaupt nicht”.

do) – this is obviously shadow fighting about names. I would myself be willing to accept the nomenclature of Cordero if it did not cut us off from the whole ancient tradition of presenting Parmenidean cosmology as belonging to the second part of the poem: the *Doxa*.³⁷

b. Cordero does make the original proposal to extract the fragments on physics from the *Doxa* section and transfer them into *Aletheia* (somewhere between fragments 4 and 7). This proposal did not succeed in meeting the approval of recent scholarship (see especially Kurfess, 2016). Here, I will confine myself to pointing out a serious problem in the justification of this position, and then a characteristic indication of Cordero's own vagueness or uncertainty.

(i) The basic problem of justification lies in Cordero's starting point that the dualistic system of Light and Night is a feature of wrong opinions *only* and has no place in the system of Parmenidean physics. Cordero defends this position by arguing that "the error of mortals leads them to establish two viewpoints about reality"; the "two principles, day and night [...] are contraries; and as such they are 'absolute' (a principle is always absolute), therefore they mutually revoke themselves" (2010, 239–240). What is overlooked, of course, in this argumentation, is that the establishment of two principles is not an establishment of *two* viewpoints, but the establishment of a *single* viewpoint about reality; this is, in any case, the essence, meaning and intention of all dualistic systems. More generally, Cordero's impression that the adoption of two principles means establishing two "absolutes" that "revoke themselves," an impression that prohibits, from the outset, any dualistic approach, seems to ignore the elementary insight that "absolute" in such a system is not each of the two individual principles in itself, but the pair of them, that is, the duality itself.

(ii) The revealing indecisiveness of Cordero's approach concerns fr. 12. In (Cordero, 2008, 79–80) the passage seems to be classified (as is

³⁷ On my use of "the *Doxa*," see above, n. 2.

reasonable) as part of the positive physics/cosmology of the goddess. Later, on the basis of the flawed argument presented in my preceding paragraph, and since fr. 12 explicitly refers to the two principles (Fire and Night), Cordero realizes that he is obliged to classify it as part of the system of human opinions (2010, 240). If, however, he classifies fr. 10 as part of cosmology because “the style of this text differs not at all from that of texts in the ‘true speech’” (2010, 240–241), it is difficult to convince the reader that, given its identical style, fr. 12 does not belong there too. One year later (Cordero 2011, 105), the author will argue that fr. 12 should be classified as part of the erroneous opinions, because here “an anonymous goddess (and not necessity) governs all things.” But can this goddess be different from the one in fr. 13, who “first of all gods she devised Eros”? Naturally, Cordero places fr. 13 in the “physics” (2011, 106 and *passim*). Occasionally, it seems that fr. 12 also returns briefly to the physics section (2011, 109), before ultimately ending up in the opinions section (2011, 113). The proposal to rearrange the fragments – the only really original element of Cordero’s interpretation – ultimately leads to a de-dramatization by its own initiator: “L’ordre des citations n’est pas important. Parménide lui-même l’a dit: ‘Il est commun pour moi où je commence, car j’y reviendrais à nouveau’” (Cordero 2019, 23).

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