

Doxa, Diakosmêsis and Being in Parmenides' Poem

Bruno Conte

Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP)
Post-doctoral researcher at the University of São Paulo (USP).

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4422-8184>
bruno@brnuc.com.br

Recebido: 30 de junho de 2020
Aprovado: 30 de setembro de 2020
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47661/afcl.v14i27.39061>



ARTIGO

CONTE, Bruno, *Doxa, Diakosmêsis and Being in Parmenides' Poem*. *Anais de Filosofia Clássica* 27, 2020. p. 176-197.

ABSTRACT: The modern edition of Parmenides' poem (from Fülleborn's 1795 work onwards) consolidated the well-known dichotomical scheme according to which its fragments are established and understood, i. e., attributing them to either one of two main "parts", following the Proem, that is, to Truth (*Alêtheia*) or Opinion (*Doxa*). A careful review of the doxographical testimonies, however, reveals sufficient indications to cast doubt over this well-accepted representation. In this paper, I analyze some of these testimonials – particularly those found in Simplicius – aiming to show the evidence for an important distinction between what the Ancients called a section "On Opinion" (*ta pros doxan*) and the Parmenidean Cosmogony properly. We shall see that this hypothesis implies a "deflationary" view of the *Doxa*, limited to verses 53-61 of fragment 8, in addition to the four verses of fragment 9. The cosmogonical account, moreover, as we would like to show, should not be simply understood as any collection of "mortal opinions" – in the sense of their devaluation in the first part of the poem (cf. B1,30; B6,4-9; B7,3-5) – but instead as importing epistemological features into the description of the origins of the present state of the universe. Finally, we extract from this picture some consequences for the understanding of the role of the argument on Being and the limits of Parmenidean "ontology".

KEYWORDS: Parmenides, *Doxa*, Cosmology, Doxography, Simplicius.

RESUMO: A edição moderna do poema de Parmênides (a partir do trabalho de Fülleborn de 1795) consolidou o esquema dicotômico bem conhecido de acordo com o qual os fragmentos são estabelecidos e compreendidos, isto é, se os atribuindo a uma ou outra de duas "partes" seguintes ao Próêmio, a Verdade (*Alêtheia*) ou a Opinião (*Doxa*). Um exame cuidadoso dos testemunhos doxográficos, no entanto, revela indicações suficientes para lançar dúvidas sobre essa representação geralmente aceita. Neste artigo, analiso alguns dos testemunhos – particularmente aqueles encontrados em Simplicio – com o objetivo de apontar a evidência em favor de uma importante distinção entre o que os antigos chamaram uma seção "Sobre a opinião" (*ta pros doxan*) e a Cosmogonia parmenídea propriamente. Veremos que essa hipótese implica uma perspectiva "deflacionária" da *Doxa*, que fica limitada aos versos 53–61 do fragmento 8, juntamente aos quatro versos do fragmento 9. O relato cosmogônico, ademais, não deve ser simplesmente entendido como uma coleção de "opiniões de mortais" – no sentido de sua desvalorização na primeira parte do poema (cf. B1,30; B6,4–9; B7,3–5) – mas mais bem como um discurso que importa características epistemológicas para a descrição das origens do estado presente do universo. Por fim, extraímos desse quadro algumas consequências para o entendimento do papel do argumento sobre o ser e os limites de "ontologia" parmenídea.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Parmênides. *Doxa*. Cosmologia. Doxografia. Simplicio.

The Poem in its modern text establishment

The debate on Parmenidean cosmology has become a prominent subject of investigation in recent years. The clarification of its status is critical for the understanding of the Poem and its philosophical and scientific horizons. Despite the growing interest in discussing the few textual citations and the many available indirect testimonies about Parmenides' cosmology, an important presupposition has not yet been called into question. And it is precisely this presupposition that I would like to challenge here, namely that deciding on Parmenides' commitment on cosmological propositions present in the Poem would amount to solving the problem of their ascription (or not) to a section of the poem called the "*Doxa*."¹

The hermeneutical problem faced by modern scholars is the following: it is clear that the Goddess directs a strong criticism against what, in a first development of the Poem, is named the "opinions of mortals" (*doxai brotón*). Nevertheless, already at the beginning of her speech, she conveys an injunction to learn not only about the "all-rounded heart of truth," but also something – but we do not know what exactly – concerning the perspective of mortals. A robust, systematical distinction is put forward between truth and opinions. Moreover, the doctrine of Being is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, identified with Truth.² The difficulty is, first, to explain the appeal of "learning about the *doxai*," considering their being outright dismissed in the development of the goddesses' argument about Being. Second, the epistemological status of the poem's cosmology remains problematic, insofar as it is somehow identified with the "*Doxa*," usually understood as a "Second Part" of the Poem, starting at B8,51.

¹ See for example the approach proposed by Cordero ("The '*Doxa* of Parmenides' Dismantled"), with the suggestion of separating true cosmological propositions from the *Doxa*, and attributing them to *Alétheia*.

² Cf. B8,50–51: ἐν τῷ σοι παύω πιστὸν λόγον ἠδὲ νόημα, ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης.

Even though recent scholarship has been increasingly recognizant of the importance of Parmenides' cosmogony, astronomy, embryology, and physiology, the question of the recovery of these subjects is frequently framed in terms of the possibility of accepting or not "opinions" (*doxai*) about the universe. However, are the cosmological propositions present in the Poem (or some of them) to be assumed as opinions of any kind or provenience, mortal or otherwise? The problem, as we would like to show in what follows, is perhaps badly stated, and stems from a *modern* representation of Parmenides' work. It is only in 1795, with Fülleborn's attempt at a reconstruction of the Poem from the known citations at his disposal, that a division in two main parts is proposed, following the prologue preserved by Sextus Empiricus. Remarkably enough, when arguing for the labelling of these two parts in an attempt to make use of expressions found in Simplicius and others, Fülleborn quotes Diogenes Laertius, who tells us that according to Parmenides "philosophy is double, according to the truth, and according to the opinion" (IX, 3,2).³ A systematic distinction between truth and opinion is taken by Fülleborn to represent the fundamental organization of the *work* itself. The dichotomical editorial scheme is then accepted without being questioned by the successive editors: Brandis soon adopted it in 1813. Karsten, to whom we are indebted for the complete gathering of the verses as we now have them, relies mostly on Fülleborn's work for his 1835 edition.⁴ He effectively consolidates the procedure of assigning all the fragments, except for the prologue, to either the *Alêtheia* or the *Doxa* part of the poem. The approach is reproduced in Mullach's editions (1845, 1860), which form the basis for Diels' *Parmenides Lehrgedicht* (1897), and becomes standard with the publications of the *Fragmente der Vorsokratier*. Following the poem, except for fragment B4 – about whose placement editors often hesitate –

³ Fülleborn, 22.

⁴ For the history of the establishment of the poem's text, see Cordero ("L'histoire du text de Parménide"), 8-15.

the verses to be considered are assigned to either one of those parts: On the one hand, we have the components of the section *On Truth* (from B2,1 to B8,52); on the other hand, we have the “remaining” fragments, collated between B8,61 and B19, and grouped under the name of *Doxa*, taken to form a “second part” of the poem.

This state of affairs concerning the representation of the structure of the poem would have significant consequences for its interpretation. Zeller first develops a reading, later radicalized by Diels,⁵ according to which Parmenides, in the cosmological verses, does not intend to communicate propositions to which he – by means of the Goddess' voice – would have been committed. Instead, according to this view, through those propositions Parmenides actually conveys a reconstruction of opinions elaborated by third-parties, presenting a false doctrine on purpose. Its pedagogical intention would be to instruct the audience on how to criticize cosmological self-contradictory beliefs, developing a model to serve as an object of criticism once the argument on being and not-being has been established as a fundamental truth. The “eristic” or “hypothetical” view of the *Doxa* established by the end of the nineteenth century would become a significant trend in Parmenides scholarship. Its traces, albeit significantly modified, are still recognizable in interpretations of contemporary authors.⁶

The doxographical tradition about the Doxa section

This hermeneutical paradigm, however, poses an issue if we take into account the doxographical tradition. From a very early date, a number of testimonies provide us with clear indications of cosmological

⁵ Zeller, 491; Diels (“Über die ältesten Philosophieschulen der Griechen”), 250.

⁶ For Cordero (“The ‘Doxa of Parmenides’ Dismantled”), 240, the *Doxa* section conveys a false theory that explains reality by two principles, day and night. For Curd, the Goddess tells a deceptive story, to teach how to identify illegitimate cosmological principles.

doctrines attributed to Parmenides himself. These are found in Aristotle's available texts, in the indirect quotes by Theophrastus found in Simplicius, and in Simplicius' own words (and in agreement with the parallel testimonies of Plutarch and Asclepius), not to mention sources derived from Aëtius. But this is a point to which I shall come back later. For now, allow me to bracket the examination of the cosmological content found in the doxography in order to make a point about the information we can draw from our sources when they provide their testimony on the *Doxa* section. As mentioned before, the titles assigned by modern editors, with their representation of a poem divided into two main parts, are based on certain formulae effectively found in the doxography. Expressions like *en tois pros doxan* and *en tois pros alétheian*, with dative neutral plurals, are the less ambiguous ones for the designation of passages where Parmenides would have dealt with *Doxa* and *Alétheia* respectively. They might be translated as "in the verses concerning opinion" and "in the verses concerning truth." These two examples are quite remarkable, as they attest to a tradition of restricting a set of verses in the poem to which the Ancients made reference by the name of "*Doxa*" (and this is otherwise an indication of some degree of importance attributed to this "section" of the poem). On the other hand, some of the doxographical material and, in particular, some important passages found in Simplicius, are not clear cases of references to a specific, identifiable piece of the original Parmenidean work: in fact, Simplicius, in addition to the Greek expressions we have just mentioned, also employs *pros doxan*⁷ and *epi doxan*⁸ in contexts where he is not directly referring to the text of the poem, but rather explaining that – or instead giving an interpretation according to which – generation exists "relative to opinion" but not to truth, or that Parmenides at some point changes his level of analysis, "descending" (*metelthón*) from truth "to

⁷ SIMPL. *In de caelo*, 556,12-14.

⁸ SIMPL. *In Phys.*, 30,16.

opinion.” In addition, following Platonic ontological criteria, Simplicius names the objects of sensation and opinion in the plural, opposing them to the objects of the intelligible realm, fleshing out his interpretation with occasional references to the poem. So, we find expressions like *en tois doxastois*,⁹ “in the section about the objects of opinion” and also *peri tón doxastón*,¹⁰ “about the objects of opinion.”

We should methodologically distinguish between those passages and expressions where ontological concepts are employed, an exegetical procedure, on the one hand, that betrays Simplicius' undeniable (and undenied) intention to provide for a Platonic interpretation of Parmenides, and those contexts and pieces of information, on the other hand, that merely indicate the placement of some sets of verses in the poem, barely relying on Simplicius' philosophical project.¹¹ As we shall see, according to the indications provided by the Neoplatonic commentator, we can reasonably determine what was, in the ancient tradition and unlike our modern representation, identified as a *Doxa* “section” in the poem. Simplicius is, for this purpose, a unique source, as he gives us a good deal of information on verses which he explicitly says come “before” or “later,” “immediately” or “somewhere after” some other verses. He effectively gives us many indications, if not on how to assemble all the pieces of the puzzle, at least of its general framework, as shown by the table below:¹²

⁹ SIMPL. *In Phys.*, 147, 28.

¹⁰ SIMPL. *In Phys.*, 146, 29.

¹¹ Pace Kurfess, 139 and n. 13, who takes all expressions as equivalent.

¹² The picture we can draw from Simplicius' indications puts some limits on the liberties taken by interpreters on the possibilities of reconstruction of the poem. In particular, it seems to resist Cordero's suggestion of assigning the cosmological announcement in B11 to the *Alêtheia* section (see Cordero, “The ‘Doxa of Parmenides’ Dismantled” 242–243 and 245).

Ἡ διακόσμησις

τὰ πρὸς δόξαν

(*In phys.* 25,14)

B8, 53-59 (*In de caelo*, 557,19-558,11: μέλλων
περὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν)

(*In phys.*, 179,27-180,2: μετὰ τὰ περὶ
ἀληθείας)

περὶ τῶν δευῖν στοιχείων

B9

(*Ibid.*: μετ' ὀλίγα πάλιν)

περὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν

B11

(*In phys.*, 559,20-560,1: περὶ τῶν
αἰσθητῶν ἀρξασθαί)

τὸ ποιητικόν

B12

(*In phys.*, 39,12: μετ' ὀλίγα δὲ πάλιν
περὶ τῶν δευῖν στοιχείων εἰπῶν
ἐπάγειν καὶ τὸ ποιητικόν)

ἡ γένεσις τῶν γινομένων
καὶ φθειρομένων μέχρι
τῶν μορίων τῶν ζώων

(*In de caelo*, 559,20-560,1: τὴν γένεσιν
τῶν γινομένων κτλ. παραδίδωσι)

B19

(*In de caelo*, 557,19-558,11: παραδοὺς
δὲ τὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν διακόσμησιν)

Moreover, a second question about those testimonies was missed because of the modern representation of the poem: what is the thematic content referred to by our sources when they talk about verses “concerning Opinion” (*peri doxan*) – and not “according to opinion” (*kata doxan*)? Despite the anachronistic vocabulary, our sources are consistent in associating what they call a *Doxa* section with the postulation of an opposition of cosmological principles (*arkhai*), causes

(*aitia*) or elements (*stoikheia*) variously rendered as Fire and Earth, Hot and Cold, or Bright and Dark.¹³ The accounts are also unanimous in attributing this doctrine of opposite principles to Parmenides himself, nowhere indicating that the ancient doxographers saw in it any systematical reconstruction with polemical intentions, as believed Zeller and his followers.

*The distinction between Doxa
and Diakosmésis in the Ancient tradition*

Simplicius comments on Aristotle's claim that Parmenides postulated the principles as opposites,¹⁴ and on this occasion he actually indicates the relevant portion of the poem where such a philosophical assumption was to be found: in lines 53 to 59 of B8, in addition to the four verses of B9.¹⁵ That is: the relevant philosophical content of those verses was rendered, according to a tradition to which Simplicius testifies, in the conceptual framework of opposing *arkhai*, the postulation of which this tradition recognizes as an important feature of Parmenidean thinking.

There is, nevertheless, a remarkable contrast in Simplicius' accounts which is not usually considered by modern students of

¹³ THEOPHRASTUS. *Physic. op.*, 3,2 (= SIMPL. *In Phys.*, 25,14): καὶ τῶν πεπερασμένων [τῶν δὲ πλείους λεγόντων... ἔθεντο τῷ πλήθει τὰς ἀρχὰς] οἱ μὲν δύο ὡς Παρμενίδης ἐν τοῖς πρὸς δόξαν πῦρ καὶ γῆν (ἢ μᾶλλον φῶς καὶ σκοτὸς)... ALEXANDRE. *In Met.*, 670,21: Π. δὲ ἐν τοῖς πρὸς δόξαν πῦρ καὶ γῆν [οὐσίαν καὶ ἀρχὴν ἐτίθετο]. THEMISTIUS. *In Phys.*, V, 2, 17,29: καὶ γὰρ ὁ Π. ἐν τοῖς πρὸς δόξαν τὸ θερμὸν ποιεῖ καὶ τὸ ψυχρὸν ἀρχάς. PHILOPON. *In Phys.* 22,2: ὅτι ὁ Π. ἐν τοῖς πρὸς δόξαν πῦρ καὶ γῆν ἔλεγεν εἶναι τὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν πάντων. *Ibid.*, 126,1: ἐν τοῖς πρὸς δόξαν δύο λέγειν τὰς ἀρχὰς, ἐν τοῖς πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἔν εἶναι λέγοντα.

¹⁴ *Phys.* I 5, 188a19-22.

¹⁵ SIMPL. *In Phys.*, 179,27-180,12. See also the table above.

Parmenides: when quoting those verses, Simplicius employs the traditional formula *en tois pros doxan*; however, in at least one important occasion, when talking about Parmenidean Cosmogony, beginning, according to him, with B11 and B12, and ending with B19, Simplicius does not call it *Doxa*, but instead names it a *Diakosmésis*.¹⁶

The presence of the term *diakosmésis* does not appear to be gratuitous. It echoes *diakosmos*, a word whose first attestation is in verse 60 of B8 in our Poem.¹⁷ Yet, there is a difference in meaning between these terms: the deverbal noun with suffix *-sis* is appropriate to designate the cosmogonical processes and the “ordering” of the universe.¹⁸ What, then, should we understand by *diakosmos*? Most of the interpreters take the word in B8,60 to refer either to the actual universe¹⁹ or to the cosmogonical discourse itself.²⁰ If we took this to be the correct referent for the term, there would be no grounds in the text for postulating a difference between *Doxa* and *Diakosmésis*. However, τὸν δῖάκοσμον in this verse can be assumed to be anaphoric,²¹ referring precisely to the verses 55–59 coming immediately before it, and *to* should then be read with demonstrative value. In the broader context where the aforementioned verses are located (B8,51 ff.), the Goddess presents the pair of forms “fire” and “night,” insisting that the *Kouros* pay attention to her “deceiving order of words” (*kosmos epeôn*

¹⁶ SIMPL. *In de caelo*, 557,19–558,11.

¹⁷ Finkelberg (“On the History of the Greek Κόσμος”), 130 n. 98.

¹⁸ We can see that stabilization of the term *kosmos* to designate the universe with Plato. According to Kahn, this sense is already found in *Gorgias* 508a. For Finkelberg (“On the History of the Greek Κόσμος”), 127–8, we should only consider passages in dialogues from the late period: the *Timaeus* (28b3), the *Statesman* (269d8) and the *Philebus* (29e1; 59a3), where there is exact synonymy with *ouranos*.

¹⁹ To cite some of the most recent works: Marcinkowska-Rosól, 140–3; Bredlow, 276; Pulpito, 204–5.

²⁰ Verdenius, 50; Guthrie, 51; Finkelberg (“Being, Truth and Opinion in Parmenides”), 236–237, among others.

²¹ A possibility already noticed by Cornford, 108 and Long (“The Principles of Parmenides' Cosmogony”), 104.

apatelón, B8,52).²² She then highlights the contrast, and suggests an alternating dynamics (and perhaps a sequence in time) of, on the one hand, the predicates bright, soft and on the other, of dark, dense and heavy. What the tradition interpreted as a “postulation of principles,” in the language of the poem actually corresponds a “cosmic arrangement” (*diakosmos*) of contrary predicates, according to which “all things” (*panta = morphai*) are presented, i. e. from a scientific perspective. The doxographic tradition identified a two-step argumentative scheme: first, the positing of opposing elements, followed by the unfolding of a cosmogonical discourse, built on the grounds of those principles. Both Plutarch and Asclepius also bear witness to this scheme, even if they do not quote the exact verses.²³

According to this evidence, the *Doxa* section may be distinguished from the larger body of the *Diakosmésis*: from the former, we only have the 15 verses quoted by Simplicius (B8,51-61; B9,1-4), a figure that obviously disallows its simple identification as a “Second Part” of the poem. Such a deflationary view of the *Doxa*, based on the tradition of testimonies employing the formula *en tois pros doxan*, allows us to dissociate Parmenidean cosmology from any “doxastic” value. Thus, it attempts to dismiss this identification of *Doxa* and *Diakosmésis* as a false problem created by the modern representation of the poem’s structure in its arbitrary two-part division.

²² For the sense of *epea* as “sequence of words,” see Diller, 47.

²³ PLUTARCH. *Adv. Colotem*, 1114b7-9; ASCLEPIUS, *In Met.*, 42,26. Most interestingly, Plutarch may be saying that Parmenides “poetically composes a cosmic arrangement” (διάκοσμον πεποιήται), referring to the highly stylized presentation of the pairs of opposites. He also says that those elements are combined, and that “from them and through them, (P) accomplishes the totality of appearances” (ἐκ τούτων τὰ φαινόμενα πάντα καὶ διὰ τούτων ἄποτελεῖ). Because the elements have a cognitive import, as we shall see next, it is also possible that Plutarch’s latter formulation is a rendering of B1, 32: διὰ παντὸς πάντα (τὰ δοκοῦντα εἶναι). The employment of two verbs (*poieó* and *apoteleó*) indicates a two-step scheme (the postulation of principles and the development of the cosmogony), and the same applies for the passage in Asclepius, with the repetition of *hypothithēmi*.

*The role of a Diakosmésis in the global
argument of the Poem*

As has been suggested by Rossetti, who is also opposed to the modern dichotomic view, we can find in the poem not only the division between Truth and Opinion at B8,50-51 but many “meta-discursive declarations” that allow Parmenides to distinguish and make transitions between arguments of different natures.²⁴ However, this acknowledgement should not prevent us from investigating the possibility of an organic relation entertained by each of those distinct “sections” to the global discursive strategy of the Poem. In particular, we do not need to resort to the kind of interpretation that was once assumed by Nietzsche, seeing Parmenidean cosmology as some “pre-critical” doctrine severed from the strong argument on Being and Not-Being.

Moreover, the feature of a unified endeavour is suggested by the Goddess herself, when she says it is incumbent upon the *Kouros* to be informed about “everything.” The word *panta* (B1,28) could *prima facie* simply express, to Parmenides’ original audience, an affinity with the scientific speculations typical from Ionian and Milesian traditions.²⁵ However, she soon specifies the meaning of “everything” in an unexpected and original sense:²⁶ the distinction between the “unshaken heart of well-rounded truth” and the “opinions of mortals” deprived of true *pistis* (B1,29-30). This movement introduces a second-order consideration of knowledge that substantially defines the novelty of

²⁴ Rossetti, 213, identifies these transitions in B1,29-32, B8,3-4, B8,50-52, B8,53-54, B10-11 and B19.

²⁵ See Long (“The Scope of Greek Philosophy”) for the typical characterization of the early thinkers’ pursuit as knowledge about “everything.”

²⁶ We should otherwise notice that the procedure of creating certain expectations on the audience and subsequently frustrating them to introduce the novelty of his message is a rhetorical device extensively employed by Parmenides in the Poem, with the background of Homeric, Hesiodic and Orphic traditions. See Conte.

Parmenides' thinking.

The complementarity of the two themes is expressed by the *émen... éde...* construction, which denotes a strong “and” in a double affirmation:²⁷ the *Kouros* should not simply learn “A followed by B”, but “A in conjunction with B” (Mullach appropriately translates *autem... et... et...*). The teaching about both objects thus appears to amount to a unified task and not to different steps in the Goddess' *curriculum*.²⁸ However, what would the interest be in learning about opinions whose trustworthiness is denied from the start? The Goddess cannot be referring, in a very trivial manner, directly to their contents. It seems that the subject proposed at vv. 29–30 must be apprehended in a formal rather than in a material perspective: inasmuch as the *Kouros* is to follow the Goddess' *pistos logos* (B8,50), he should discover, by the same token, the reasons to understand that the opinions of mortals are devoid of *pistis alethés*. The discrimination (*krinein*) of Being and Non-Being, alongside the exclusion of Non-Being,²⁹ allows for a critical perspective about the judgments of mortals, who erroneously assign “being” (and “non-being”) to each and every one of the things they are used to naming. The delimitation of the strict conditions of naming *to eon* in Truth is at the same time a rejection of the overpredication of “being” in ordinary human experience and language.

²⁷ Denniston, 280, 287.

²⁸ Pace Schwabl, 399–402, who sees three different stages announced by B1.29/B1.30/B1.31–32. After Truth, he draws a distinction between a “negative” and a “positive” *Doxa* section, corresponding respectively to B8,55–59 and the cosmological discourse, which he considers as a traditional cosmogony. We have seen, though, that the doxographers recognize in the *Doxa* a positive theory of principles, which implies considering the passage not merely as negative but, as we shall see, as conveying a positive and also “critical” intention. Nevertheless, neither is this merely a traditional cosmogony, as we would like to show soon, nor are we forced to consider it a collection of special *doxai*. “Opinions” names in the poem, through and through, the kind of knowledge to be criticized. There are no “true opinions,” and that expression would be an oxymoron in the language of the poem.

²⁹ Both Plato and Simplicius understood Parmenides' argument as a confutation of Not-Being (Plato. *Sophist*, 239b2; SIMPL. *In Phys.*, 144.29).

The *Doxa* section, then, presents the real grounds for the naming of things: everything has been named according to the *dynaméis* of Light and Night (B9). Those principles or forces can only be revealed after the ontological distinction of Being and Not-Being, because only then will the theoretical means have been provided to dismantle the pseudo-identity of the *morphai* (which are the objects of mortal judgments and should not be confused with the *arkhai*).³⁰ Mortals name things and err, for indeed in naming them they are trapped in the illusion (*apatê*), produced by language, that things could have the stability, homogeneity, and integrity that only belongs to “what is” (*to eon*). In so doing, mortals are led to proclaim contradictorily that things “are and also are not” (cf. *einai te kai oukhi*, B8,40). Everything known in the universe (*panta*) remains the effect of misleading judgments (*dokounta*) because mortals lack the epistemological criticism that would first prompt them to investigate, for each of those things known in the universe, its real constitution or *physis* originated in opposing principles.

This “flame” (*phlox*) and this “night” (*nyx*) (i.e. some sort of privation of Light) are forms in lack of real ontological consistency. Whereas “what is” remains in itself and possesses a self-grounded identity,³¹ each *morphê* discriminated by mortals acquires its identity only

³⁰ It should be noted that when Simplicius thematizes the *arkhai*, he feels compelled to quote not only B8,53-59 but also the four verses of B9 (*In phys.*, 179.27). This is not the case with other passages where B8,53 ff. are quoted. In 38,28 he is interested in advocating for the ontological dualism in Parmenides and merely shows that the Eleatic had something to say both about the intelligible and about the sensible. In 30,20, a reference to the *arkhai* is made, and B9 appears to be substituted for a marginal note found in his manuscript, where the role of opposing principles is abstractly explained. Pulpito, 208-210, also distinguishes between *morphai* and the principles but sees in *demai* the “constitutive aspects” of things, expressed as pairs of opposites. We would rather not insist on such a terminological distinction, because then *ekrinanto demas* (B8,55) would attribute to the mortals themselves the knowledge of the structure of oppositions underlying the forms they name. The description of opposite predicates is part of the Goddess revelation and mortals are unaware of how important their interconnexion is for the understanding of reality.

³¹ B8,29: ταὐτόν τ' ἐν ταῦτῳ τε μένον καθ' ἑαυτό τε κείται.

insofar as it depends on its own alterity³² – in this sense, none of them is “necessary” (B8,54). Mortals conventionally separate what in nature is a dynamics of opposites in the constitution of each thing in the universe.³³ It is the Goddess’ task to reveal the operation accomplished by mortals when they name forms, by making explicit the contrary predicates underlying each named thing. In so doing, she also discloses the interplay of a “cosmic arrangement” (*diakosmos*) of forces ultimately derived from the primary opposition of Light and Night,³⁴ an interplay which exists in everything.

To learn “that” and “how” mortals err – respectively in the *Alêtheia* and *Doxa* sections – is not yet, however, to have an explanation on “why” this is the case. The purpose of giving such an account is announced at B1,31: the disciple shall learn “the manner how (*hós*)³⁵ the things–purported-to-be (*dokounta*) were to be necessarily accepted, through all, as if they were beings³⁶.” It is very likely that the cosmological discourse, beginning with a cosmo-theogonical account,

³² B8,57–58: ἑωυτῷ πάντοσε τωῦτόν, τῷ δ’ ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωῦτόν. Each form is identical to itself only inasmuch as it is in “in all regards” (*panthose*) different from another (*tdi* here has explicative value). The mortal-named *morphai* can thus be characterized as or entailing “enantiomorphic opposites” (cf. Curd 12). But this cannot be applied to the principles themselves nor to their *dynamais*.

³³ In naming and discriminating mortals somehow acknowledge the presence of opposing principles: *episemai* in B19,3 should be read in the strong sense of recognizing the signs of those principles in each named thing. Naming, however, fixates the appearance of a separated unity (cf. χωρὶς ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων, B8,56) that disguises the reality of the mixture.

³⁴ Thanassas, 64, also emphasizes the prefix *dia-* as introductory of the concept of “mixture,” and recognizes the equal standing of the principles in that they “determine and dominate the world order.” He does not allow, though, for a distinction between the principles and the *morphai*, which seems to be crucial for the understanding of the *Doxa*-passages.

³⁵ Dehon, 282, correctly pointed out that the Goddess here does not invite to know *dokounta*, but instead emphasizes “the manner how” they were to exist. Mullach was fortunate when he translated the conjunction by *quomodo*.

³⁶ Brague proposed πάντ’ ἄπερ ὄντα as a correction for the corrupted reading πάντα †περ† ὄντα in the mss., based on Simplicius’ expression δοκοῦν ὄν (*In de caelo*, 557.20) (Brague 56–57). The first to have noted that the participle escapes the regular Platonic phraseology, thus conveying a reproduction of the language of B1.31, appears to be Falus, 283.

proceeded with a zoogony followed by an anthropogony.³⁷ It is very likely that we find B16 in the context of the anthropogony, where Parmenides develops some sort of physiological account of human cognition or perception. The Parmenidean thesis of homology of the cognitive organs with their objects appears to be significant enough to be quoted both by Aristotle and Theophrastus when they discuss their predecessors' theories of perception. The fragment, it seems, may describe the conditions for the appearance of intelligence among humans (*tós noos anthrópōisi paristatai*)³⁸ in terms of a mixture of limbs (*krasis meleón*, B16,1-2). Theophrastus explicitly relates the fragment to the doctrine of two elements (*duoïn stoikheion*)³⁹ which, as our evidence suggests, should be identified with the *diakosmos* presented in the *Doxa* section (B8,53-59, B9).

Parmenides seems to be interested in demonstrating the presence of the primordial duality not only in the human cognitive apparatus but in everything else in the universe. We can detect dualities in the extant direct quotations of the cosmogonical part of the poem: female/male (B12), Moon/Sun (B14-15), feminine seeds/masculine seeds (B18). The sources derived from Aëtius, moreover, inform us about cosmological descriptions where we can identify the explanatory role of opposites whose relation to primordial principles is attested to in B9 (they are their powers or properties, *dynaméis*). Parmenides asserted that the Moon

³⁷ The sequence of explanations on the origins of the universe, on the gods, on animals, on the origins of humans (sometimes including their first political organizations) is archaic, persists in Plato's *Timaeus-Critias* and can be found as late as Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (see Naddaf). The general picture provided by Simplicius (see the table above), and especially his description of Parmenidean cosmogony as γένεσις τῶν γινομένων καὶ φθειρομένων μέχρι τῶν μορίων τῶν ζῴων (*In de caelo*, 559,20-560,1) provide reasonable grounds to believe that our Eleatic is following the traditional scheme.

³⁸ Is this "appearance" a bodily state or a particular stage in the cosmic evolution where a certain combination is produced, that of the cognitive capability that characterizes the human form? It is difficult to decide. Although not discussing any cosmogonical implications, Hershbell, 12, associates the *physis* of the limbs of human body with the *noos*, in the sense of their governing "constitution."

³⁹ *De sensu*, 3.1.

and the Sun have their origins in the Milky Way, the Moon deriving from dense regions (which accounts for its coldness), the Sun from the rare (explaining its hotness) (*Dox.* 349,10-11); he tried to circumscribe the inhabited zones in the Earth, distinguishing its regions (377,18-20), and inferring that males originate in the North (associated with coldness), females in the South (associated with heat) (419,12-23); he also explained ageing as a diminution of heat (443). The positing of ultimate principles has etiological purposes: it allows to account for phenomena on the basis of oppositions derived from them, revealing the presence of Light and Night in the *physis* of each individual thing.

The account of the origins of all things in the universe includes an account of the constitution of humans and their cognitive capabilities, both grounded in the opposition of principles: hot knows hot, cold knows cold.⁴⁰ The human perception of reality is explained on the same grounds as those of all other existing things in the universe: the cosmogonical narrative unfolds from the primordial past to the present state of the universe, where there are human beings and things around them offering themselves to their judgment (*kata doxan ephy tade kai nun easi*, B19,1). The demonstrative pronoun (*tade*) here is in parallel to *epi toisi te kai tois* in B9: Parmenides seems to take great care in refusing to attribute the status of *eonta* to the individual, concrete things. They “are” not, strictly speaking, except for the misleading judgment of mortals. This would explain the play of words in B1,31, when the Goddess describes individual things as “things-purported-to-be” (*dokounta*), that is: things as they present themselves to the immediate, uncritical human experience.

The *doxai* fail to discriminate between Being and Non-Being, and the *Alétheia*-argument provides the rigorous criteria for thinking *to*

⁴⁰ See Laks, 13-14, for the interpretation of *symmetria* in Theophrastus' *De Sensibus* account: in the cognitive act, each of the two elements perceives and cognizes for itself. Thus the term describes the “adaptation” of (each element in) the senses to their objects and not the “proportion” in the mixture.

eon. Once the criticism on opinions is complete with the deduction of Being, the Goddess can shift her perspective: it is no longer a matter of showing the contradictions of the ordinary human language, but rather of providing an explanation for the very erring of mortals. And this explanation seems to be in line with the general cosmological accounts, insofar as we consider the presence of opposing principles in the cognitive framework of mortals as the reason for their judgment being twofold: as stated in the *Doxa*, they name forms according to two perspectives (*duo gnomais*, B8,53), and are misled in taking one aspect of reality (one of the two principles and their *dynamais*) for what they predicate “being,” the other for what they call “non-being.” The cosmological discourse is then not simply the gathering of a piece of encyclopedical knowledge about the universe but is also directed at an epistemological goal, indicating the presence of principles through the investigation of nature and completing the explanation begun in the *Doxa* that accounts for the naturally “errant” perception of men.⁴¹

Some consequences for Parmenidean “ontology”

The interpretation sketched here suggests that we follow a continuous thread, which runs through the different “sections” of Parmenides' Poem. It also tries to account for Parmenides' scientific interest in speculations about “everything” (*panta*). This “everything” must be considered as the overall subject of the Poem. It is mentioned in the very first lines of the proem (*kata panta*, B1,3), to be then thematised by the Goddess in her opening speech (*panta puthesthai*, B1,28). It also appears to be constantly reworked throughout the Poem, as the

⁴¹ This, of course, entails a sort of “circular demonstration” of which Parmenides appeared to be very proud in his discourse (cf. B5 and the *εὐκυκλέος*-lesson at B1,29). This interpretation thus extends the recognition of that methodological preference as not restricted to the demonstration of the *sémata* of Being in *Alétheia*, but also present in the *Diakosmésis*, insofar as it begins and probably ends with an account for mortal error.

argument progresses. Most notably, in *Alêtheia* we find an adverbial use of *pan* connected with *einai*: what-is needs “to be completely” (*pampan peleinai*, B8,11); it “is wholly” (*pan estin*, B8,22) homogeneous; it also “is in everything” (*pan estin*, B8,25) continuous. At the same time, Parmenides also strongly suggests cosmological implications when employing *panta* as a noun in double constructions: *dia pantos panta* (B1,32), *pantêi pantôs kata kosmon* (B4,3). It is interesting to find a corresponding repetition of the participle form *eon*, as this usage also seems to dilute any insinuation of differentiated multiplicity back into continuous unity when the Goddess says that “what-is touches what-is” – cf. *eon gar eonti pelazei*, B8,25. Finally, at B8,38–39 – despite difficulties with the establishment of this text and its grammatical construction – “everything” (*panta*) is put in some connection with human language (cf. *onoma*).

Of course, the argument on Being should introduce some nontrivial feature for our understanding of “everything.” The novelty of Parmenidean “ontology” vis-à-vis Ionian cosmology, however, does not oblige us to forcefully assume a direct polemic against the scientific speculations of the time, quite the contrary. To say the least, the talk about “what is” did not prevent Parmenides from elaborating his cosmology, as we have seen. However, we could say more: the understanding of the universe from the emergent cosmological sciences already implied casting doubt over ordinary conceptions on what there is. Even before Parmenides, the commonsensical view of human opinions is challenged in favour of naming abstract properties (“the hot”, “the cold”, “the dense”, “the rare”) as the actual constituents of reality, considering their capacities for changing into one another as what properly “is.” Anaximander appears to have taught that what underlies each thing we perceive and truly determines their nature is a constant interplay of elementary opposites, so much so that for him the ultimate principle of all things can only be said to be something

“unlimited” (*apeiron*).⁴² When Parmenides introduces the deductive argument in *Alêtheia*, his polemics appear to aim non-scientific “opinions of mortals.” He seems sure to have invented a strong discourse to counter widespread beliefs – and this we can understand as a criticism of popular conceptions in favour of the new scientific worldview.

If we accept the preceding argument, we will also have to accept two implications: First, that the demonstration of Being in the Poem is not an end in itself, but rather a preparation for the cosmological presentation coming after *Alêtheia* (in the *Doxa* and *Diakosmésis* parts). Such an interpretation puts into question the degree of prominence of ontology in Parmenides. Even more so because of a second implication, that an important discontinuity would have to be assumed: the argument on Being, intended as polemical against non-scientific views, does not by itself provide the theoretical grounds for investigating the *physis* of each thing. Cosmology is not directly deduced from ontology. Instead, the argument in *Alêtheia*, as we read it, allows for a critical perspective on mortal *doxai* (and their language), which seems to be, in the Poem, only a step for the further disclosure of the primary ‘forces’ or ‘capacities’ (*dynaméis*) relevant for explaining the features of the cosmos. This interpretation is not mere speculation, but a hypothesis which puts us in a position to better understand some of the best of our ancient testimonies, where such discontinuity is never deemed to be anything scandalous. Aristotle, in particular, has no problem in acknowledging the Parmenidean doctrine of two *aitiai* for cosmological explanations,

⁴² Teophrastus (*apud* Simplicius). *Phys. op. 2 = Dox.* 476. Ἀναξίμανδρος... ἀρχὴν τε καὶ στοιχεῖον εἴρηκε τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον, πρῶτος τοῦτο τοῦνομα κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς· λέγει δὲ αὐτὴν μήτε ὕδωρ μήτε ἄλλο τι τῶν καλουμένων εἶναι στοιχείων, ἀλλ’ ἑτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἄπειρον. I don’t take *ta onta* here as signifying the elements, but individual things in a broader sense. Furthermore, I do not think that the plural participle of being had already that terminological sense for Anaximander. Kahn, who has claims for the view I here deny, honestly admits that our documentation does not confirm any of the alternatives, and recognizes that the choice remains a matter of historical interpretation (Kahn 175). I assume that the concept of *ta onta* as identification of the fundamental constituents of reality belongs to the history of effect of the Parmenidean *eon*.

separate from the account of the One-Being (*Phys.* I 5, 188a19-22; *Met.* I 5, 986b27-987a2; *De gen. et corr.*, I 3, 318b3-7). But Aristotle's polemics with Parmenidean monism is another story for another time: if the current hypothesis is correct, it could be described as an original attempt to develop natural philosophy in the framework supplied by a robust conception of science (*epistémê*), devising principles such as form, subject and privation. Aristotle then forges the path to provide *Physics* with its proper ontological grounds, and the ability to talk about *physéi onta* (plural) – something completely lacking in Parmenides.

Bibliographic References

- BRAGUE, R. "La vraisemblance du faux (Parménide, fr. I, 31-32)." *Études sur Parménide: Problèmes d'interprétation*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Vrin, 1987.
- BREDLOW, Luis Andrés. "Cosmología, cosmogonía y teogonía en el poema de Parménides." *Emerita* 78.2 (2010): 275–297. Web. 9 Aug. 2014.
- CONTE, Bruno. "A poética de Parmênides e sua nova imagem de mundo." *Hypnos* 37 (2016): 225–251.
- CORDERO, Nestor-Luis. "L'histoire du text de Parménide." *Études sur Parménide*. Ed. P. Aubenque. Volume II: Problèmes d'interprétation. Paris: Vrin, 1987. 3–24.
- . "The 'Doxa of Parmenides' Dismantled." *Ancient Philosophy* 30.2 (2010): 231–246.
- CORNFORD, F. M. "Parmenides' Two Ways." *The Classical Quarterly* 27 (1933): 97–111.
- CURD, P. "Deception and Belief in Parmenides' Doxa." *Apeiron* 25.2 (1992): 109–134.
- DEHON, P. "Les recommandations de la déesse. Parménide, fr. 1.28–32." *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 6.2 (1988): 271–289.
- DENNISTON, John Dewar. *The Greek Particles*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- DIELS, Hermann. *Doxographi Graeci*. Berlin: Reimer, 1879.
- DIELS, Hermann. "Über die ältesten Philosophieschulen der Griechen." *Philosophische Aufsätze: Eduard Zeller zu seinem fünfzigjährigen Doctor-Jubiläum gewidmet*. Leipzig: Poeschl, 1887.
- DILLER, H. "Der vorphilosophische Gebrauch von κόσμος und κοσμεῖν." *Festschrift Bruno Snell*. München: C. H. Beck, 1956. 47–60.
- FALUS, R. "Parmenides-Interpretationen." *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 8 (1960): 267–294.
- FINKELBERG, Aryeh. "Being, Truth and Opinion in Parmenides." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 81.3 (1999): 233–248.
- . "On the History of the Greek Κόσμος." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 98 (1998): 103–136.
- FÜLLEBORN, G. G. "Fragmente Des Parmenides. Neu Gesammelt, Übersetzt Und Erläutert." *Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Philosophie*. Ed. G. G. Fülleborn. VI. Züllichau/Freistadt: Frommannsche Buchhandlung, 1795. 1–102.
- GUTHRIE, W. K. C. *A History of Greek Philosophy: The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus*. Vol. 2. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1965.
- HERSHBELL, Jackson P. "Parmenides'

- Way of Truth and B16." *Apeiron* 4.2 (1970): 1–23.
- KAHN, Charles. *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
- KURFESS, Christopher J. "Restoring Parmenides' Poem: Essays Toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources." PhD Thesis. University of Pittsburgh, Jan. 2012.
- LAKS, Andre. "'The More and the Full' on the Reconstruction of Parmenides' Theory of Sensation in Theophrastus, de Sensibus, 3–4." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 8 (1990): 1–18.
- LONG, A. A. "The Principles of Parmenides' Cosmogony." *Phronesis* 8.2 (1963): 90–107.
- . "The Scope of Greek Philosophy." *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*. Ed. A. A. Long. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 1–21.
- MARCINKOWSKA-ROSÓL, Maria. "Zur Syntax von Parmenides Fr. 1.31–32." *Hermes* 135.2 (2007): 134–148.
- MULLACH, G. A., ed. "Parmenidis carminum reliquiae." *Fragmenta Philosophorum Graecorum*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Paris: Didot, 1860. 114–130. Poeseos Philosophiquae.
- NADDAE, G. *Le concept de nature chez les présocratiques*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2008.
- PULPITO, Massimo. "Parmenides and the Forms." *Parmenides, Venerable and Awesome (Plato, Theaetetus 183e): Proceedings of the International Symposium*. Ed. N.-L. Cordero. Las Vegas/Zurich/Athens: Parmenides, 2011. 191–212.
- ROSSETTI, Livio. "La *polumathia* di Parmenide." *Khôra* (2015): 193–216.
- SCHWABL, H. "Sein und Doxa bei Parmenides." *Um die Begriffswelt der Vorsokratiker*. Ed. H.-G. Gadamer. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968 [1953].
- THANASSAS, Panagiotis. *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 2007.
- VERDENIUS, W. J. *Parmenides, Some Comments on His Poem*. Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1964 [1942].
- ZELLER, E. *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*. Vol. 1. Leipzig, 1869.

I would like to thank Aline Ramos for her kind disposition in revising the English text.