

Parmenidean Dualisms

Panagiotis Thanassas

Summary

The poem of Parmenides is systematically composed of dual structures. The part of Aletheia establishes an opposition between Being and Non-Being, but also an "identity" between Being and Thinking; the part of Doxa attempts to give an account of the relation between the two forms of Light and Night; finally, it is the duality of the two parts of the poem themselves that poses the question of their own relation. I attempt to explore the character and role of these dualisms, and especially their impact on the traditional perception of Parmenides as a rigorous "monist."

For the last two centuries, a specter has been haunting Parmenides, his poem and the research on it. It is the specter of "monism," i.e., the philosophical view that "exactly one thing exists."¹ The term "monism" appears for the first time in the 18th century, as a way of denoting a philosophical position that denies the Cartesian dichotomy between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*—a dichotomy which, for its part, offered the prospect of a philosophical "dualism." In the course of time, however, the concept of monism transcended these narrow semantic limits and came to denote every philosophical position that insists on an indestructible unity of reality (be this the unity of a variety of beings, a single principle that rules over them, or even a solitary existing substance). In the context of this

¹ We adopt here the formulation of Barnes ("Eleatic One," p. 2); cf. also that of Mourelatos: "all things are one thing" ("Alternatives," p. 4).

semantic amplification, monism could henceforth be attributed to earlier philosophers, the first of them being Parmenides. I do not consider such anachronisms problematic in themselves. I believe, on the contrary, that hermeneutically performed dialogues between philosophers that have lived in different times are a fundamental component of any history of philosophy that would remain part of philosophy proper, rather than reducing itself to a philologizing doxography.

The problem with “monism,” therefore, is not its anachronistic association with Parmenides, but its use as a philosophical “label”—as a notion with a conceptual content considered so self-evident that its elucidation is deemed redundant. Such labels have the effect of inhibiting the very impulse that drives philosophical activity. They seem to name solutions to problems in such a way that the problems themselves cease to occupy us, and no longer call for inquiry. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has shown, understanding is nothing but a dialogic procedure, in which the interpreter states a question to which his subject-matter is expected to provide an answer. In this dialogue between interpreter and subject-matter, the question always remains crucial, even more important than the answer itself.² What is then the character, the quality and the significance of those questions, with respect to the answers of which Plato is labeled as an idealist but Aristotle as a realist, Democritus as a materialist and Thales as a hylozoist, Kant (together with Hegel!) as an idealist, Heidegger (together with Sartre!) as an existentialist? The Stalinist categorization of philosophers into “reactionary idealists” and “progressive materialists,” which remained the starting point and conclusion of philosophical interrogation in Eastern Europe for the longer part of the 20th century, is nothing but an intensified form of this kind of history of philosophy.

It is worth noting, however, that Parmenides has not only been considered an apostle of monism, but also a pioneer of dualism—e.g., by Burnet, who entitled the chapter of his his-

² See Gadamer on “the hermeneutic priority of the question” (*Truth*, pp. 356–371).

tory dedicated to the Doxa “The Dualist Cosmology” (p. 185).³ The basic scheme dominating the interpretation of Parmenides speaks of a monistic Aletheia and of a dualistic Doxa. What I will attempt in this presentation is an inquiry into the legitimacy, the character and the function of the notions of monism and dualism, intending to show the restrictions of this scheme and to demonstrate the polymorphous content of both notions. Concerning monism, this has already been to some extent achieved. In the first part of my presentation, I will attempt to evaluate this extant discussion of monism and to articulate my own proposal largely in its terms (I). Then, I will try to present and describe dualistic structures in the Aletheia (II) and in the Doxa (III). In the closing part (IV), I will outline the relation between ontological and cosmological dualisms and finally ask if and in what sense we could maintain that monism, dualism and pluralism belong together and determine each other in Parmenidean philosophy.

I. Monism?

The first thinker who assigned to Parmenides a monistic position was none other than Plato. As is well known, in the dialogue *Parmenides* the persona of young Socrates addresses the old Eleatic by summarizing his doctrine as follows: σὺ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν ἐν φήσιν εἶναι τὸ πᾶν (128a–b). In the *Sophist*, yet another person expected to be knowledgeable about the philosophy of “the father Parmenides,” the Eleatic Stranger, includes him among those who maintain the position ἐν τὸ πᾶν.⁴ It is worth dwelling on the content and the significance of this position here ascribed to Parmenides, and especially on the notion of totality denoted by πᾶν. We all know that this word has a collective and a distributive meaning (“all” and “each,” respectively). In both cases, unity and multiplicity are present, with the unity ruling in the collective and the multiplicity ruling in the distributive meaning: “all”

³ When writing Aletheia and Doxa in capitals, I want to denote only the two parts of the poem (as divided at 8.49–50) and not their special content or their possible polymorphy.

⁴ See *Sophist* 244b: ἐν τὸ πᾶν λεγόντων. Cf. also *Sophist* 242d, *Theaetetus* 180e.

represents a totality that is constituted on account of its own unity, while “each” stresses the multiplicity of the individual units belonging to the unity.

The reasons for which Plato summed up Parmenidean philosophy in the position “all is one” are apparently related to his intention to schematically expose his two most important predecessors, Heraclitus and Parmenides, as rivals in an antithesis that could be mediated only through his own philosophy, and in particular through the “hypothesis of Forms.” If, however, the preceding observations have some import, if unity is already present in the concept of $\pi\hat{\alpha}\nu$, if each $\pi\hat{\alpha}\nu$ is $\pi\hat{\alpha}\nu$ only to the extent that it is also a $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$, then the phrase $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\tau\acute{o}$ $\pi\hat{\alpha}\nu$ proves to be scarcely more than a tautology. If, on the other hand, unity makes sense only as unity of a multiplicity, then rejecting multiplicity annuls the conceptual content of unity as well. In other words: If the phrase $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\tau\acute{o}$ $\pi\hat{\alpha}\nu$ intends to be something more than a tautology, it becomes meaningless. Its adaptation to the view that “all things are one thing” is simply absurd.

It is precisely these deadlocks or, if you want, this exceptional dialectical force of the word $\pi\hat{\alpha}\nu$, that have led to the long and interesting discussion on the character of Parmenidean monism carried out in the last decades. The initiation of this undertaking is considered to be a text by Barnes on the “Eleatic One,” which denied that Parmenides favored a “real monism” in the sense that “exactly one thing exists” (p. 2). As in many other areas of research on Parmenides, the important stimulus here emanated from Mourelatos, who made clear that the philosophical position conveyed in the poem does not imply this kind of monism (*Route*, pp. 130–133). On the work of Mourelatos was also based Curd’s interpretation of Parmenides’ doctrine as a case not of “numerical,” but of “predicational monism”: “each thing that is can be only one thing; it can hold only the one predicate that indicates what it is, and must hold it in a particularly strong way.”⁵ Curd thus frees Parmenides from

⁵ Curd (*Legacy*, p. 66). For some interesting reservations raised by Mourelatos against this parallel interpretation, see his “Parmenides and the Pluralists.”

the obtuse monism usually ascribed to him and rehabilitates pluralism as compatible with his theoretical enterprise: “it is possible for there to be a numerical plurality of entities each of which is predicationally one.”⁶ In a recent, very interesting essay, Rapp explores a further possibility of “predicational monism” that goes beyond what he calls Curd’s “essentialism”: “it is the word ‘to be’ itself and only this word that [. . .] can exclusively be predicated of everything that is” (“Eleatischer Monismus,” pp. 303, 292). According to this version, reality consists of a plurality of entities, and the only task and topic of ontology is to confirm the Being of each one of them. This predicational-ontological monism, which certainly accommodates the typical Parmenidean monolectics, is not only compatible with ontic pluralism, but also presupposes it.

Are there hints of such a position in the text of Parmenides? My answer is affirmative, and in this point the possibility explored by Rapp meets with my own hermeneutic approach presented some years ago. That interpretation was initiated (though not determined) by a new reading of the notoriously difficult last verses of the proem. The better attested reading *πάντα περ ὄντα* in 1.32 remains there unsatisfactory and inadequate, so long as it yields the meaning: “what appears is everything.” Evidently, such a complete and utter dominance of appearances would never have been proclaimed “acceptable” (*δοκίμως*) by the goddess.⁷ I therefore propose to understand the participle *ὄντα* here not as a copula, but in an “absolutive” syntactic construction and to attribute to it the entire ontological weight of the verb “to be” as it is encountered in other

⁶ Curd (*Legacy*, p. 5). —Cordero’s notion of a “linguistic” monism (*By Being*, p. 176) also points in a similar direction, although he seems to disregard that the “oneness detectable in Parmenides” is not “only [. . .] linguistic,” but also noetic.

⁷ This was, however, the reading of Owen (“Eleatic,” p. 88), Guthrie (*HGP*, p. 9), Curd (*Legacy*, p. 113), and many other adherents of *περ ὄντα*, who therefore see in the last two lines of the proemium not a transition to ontological truth but rather a description of erroneous *doxa*.

parts of Parmenides' poem: "all that appears *is*."⁸ The word *δοκούντα* thus denotes here the totality of "appearing things" of our world. In respect to this manifold, and in the sense of the predicational-ontological monism depicted above, the only predicate appropriate within ontology is that these appearances "are beings," or simply that they "are." Ontological monism makes sense only on the basis of ontic pluralism, that is, on the basis of the reality of a manifold of beings. Parmenides is interested in ontology, not in henology.

II. Ontological Dualisms

The truth of Parmenides, his ontological affirmation of the Being of entities, advances through a series of binary structures. I would like to stress the verb "advances" because, despite the persistence of interpretations describing Parmenides' philosophy as one of immobility and rigidity, *Aletheia* takes place as an inquiry (*διζήσις*) and is explicitly acquired along a road or path, remaining thus permanently "on the route." Strictly speaking, there are two different routes presented by the goddess "for thinking":

⁸ More on this point in Thanassas, *Fabrt* (pp. 36–41) and *Cosmos* (pp. 23–26). Under this interpretation, the complete translation of the verses 1.31–32 would read:

"But nevertheless these you shall learn as well, how appearing things should be accepted: all of them altogether as beings."

The crucial point in the grammar here is that the participle *όντα* holds no predicate; *πάντα* is not a predicate, but simply replaces *δοκούντα*. It is only Mourelatos and Owens that seem to have read the expression in this way. Mourelatos, whose contribution to establishing the version *περ ὄντα* was decisive, translates: "just being all of them altogether" (*Route*, p. 216), or "if only all of them were in every way" ("Pluralists," p. 125); Owens's gloss is: "all indeed beings," "all indeed existent" ("Eleatic," p. 385). In the same article on "The Physical World of Parmenides," a masterpiece of Parmenides studies that remains neglected, Owens stresses that for Parmenides "all sensible things have being, far more being than the ordinary mentality is willing to concede to any one of them. [. . .] any denial of the reality of the physical world would do away with the reality of being, and its reduction to an illusionary status would make being likewise an illusion. The one stable being and the multiple and changing perceptible world are the same thing, as known respectively through reasoning and through sensation" (p. 395).

The one [route thinks]⁹ that Is and that it is impossible not-to-be (2.3).

The other [route thinks] that Is-not and that it is necessary not-to-be (2.5).

In other parts of the poem, the two routes are presented in the monolectic form ἔστω ἢ οὐκ ἔστω; here, however, they appear accompanied by the modal complements “impossible not-to-be” and “necessary not-to-be.” The role and the force of these complements have been amply discussed in the last decades. Owen’s attempt to establish at this point a third, middle way, according to which “the subject *can* but need not exist,”¹⁰ has undergone extensive and definitive refutations. The last of them is contained in a paper by O’Brien, which offers an excellent analysis of the contradictory character of the two routes and of the role of the modals in defining them.¹¹ For the sake of the discussion, however, I would like to mention another recent reconstruction, which in my eyes appears to be hopelessly wrong. It can be found in a dissertation by Meijer, who splits up (and eventually shuts down) the first route, by separating ἔστω from the modal οὐκ ἔστω μὴ εἶναι. In 2.3, he attempts to make a clear distinction between a way A, along which “Being is,” and a way B, along which “not-being is not” (Meijer, p. 125). He thus overlooks the fact that A *must* imply B and vice versa. He even goes so far as to call these two ways “contradictory” (p. 127)! In view of this zenith of confusion, I would propose the following formalization of the ontological crossroads presented in fr. 2:

2.3: A and necessarily $\neg(\neg A)$

2.5: $\neg A$ and necessarily $\neg A$

⁹ For the advantages of supplementing “thinks” rather than the usual “says,” see Cordero (*By Being*, p. 42).

¹⁰ Owen (“Eleatic,” p. 91); cf. also: “the question ‘Does it exist?’ has to be answered sometimes yes and sometimes no,” (p. 91n1).

¹¹ O’Brien (“Parmenides,” pp. 31–32); see also the argumentation already presented by Thanassas (*Fabrt*, pp. 72–80). O’Brien alike denies that Parmenides’ argument is “to be found in a syllogism” and stresses rightly that 2.6–8 does not entail a conclusion, but functions rather “as a way of ensuring that we make the right choice” between the two routes previously illustrated.

The two routes stand thus in a contradictory relation and they form a complete disjunction. By her assurance that there are “only” two routes, the goddess wishes to deny any possible “middle way.” The alternative between 2.3 and 2.5 is an exhaustive one. The second of these routes is categorically rejected as *παναπευθέα*, a road “without any tidings,”¹² and its inadequacy is due to two reasons: Non-Being cannot be known, and it cannot be expressed. Should we thus forget this second route immediately after its rejection? Why does the goddess present this route, and why, even after its categorical rejection, does she constantly remind us of it¹³ and of the Non-Being “discovered” along this way?¹⁴ It was the poem of Parmenides that for the first time made Non-Being a subject of philosophical analysis. Was the goddess somehow hoisting with her own petard, when she introduced the “temptation” of Non-Being and prepared the grounds for Gorgias’ treatise “On Non-Being”?

Every understanding and every knowledge is understanding and knowledge of something *as* something; this *As* effects the determination of the object of understanding, involving simultaneously—explicit or not—a distinction from other possibilities of determination and ultimately their rejection. As something to be thought of, Parmenidean Being is firstly distinguished from sensual *δοκεῖν*, but this distinction delineates the noetic field in general, and not specifically Being. In order to comprehend entities in their Being, this Being has to be opposed to the only

¹² Following a translation proposed by Mourelatos (*Route*, pp. 23–24).

¹³ See 6.2, 8.11, 8.16, 9.4.

¹⁴ The route of *οὐκ ἔστι* is not utterly nugatory, and it should not be identified with the Non-Being (or “Nothing,” *μηδέν*) that dominates on this way. Concerning Non-Being/Nothing, Parmenides maintains that “Nothing is not” (6.2), whereas the route itself is simply “without any tidings” (2.6). Mansfeld’s complaints (“1.7 expresses something that stands in clear contradiction to 1.2: *one* of the two roots can *not* be thought of,” *Offenbarung*, p. 57) are thus unfounded. In 2.7 Parmenides characterizes as unknowable not the route itself, but *μη ἔόν*. And in 2.6 he does not claim that the route cannot be thought of, but only that it does not convey any knowledge, and that it is hence improper to truth. In stressing this, I do not overlook the fact that in 8.17 it is the route that is characterized as *ἀνόητος*. I propose that this inconceivability should be ascribed to Non-Being and not to the very route itself. This problem does not emerge if we understand this *ἀνόητον* in the active sense of “not thinking” (as Hölscher proposed, *Parmenides*, p. 21).

contrasting possibility: that of Non-Being. Only the explicit denial of Non-Being provides Being with its determination. The κρίσις in favor of Being (8.15) presupposes its διάκρισις from Non-Being. It is not accidental, therefore, that the route of Being is stated in the form “Is and it is impossible not-to-be.” This route entails the possibility of Non-Being as an essential component and consists effectively in its negation. The truth lies in the persistent reflection upon this Non-Being and in its resolute negation. Being is conceivable only as “not Non-Being,” its determination needs Non-Being as its other and opposite. As for the second route, this is equally important for the crossroads: We are constantly asked to think of it, in order to avoid the permanently lurking danger of falling into Nothing. Being and Nothing belong together, and they are both present on both routes. The difference lies in the role they play on each route: the first route is presided over by Being, while in the second Non-Being is the master and Being remains inferior and renounced. This second route is not presented only to be dismissed and forgotten. On the contrary, we ought constantly to hold its possibility in mind—though as a route “without any tidings,” for in its “heart” resides Non-Being, the unknowable and inexpressible.

We could thus describe the ontological crossroads as a double pair, as a double manifestation of the basic antithesis between Being and Non-Being, or as a duality of dualities. The first route consists in a relation between Being and Non-Being in which the first is affirmed and the second denied, whereas the second route presents an affirmation of Non-Being and of its necessity, that is, a denial of Being. Each route is a relation between Being and Non-Being as contradictories, and the crossroads itself is the relation between both routes. It is not true, consequently, that Parmenides “stopped at mere Being,” as Hegel has claimed.¹⁵ In the poem we might even detect a kind of *bound dialectic* between Being and Non-Being. The other of Being is included in its determination, although this inclusion is not the departure of a conceptual movement and progress (as for example in Hegel’s *Science of Logic*). The relation between Being and Non-Being in Parmenides remains an invention of Thinking, within which

¹⁵ See his criticism of the “Eleatics” in the *Encyclopaedia* (§ 86, Addition).

Non-Being ultimately remains a phantom: it never appears, for it *cannot* appear. The goddess invokes only its possibility, and precisely to steer our attention to what remains the only object of Thinking: Being.

Apart from the dualism of the routes and of the two ontological categories present on both, the section on Aletheia contains one more dual structure, which does not have the form of an antagonistic opposition, but rather that of an identity: the relation between Being and Thinking. It is the allergy against another misleading and confusing label, “idealism,” that has caused numerous unnecessary discussions based on the typical, widespread assumption that “Parmenides cannot have been an idealist.” Facing this unreflective assertion, it is necessary to pose two questions right at the outset:

- a. *Why* can't Parmenides have been an idealist?
- b. *What* is idealism?

This might prove a successful strategy for transforming an unfruitful discourse about a label into a philosophical discussion. Then we might open up for the insight that the intended paradox in fr. 4, where the goddess calls us to “see through the νόος how absent beings are firmly present to it,” is clear evidence that νοεῖν and νόος are conceived by Parmenides not as instances of sense perception, but in direct opposition to it.¹⁶ Νοεῖν means not “to know” but “to think,” and this is why the second route can be an essential object of νοεῖν (2.5) but not a source of any knowledge whatsoever (2.7). And we might even realize that the traditional reading of the notorious fr. 3 remains the most compelling one:

Thinking and Being are the same.

¹⁶ This was in fact the position of the immensely misunderstood essay of v. Fritz, who explicitly recognized in the poem of Parmenides “the most important turning-point [. . .] in the development of the concept of *nous*” in early Greek philosophy (p. 43).

In a balanced, exhaustive and, in my eyes, philologically definitive analysis, J. Wiesner has shown that although a “complete and total rejection of Zeller’s explanation [. . .] cannot be justified” solely on the basis of grammar, the traditional view is nonetheless preferable to the perplexities and the ambiguities that arise from Zeller’s constructions.¹⁷ The suggestion of the philologist Wiesner that we understand the identity of fr. 3 as an “equivalence of concepts related to one another” coincides here with Heidegger’s understanding of the “sameness” as a “belonging together” of Being and Thinking.¹⁸

As we saw, Being emerges only within the activity of Thinking; and this, having rejected the possibility of thinking and expressing Non-Being (2.7–8), turns ultimately towards Being and relies on it: “for without Being [. . .] you will not find Thinking” (8.35–36). Being is founded upon Thinking, because otherwise it cannot be grasped; and Thinking is founded upon Being (it is *ἐνεκεν τοῦ εἶναι*, 8.34), for otherwise it could not free itself from the senses and establish its own subject and legitimacy. This “identity” between Being and Thinking is not the outcome of some syllogistic procedure, but becomes manifest from the very beginning of the ontological survey: each of them emerges exclusively *via* the other. To be sure, τὸ αὐτό does not denote a mathematical identity, in which either term can be replaced with the other—for this would deprive them both of their distinctive character. The kind of link between Being and Thinking is specified in fr. 3 by the double force of *τε καί*, which suggests an interaction, a *mutual connection and reciprocal reference*, the necessity of a *reciprocal mediation*.

¹⁷ See Wiesner (*Parmenides*, pp. 139–149). Giancola’s recent paper (“Parmenides’ B3,” 2001) presents persuasive arguments against Zeller’s reading, but results unfortunately in a “religious-mystical” interpretation. —It has not been observed that Zeller’s reading replaces the traditional identity with a one-sided dependence between Being and Thinking that leads to ambiguities: “Only that can be thought which can be” (1869, p. 470), or “only that can be which can be thought” (1856, p. 398). When assigned to the goddess herself, this very ambiguity should be reason enough for rejecting Zeller’s reading.

¹⁸ See *Was heisst. . .* (p. 147) and *Identität* (p. 18).

III. Cosmological Dualism

The dualistic structure of Light and Night in the *Doxa* has often been remarked upon and underlined. The mere assertion, however, that “the *Doxa* is dualistic” does not further our understanding of this longer part of Parmenides’ poem. First of all, we should recognize that “the” *Doxa* exists as a simple unity only in a merely quantitative sense, denoting the section of the poem that begins at 8.50. However, as I have tried to show elsewhere, this part “is not a homogeneous unity, but rather a complex in which *several and distinct interests, intents and purposes* are pursued.”¹⁹ Their common denominator is their subject-matter: phenomenality as such, or the manifold of the world of appearance, which they approach from different perspectives. None of these perspectives is “false”; they are altogether true, for they fulfill in different ways the task of “learning” and “understanding” proclaimed by the goddess (1.28, 8.51).

The duality of Light and Night structures the *Doxa* throughout. The two basic interests of the goddess here are first the disclosure of the “deceitful” mortal opinions, and then the presentation of her own, valid cosmological system. The first of these issues is announced by the adjective *ἀπατηλός*, the second by the participle *ἐοικώς*, which does not yet mean “probable,” but “appearing” and “appropriate, fitting.” The goddess thus contrasts her own cosmological system, which describes the appearances in an “appropriate” way, with the misleading cosmological system rooted in mortal opinions. Both systems are based on the same duality, that of Light and Night. But while the human conjectures rely on a complete and irrevocable separation and a strict isolation of these forms, the appropriate cosmology proclaims their synthesis. According to the mortals, Light and Night exclude one another; they remain in a

¹⁹ See Thanassas (*Fabrt*, pp. 157–205; *Cosmos*, pp. 61–84). Meanwhile, a similar differentiation has been proposed during the Buenos Aires Symposium by N.-L. Cordero and M. Pulpito, and previously also by Graham (“Responses,” pp. 168–169) and Leshner (“Knowledge,” p. 240). Needless to say: 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*; in Kantian terms, these claims could be labeled as “critique” and “doctrine.”

permanent, irreversible opposition, which Curd has aptly called “enantiomorphism” (pp. 104–110). Curd also rightly stresses that “it is not plurality itself but opposition that is at the root of the problem,” and concludes: “If only Light and Night were genuine entities rather than interdefined opposites, Parmenides’ cosmology would give an account of the world as experienced [. . .] that would pass tests based on the fundamental *κρίσις*, ‘is or is not’” (pp. 110, 116). But this, I believe, is exactly what happens subsequently in the *Doxa*! According to the mortals, the forms remain “apart from one another” (*χωρὶς ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων*), “contrariwise” (*ἀντία*) and “opposite” (*τάντια*) to each other; or, as stated in a notoriously misleading phrase of 8.54a, no unity between the two forms is deemed necessary. The exclamation following (“here they have gone astray,” 8.54b) expresses the core of the goddess’s criticism: what is needed is unity of the two forms! Her own system, presented from 8.60 onwards, is the system of the mixture of both forms, which now appear as inextricably intertwined complementary entities that build up “together” (*ὁμοῦ*) the worldly arrangement (*διάκοσμος*).

The *Doxa* entails thus not one but two different dualisms: the deceitful dualism of segregation and the appropriate one of mixture. But why is mixture appropriate? In short, because it is compatible with the truth of Being. Light and Night are here “both equal, since Nothing partakes in neither” (9.4). This equality could not be maintained in the system of segregation, which seems to have some severe, fatal ontological implications. Led astray by their senses, the mortals believe that only what presents itself in Light is existent and knowable, while the dark and invisible, eluding sight and knowledge, is ultimately treated by them as not-being. Of course, humans do not reflect on Being and Non-Being as such. They only follow a tacit, hidden ontology, wherein Being and Non-Being are *illegitimately* represented by Light and Night. Humans thus lapse into a sensualist fallacy; they carry out a separation “according to the appearance” (8.55), in which they rend the world apart and create *caesurae*. But cosmological dualism is acceptable only to the extent that it accounts for ontic pluralism in a way compatible with the ontological monism of Being.

One of the confusions that arise in the context of the discussions on “the” *doxa* pertains to its relation to the so called “third way” portrayed in the part of Aletheia (6.4–9, 7.3–5 and 8.38–41). Reinhardt’s discovery of this “third way” has been essential to the understanding of the structure and the argument of the poem, but its identification with “the” *doxa* has proven to be an obstacle for a productive discussion.²⁰ The third way cannot be identical with “the” *doxa*, because “the” *doxa* does not exist. The third way is in fact only related to a specific attitude presented within the section of Doxa. The keyword for establishing this connection is “mortals.”²¹ The third way is the ontological evaluation and condemnation only of the deceptive *doxa*, which in the Aletheia section is shown to be an impassable, ontologically impossible way. The notion of a third way does not for its part contradict the assertion in fr. 2 that there are “only two routes for thinking.” The ontological crossroads presented there was certainly not a real alternative, but the insight into an insoluble contradiction and the enforcement and steady affirmation of the only real possibility: the truth of Being. The third way is also no real way, no real route, no real path at all. But it is nonetheless different from the second “route of inquiry” in one crucial respect; the third way does not affirm Non-Being, but rather remains ontologically blind, noetically handicapped, without any insight into the crossroads. Mortals who are “two-headed” (6.5) obviously have no head at all—at least not a head capable of distinguishing the two ontological routes, of performing the essential *κρίσις* (8.15) and remaining “firmly” (4.1) on the true one. The “third way” is not a way, but an impasse; it is the rejection or the negligence of the ontological dualism.²²

²⁰ See Reinhardt’s *Parmenides* (p. 69; translation in Mourelatos’s *Pre-Socratics*, p. 303): “*doxa* [. . .] is nothing but the third way of inquiry.”

²¹ See 1.30, 6.5, 8.39, 8.51, 8.61.

²² O’Brien denies the existence of a distinct third way, by pointing out that this alleged third way is rejected in 7.1–2 for the same reasons that lead to the rejection of the second route, that of Non-Being (O’Brien, pp. 46–47, 74, 95, and *passim*). But the route rejected in 7.1–2 is the second route! The third way is introduced only in 7.3 by the word *μηδέ*, which means “nor” and brings up a new subject of discussion. —Although I very much sympathize with the proposals concerning the lacuna in 6.3 to drop the traditional *εἴρω* in favor of a verb of

IV. A Conclusion

As we have seen, dual structures are present throughout the poem. The ontological dualism presents Being and Non-Being as two opposed ontological categories that exclude each other; it presents a crossroads of two concurring routes that leave no place for other ontological possibilities, but jointly force the affirmation of the first of them. This mutual exclusion, a mark and an indicator of ontological truth, becomes in the *Doxa* the primary source of error as soon as it is applied to the cosmological categories of Light and Night. Cosmic segregation cannot compensate the failure to perform the ontological *κρίσις*; indeed, such segregation in fact prevents that *κρίσις*, for it implicitly confuses ontology with cosmology, Night with Non-Being. The ontological condemnation of this doxastic confusion can be presented as the “third way” of human aberration. The cosmological correction of that schism is subsequently supplied by the system of the goddess, who shows that while ontological intermingling was fatal, mixture is essential for a cosmology compatible with ontological truth.

Ontological monism in the *Aletheia* is possible only on the ground of the dual structure and the antithesis between Being and Non-Being. But it also presupposes the ontic pluralism of the *δοκούντα*, of the multiplicity of appearances. The notion of numerical monism is completely incongruent with the letter and the spirit of the poem. To the question “how many things exist,” Parmenides has a clear, natural answer: many, very many!²³ Parmenides was a numeric pluralist, as is shown not only by the plurality of appearances (*δοκούντα*) in 1.32, but also by the plurality of “absent beings” made present to *νόος* (4.1), or by the

positive meaning like *ἄρξει* (Cordero, “Chemins,” pp. 21–24), *ἄρξω* (Nehamas, pp. 102–106) or something similar, I do not agree that this modification implies abolishing the notion of a “third way” established by Reinhardt. Indeed, I believe that the question of the missing verb is completely independent of the question of the number of routes.

²³ Barnes, on the contrary, remained ultimately aporetic: “it is not the case that Parmenides was a monist. I do not assert that he was a pluralist [. . .] As far as we know, the question of how many items the universe contains did not concern him” (“Eleatic One,” pp. 20–21). But even if this was not a question explicitly raised by Parmenides, his philosophy nonetheless presupposes a certain perspective or position regarding this matter; and the same should be the case for his interpreters.

plurality of entities qua beings that “hold together” (4.2)²⁴ and “keep close” to each other (8.25). All these entities are indeed equally “full of Being” (8.24) in a way that does not permit one of them to participate in Being any more than another (8.47–48). Ontic pluralism is thus the ground of an ontological survey which operates with a dual scheme in order to lead to the monism of Being. This monism takes place on the basis of a further dual structure, that of Being and Thinking, which for its part does not represent an opposition but an identity. The truth of Being thus requires plurality (of entities or appearances), an oppositional duality (of Being and Non-Being), identificative duality (of Being and Thinking) and compatibility with cosmological duality (Light and Night equally participating in Being).

There remains, however, a further, deeper duality, which we have not yet touched upon: the very duality of the two parts of the poem, or the duality of ontology and cosmology. This duality has often been treated as a defect, if not as a scandal. But 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.). Seen from this perspective, the question of why Parmenides “added” Doxa to the Aletheia becomes obsolete. The two parts of the poem are both true, offering different responses to different questions. The first part inquires into the Being of appearances, the second into the mode in which they appear. The two inquiries are autonomous and complementary, and they cannot be reduced to one another. The only issue arising here is that of their compatibility, which is clearly assured in 9.4: Neither of the two forms operative in the “appropriate” cosmology is contaminated with Non-Being; their interplay and mixture do not endanger ontological truth.

²⁴ See also Owens (“World,” pp. 387–388): “The fragment [4] envisages a multiplicity of things, each of which may be called ‘a being.’” Similarly Asclepius, many centuries ago: οἶεται ὁ Παρμενίδης πλῆθος ἐν τοῖς οὔσι (*In Met.*, p. 202).

This is the only “mediation” between the two parts necessary for the consistency of the whole. As for the transition from human, traditional cosmology to ontology, this transition is effected in the poem by means of an anonymous goddess, i.e., by means of the Divine. This, however, is not an answer to the question “how philosophy arises,” but only the articulation of that question, which will remain unanswered in the history of philosophy to follow. Philosophy still remains ungrounded.²⁵

²⁵ This text was prepared in the Summer Semester 2007 at the Philosophical Seminar of the University of Heidelberg, during a sabbatical leave with a scholarship funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. I would like to thank the Seminar and its director at that time Prof. Jens Halfwassen for the excellent working conditions, the Humboldt Foundation for the generous support, and Kenneth Knies for help in smoothing out the prose for this final version.

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