

Noematic plenitude and epistemic completeness in Parmenides¹

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Abstract: I argue that Parmenides found the way $\omega\varsigma \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ and the mortal $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ (as presented in his poem) to be satisfactory on their own level because both accounts were supposed to cover $\tau\acute{o} \ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ in its entirety. Parmenides realized that every cognitive act has noematic content and believed that adequate explanations cannot lack such content. Thus, since he attempted to explain reality as a whole rather than one particular object, he ensured that the way $\omega\varsigma \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ and the mortal $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ exhausted the totality of the real in their own way: while the former explanation omitted, the latter took into account all distinct things known to human beings. The present article puts forth the hypothesis that, despite their disparate epistemic statuses, Parmenides' two doctrines satisfy the principle of "noematic plenitude", according to which adequate explanations cannot posit or imply something for which there is no noematic content. For I am among those who see similarities between Parmenides and Kant, and I think that "noematic plenitude" can be understood as both a regulative principle with respect to the mortal $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ and a constitutive principle with respect to the way $\omega\varsigma \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$.

Keywords: Parmenides, noematic plenitude, epistemic completeness, regulative/constitutive principle, truth, opinion.

ES Plenitud noemática y completitud epistémica en Parménides

Resumen: Argumento que Parménides consideraba que tanto el camino $\omega\varsigma \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ como las $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ mortales (según se presentan en su poema) eran relatos satisfactorios en su respectivo nivel, ya que ambos pretendían abarcar $\tau\acute{o} \ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ en su totalidad. Parménides se dio cuenta de que todo acto cognitivo tiene contenido noemático y creía que las explicaciones adecuadas no pueden carecer de ese contenido. Así, puesto que intentaba explicar la realidad en su conjunto más que un objeto en particular, se aseguró de que el camino $\omega\varsigma \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ y las $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ mortales agotaran la totalidad de lo real a su manera: mientras que la primera explicación omitía, la segunda tenía en cuenta todas las cosas distintas conocidas por los seres humanos. El presente artículo propone la hipótesis de que, a pesar de sus diferentes estatus epistémicos, las dos doctrinas de Parménides satisfacen el principio de "plenitud noemática", según el cual las explicaciones adecuadas no pueden postular o implicar algo para lo que no existe contenido noemático. Pues yo soy de los que ven similitudes entre Parménides y Kant, y pienso que la "plenitud noemática" puede entenderse tanto como un principio regulativo con respecto a las $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ mortales cuanto como un principio constitutivo con respecto al camino $\omega\varsigma \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota\nu$.

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Palabras clave: Parménides, plenitud noemática, completitud epistémica, principio regulativo/constitutivo, verdad, opini6n.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Noematic plenitude. 3. The divine perspective revealed in demonstrative discourse. 4. The mortal perspective presented as an acceptable story. 5. Noematic plenitude as both a regulative and a constitutive principle.

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1. Introduction

A number of ancient sources report that Parmenides' poem was about τὸ πᾶν. Consider, for example, what Plutarch said, as recorded by Eusebius: «[Parmenides] declares that τὸ πᾶν is eternal and immutable according to the truth of things»². Such a report can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle, who preceded and certainly influenced ancient doxography. Plato has Socrates say that Parmenides presented excellent arguments to prove that τὸ πᾶν is one³, while Aristotle tells us that Parmenides saw τὸ πᾶν as a single nature⁴. Plato and Aristotle also insist that Parmenides held a certain kind of monism, but I will not discuss this question in depth. Although I find it difficult to deny Parmenides' monism, this issue has become controversial⁵, and various historical and semantic points must be clarified before engaging in the debate. Nevertheless, I will not delve into those points now. My main purpose here is to address the Parmenidean concept of *totality* from an eminently epistemological point of view.

The concept of *totality* plays a crucial role in Parmenides' poem. The lexeme πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν appears about twenty times in the extant fragments, not to mention the adverbs πάντη, πάντοθεν, and πάντως. Of course, these words are very common, so not every instance of them must be theoretically relevant. However, the centrality of the concept of *totality* is already clear in B1.28-32⁶.

[...] χρεῶ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
 ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος⁷ ἀτρεμέες ἦτορ
 ἡδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἐνί πίστις ἀληθῆς.
 ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεται, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
 χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα⁸.

It is appropriate⁹ for you to learn everything, both the unshakable heart of quite compelling {Truth ~ Reality} and mortal opinions in which there is no {true ~ real} trust. At the same

² αἰδῖον [...] τὸ πᾶν καὶ ἀκίνητον ἀποφαίνεται [καὶ] κατὰ τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἀλήθειαν (PE 1.8.5.2-3). All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

³ σὺ μὲν γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν ἐν φῆς εἶναι τὸ πᾶν, καὶ τούτων τεκμήρια παρέχει καλῶς τε καὶ εὖ (Prm. 128a8-b1).

⁴ Cf. περὶ τοῦ παντὸς ὡς μῆς οὐσησ φύσεως (Metaph. A 5, 986b10-11).

⁵ Plato and Aristotle have been criticized for taking a biased approach to earlier philosophies (see McKeon 1940). The charge seems to weigh more heavily on Aristotle, who would have presented previous theories as «stammering attempts to express his own [theory]» (Cherniss 1964: xii). Tarán (1965: 269-295) exemplifies this attitude, which has led contemporary scholars to wonder whether Parmenides really held the unity of all that is. Solmsen (1982) points out that the credentials of the Eleatic One are dubious (138-139). Mourelatos (2008) believes that «it would be wrong and arbitrary to interpret Parmenides' 'Truth' as a holistic monism» (130), i.e., as arguing for «an absolute and all-encompassing cosmic One» (xvi). Barnes (1979) claims that Parmenides was not a real monist and did not hold the existence of only one thing (3). Curd (1991) rejects that Parmenides was a «numerical monist» who claimed that «there is only one thing or item in the universe» (242).

⁶ I quote Parmenides in abbreviated form: B00(.00-00). All other quotations from *Vorsokr.* follow the format DK 00 B 00(.00-00).

⁷ εὐπειθέος Plut. *adv. Col.* 1114D.10; S.E. *M.* 7.111.35; Clem.Al. *Strom.* 5.9.59.6.3; D.L. 9.22.20; εὐφεγγέος Procl. *in Ti.* 1.345 Diehl/2.204 Van Riel); εὐκυκλέος Simp. *in Cael.* 7.557.26 (εὐκύκλιος A).

⁸ περῶντα Simp. *in Cael.* 7.558.2 (A); περ ὄντα Simp. *in Cael.* 7.558.2 (DEF).

⁹ The goddess is speaking in terms of capability. She has just said that law and justice (θέμις τε δίκη τε, B1.28) allowed the boy to come to her side.

time, however, you will learn these things too: how the things that seem [to be] ought to seemingly be as long as they all {pass through all ~ persist forever}.

The pronoun πάντα in B1.28 refers to everything the κοῦρος ‘boy’ will learn, which includes (i) infallible knowledge of ultimate reality, (ii) acquaintance with inaccurate mortal theories, and (iii) knowledge of how mortal views can be approved (cf. δοκίμως). The pronoun πάντα in B1.32 agrees with τὰ δοκοῦντα, and presumably indicates all mortal views, while παντός in the same verse represents either the whole body of things or the totality of time. Prepositional phrases with διὰ sometimes signify the length crossed or covered by something, and such a length is frequently temporal. This is why διὰ παντός occasionally means ‘always’, as in Th. 1.38.1 (cp. English ‘forever’, for + ever).

Parmenides’ goddess insists on the notion of *totality* at the end of the poem because the knowledge she will share is all-encompassing. Her concern for comprehensiveness is evident in the importance she attaches to the concept of *plenitude* throughout the poem. She attributes fullness to both the act of thinking¹⁰ and the object of knowledge¹¹ and opinion¹², and the explanation for this double use of the concept of *plenitude* — one for the content of thought and the other for the object of inquiry — is very simple. Parmenides considered the impossibility of laying hold of nothing with the mind to be a constraint that compelled effective thought to be full of content, regardless of the nature or extent of its specific object. When I say that thought must be full, I mean that every “figure” apprehended by thought must have content and be contained by a “background” that cannot itself lack noematic content (*i.e.*, *be nothing*)¹³.

In the following sections, I will show that the positive side of this constraint gives unity to Parmenides’ poem. Since the impossibility of grasping nothing amounts to the necessity of grasping something, whatever its ontological status, Parmenides believed that the νόος must be full of content (noematic plenitude). What Parmenides called νόος is the most basic cognitive power: the awareness common to all cognitive acts, whether human or not. This power may or may not operate on sensible phenomena, but its execution requires content. For this reason, Parmenides believed that a satisfactory explanation of the universe must consider the full scope of thought (epistemic completeness). It must include everything of which thought is aware, including what is distinguished by the senses. Accordingly, Parmenides’ goddess offers two accounts of the universe: one that is consistent with sense perception (the “Doxa”), another that is not constrained by the limitations of sense perception (the “Truth”).

2. Noematic plenitude

The physiological approach to human cognition in B16 suggests that this passage belongs in the second part of Parmenides’ poem. However, the point I want to make about this fragment applies to the entire poem. Here is the version of B16 that I prefer, along with my translation.

ὥς γὰρ ἐκάστοτ¹⁴ ἔχει κρᾶσις¹⁵ μελέων πολυκάμπτων¹⁶,
 τῶς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρέστηκεν¹⁷. τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ
 ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν

¹⁰ Cf. πλέον in B16.4.

¹¹ Cf. ἐμπλεόν in B8.24.

¹² Cf. πλέον in B9.3 and πλῆγντο in B12.1.

¹³ As Alcocer Urueta (2023: 180-181) has noted, this turns out to be antinomic because thought tends to enclose the “background”, turning it into a “figure”.

¹⁴ ἐκάστοτ’ Arist. *Metaph.* E1; ἐκάστοτε Thphr. *Sens.*; ἕκαστος Arist. *Metaph.* E²; ἐκάστῳ Arist. *Metaph.* A^b. Pace Hershbell (1970: 18), I do not see why Parmenides could not have used ἐκάστοτε. This adverb would support the idea, very common in archaic poetry, that human knowledge, as opposed to divine knowledge, is unstable.

¹⁵ Stephanus’ amendment of κρᾶσιν gives us a lexical subject for ἔχει. Cf. Heitsch (1991: 191).

¹⁶ πολυκάμπτων Arist. *Metaph.*; πολυπλάγκτων Thphr. *Sens.* Either term could have been used to allude to the variability of human physiology.

¹⁷ παρέστηκεν Thphr. *Sens.*; παρίσταται Arist. *Metaph.* According to Fränkel (1960), παρέστηκεν is «die Lesung des Theophrasttextes, und es ist nicht einzusehen, warum man sich mit einem unmetrischen oder (wenn das a lang sein soll) mißgeformten παρίσταται herumplagen soll. Denn dies ist offenbar ein bloßer Überlieferungsfehler im Text der *Metaphysik*» (175).

καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλεόν ἐστὶ νόημα.

For as the combination of the much-changeable limbs¹⁸ comes about each time, so is awareness [*i.e.*, the power to νοεῖν] disposed in humans; for what the constitution of the limbs in humans cognizes is the same, in each and every case; for the full [*i.e.*, the plenum] is νόημα [*i.e.*, an act of νόησις].

Even if the exact meaning of B16 is unclear, we can deduce a few things from this fragment¹⁹. First, human cognizers become aware of different things over time because the νόος *in them* depends on the temporary state of their bodies. Second, what the human constitution cognizes is ultimately the same in all cases. Thus construed, B16 seems to claim that the νόος is always aware of the same plenum, regardless of whether particular thinkers differ in body, place, or time, and have a perspectival grasp of reality. This idea is similar to the one found in DK 22 B 89: ὁ Ἡράκλειτος φησι τοῖς ἐγρηγορόσιν ἓνα καὶ κοινὸν κόσμον εἶναι, τῶν δὲ κοιμωμένων ἕκαστον εἰς ἴδιον ἀποστρέφεται, «Heraclitus says that the cosmos is one and common to those who are awake, while those who fall asleep return to a private [cosmos]». Setting aside the particularities that arise from different circumstances (*e.g.*, physiological), thinking subjects share the same reality (*i.e.*, the totality of real things and events), which is a plenum.

It is true that the adjective πλεόν does not have to mean 'full' (neuter nominative singular of πλέος, πλέως), since it can mean 'more' (neuter nominative singular comparative of πολὺς). Several interpreters²⁰ prefer this second meaning and suppose that τὸ πλεόν in B16.4 refers to what prevails in a certain mixture, that is, to what Theophrastus calls ὑπερβάλλον 'surpassing' in *De sensibus* 3.3²¹. However, πλέος means 'full' in B9.3, and we can reasonably assume²² that Parmenides uses πλεόν in B16.4 to characterize the object of thought as *full*²³. In this case, as I said, the claim of the goddess would be that every act of noesis apprehends the same plenum, even if the concrete act of apprehension has a limited range and depends on the physiological makeup of each individual.

Let me elaborate on this in two steps. First, regardless of what φρονέω meant to Parmenides, the act of φρονεῖν in B16.3 must refer to the content of thought (ὅπερ in my construal). Second, Parmenides could have generically called that content ἐόν 'what is' because the content of

¹⁸ Unlike Schwabl (1953: 70), Bollack (1957: 67), Verdenius (1964: 6-7), Laks (1990: 6), I do not identify the μέλεα with the principles characterized in B8.53-59. The plural of μέλος usually refers to the human body as a collection of parts (*cf.* Snell 2011: 16-18).

¹⁹ *Cf.* Alcocer Urueta (2023: 148).

²⁰ For example: Année (2012: 181), Bernabé Pajares (2007: 31), Cassin (1998: 113), Cerri (1999: 159), Conche (1996: 243), Coxon (2009: 94), Diels & Kranz (1960: 244); Hermann (2004: 161), Marcinkowska-Rosól (2010: 188), O'Brien (1987: 74), Palmer (2009: 375), Vlastos (1946: 66), Zeller (1856: 414).

²¹ Παρμενίδης μὲν γὰρ ὅλως οὐδὲν ἀφώρικεν ἀλλὰ μόνον ὅτι δυοῖν ὄντων στοιχείων κατὰ τὸ ὑπερβάλλον ἐστὶν ἡ γνώσις. ἐὰν γὰρ ὑπεράρῃ τὸ θερμὸν ἢ τὸ ψυχρὸν, ἀλλήν γίνεσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν, βελτίω δὲ καὶ καθαρωτέραν τὴν διὰ τὸ θερμὸν· οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτην δεῖσθαι τινοῦ συμμετρίας, «In fact, Parmenides did not resolve anything at all, but only that, since there are two elements, knowledge is in accordance with the predominant one. For if what is hot or what is cold prevails, then the discernment becomes different, and better and purer the one [produced] by what is hot; but even this one hinges on a certain proportion». Vlastos (1946) relies heavily on this comment, which is critically assessed by Laks (1990) and Bredlow (2011).

²² With Bollack (1957: 70), Cordero (2005: 222), Deichgräber (1959: 71), Gallop (2013: 87), Gemelli Marciano (2009: 39), Hershbell (1970: 13), Laks (1990: 8-9), Mansfeld (1964: 192-193), Mourelatos (2008: 253), Ritter (1829: 484), Schmitz (1988: 77-78), Tarán (1965: 169, 258), Untersteiner (1979: CCV), Tarrant (1983: 77) and García Calvo (2018: 72) suggest reading τὸ πλεόν, understood as 'what is', instead of τὸ πλεόν.

²³ My purpose is to offer a unified interpretation of Parmenides' poem based on the fullness of thought, not to justify my translation of B16.4. The reader is free to take my translation as an assumption; after all, it is acceptable to build a theory on an assumption. For a thorough examination of the academic debate on B16, see at least Laks (1990) and Bredlow (2011). For now, it is sufficient to note that Parmenides undoubtedly uses πλεόν to convey the notion of *plenitude* in B9.3, and probably also in B8.24 (ἐμ-πλεον). It is also worth noting that πολὺς 'much, many' is a derivative of the verbal root *pleh₂- > πίμπλημι 'to fill, make full' (*cf.* Beekes 2010, *s.v.* πολὺς and πίμπλημι), even if this is not necessarily evidence in favor of my reading. It is common for the Greek language to represent plurality as that which fills the whole to the utmost extent.

thought can always be expressed with the verb εἰμί²⁴. This at least explains why B4 assures that not even the νόος *in humans* can fail to grasp τὸ ἕν.

λεῦσσε δ' ὄμως ἀπεόντα νόω παρεόντα βεβαίως·
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἕν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὔτε συνιστάμενον.

All the same, consider with νόος the things that are far away as things that are near: for you will not stop what is from holding onto what is, whether it is dispersed everywhere every way according to an arrangement or set together.

Humans are aware of distinct things that appear and disappear over time, but the goddess urges the κοῦρος to rely on the power of thinking, as this will enable him to see that all things are parts of the same totality. He can look at the totality as either a dispersed or a cohesive plurality, but the νόος will never allow him to grasp in such a totality something that is nothing at all.

Fullness of being is inevitable. I will argue below that the expression τὸ ἕν in Parmenides must be understood both as carrying categorial content (*x* is something, anything) and as denoting the subsistence common to all things that are insofar as they are (*x* is something, anything). For now, I just want to point out that NOEMATIC PLENITUDE (*i.e.*, the need for the entire range of thought to have content) is the positive aspect of a constraint that prevents thinking subjects from considering τὸ μὴ ἕν 'what is not', *i.e.*, what cannot be determined in any way. Parmenides symbolized this restriction by the constrictive power of Ἀνάγκη 'Necessity', not only because the νόος seizes being, but also because it excludes nonbeing²⁵. See how NOEMATIC PLENITUDE acquires methodological relevance in B2.

εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
αἶπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι·
ἢ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
Πειθοῦς ἔστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ),
ἢ δ' ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς χρεῶν ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
τὴν δὴ τοι φράζω παναπευθεῖα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἕν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν)
οὔτε φράσαις.

Come on, then, I myself will tell—and you retain the message once you have lent an ear—precisely which are the only ways of inquiry to think over: the one, that [it] is and that it is not [possible ~ allowed ~ right] that [it] is not, is the way of Conviction (for it looks out for {Truth ~ Reality}); the other, that [it] is not and that it is a requirement that [it] is not, this one I surely declare utterly inscrutable: for you could not even notice [*i.e.*, become aware of] nonbeing (for [this is] not achievable) nor could you {show ~ tell} it.

According to B2, there are only two options for anyone who wants to inquire into anything: either the object of inquiry is or is not. Of course, the goddess is not interested in just anything, but in everything there is, so she does not provide a lexical subject for ἔστιν. Presumably on the assumption that the κοῦρος knows what she is talking about, the goddess avoids limiting the extension of the subject term by not determining its intension. Whatever the subject of ἔστιν is,

²⁴ Cf. Alcocer Urueta (2023: 146, 153-156).

²⁵ As noted by Gottschalk (1966), Schreckenbergs' (1964) thesis that the original meaning of ἀνάγκη is 'yoke', 'bond', or 'fetter' seems to confuse etymology with associated meanings, which certainly include 'constriction' and 'bondage'. According to Beekes (2010), ἀνάγκη is likely related to «the Celtic words for 'necessity, fate' [...] which may go back to **ank-* < **h₂enk-*, and also the Germanic group of Old High German *āhta*, Modern High German *Acht* 'outlawry'» (97). This connection makes sense because in Parmenides' poem Ἀνάγκη proscribes and excludes nonbeing. In any case, Parmenides connects Ἀνάγκη with the enchainment of being (B8.30-31), which not even Δίκη can loosen (B8.13-18).

the alternative οὐκ ἔστιν must be rejected because it is meaningless to talk about what cannot be grasped, indicated, or made known.

This clarifies Parmenides' concept of *being*. The goddess assumes that τὸ ἐὸν involves content because, to her, *being* means *being anything, either P or anything other than P*. For the same reason, she equates the negation of ἐὸν with the absence of mental content. Parmenidean τὸ μὴ ἐὸν does not refer to something inexistent but imaginable, as the 100 Euros I do not have in my wallet or whatever the word 'dodo' or 'Martian' make me think of. Nor does it seem to refer to the impossible union of things that we can imagine and may find or have found separately (τράγος 'goat', ἔλαφος 'deer' > τραγέλαφος 'goatstag'). Parmenidean τὸ μὴ ἐὸν has no content unless there is content in *being nothing at all, neither P nor anything other than P*, which is something worth discussing because the phrase 'being nothing at all' still makes sense on some level.

B2 is a disjunctive syllogism; it first proposes a disjunction and then affirms one disjunct by eliminating the other (*modus tollendo ponens*). The goddess explicitly refers to the result of this maneuver in B8.1-2: «but there still remains alone the account of the way that [it] is» (μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν). She also confirms the success of her deduction in B8.15-18, where the way ὡς ἔστιν is presented as the only disjunct allowed by necessity.

ἡ δὲ κρίσις περὶ τούτων ἐν τῷιδ' ἔστιν·
ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν· κέκριται δ' οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη,
τὴν μὲν ἔαν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθὴς
ἔστιν ὁδός), τὴν δ' ὥστε πέλειν καὶ ἐπήτυμον εἶναι.

The decision on these [matters] lies in this: is or is not; now, it has already been decided, as a necessity, to abandon the one [way that is] inapprehensible, unnameable (because it is not a {true ~ real} way), so that the other comes through and is well-founded²⁶.

B2 is a disjunctive syllogism; it is not the statement of a principle. This fragment presupposes the principle of NOEMATIC PLENITUDE, namely that the full range of thought must have content (cf. B6.1). No subject can apprehend nonbeing. Thought cannot encompass anything that cannot be grasped or determined. When we think of something, our thoughts cannot be about nothing (cf. B6.1-2), for no aspect, part, or background of an object of thought can be nothing at all.

Everything that happens in the poem after B2 depends on this κρίσις. However, this does not mean that NOEMATIC PLENITUDE only plays a role from B8.1 to B8.51, where we come to know «the unshakable heart of quite compelling {Truth ~ Reality}». Since the κούρος also needs to learn how to deal with mortal doctrines, B6 becomes crucial because fragment makes room for such learning, especially if we take the verb πέλω in B6.8 as a verb of occurrence or appearance²⁷.

χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι,
μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν· τὰ σ' ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.
πρῶτης γὰρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος [LACUNA]²⁸
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῆς, ἣν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν
πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν
στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται
κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φύλα,
οἷς τὸ Πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτὸν νενόμισται
κού ταῦτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος.

It is required that, in judging and thinking²⁹, there be something that is: for [that]'s [allowed] to be, and [it] is not nothing. I exhort you to ponder these things. Indeed, [SOME FINITE VERB

²⁶ The adjective ἐπήτυμος (< ἔτυμος < ἑτέος) means 'true, real' in the sense of *genuine, truthful, legitimate, stable*. The goddess is saying that the way ὡς ἔστιν proves to be the true way because it remains firm.

²⁷ On this point, see Alcocer Urueta (2020: 32-33) and (2023: 177-178, including fn. 149).

²⁸ <εἶργω> [I bar your way] Diels; <ἄρξει> [you shall begin] Cordero; <ἄρξω> [I shall begin] Nehamas; <ἄξω> [I shall lead you] Thanassas; <ῶσα> [I pushed you away] García Calvo.

²⁹ I read τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τε as an accusative of respect. It should be translated as «in judging, in thinking» if we are to accept τὸ λέγειν τό νοεῖν τ' as transmitted in the manuscripts. Cf. Tarán (1987: 253-254).

FORM?] in your case from the first way of inquiry, but then from the one that mortals who know nothing certainly contrive, bicephalous: for the ineptitude in their chest directs a wandering νόος, and they are carried away again and again, deaf as well as blind, stupefied, undiscerning hordes, for whom to become manifest and not to be are usually considered the same, and not the same, the journey of all [of them] is reversible.

Since B6.3 presents an important lacuna, we lack the necessary information to know in what sense the goddess refers to two discernible ὁδοί in this fragment. Nevertheless, the preposition ἀπό (B6.3, B6.4) makes it reasonable to suppose that the missing verb carries the idea of either *deviation* or *departure*, and thus to consider two possibilities³⁰. On the one hand, the goddess could be saying that she will keep (or has kept) the κοῦρος away from both the way ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν (B6.3 = B2.5) and the way in which πέλειν ‘become manifest’ is alternately confused with οὐκ εἶναι ‘not to be’ (B6.4-9)³¹. On the other hand, she could be anticipating (or remembering) that her lesson assumes first a divine perspective (B6.3 = B2.3 = B8.1-51) and then a mortal perspective (from B8.51 onwards). The second option is preferable, as it allows us to establish a correspondence between these two ways and the content of the poem. In any case, the meaning of πέλειν ‘become manifest’ would explain the alternate identification of πέλειν and οὐκ εἶναι (cf. ταῦτόν κού ταῦτόν in B6.8-9). After all, mortal theories deal with phenomena, which are things that appear and disappear, occur and recur.

In Parmenides’ poem, εἶν means *being anything* and μὴ εἶν means *not being anything* or *being nothing* (cf. B6.1-2), so the specifications that make it possible to distinguish *being P* from *being other than P*, either synchronously or asynchronously, are irrelevant on the way ὡς ἔστιν, which deals with being *simpliciter*. Regardless of whether Parmenides considered *being* the universal commonality or the ultimate reality that underlies all apparent differences (cf. B8.38-41), mortal theories were not suited to explain what simply is. Such theories, however, could not be dismissed as mere nonsense, for *being something and not something else* (difference) must not be confused with *being nothing at all* (nothingness). This seems to be the point made or implied in B7:

οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῆι εἶναι μὴ εἶντα·
ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ’ ἀφ’ ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἶργε νόημα
μηδέ σ’ ἔθος πολῦπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω[.]
νωμᾶν ἄσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἠχῆσσαν ἀκουήν
καὶ γλώσσαν, κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ πολὺδῆριν ἔλεγχον
ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.

For this shall not be imposed at any time, that things that are not are; so you better keep your thought away from this way of inquiry, and do not let custom force you along this much-frequented way to exercise an aimless eye and a resonant ear and tongue; rather, discern judiciously the much tested proof expounded by me.

B1.28-32 and B6 make it reasonable to assume that Parmenides’ poem presented the universe from two different perspectives. First it abstracted all possible differences, then it touched on all the apparent differences that were relevant to the common worldview. In what follows, I will show how NOEMATIC PLENITUDE works in the two corresponding parts of the poem.

3. The divine perspective revealed in demonstrative discourse

The first speech of the goddess renders the «unshakable heart of quite-compelling {Truth ~ Reality}» (B1.29), which is both «a reliable explanation and a thought about {truth ~ reality}» (πιστόν

³⁰ On this point, see especially Nehamas (1981: 102-106).

³¹ Due to space limitations, I will not go into detail about the so-called “Parmenides’ third way”. On this topic, see Stein (1867: 782), Reinhardt (1977 [1916]: 36, 44), Mansfeld (1964: 1-41), Nehamas (1981: 97-111), Cordero (2005: 126-154), Palmer (2009: 51-105), and Wedin (2011: 1-65; 2014: 53-71). My position is that the label “third way” is confusing. This way should not be placed on the same level as the ways ὡς ἔστιν and ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν (B2). The entanglement of πέλειν and οὐκ εἶναι (B6) only makes sense for mortals, since πέλειν represents phenomenal appearance. As we will see below, the goddess will avoid the mortal mistake in the “Doxa” by subordinating the world of phenomena to the disjunctive syllogism (B2) in normative terms.

λόγον ἤδὲ νόημα ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης, B8.50-51). Considering that thought is full according to the goddess, it should come as no surprise that B8.42-49 depicts τὸ πᾶν as a plenum:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πείρας πύματον, τετελεσμένον ἐστὶ
 πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκω,
 μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντη· τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μεῖζον
 οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἐστὶ τῆι ἢ τῆι.
 οὔτε γὰρ οὐκ ἔδον ἔστι, τὸ κεν παύοι μιν ἰκνεῖσθαι
 εἰς ὀμόν, οὔτ' ἔδον ἔστιν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἐόντος·
 τῆι μᾶλλον τῆι δ' ἦσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστὶν ἄσυλον·
 οἷ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἴσον, ὁμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει.

Nevertheless, since there is a farthest limit, [it] is complete on all sides, similar to the mass of a well-rounded ball, equally balanced in all directions from the center: for it is a requirement that it does not turn out to be a bit longer or a bit shorter here or there. For neither is there nonbeing, which could prevent it from reaching what is one-and-the-same, nor is there being such that there could be, of being, more here and less there, since it is all inviolable: indeed, equal to itself from anywhere, it stretches evenly within limits.

Despite the extensive use of imagery in these lines, Parmenides' goddess primarily relies on demonstration. Even if the κοῦρος has arrived at a place off the beaten path of men (ἀνθρώπων ἔκτος πάτου, B1.27), he cannot avoid perceiving distinct objects and must use his reason to understand that ultimate reality transcends differences. This is why B8.1-51 argues for the fullness of τὸ πᾶν by ruling out nonbeing in space, time, and outward form (cf. esp. B8.38-41).

To understand how the argument works, we must realize that τὸ πᾶν, τὸ νόημα, and τὸ ἐόν are coextensive. Parmenides' goddess speaks of something (hereinafter referred to as π) that extends through the world and coincides with the scope of thought, seen as a capacity that transcends the subjectivity of particular thinking subjects. I will not dwell on the fact that the notion of *thought* in ancient Greece was rather that of a power given in the universe. I am more interested in insisting that π should extend through the scope of thought but not beyond it, for everything that can be talked about must be ascertained by the νόος and must be something, whatever it is. Cornford's fragment (Pl. *Tht.* 180e1) seems to support the idea that only the verb εἰμί is capable of ranging over π without making distinctions: οἷον ἀκίνητον τελέθει τῷ παντὶ ὄνομ' εἶναι, «such that it proves to be invariable, $\beta\epsilon$ is the name for everything»³².

To say that the (present forms of the) verb εἰμί range over the entire scope of thought does not mean that every object of our imagination must exist or be the case. Parmenides' assumption is not that if we imagine something, for example, (that) a goat-stag (drinks hydromel), then the object of our imagination must exist or be the case³³. To associate such a foolish position with early Greek philosophy is anachronistic and naive. Parmenides' point is that it makes no sense to include something ungraspable and ineffable in our statements of fact, which is the idea that underlies the speculative account of π that follows the way ὡς ἔστιν. Parmenides' assumption is debatable, but it involves a great deal of metaphysical depth. What guides his first investigation is the nominal clause ὡς ἔστιν, which indicates the factuality of any proposition. Verb forms carry functional information, and Parmenides' ἔστιν represents the basic subsistence of anything real that stands at the moment of utterance. As we will see, the connection between being and thinking has much to do with this, since the present coincides with the consciousness of the speaker, of any speaker (καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντὶ, B16.4) who determines the reference point of the time deixis.

³² We find a slight variant in Simp. *in Ph.* 143. Following Cornford (1935), Loenen (1959: 75-76), Guthrie (1965: 40), Mourelatos (2008: 185-188), Tarrant (1983: 76), Gallop (2013: 90-91), and Woodbury (1986: 5) have defended the authenticity of this passage. To discredit the fragment, Barnes (1979: 14-16) argued that we are reading an inaccurate version of B8.38: οὐλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμναι· τῷ πάντ' ὄνομ(α) ἔσται. According to him, Simplicius could have copied the passage from an unreliable and partial source, namely Plato.

³³ Although *I am actually imagining a thing* that combines the appearance of a goat and a deer drinking from something that resembles a vase.

In Parmenides' poem, the present forms of the verb εἰμί range over all that is now the case and involve two kinds of information: (1) the semantic import of the verb εἰμί as bearer of functional categories such as tense, aspect, and mood (*i.e.*, is + unspecified categorial content)³⁴, and (2) propositional content, especially the semantic import of any lexical predicate, whatever it is (*i.e.*, is + unspecified categorial content), that holds true now for any subject, whatever it is. Parmenidean εὖν certainly presupposes specifications, but the way ὡς ἔστιν reduces *everything that is* to *something that is* and overlooks all specifications, including those expressed by common names such as boy, girl, bush, bird, fish, etc. As noted by Aristotle, this involves categorial fuzziness:

καὶ πρὸς Παρμενίδην δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς τρόπος τῶν λόγων, καὶ εἴ τινες ἄλλοι εἰσὶν ἴδιοι· καὶ ἡ λύσις τῆ μὲν ὅτι ψευδῆς τῆ δὲ ὅτι οὐ συμπεραίνεται, ψευδῆς μὲν ἢ ἀπλῶς λαμβάνει τὸ ὄν λέγεσθαι, λεγομένου πολλαχῶς, ἀσυμπέραντος δὲ ὅτι, εἰ μόνα τὰ λευκὰ ληφθείη, σημαίνοντος ἐν τοῦ λευκοῦ, οὐθὲν ἦπτον πολλὰ τὰ λευκὰ καὶ οὐχ ἕν· οὔτε γὰρ τῆ συνεχεῖα ἐν ἔσται τὸ λευκὸν οὔτε τῷ λόγῳ. ἄλλο γὰρ ἔσται τὸ εἶναι λευκῶ καὶ τῷ δεδεγμένῳ. καὶ οὐκ ἔσται παρὰ τὸ λευκὸν οὐθὲν χωριστὸν· οὐ γὰρ ἢ χωριστὸν ἀλλὰ τῷ εἶναι ἕτερον τὸ λευκὸν καὶ ὧ ὑπάρχει. (*Ph.* 1, 3, 186a22-31)

And with respect to Parmenides, the same kind of arguments [apply as with respect to Melissus], although some others are specific to him: the resolution is, on the one hand, that it is false and, on the other, that it is inconclusive; false in that he assumes that 'being' is said in a single way, when it is said in many ways, inconclusive because, if only white things were assumed, meaning 'white' one thing, nothing less than many things would be white and not one: for that which is white will not be one thing either by continuity or by concept. Indeed, the [mode of] being for white will be other [than the mode of being] for that which admits [the white or whiteness]. And besides the white [or whiteness], there will be nothing separate: for not because it is separate, but because of the [mode of] being, the white [or whiteness] is something other than that to which it pertains.

Parmenides did not assume the unity of $\pi\tau$, but derived it from the cohesive force of being, to borrow a term from chemistry. Note that the goddess sometimes uses the participle of εἰμί in the plural (*cf.* παρ|εόντα and ἀπ|εόντα in B4.1, μῆ εόντα in B7.1). Aristotle clearly tells us that Parmenides' view of oneness was not materialistic,³⁵ but the way ὡς ἔστιν is not free of materialistic connotations. Otherwise the goddess would not say that «being makes contact with being» (B8.25). The belief that all that is merges into the same condition suggests the homogeneity of ultimate reality — whether material, energetic, or spiritual. After all, Zeno, Melissus, and other post-Parmenidean philosophers such as Anaxagoras conceived of ultimate reality as a continuum, and the Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Sophist* problematizes whether we can or should associate τὸ εὖν with a particular nature.

Even if the way ὡς ἔστιν deals with being in its totality, the goddess begins with a totality that allows for multiplicity, and only then argues that such a totality must constitute a whole that is quite full of being (ἐμπλεὸν ἔστιν εὖντος, B8.24). This recalls that Parmenides has been associated with the Orphic tradition, because the Orphic fragment 237 Bernabé (= 165 Kern = Procl. *in Ti.* 1.314 Diehl/2.158 Van Riel) is as follows: πῶς δὲ μοι ἕν τε τὰ πάντ' ἔσται καὶ χωρὶς ἕκαστον; «But how will all things be one for me and also each [of them] separately?». The proof that the goddess does not start from a single and simple whole is that she uses πᾶν as a floating quantifier³⁶, for this type of quantifier reinforces the distributive sense of predication³⁷. We find examples of this use in B8.5, B8.22-25, and B8.48, where πᾶν is not part of the noun phrase acting as the subject of the sentence, nor is it a predicative expression over the subject. In all these passages, the subject — $\pi\tau$ — is made known by the verb morphology of ἔστι, and the quantifier πᾶν specifies that the lexical predicate in question applies to all elements, parts, or aspects of that subject. Observe what happens in B8.5-6, where πᾶν is not the subject of ἦν, ἔσται or ἔστιν:

³⁴ Cf. Alcocer Urueta (2023: 163-173).

³⁵ *Metaph.* A 5, 986b18-21.

³⁶ See Sportiche (1998) on this notion.

³⁷ Cf. Jiménez López & Méndez Dosuna (2020: 469).

οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν,
 ἔν, συνεχές

nor was [it] at some time, nor will [it] be, since [it] is now all together, one, continuous

The same happens in B8.22-25, where πᾶν is not the subject of the sentence, nor is it just another predicative expression, like διαιρετόν, ὁμοῖον, ἐμπλεον, or ζυνεχές:

οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστιν ὁμοῖον·
 οὐδέ τι τῆι μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἴργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι,
 οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἐμπλεόν ἐστιν ἔοντος.
 τῷ ζυνεχές πᾶν ἐστιν· ἐὸν γὰρ ἔοντι πελάζει.

Nor is [it] distinguishable, since [it] is all alike; nor [is] there anything more, which would prevent it from holding together, nor [is there] anything less, but [it] is all quite full of being. Therefore, [it] is all continuous: for being makes contact with being.

The lack of internal limits also has temporal consequences. Parmenidean being has a special relationship with the present because Parmenides saw the verb εἰμί as a function word rather than a content word. The present forms of the verb εἰμί are technical terms for the goddess, who discards verb forms that express a tense other than the present (as ἦν in B8.5), a grammatical aspect other than the imperfective (as ἔγεντο in B8.20), and a lexical aspect other than the durative (as γίγνεσθαι or γενέσθαι in B8.13)³⁸. This is because the goddess speaks from a timeless perspective and wants the κούρος to see the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. Consider B8.34-41:

ταῦτόν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὔνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.
 οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἔοντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφατισμένον ἐστιν,
 εὐρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν· οὐδ' οἱ χρόνος ἐστὶν³⁹ ἢ ἔσται
 ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἔοντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν
 οὔλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμεναι· τῷ πάντ' ὄνομ(α) ἔσται,
 ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεπρωτοῦτες εἶναι ἀληθῆ,
 γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι, εἶναι τε καὶ οὐχί,
 καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροῶ φανὸν ἀμείβειν.

To think amounts to an act of thinking that [it] is. For without being, in which [thinking] is expressed, you will not find thinking. And there is no time interval⁴⁰ for this, or there will be something else besides being, since Moira certainly bound it to be whole, immutable: in regard to it, just words will be all that mortals posited, convinced that [what they posited] is {true ~ real}, to be born and to perish, to be and not [to be], to change place and to transmute the shining face.

Τὸ ἔον expresses thought because the present forms of the verb εἰμί are capable of asserting any state of affairs that obtains now, and the present is always determined by the νόος⁴¹. Moreover, these forms do not express temporal differences. Verbs like γίγνομαι, φύω, or πέλω can express the present tense or the imperfective aspect, but entail temporal limits. The lexical content of εἰμί, on the other hand, does not imply a temporal contrast between a particular state and its negation⁴².

Let us now see how the argument of the goddess unfolds. B8.2-4 mentions six attributes of π, and the goddess goes on to prove them after admitting that π is.

³⁸ On the relation of being to tense and aspect, see Heitsch (1971: 427), Kahn (2003: 194-227), Bueno (1974: 212-217).

³⁹ Version A of B8.36: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται Simpl. in *Phys.* 86.31; οὐδὲν γὰρ <ἢ> ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται suppl. Preller; οὐδ' ἦν γὰρ ἢ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται Bergk. Version B of B8.36: οὐδ' εἰ χρόνος ἐστὶν ἢ ἔσται Simpl. in *Phys.* 146.9; οὐδὲ χρέος Stein; οὐδὲ χρόνος ἐστὶν ἢ ἔσται Coxon; οὐδ' οἱ χρόνος ἐστὶν ἢ ἔσται Marcinkowska-Rosół; οὐ δὲ χρέος García Calvo; οὐδ' ἐν χρόνῳ Bredlow.

⁴⁰ Cf. Alcocer Urueta (2023: 170).

⁴¹ Against the possible charge of anachronism, consider that the ψυχῆς νοῦς determines time according to Arist. *Ph.* 4, 14 223a26.

⁴² Cf. Alcocer Urueta (2023: 167-168).

[...] ταύτη δ' ἐπί σήματ' ἔασι
πολλὰ μάλ', ὡς ἀγένητον ἔδν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν,
οὕλον, μουνογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἤδ' ἀτέλεστον [...]

[...] on this [way] there are very numerous signs⁴³ that, since [IT] is⁴⁴, [IT] is unoriginated and indestructible, whole, one of a kind, as well as unshaken and without end [...]

The goddess never states which principle governs her deduction, but I maintain that it is NOEMATIC PLENITUDE. What explains the flow of her demonstration is that τὸ πᾶν must be full of being at every moment of apprehension and utterance. This does not mean that particular objects must always be present, but rather that there cannot be nothing at any given point as a function of time, quantity, position, or quality. This justifies every attribute of IT. IT is ἀγένητον and ἀνώλεθρον because there is no room for nonbeing before or after a certain moment. IT is οὕλον and μουνογενές because there is no room for nonbeing in τὸ πᾶν, viewed either as a continuum or, just initially, as a series. IT is ἀτρεμές because there is no place for IT to move (for there is no room for nonbeing between any given point and the “farthest limit”). IT is ἀτέλεστον because it does not depend on whether a particular stage is reached or completed (for there is no room for nonbeing at a particular stage), which implies either that IT is absolutely actual or that IT is beyond actuality and potentiality.

Some interpreters believe that there are more attributes than these. According to McKirahan (2008), B8.5-6 mentions six more, namely οὐδέ-ποτ' ἦν, οὐδ' ἔσται, νῦν-ἔστιν, ὁμοῦ-πᾶν, ἔν, συνεχές, to which “motionless” (B8.26-31) and “unchanging” (B8.38-41) should be added. Nevertheless, these are nothing more than reformulations of the attributes in B8.2-4. It makes no sense to say that IT was or will be at some moment (οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται) — it is only appropriate to say that IT is now (νῦν ἔστιν) — because IT can neither become nor cease to be (ἀγένητον, ἀνώλεθρον). The goddess speaks of time only in connection with generation and destruction⁴⁵. B8.20 supports this, since it establishes a difference between ἔστι and other verb forms in terms that go beyond tense: «for if [it] had an origin, [it] is not, nor if [it] is going to be at some point in the future» (εἰ γὰρ ἔγεντ', οὐκ ἔστι(), οὐδ' εἴ ποτε μέλλει ἔσεσθαι). The same is true of the other attributes proposed by McKirahan: ὁμοῦ πᾶν, ἔν, and συνεχές elaborate on οὕλον and μουνογενές, while ‘motionless’ and ‘unchanging’ are synonymous with ἀτρεμές and ἀτέλεστον.

I will not go through the demonstration in detail, but before moving on to the second part of the poem, I will briefly describe the main stages of the way ὡς ἔστιν.

1. B8.1-4 marks the beginning of the way. The goddess says that numerous signs along this way make it possible to characterize IT once it is established that IT is.
2. B8.5-6 claims that tense distinctions are irrelevant in dealing with IT, which is unaffected by time.
3. B8.6-21 argues against the generation and destruction of IT. IT cannot come from nothing (B8.6-11), nor can IT be subject to reproduction or succession (B8.12-13)⁴⁶. IT has no temporal limits because there cannot be nothing at any interval of time (B8.13-21).
4. According to B8.22-25, IT cannot be separated from everything else because IT does not admit nonbeing or is completely full of being.
5. B8.26-41 denies that IT can be subject to any kind of change, including generation and destruction (B8.26-28). It is noteworthy that the goddess uses the verb μένω ‘remain, stay’ when talking about IT. Since this verb supposes time, to say that IT is ἀκίνητον ‘unmoved, motionless’ must mean that IT *remains identical over time*, in both quality or quantity and state or position (ταύτόν τ' ἔν ταύτῳ) (B8.29-30). It is also worth noting that immutability is described as the impossibility of getting out of the

⁴³ Just as a symptom indicates a disease but is not the disease itself, these signs indicate attributes but are not attributes themselves.

⁴⁴ The participle ἔδν in B8.3 has a causal or conditional value.

⁴⁵ Cf. Tarán (1965: 175-188), also (1979).

⁴⁶ Simp. *in Ph.* 145 transmits ἐκ (γε) μὴ ἔδντος, but I accept the amendment of Karsten (1835: 34): Οὐδέ ποτ' ἐκ τοῦ ἔδντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ἰσχύς / γίγνεσθαι τι παρ' αὐτό (B8.12-13).

present (B8.30-33). Only the present — the unmarked tense — does justice to $\pi\tau$, because only the present forms of the verb $\epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ faithfully represent the apprehension of what is (B8.34-41).

6. In B8.42-49, $\pi\tau$ is depicted as an all-encompassing plenum.
7. The way $\omega\varsigma \xi\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ ends at B8.50-51.

4. The mortal perspective presented as an acceptable story

The second speech of the goddess is «a deceptive array of words» (κόσμον ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν, B8.52), *i.e.*, of unreliable mortal views (*cf.* B1.30, B8.51). Unlike the way $\omega\varsigma \xi\sigma\tau\iota\nu$, this explanation emphasizes the dynamic aspect of the world and uses the verb $\phi\upsilon\omega$ and its derivatives in a technical way. While the meaning of the aorist $\phi\upsilon\nu$ seems inappropriate in B8.10, it is perfectly appropriate in the second part of the poem, which deals with the natural world. We have only a few lines of this $\pi\epsilon\alpha\tau\iota \phi\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma \iota\sigma\tau\omicron\rho\iota\alpha$, but B10 and B19 let us know that it contained an explanation of the physical constitution, not only of the heavens, but also of the lower spheres of the cosmos, where things were supposed to be unstable and perishable. The passage of time becomes crucial in the so-called “Doxa”, and generation and destruction no longer seem to be a problem.

εἴσῃ δ' αἰθερίαν τε φύσιν τὰ τ' ἐν αἰθέρι πάντα
σῆματα καὶ καθαράς εὐάγεος ἠελίοιο
λαμπάδος ἔργ' αἰδηλα καὶ ὀππόθεν ἐξεγένοντο,
ἔργα τε κύκλωπος πεύσῃ περίφοιτα σελήνης
καὶ φύσιν, εἰδήσεις δὲ καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀμφὶς ἔχοντα
ἐνθεν ἔφου τε καὶ ὥς μιν ἄγουσ(α) ἐπέδησεν Ἀνάγκη
πείρατ' ἔχειν ἄστρων. (B10)

You will get to know the emergence of the ether and all the signs in the ether, also the devastating actions of the pure torch of the very clear sun and where they got their origins [*i.e.*, what their cause is], and you will learn the periodic actions and the emergence of the round-eyed moon, and you will know when the sky, that sticks all around, emerged, and also how Necessity, who commands it, binds it over to keep the confines of the heavenly bodies.

οὕτω τοι κατὰ δόξαν ἔφου τάδε καὶ νυν ἔασι
καὶ μετέπειτ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε τελευτήσουσι τραφέντα·
τοῖς δ' ὄνομ' ἀνθρωποὶ κατέθεντ' ἐπίσημον ἐκάστωι. (B19)

According to the commonly held view, I tell you, this is how these things were born and are now, and afterwards, from this moment on, they will come to an end after being nourished; in regard to these things, however, men have established a designative name for each [of them].

The goddess does not consider mortal theories to be true, but she is willing to validate them under certain conditions. Some interpreters think that the “Doxa” does not put forth Parmenides’ own philosophy of nature⁴⁷, but the authenticity of this section cannot be easily

⁴⁷ Nietzsche (1988) [1873]: 836), Schuhl (1934: 289), and Albertelli (1939: 128) thought it possible that the “Doxa” contained Parmenides’ early speculations. Following Zeller (1856: 418), who hypothesized that these are not Parmenides’ own views, Burnet (1930: 184-185) proposed that Parmenides was presenting Pythagorean ideas in a polemical spirit. Patin (1899) and Loew (1930: 209-211; 1935: 21-23) considered Heraclitus to be the target of the controversy. To these hypotheses should be added Owen’s (1960): «Parmenides set himself to give the correct or the most plausible analysis of those presuppositions on which ordinary men, and not just theorists, seem to build their picture of the physical world» (89).

denied. Aristotle ascribed it to Parmenides⁴⁸, and the goddess promises in the proem not only to teach «mortal opinions in which there is no real trust», but also «how the things that seem [to be] ought to seemingly be». In fact, B8.60-61 seems to announce that she will do both things at once:

τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον εἰκότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὥς οὐ μή ποτέ τις σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσει

I let you know this orderly disposition, adjusted in every way, so that no mortal conception will ever get past you

B8.60-61 could simply mean that the κοῦρος should rise above the standard human viewpoint once he understands that mortal lucubrations are nothing but a hoax. But then, where and how did he learn «how the things that seem [to be] ought to seemingly be»? Unless we come up with insider theories that Parmenides was engaged in mockery and parody, I do not see why we should not attribute the “Doxa” to him. In this section we find Ἀνάγκη (B10.6), a female deity ruling everything (B12.3), and a fitting explanation of the cosmos. I agree with both Johansen (2016) and Hussey (1972) in this regard. The former adheres to the old firm belief that the “Doxa” meets certain criteria in order to resemble the true teaching of the goddess. The latter suggests that Parmenides developed a coherent and exhaustive account of natural phenomena based on commonly held views (97-98). For my part, I think that if we want to understand the value that the goddess assigns to the “Doxa”, we must look at the conditions that she tries to satisfy when presenting mortal opinions, the most important of which is NOEMATIC PLENITUDE.

The flaw in mortal views is semantic. They are untrue because of a particular understanding of the correspondence between words and reality. The goddess judges mortal terms so harshly in B8.38, B8.53, B9.1, and B19.3 because the terms of natural philosophy, unlike the present forms of the verb εἶμι, cannot transcend differences. Even so, mortal theories are not to be condemned altogether. If we read B8.53-B9 without stopping, we will find out that such explanations can be accepted if they manage to account for all phenomena. Differential notions cannot correspond with what underlies all appearances, but it is still possible to give a satisfactory explanation of nature based on opposite notions.

μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν·
τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεῶν ἔστιν—ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν—
τάντῃα δ' ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο
χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῇ μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ,
ἥπιον ὄν, μέγ' ἔλαφρόν, ἔωυτῷ πάντοσε τωῦτόν,
τῷ δ' ἑτέρωι μὴ τωῦτόν· ἀτὰρ κάκεινο κατ' αὐτό
τάντῃα νύκτ' ἀδαῆ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθές τε.

[...]

αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νύξ ὀνόμασταί
καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσι τε καὶ τοῖς,
πᾶν πλεόν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου

⁴⁸ *Metaph.* A 3, 984b1-4: τῶν μὲν οὖν ἐν φασκόντων εἶναι τὸ πᾶν οὐθενὶ συνέβη τὴν τοιαύτην συνιδεῖν αἰτίαν πλὴν εἰ ἄρα Παρμενίδῃ, καὶ τούτῳ κατὰ τοσοῦτον ὅσον οὐ μόνον ἐν ἀλλὰ καὶ δύο πως τίθησιν αἰτίας εἶναι, «Thus, none of those who claimed that τὸ πᾶν is one succeeded in conceiving this kind of cause [*i.e.*, the cause of movement], except perhaps Parmenides, and he [did it] insofar as he proposed not only that there is only one, but also, in a sense, two causes». *Metaph.* A 5, 986b31-987a2: ἀναγκαζόμενος δ' ἀκολουθεῖν τοῖς φαινομένοις, καὶ τὸ ἐν μὲν κατὰ τὸν λόγον πλείω δὲ κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν ὑπολαμβάνων εἶναι, δύο τὰς αἰτίας καὶ δύο τὰς ἀρχὰς πάλιν τίθησι, θερμὸν καὶ ψυχρόν, οἷον πῦρ καὶ γῆν λέγων· τούτων δὲ κατὰ μὲν τὸ ὄν τὸ θερμὸν τάπτε θάτερον δὲ κατὰ τὸ μὴ ὄν, «But being obliged to be consistent with the phenomena, and supposing [τὸ πᾶν] to be one [thing] according to reason and many according to sensation, he further proposes two causes, that is, two principles, calling them the hot and the cold, that is, fire and earth; and, of these, he places the hot under what is, and the other under what is not». The fact that ψυχρόν was placed under μὴ ὄν only means that it is the contrary of the “positive” term θερμὸν: what is not hot.

ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρω μέτα μηδέν.

In fact, with regard to outward forms, they established two means of distinction for naming⁴⁹: [to establish] [just] one of them is not expedient⁵⁰ — in this they have deviated⁵¹. They judged [them] contrary as to [their] mass and placed [their] features apart from each other: here, the ethereal fire of the flame, which is mild, extremely light, identical to itself in every respect, but not identical to the other; and yet also that which is in itself the opposite, unconscious night, a tight and heavy mass.

[...]

And yet, since all things were designated light and night and these [designations were applied] to these and those things according to the corresponding powers, all is full of light and night without shine, both of them equal, since nothing [comes] with neither of them.

According to the goddess, mortals originally agreed (*cf.* κατέθεντο) on two γνώμαι for naming phenomena. This was inevitable, for humans cannot help noticing differences. However, mortals deviated (*cf.* πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν) from the original dualism. In trying to present their explanations as the most fundamental, they passed one γνώμη off as the first principle and neglected the other, thus making their explanations inconsistent. B8.54 was probably meant to expose the false monism of materialists who purportedly grounded phenomenal diversity in a single principle, say, air⁵². These philosophers, namely the Milesians, opted for a gradualist explanation of diversity, and even though they silenced one of the two poles of the continuum, they tacitly assumed a contrary principle, say, not-air, in order to account for all the attributes that did not follow from the positive γνώμη.

Since mortals are doomed to notice differences, the goddess does not oppose dualism in the “Doxa”. Representational dualism is enough to declare mortal explanations untrue, but not to reject them altogether. One can account for μορφαί ‘outward forms, appearances’ using γνώμαι ‘means of knowing’ like *brightness* and *darkness*, insofar as these *abstracta* are thinkable and have a correlate in human experience. What interests the goddess most in the “Doxa” is the adaptation of humanlike theories to the vision expounded along the way ὡς ἔστιν. That is why she presents us with a spherical cosmos and stresses the complementarity of opposites. Cosmic diversity results from the procreative intercourse of two basic principles (B13)⁵³, and procreated things exhibit to some extent the powers (δυνάμεις) associated with the basic γνώμαι. Mortal explanations are not true, but can be accepted if the hypothetical principles on which they account for phenomena pass through all or persist forever, as the goddess says in B1.32. This means that a principled explanation of the cosmos must maintain the validity of the postulated first principles across time, space, and variation in apparent form and capacity.

Parmenides offered a theory of nature based on two complementary principles. Since he wanted to supersede all other physical theories⁵⁴, he improved conventional cosmogonies or cosmologies by adhering to NOEMATIC PLENITUDE, which had a normative function in the “Doxa”. Such a prescriptive role can be translated into the maxim: *Suppositions (τὰ δοκοῦντα) must cover the full range of what is conceivable based on sense perception*. This would imply, for example, that the farthest boundary of the natural world must be determined by empirical evidence (*e.g.*, by the last known celestial body), or that the appearance of any given volume must be explained

⁴⁹ In general, I follow Woodbury (1986: 3).

⁵⁰ I have always hesitated about the meaning of τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεῶν ἔστιν, but I believe that χρεῶν does not carry the strong modal value of ‘to be a requirement, a need, a necessity’, but the attenuated one of ‘to be expedient, desirable, suitable’, as in Thgn. 1.563-564: Κεκληῆσθαι δ’ ἐς δαῖτα, παρέξεσθαι δὲ παρ’ ἐθέλον / ἄνδρα χρεῶν σοφίην πᾶσαν ἐπιστάμενον, «It is desirable to be summoned to a banquet and to be seated next to a worthy man who is well-versed in all kinds of knowledge».

⁵¹ Here we have a tense variation. I think that the perfect πεπλανημένοι denotes the relevance of the deviation at the moment of utterance, thus marking a difference with respect to the narrative aorist κατέθεντο, ἐκρίναντο, ἔθεντο. The periphrastic perfect often expresses a resulting state, but note that unlike B8.35, the subject here is an agent. In any case, the periphrastic anterior perfect is no longer a rarity in the Classical period (*cf.* Bentein 2016: 140).

⁵² *Cf.* Coxon (2009: 344).

⁵³ The interpretation of dualism as allomorphy proposed by Sisko and Weiss (2015: 52) is very attractive.

⁵⁴ Alcocer Urueta (2023: 173-181) explains how Parmenides might have corrected other theories.

in terms of the proportions of its ascertainable constituents. However, NOEMATIC PLENITUDE would require that any volume within the natural world instantiate at least one γνώμη. Moreover, if we overlook phenomenal differences, then the attributes mentioned along the way ὡς ἔστιν are valid for the natural world, which is represented as a round or circular plenum. The evidence is scant, but compelling. We have just read in B9 that everything was covered by light and night, and B12 lets us know not only that light and night filled all cosmic rings in some proportion, but also that a ruling deity watched over all things.

αἱ γὰρ στεινότεραι πλῆντο⁵⁵ πυρὸς ἀκρήτιοι,
αἱ δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς νυκτός, μετὰ δὲ φλογὸς ἴεται αἴσα·
ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ·
πάντα γὰρ <ἦ> συγεροῖο τόκου καὶ μίξιος ἄρχει
πέμπουσ' ἄρσενι θῆλυ μιγῆν τό τ' ἐναντίον αὐτίς
ἄρσεν θηλυτέρωι.

Indeed, the narrower [rings] were filled with unmixed fire, while those above them [were filled] with night, and a portion of flame flows in between; and in the midst of these [rings there is] a divinity that rules everything; for [she] regulates everywhere the terrible birth and mating, leading the female to mate with the male and also conversely, the male to mate with the female.

Furthermore, the idea that the “Doxa” imitates the “Truth” is also supported by B10 (cited above). Note that B10.6-7 describes the phenomenal world as self-contained (or contained by necessity, *i.e.*, by the rejection of anything other than what is) in much the same way that $\pi\tau$ is depicted in B8.42-49.

5. Noematic plenitude as both a regulative and a constitutive principle⁵⁶

Gomperz (1922: 150) compared the way ὡς ἔστιν to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and Parmenides’ “Doxa” to Kant’s pre-critical cosmogony. Burnet (1930: 183) found such a comparison anachronistic, but others have welcomed the analogy, albeit with reservations. Popper (1998) believed that the “Doxa” is about something like Kantian phenomena (98), although «after Newton the world of appearance could no longer be renounced, or denounced, as mere delusion» since it «had become the realm of scientific ‘truth’» (144). Something similar happens with Mourelatos (2008). Although he recognizes that Parmenides invites «a transfer of properties from ‘what-is’, his counterpart of Kantian noumena, to *dokounta*, his counterpart of Kantian phenomena» (xlili), he reminds us that, unlike Parmenides’ τὸ ἐόν, Kant’s noumenon is not an object of knowledge. For my part, I think that, according to both Parmenides and Kant, empirical knowledge requires systematization, so I seriously entertain the idea that Kant’s distinction between constitutive and regulative principles can shed light on the role of NOEMATIC PLENITUDE in both parts of Parmenides’ poem.

The likelihood that NOEMATIC PLENITUDE had a normative function in shaping the “Doxa” to fit the way ὡς ἔστιν makes me think that NOEMATIC PLENITUDE could function as a regulative principle in Parmenides’ natural philosophy. According to Kant, the principles of the understanding (*Verstand*) are constitutive of knowledge in that they make possible *a priori* the concepts of experience⁵⁷, whereas the principles of reason (*Vernunft*) cannot even constitute empirical concepts, for there

⁵⁵ πᾶντο D¹; πανητο E^a; πινητο D²E; πλῆντο Bergk (Diels); πλῆνται Bergk.

⁵⁶ As outlined below, Kant distinguished between constitutive and regulative principles to differentiate the notions that constitute our knowledge (*e.g.*, *Quantität*) from the notions that guide our inquiries and help us systematize our knowledge without constituting it (*e.g.*, *Zweckmäßigkeit* ‘accordance with an end/purpose’).

⁵⁷ The principles of the understanding constitute the objective determination of phenomena. For example, we can determine the intensity of light using numerical quantities: «So werde ich z. B. den Grad der Empfindungen des Sonnenlichts aus etwa 200 000 Erleuchtungen durch den Mond zusammensetzen und *a priori* bestimmt geben, d. i. konstruieren können. Daher können wir die ersteren Grundsätze konstitutive nennen» (KrV A178/B221).

is no scheme of sensibility⁵⁸ corresponding to them⁵⁹. The principles of reason are regulative principles that stem from the interest of reason in perfecting our knowledge of objects⁶⁰. They are heuristic, not ostensive concepts that show, not how an object is constituted, but how we are to *seek*, under their guidance (*Leitung*), the consistency and connection of empirical objects (*Beschaffenheit und Verknüpfung der Gegenstände der Erfahrung*)⁶¹. Thus, if the analogy I propose makes sense, then the attributes introduced by Parmenides' divine guide ("*Leiterin*") in B8.3-4 should function as principles of speculative reason⁶²: they should help organize and correct mortal opinions, *i.e.*, generally held views⁶³.

All attributes of *IT* follow from NOEMATIC PLENITUDE, whose adaptation to "humanlike" terms I have translated into the maxim: *Suppositions must cover the full range of what is conceivable based on sense perception*. There are Kantian counterparts that lend substance to this analogy: the βρωτων γνωμαι (*empirische Begriffe*) account for μορφαί (*Erscheinungen, Phaenomena, Sinnenwesen*); they cannot correspond to *IT* (*Noumenon*), but can be organized in such a way (διδάκοσμον, *Beschaffenheit und Verknüpfung*) as to resemble *IT*⁶⁴. What is crucial for the analogy to be complete is that NOEMATIC PLENITUDE be used regulatively in the "Doxa". This condition is met according to the previous section insofar as acceptable mortal theories are required not to create intervals or stages in which principles (γνωμαι) are missing⁶⁵. In this regard, two things should be noted: first, the "Truth", which is viewed as «a reliable explanation and a thought about {truth ~ reality}» (πιστὸν λόγον ἢδὲ νόημα ἀμφὶ ἀληθείης, B8.50-51), presents reality as full of being; second, the "Doxa" portrays the phenomenal world as a plenum.

Comparing Parmenides with Kant is not far-fetched as long as we keep in mind that ideas can lead to illusory reasoning according to the German philosopher. This is all the more interesting because the way ὡς ἔστιν qualifies as one of those rationalizing doctrines (*vernünfteln*de *Lehrsätze*) criticized by Kant in the Transcendental Dialectic⁶⁶. NOEMATIC PLENITUDE may have had a regulative function in the "Doxa", but it was constitutive of the way ὡς ἔστιν. If this way is said to look out for {Truth ~ Reality} (B2.4), it is because the plenum characterized in B8.1-51 represented reality as such in the eyes of Parmenides. Kant would have denied objective validity to such a theory, but this does not prevent us from finding points of convergence between Parmenides and Kant in this regard as well. I would like to conclude by pointing out that there are strong similarities as to how both philosophers conceived of what surpasses (mortal) experience. Notice how well the characteristics Kant ascribes to the *prototypon transscendentale* fit Parmenides' *IT*:

Wenn wir nun dieser unserer Idee, indem wir sie hypostasieren, so ferner nachgehen, so werden wir das Urwesen durch den bloßen Begriff der höchsten Realität als ein einiges,

⁵⁸ According to Kant (*KrVA137-147/B176-187*), imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] produces certain representations [*Vorstellungen*] — the schemata [*Schemate*] — that play an intermediary role between our immediate representations of objects (*i.e.*, our intuitions [*Anschauungen*]) and the abstract representations of our understanding (*i.e.*, concepts [*Begriffe*]). There are three types of schemata: purely sensible, empirical, and non-sensible. In the first two cases, imagination provides an image [*Bild*] (*e.g.*, the figure of a triangle or a dog) that serves to subsume an object into a certain concept.

⁵⁹ Cf. *KrVA664/B692*.

⁶⁰ Cf. *KrVA666/B694*.

⁶¹ Cf. *KrVA671/B699*.

⁶² I am referring to those principles that presuppose the unity of nature in general (*cf. KrVA651/B679*) rather than the ideas of *God*, the *world*, and the *subject* in particular. For example, the principles of homogeneity, specification, and continuity (affinity), which are discussed in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic (*KrVA642-668/B670-696*, *cf. esp. A651/B679*), align with Parmenides' view of *IT* and his description of the phenomenal world. In this sense, the notion of perfection [*Vollkommenheit*] that Kant discusses at the end of such an appendix (*cf. KrVA669-704/B697-732*) should be connected to what I call NOEMATIC PLENITUDE.

⁶³ Cf. *KrVA671/B699*.

⁶⁴ My intention is to point out the elements that allow us to draw an analogy between the two thinkers rather than rigorously demonstrating the analogy itself. I am not attempting an exhaustive comparison of the two theoretical frameworks here. Instead, I aim to present a Parmenides who is less naive than he is usually considered to be, *i.e.*, a Parmenides who exhibits greater methodological refinement.

⁶⁵ See Alcocer Urueta (2023: 173-181) for further details.

⁶⁶ Cf. *KrVA421/B448-449*.

einfaches, allgenugsames, ewiges etc. mit einem Worte, es in seiner unbedingten Vollständigkeit durch alle Prädikamente bestimmen können. (KrV A580/B608)

If we go after this idea of ours to the point of hypostatizing it, then we will be able to determine the primordial being through the mere concept of the highest reality as a unitary, simple, all-sufficient, eternal [being], etc., in a word, [we will be able to determine] it in its unconditional completeness across all predicaments.

It is inappropriate to compare the functions performed by Parmenides' IT and Kant's *prototypon transcendentale* in their respective systems. However, their similarities prove that the way $\omega\varsigma \xi\sigma\tau\text{IV}$ is a prime example of metaphysics as understood by Kant (cf. KrV BXIV). Parmenides' «unshakable heart of quite compelling {Truth ~ Reality}» supports the idea that the concept of *perfection* (which is transcendental according to Kant) — or the root of this concept, perhaps NOEMATIC PLENITUDE — guides speculative reasoning.

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