

Parmenidean Monism and The Routes of Being.

It is well known that Parmenides presents his concept of being in an unified way, and if he distinguished different senses of being he never did that explicitly. However, the tradition of commentaries of his poem attempts to distinguish the many senses of being there involved. One very famous interpretation initiated by Russell and supported by many scholars throughout the Twentieth Century claims that the paradoxical result of Parmenides's monism is a consequence of his incapacity to discern the three basic senses of the verb to be: identity, predication and existence.

Patricia Curd (1998) proposed a revolutionary interpretation of the poem. According to Curd, Parmenides does not propound the thesis of numerical monism (the claim that there exist only one thing) despite the many centuries of commentaries that read the poem as a proposition of this thesis. Instead of that, she suggests that Parmenides held the thesis of "predicational monism", according to which "each thing that is can be only one thing; it can hold only the one predicate which indicates what it is". Building upon previous results given by Alexander Mourelatos, Curd argues that the verb to be in Parmenides's poem is primarily predicative and that, according to the Parmenidean thesis, the only acceptable way to use "is" is in a predication of essence. The interpretation proposed by Curd and Mourelatos has been regarded as satisfactory by many scholars on the basis that they incorporate the results of new investigations on the sense of the verb to be, such as Kahn's publications against the existential reading of this verb in Ancient Greek texts.

As an indirect counterargument to Curd's interpretation, I will present a reading of Parmenides's thesis on being that incorporates the recent results of Kahn's investigation while still deriving the traditional result of numerical monism. I take the veridical sense of the verb to be as basic in order to interpret Parmenides's statements on the "two routes of investigation": the way of being and the way of non-being. According to my view, the two routes represent an attempt of definition of the concepts of Truth and Falsehood. I understand Parmenides's contradictory formulation of the way of non-being (that it is not and by necessity is not-being) as a recognition of the apparent contradiction involved in the attempt to define what is false by means of a true sentence. For if there is a sentence that correctly describes the non-being, it is a true sentence and therefore belongs to the other route, the route of being, the route of truth. I will show how numerical monism can be easily reached from the acceptance of this starting point.