ἀrchαί

On the Interdependence Between Contents and Literary Forms in Parmenides' Poem

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Abstract: Starting from the identification and characterization of three literary forms that coexist throughout Parmenides' Poem, all of them plainly different from each other, it is proposed and demonstrated that such a variety of forms mirrors the delimitation of the different ways of thought and language elaborated by Parmenidic philosophy, in which at least two types of nature of knowledge must be recognized: the logical and the cosmological.

The first, marked by a formally logical-argumentative speech which is given the name of truth (aletheia) and whose way of thinking is exclusively noetic; the second, of a theoretical-descriptive nature, dedicated to the consideration of the movement proper to cosmic phenomena, whose devenir demands an equally mobile way of thinking (phronein).

Keywords: Parmenides, ancient Greek poetry, literary forms, noein, phronein.

I

Although [1] "content" and "form" are conceptually and linguistically distinct nouns and may be used, at times, through a relation of antonyms that gives them a mutually antithetical value, it is important to remember that there is no way a given content cannot assume a certain form, as well as any form always already implies content, and that without any suppression of their respective meanings. Considered as such, these terms show themselves as mutually dependent: without one, there is no other, in a way that their interdependence and their possible antonymy according to use, rather attest their co-belonging, their inseparability.

Parmenides' Poem is a particularly fertile ground to demonstrate this relation of co-belonging: regardless of how we present the ordering of the fragments of his work that have come down to us, the set of these fragments reveals at least three very well-defined literary forms and, therefore, clearly distinct from each other. To these forms belong equally well-defined contents, just as these contents seem to require a specific literary form for their expression. Philosophy has to be conceptual: as each of these forms

of the Parmenidic text belongs exactly to a domain of specific content and *vice versa*, I will call this relationship of mutual belonging between literary form and philosophical content as *literary unity*. I then propose that three literary unities be recognized coexisting in the remaining fragments of his poem, and, going further, I equally propose that this recognition indeed endorses the tripartition of the poem, as it has been traditionally presented, leaving, however, as a question, the criterion to be used for the coordination of these three parts, as well as for the internal ordering of the fragments that belong to each of them.[2]

Taking this traditional ordering of the poem as a reference, a structure absolutely consolidated in the history of the establishment of the Parmenidic text at least since Hemann Diels published his *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,*[3] we have three parts that constitute its whole: the proem; the part dedicated to the being and the truth; and the part dedicated to the opinions. It is fully perceptible how each of these parts reveals a *style*, an *elocution*, a *vocabulary* and a *literary genre* that are their own: the proem is presented in a language clearly poetic; the middle part is distinguished by a radically argumentative character, exhibiting as its predominant "pronunciation" being that of logical and rational argumentation; and the final part, again somewhat more poetic,

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[2] The first tripartite presentation of the poem was established by Fülleborn (1795), whose proposal was received at the time with wide acceptance by the academic community, decisively influencing the establishments of the text that followed, namely those of Mullach (1845; 1860) and Diels (1897).

[3] In structural terms, the proposal by Hermann Diels (1903), later edited by Walther Kranz (DIELS, H.; KRANZ, W., 1922; 1934-37; 1951-52), has not undergone any significant alteration or resistance since it was established as standard, becoming canonical. Recently, however, Diels' text has been questioned in terms of new interpretive positions, and the need for a new ordering of Parmenides' fragments is especially in vogue today. See Kurfess (2012); Conte (2016); Cordero (2021); Santoro (2020). Laks and Most, with the recent publication that intends to supplant the edition of Diels and Kranz as the main reference for the texts of the Presocratics, elaborate a reordering of the Parmenidic fragments but without entering into any litigation with its traditional tripartition; on the contrary, it conserves it and adopts it as a criterion for the division of the work, basically maintaining the structure presented by DK (Laks; Most, 2016, p. 30-87).

theorical-descriptive in its manifest cosmological and anthropogonic tenor. This distinction in the order of language obeys a double situation: firstly, by virtue of the function that each part plays in the poem, each one functioning according to a determined purpose; and, secondly, because these forms or modes of language are a contingency of content and *nature of knowledge* exposed in each of these parts. Therefore, perhaps they could not assume a form other than the one they assume.

The task that I intend to accomplish here consists in developing and demonstrating the correlation between the philosophical proposal and the literary form with which it is composed in each of the three parts of the poem, including in this the demonstration that these literary unities, which I treat as a concept, are defined by having a specific style, elocution and literary genre and even a vocabulary that is equally intrinsic to them.

II

The identification of three literary unities in the poem does not, however, imply recognizing them as autonomous parts between themselves, as if isolated pieces that don't interrelate, quite the contrary: as I have been proposing at least since 2005, Parmenides' Poem performs an inextricable unity, which the solid integrity reveals itself precisely according to the way how these literary unities relate between themselves and to the role that each of them plays in the overall economy of the poem.[4] It is curious to note, on

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[4] See Costa (2005; 2007; 2009; 2010). Several interpreters confessed not knowing why the part dedicated to the opinions would have been written by Parmenides, which is why they point out the difficulty of incorporating it into the whole of the poem, since it can't be glimpsed which relationship the opinions would establish with the truth, as it is the case with Kirk and Raven (1971, p. 266): "The relation between the two parts of the poem is by no means obvious and has, as we shall see, been very variously interpreted; but fortunately it is the 'Way of Truth', of which so large a proportion survives, that made Parmenides the most influential of all the Presocratics, while the 'Way of Seeming', whatever the motive that prompted Parmenides to write it, seems to have exercised comparatively little influence upon his successors." In the same way are Barnes (1982, p. 123) and

the one hand, that this proposal of mine ends up offering sustenance to the traditionally predominant presentation of the Parmenidic text, in which three rigorously sectioned parts or segments *stand out*; on the other hand, my reading of these three distinct content-forms does not *stand them out* in parts, but *unites* and *conjugates* them, indicating a continuity in the sequential arrangement between them that orders and shapes Parmenides' work as a harmonic totality. Consequently, the decision and willingness to unite the parts and conjugate them instead of detaching them, isolating them from one another, makes all the difference, since the traditional tripartition of the poem ended up favoring, in hermeneutical terms, readings that resulted in such a detachment that the part granted to the truth did not establish any relationship with that of the opinions, from which in turn derived both (a) that the thematic of the opinions and also of the Parmenides' cosmology were relegated to oblivion and (b) that many interpreters have come to admit that they didn't see a reasonable sense in Parmenides having written this last part. That my proposal, in recognizing three distinct literary forms in the poem that are, correlatively, crucial contents of the Parmenidic philosophy, does not come to result in these same consequences depends precisely on realizing how and in virtue of what that they are conjugable and complementary in their distinction, something that, I think, the exposition of the literary-philosophical character of these unities will help to verify.

Before proceeding with the description and the analysis of the characteristics of each literary unity that I recognize in the poem, it is worth remembering that the only aspect that is absolutely common to them and therefore permeates the entire length of the Parmenidic text corresponds to the properly poetic form of its writing, which, as is well known, (a) follows and adopts the pattern of the epic poetry, of Homeric origin, exerting the meter and (the) rhythms proper to the use of the dactylic hexameter; as well as (b)

Mourelatos (1970, p. 211, 260); and not so distant, even though committed to recognizing some plausible reason to include the opinions as an understandable part of a possible organicity of the poem, e.g. Coxon (1986, p. 265, 343) and Curd (2004, p. 116).

makes use of a considerable scale of the traditionally epic vocabulary, lending a certain archaizing tone to his poem.[5]

The first literary unity of the work corresponds to what became conventionally called the poem's proem, which extends from B1, 1 to B1, 32.[6] The proem is concluded, however, by a series of five verses, from 28 to 32, which conforms an apart literary landscape within this first unity; there is specifically a question here of a subset that encloses it, which the particular nature of it I will describe in due course. Therefore, the description that follows specifically covers the range between B1, 1 and B1, 28, as far as, in this last verse, the text concludes with the formula ἀλλὰ θέμις τε δίκη τε.

All this extension exhibits, in literary terms, a poetic style. Conceptually, I will give *stylistic* value here to that which corresponds to the most fundamentally differentiating literary nature of the text form itself. In the case of the proem, this form is fully poetic, not only because it is presented in verses and contains resources inherent to versification, but also because it encloses aspects that are most proper of (the) poetic writing: care or even emphasis on the aesthetic charge of the text; symbolic or figurative value of most of its terms and expressions; adoption of literary images and other stylistic resources in a continuous, non-punctual manner, such as the use of various figures of speech, like metaphors and allegories; and prevalence of connotation over denotation regarding the semantics of words. In addition to these characteristics, the various allusions to other poems also belong to the poetic style of the proem, firmly linking its verses to the poetic tradition that precedes it, cf. (Bernabé, 1979, p. 372-376).

As for its *elocution*, this same extension of verses *intones* a mythical elocution voice, understanding "elocution" as the mode of

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[5] On Homeric meter, see Parry (1930) and Dihle (2009). On the use of the epic meter and also on the literary style in the Presocratics in general, see Havelock (1958; 1966); Bernabé (1979); Kahn (2003) and Mackenzie (2021).

[6] About the proem, the studies by Bowra (1937), Burkert (1961) and Mourelatos (1970) continue to be absolutely referential.

expression assumed by a text or a speech – and here I consider and add that the proem is composed with the still alive qualities of the epic poetry of the Aedos, being, therefore, essentially oral. This elocution thus retains the most distinctive and peculiar elements of the mythical narrative: the descriptive character of the narrative itself; the *fantastic ideary*; the presence of the divinities and the extraordinary; the solemn, sacralizing and sublime character, marking, in this case, the literally superhuman exceptionality[7] of the encounter between the traveler and the goddess who, from this encounter (B1, 25) assumes definitively the voice of the poem.

There are also two very relevant components of this mythical elocution: (a) the hieratic announcement of a *revelation* to be made by the goddess, an announcement mythically occasioned by the set of verses that precedes it, which is given, however, only in the final part of the proem (B1, 28-32), closing it; and (b) the time in which the action takes place, that appears, for the section under analysis, to be situated in the past. It is therefore a classic grounding myth or even an *origin myth* (cf. Eliade, 1963, p. 1-20), which, as such, shows and contextualizes the birth or arising of something new that the myth itself announces or reveals. In the case of the Parmenidic text, the revelation will already take place outside this mythical elocution that so strongly characterizes the proem – the announcement of this revelation is mythically given in this *literary unity*, but the revelation only comes to be accomplished by the goddess throughout the other two. An origin myth imposes past verb forms on the narratives, since the reports are from a past event and what *originates* from it. This is precisely the case of the proem: the event is the course itself already lived, the journey in some way preparatory that was made until the future listener of the goddess arrives at her, requiring the use of verbal forms in the past tense, except for the use of presentism (as in B1, 1, for example), which is a narrative device that adopts the present tense despite the fact that the action clearly reports an action in the past. Once the encounter

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[7] ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν (B1, 27).

between the goddess and the traveler has taken place, the time of the action throughout the poem becomes the present.

If the literary unit that extends between verses 1 and 28 of the proem presents a poetic style and a mythical elocution, it would be expected for its *vocabulary* to be eminently concrete, and it is. It is characteristic of the mythical language, which is essentially descriptive, the concreteness of its vocabulary, despite its usual fantastic character and its aspect of wonder. And it is curious to note that elements such as fantasy, imagination, the magnitude of the reported contents and the extraordinary and admirable *feature* that are common to myths, come to be elaborated in general through a sophisticated arrangement of words of concrete tenor, very rarely abstract.; it is the inventive combination between them that produces the effects and the attributes alluded above. Therefore, this first literary unity, which corresponds to the immense majority of the proem, is no exception to the rule: very rich in descriptive details, its vocabulary is not only very concrete, but also specific and minutious. It should also be said, regarding the historicity of its lexicon, that the epic matrix is also evident here.

Together, these three domains – style, elocution and vocabulary – make up what I will call *genre,* the formal and complex reality that basically results from the sum of these three properties. **Of poetic style, mythical elocution and descriptive-concrete vocabulary, the genre of this first literary unity of the poem is the mythopoetic**. As the idea of *unity* proposed by me concerns the interdependence between contents and forms, the identification of the content values that it transmits requires a severe hermeneutic exercise, precisely because of the formal characteristics that I have demonstrated, which in turn make this identification an arduous or even ungrateful task. But perhaps the main *content* imprinted in this mythopoetic *form* is the purpose that this unity fulfills, the *function* it assumes within the dynamics of the poem. It conditions and sets the scene of the entire work, lending it a grandiose air that infuses in its listener and its reader the expectation of a great revelation: it is not just the character that will be led by the mares, the Heliades and,

finally, the goddess, is not only him who is being prepared to receive from the divinity the revelation of unprecedented contents – separated from human paths (cf. B1, 27) – but all those who, like us, come into contact with what the work communicates and that are equally led by it. The proem introduces its reader and listener almost ritualistically to the experience that will be offered to us: simply everything that must be instructed (cf. B1, 28), namely, "both from the well-persuasive truth the unshakable heart, / and from the opinions of the mortals, in which there is no true trust." (B1, 29-30).[8] About these latter, it will still be needed to learn "how the opinions need to opinionatively be, / all through all (per)passing through" (cf. B1, 31, 32) Added with the four verses that end the proem, it is clearly seen that the function that this first literary unity exerts alongside the integrity of the poem is simply that of anticipating its entire architecture, precisely outlining its scheme, which will be dedicated to, from there, reveal and expose the contents promised by the goddess. **The forthcoming literary unities are the fulfillment of this promise, one of them will reveal the heart of the truth; the other will reveal in what consists the opinions of mortals**.

As can be seen, the final sequence of the proem (B1, 28-32) is of paramount importance for the establishment of the Parmenidic text, since it accurately describes the two major tasks that the poem proposes to perform, serving as a summary that explicitly indicates the two "chapters" that the work presents. I left it aside from the first literary unity because it contains both literary elements and a structural function different from those that characterize the previous verses that composes the proem, performing together a singular discourse, unlike the three literary unities that I identify in the poem. For being much less complex in its content-form relationship and for not being extensive, but absolutely punctual, I

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[8] All quotes to the poem will be translated by me. For the famous/renowned and controversial passage of B1, 29, I generally adopt the reading εὐπειθέος ("very persuasive"), bequeathed by Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, Sextus Empiricus and Clement of Alexandria, to the detriment of εὐκυκλέος ("well round"), offered by Simplicius.

do not qualify this mode of discourse as the fourth of these units, although its characteristic feature is very specific: (a) in terms of its literary trait, composes a text of direct speech to the interlocutor, who always remains silent; the tone is of exhortation and imperative, underlining the goddess's ascendancy, leaving to the listener to simply obey her; (b) in relation to the aforementioned structural function, this discourse fulfills the role not only of announcing but also of introducing something of the content that will be developed afterwards; the most important thing, however, is to observe that he defines with clarity the entire architecture of the work and, at the same time, signalizes its moments of passage, highlighting the connections that link one literary unit to another.

This discursive device will be repeated when the goddess, concluding the exposition of being and truth (B8, 50-51), begins to explain the opinions of the mortals. The entire passage that extends between B8, 50-61 is in the same literary category that was described above for the final sequence of the proem, and in B8, 50-52 and B8, 60-61 we clearly see the function of signalizing the passage from a philosophical theme and its specific literature – this is its *literary unity* – to the following theme and literature, while in the passage between them (B8, 53-59) we see the propaedeutic function of initiating the exposition of the new contents, in this case those related to the second revelation promised by the goddess, precisely in B1, 28-32. In these two sequences, when exposing to her listener what she is about to reveal, the goddess simultaneously demarcates with clarity the course of the poem, signaling respectively the passing from the proem to the truth and from this latter to the opinions, perfectly catenating the three literary unities that compose the work and making the poem move fluidly through its "parts".

For making reference to the poem itself when explaining what it must accomplish and because they are placed in the midst of the literary unities that constitute it, connecting them while, at the same time, enhancing their difference, I will classify these two sequences

according to their general functions, naming them *metalinguistic interpositions*.

III

The second literary unit of the poem essentially occupies its middle part, the most renowned and with the greatest historical consideration. This central part, which shows "the way of persuasion" (B2, 4: Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος) – formally the poem never refers to a "way of truth", despite the habit of our commentary tradition, that always refers to a supposed "way of truth" –, in which the thematization of truth and being emerge, extends from B2 to B8, 1-49.[9] From verse 50 onwards, the fragment B8 ends with a second metalinguistic interposition that, once again, highlights the general scheme of the poem and ratifies it by showing itself in conformity with the disclosure of its compositional structure in B1, 28-32.

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[9] That this path is one of persuasion and not of truth, i.e., that it is in the path of persuasion that the truth marks its presence and finds its possibility of happening, is a textual data of considerable interpretive impact – because in the naming and announcement of this ὁδός, there is first the persuasion and *only then* the truth – which commentators have not been observing, configuring a potentially serious negligence regarding the Parmenidic text and its proper comprehension. The use of the **genitive** marks with clarity that the path belongs to persuasion, not to the truth, possibly suggesting that the kind of company indicated by the verb ὀπηδέω in this verse is that the truth walks through the path of persuasion and, in this sense, accompanies it, consequently moving away from the idea that the path of persuasion follows the truth. This observance can also be determinant in the decision between the two existing readings for B2, 4, favoring the form Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ), provided by the codices (libbri), to the detriment of form Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείηι γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ), established by Diels and followed by the vast majority of the editions of the poem, with the exceptions e.g. of Bollack (2006, p. 107) and Santoro (2011, p. 88). Even if there is no easy or unequivocal way out of this textual datum, this negligence makes impossible the philosophical question that this literary fact demands: what does the philosopher want to propose with this, with the indication that the path in which the truth will be presented belongs to persuasion, so that it is in persuasion that it finds its **gene**, its origin? See Costa (2010, p. 49-60).

Adopting the same conceptual values used in the description of the previous literary unity, it is convenient to begin the characterization of the second literary unity of the poem by enhancing its accentuated dissimilarities to the first, that of the proem: it is written in the form of poetry, of course, but its *style* is not poetic, not showing any of its most characteristic aspects, such as those I highlighted before, with the exception of the ones intrinsic to versification, cases of rhythm and meter, which are naturally maintained. Stylistically, however, this literary unity is distinguished by a frankly prosaic expression, denotative semantics and does not reveal an art of greater pretensions with aesthetic refinements, or at least far below than those verifiable in the first unity. Its *elocution* is largely distant from the mythical elocution, although traces of this type of elocution are manifested precisely through the female deities who perform brief but decisive *actions*. Moreover, throughout this sequence, the modulation of the voice of the goddess presents the most *sui generis* aspect of the entire work: it configures a speech that is not even essentially descriptive, but more exactly expository, with a demonstrative and inquiring character and, above all, marked by an argumentative coercion – this is the path of *peithó* – without parallel or historical precedent. The poem itself shows to be aware of the unprecedented character of this occurrence, when it affirms, in a solemn and emphatic mode, that the path on which the traveler will have his steps guided by the goddess is a path ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων (B1, 27).

With a style and elocution so unusual to the literary unity that precedes it, its genre, therefore, will have to be, and is, substantially another, as well as its vocabulary. Based on what I stated above, **the style of this "non-poetic" poetry can be qualified as denotative-demonstrative, while its *elocution* clearly takes the form of an expository-argumentative discourse. As for the *genre*, keeping the idea of synthesis between style and elocution, I define it as deductive-rational, displaying a language that we can already consider properly logical-argumentative**, marked by an indelible exercise of argumentative resources such as logical deduction and *reductio ad absurdum*. In the midst of this formal reality, or

precisely because of it, the vocabulary used in this unity is of an unusual magnitude of abstraction, parallelizable only to that which already is recognizable in some fragments of Xenophanes and which, even in a much smaller textual set, is analogous to it.[10]

As is well known, the *reductio ad absurdum* is a type of logical argument that necessarily includes the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of the excluded middle (aka excluded third), being that the latter is the *complement* of that first principle and that both in turn are principles *correlated* to the principle of identity. That the Parmenides' poem makes use of demonstrative argumentation by means of the reduction to absurdity is something already consolidated in the critical fortune of his work,[11] so that the presence of this resource requires *per se* that those three other principles are equally present, as in fact they are. Reductions to absurdity strongly hue the argumentation chained by the goddess in B8, starting with its impressive opening sequence (3-10), and contain in their development, therefore, explicitly or implicitly, the three fundamental principles of logic. Even so, it is worth mapping other passages in the poem in which these principles are used: (a) as an example of the principle of the excluded middle, mention B2 as a whole, with the conclusive and consecutive exclusion of the non-being path; (b) uses of the principle of identity occur in greater numbers, clearly perceptible in B2, 3-5; B3; B4, 2; B6, 1-2; and B6, 8-9; and (c) occurrences of the principle of non-contradiction are also noted in B2, 3-5; B6, 8-9; and B7, 1.[12]

All these logical-argumentative elements are, therefore, present in Parmenides' poem and, in it, they have their first historical appearance in a sufficiently explicit and mature way. Once again aware of her achievement, the goddess operates **in this literary**

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[10] Cf. Xenophanes B23, B24, B25 e B26. On this subject and the absolute influence of the Xenophanic thinking over the Parmenidic, see Costa (2005).

[11] Cf. Cordero (2005, p. 29-30). According to Grimberg (2007, p. 59), the use of the *reductio ad absurdum* in B8 contains the first historical records of reasoning through absurdity that have come down to us.

[12] I consider that the principles of identity and non-contradiction act inextricably in B2, 3-5 and B6, 8-9.

unity – but not in the proem, nor in the fragments about the opinions and the cosmos – a *critical* and *logical* discourse (B7, 5-6) that makes use of all these elements, teaching it didactically to her listener and fulfilling step by step the first part of her teaching promise. Surprisingly, **the first grand revelation made by the goddess is, simply, the advent of logic, i.e., the sprouting of that** *way* **of proceeding with the saying and the thinking that was later designated formal logic, just as the first grand learning of her listener is that of discerning in a logical and critical** *way* **(B7, 5-6), thinking and saying in accordance with these principles (B6, 1-2)**. With this advent, come into play the deduction, the argument, the demonstration and a type of inquiry that always elaborates formally *negative* questions, in a clear *praxis* of mutual exclusion between contradictory terms, this mode of questioning being a specific rhetoric of its own, which aim is to challenge the *denying* of the previous statements that, once *logically undeniable*, makes it evident that these questions invariably remain unanswered, so that the aforementioned statements are automatically confirmed as valid. **These four elements together form the irresistible power of persuasion (*peitho*) and the consequent *pistis alethes* that crucially characterize the goddess' discourse in this (and only in this) literary unity**. They even lend to this discourse all the poetry that logic can be, being sonically sensitive the *way* that the logical chaining proper to the argumentative discourse has a characteristic rhythm and tempo and even a certain melody or peculiar musicality, which are particularly notable aspects when the goddess unravels, in B8, by a pure exercise of logical-deductive derivation, one predicate of the other among those that compose the *semata polla* of "that (it) is" (Cf. B8, 2-3).

If the elements and aspects alluded above, which are as unprecedented and unheard of as they are valuable, enter the scene in this persuasive *hodos* of the logical-argumentative *mode* of

language,[13] on the other hand, all the semantic multicolored of the proem – also present in the opinions, albeit in a less intense hue – disappears from it. This means that connotation, figurative discourse, polysemy and ambiguity leave the scene, and these are essential "enemies" of logical language, which always seek and disciplinedly maintain, at least in its classical and formal reality, the denotation, the non-ambiguity and even monosemy among its criteria and guidelines. The formal qualities that enter and the ones that leave the scene throughout this literary unity have their presence or absence determined by the exercise of an extraordinary logical purity, which results from the criterious and coherent depuration operated by the *peitho* that Parmenides presents to us, as I said, in a unprecedented and unparalleled form, composing here a piece as cohesive (B8, 25) and without alterity (B8, 37) as the very being that it presents.[14]

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[13] The Greek term ὁδός means both "way", "path", "road", "route"; and "manner", "mode", and "way" again, so "way", in English, is a case of a peculiar word that shares these two meanings with ὁδός.

[14] I have always defended that the whole of Parmenides' poem finds its starting point in Xenophanes, just as the entire structure of his thought is organized in an intimate dialogue with the work of his predecessor (Costa, 2005; 2010, p. 11-24). This means, among many other things, recognizing that the argumentation elaborated by Parmenides finds its formal antecedents in the verses of Xenophanes. In this volume, an article by Lesher ("Assertion and Argument in Xenophanes") defends this same position in a very rich and precise way, accusing, with a good amount of reason, that there is a certain "commonplace" in Presocratic studies which claims that Parmenides was the first to use deductive arguments, ignoring, therefore, that these had already appeared in the work of Xenophanes. Lesher goes further, also recognizing the presence of inductive and abductive argumentation in the philosopher's verses, with which I am in full agreement. However, even this does not invalidate the historical originality and the unique character of the argumentative resources used in Parmenides' poem: in the face of the formulation of tautologies and the consequent use of the principle of identity; the complementary use of the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle; and, still, the exercise of *ad absurdum* reductions, which drag to (a) logical self-contradiction this or that sentence to be rejected. Compared to all this, nothing withdraws from the logical-argumentative operation of the goddess its astonishing originality, something of which, as I have already mentioned, the Parmenidic poem itself shows to be metalinguistically conscious (cf. B1, 27). For more on this topic, see Costa (2010, p. 45-49; 80-84; 103-105; 116-121; 163-166) and White (2021).

This is more than enough to demarcate how much they enter a territory completely foreign to the previous when the goddess and the traveler, leaving the proem behind, start to tread the path of persuasion, taking their steps in the domain in which the goddess will thematize the being and the truth. It is an environment so well defined and so immediately recognizable in its distinction that walking through it is as unmistakable and singular as the difference between bass and treble is, for the ear, or, for the tongue, the difference between the bitter and the sweet. But if this so unique atmosphere and form are so fully perceptible, perhaps the same cannot be said of the contents that, in this unity, are inseparable from them. What would these contents be that require the form that they require in order to be enunciated? If it is patent that this domain is related to truth and being, wouldn't it be opportune here to ask what is, or are, each of them? Or do we consider it a simple task to define being and truth according to the Parmenidic conceptualization? It may seem strange, but I have been arguing that the frank and direct question about what truth and being actually are as Parmenides conceptualized them has been a subject of great oblivion by most interpreters of his work (cf. Costa, 2007, p. 116ss; 2010, p. 6; 87-114). The question is rarely posed with effective philosophical radicalism, which accuses us of starting, in general, with a pre-comprehension of what truth and being are or, worse, that both are concepts that are already sufficiently obvious or previously given. This supposed "obviousness", as well as that pre-comprehension, most often results from a great and customary anachronism, which projects backwards concepts of truth and being that were consolidated later in relation to the time in which Parmenides lived; these concepts of being and truth applied retroactively to the Eleatic are invariably taken from a metaphysical tradition, especially the classical one, of a Platonic-Aristotelian trait, but sometimes also from the modern one. If the grand unprecedented deed so distinctive of this section of fragments is the exposition of a rigorous logical argumentation and which is exerted with enormous methodological precision, it is quite possible that we are facing a knowledge – the truth – which nature is logical and

epistemological, but not necessarily metaphysical or, if someway metaphysical, a metaphysics not coincident with the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle.

From what I have explained so far and remembering that part of this exposition is the philosophical conviction that content and form are mutually dependent and so radically coextensive that they do not configure associations in which any kind of primacy of one over the other is perceived, and still keeping open the possible definitions of truth and being according to what the goddess tells us about them, it is safe to say, however, that everything that is implicated in terms of knowledge to happen the practice and realization of the three fundamental principles of logic – that of identity, of non-contradiction and of the excluded middle and, in addition to them, the exercise of the *reductio ad absurdum* – are primordial contents of the Parmenidic thought, which would thus provide one of the most radical examples of total fusion between contents and forms, since **these logical principles and argumentative practices are formal contents of method and procedure, a discipline of the thinking and of the language, in a *way* that in this literary unity, which deals with being and truth, contents and forms fully coincide**. If a metaphysical reality underlies them is a very welcome question, which animates a great debate and generates much dissension regarding such a "multi-controversial proof" (B7, 5: πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον) affirmed by the goddess, namely, that *that (it) is, is*, and, therefore, by extension, *that (it) is not, is not*. This proof, as I formulate and present it here, results from the contraction or arrangement between what is stated in B2, 3-6; B 6, 1-2; B7, 1; B8, 2; B8, 7-9; B8, 11-12; and B8, 46-49. It should be noted: the controversial dispute encompasses exactly two statements by the principle of identity, that a=a and that b=b, deriving from them, by the principle of non-contradiction, (1) that neither the being is not, since, if it is, it is necessary to be; and (2) that neither the non-being can be, for if it is not, it cannot be; from which follows (3) the declaration that the *route* of non-being is an *unroutable route* because it is self-contradictory (B2, 5-8 and B8, 7-9), a possible conclusion by the exercise of the principle of the

excluded middle. **They are eloquent contents for simply being logical-formal procedures. That this is the truth, to which the *path*, the *way* of persuasion leads, seems indubitable to me. The question is whether it is "only" that or more, i. e., if it is, in addition to the logical-formal procedure of thought and language and all that this procedure can produce, something else or even a content referred to a reality apart from the method itself**. In Aristotelian terms, this question means deciding whether this advent, in Parmenides, is restricted to formal logic or also includes a material logic. In the first case, the Parmenidic philosophy would be free of pretensions that we could call metaphysics; in the second, these pretensions would be possible.

In any case, exclusively regarding the argumentative procedure, that what the method produces is equally true, is also a *logical necessity*, since the method that is *truth* derives from true propositions, such as the *semata polla*, for example, which predicate the being or "that is" affirming it ungenerated, immovable, imperishable, inviolable and so on and so on and so on, because in this way the logic of truth or the truth of logic *machinates* in contrast with the *amechania* (B6, 5) proper to the "wandering intellect" (cf. B6, 6: πλακτὸν νόον), deriving one attribute from the other by the exercise of pure coherence and chaining: because if the affirmation that it is ungenerated is accepted, therefore it will also be immortal; if it is immortal, it is equally imperishable; and if it is imperishable, it is also immovable and does not *undergo* any kind of change or alterity; if it is without change, it is always identical to itself and so on, *ad infinitum*, through the autonomy of the procedure and language itself. In fact, "being identical to oneself" is the fundamental premise of the principle of identity, which advocates that every statement formulated as "A is A" or "B is B" will always and undeniably be true for being purely tautological. Because the statements of the goddess, her controversial thesis, both historically ground the tautology and are grounded by tautologies, in a *way* that tautology is a type of proposition whose price to be paid for this irrefutable guarantee of logical veracity is that of not needing to correspond to empirical realities, having autonomy in its

formal validity, not needing to be, therefore, neither ontological nor metaphysical. Or, as is said contemporaneously, more in a more acute manner, or perhaps only more radically, tautologies are complex propositions, necessarily true, but devoid of descriptive content; the same happens with logical contradictions, equally non-descriptive, but false. The tautologies, identities and contradictions exercised by the goddess initially possess exactly this nature and characteristics.[15] Is the goddess describing something – keeping in mind that, literarily, the form of this unit is basically non-descriptive, but expository-demonstrative – or is she simply performing that in which means and ends are the same, that is, a procedure in which the procedure itself is potentially all the content and all the form?

Lastly, as for an alleged boldness in claiming that we already have in Parmenides the grounding of formal logic, since it is not yet qualified with that name, I consider irrelevant to cling, here, to the use of terms, when the really decisive fact is that the presuppositions and essential foundations of formal logic are already built in the Parmenidic text. On the other hand, it is not at all irrelevant to ask by what term would Parmenides have designated the very thing that his poem unprecedentedly constructs. What other term than *truth* or *being*, or even both, while being valid as mutual variants of themselves? **If so, the being presented in this literary unity is none other than the truth itself, just as the attributes of the being would characterize the being that the truth is**.

IV

Again I start with the dissimilarity of the shapes. The fragments that go from B9 to B19, regardless of where they are or will be allocated in the textual *corpus* of the poem, form its third specific literary unity, in no way similar to that of the proem and to that of

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[15] Occurrences of *to auto* in the poem: B3; B5, 2; B6, 8-9; B8, 13; B8, 29 (three occurrences in one verse); B8, 34; B8, 57-58; B16, 2.

the truth. We have here a third literature, whose way of presenting and exposing its contents finds, like the others, a style, an elocution and a vocabulary that is characteristically its own, in order to constitute its own genre, once again very well defined. I immediately state then, because it is absolutely decisive, that none of these fragments bear any trace of the logical-argumentative operation exposed in the previous section. None of them neither moves along the *way* (*hodos*) of persuasion nor is in accord to the *modus* (*hodos*) of truth: neither the principle of identity, nor of excluded middle, nor of non-contradiction, nor any use of refutative reasoning by absurdity makes an appearance here. Without any of them, these fragments are neither deductive nor properly argumentative. There are no arguments in them, but affirmations, theoretical statements analogous to those of the first cosmologies or physics that philosophy has given us. Not that it is a cosmology like any other, and this will concern a certain innovation that it entails: it will soon be seen that here, too, the goddess seems to have conducted her listener to paths never trodden by human feet. But its *form* does not elaborates novelty, while the elocution that the goddess assumes when she presents the truth and the way of persuasion that contains it is absolutely new and even revolutionary. The affirmations contained in these fragments are not conquered in the same way as the determination of the being and its attributes was conquered; they do not derive from the logical speech of truth through its persuasive and moving force, its *peitho* and its *pistis*. In Parmenidic semantics, and only in this semantics, these cosmological statements are not *true*, since they are not elaborated by the *modus of truth*, not belonging to this nature of saying and thinking. And here it is crucial to face with courage the following: no matter what is traditionally the more or less common concept of truth that has historically been consolidated by decantation and custom in our specifically philosophical or even generically cultural ideary; for Parmenides' poem, the idioms and semantics that the goddess practices, the very distinct and specific forms of saying, which she dominates, are valid and must be valid. **Whatever the fragments from B9 to B19 may be, in any place or order they**

are placed, it is certain that they are said neither in accordance with the mythopoetic genre of the first literary unity, nor with the deductive-rational one of the second, proper to the truth, so, therefore, they are neither mythopoetic, nor anachronistically "true".

In exactly formal terms, the poem's *third literary unity* begins at B10 and extends at least to B18. This is because B9 and B19 constitute a form of expression that does not coincide with the cosmological speech, because they are not speeches about cosmic phenomena, but speeches that critically and philosophically theorize the conditions of knowledge implied in a cosmology. Thus, the passage between B9 and B19 has an internal modulation, differing (a) the properly cosmological speech of the goddess, declaring, among others, contents about the stars, the planets and the birth of human beings (B10-B18); and (b) a speech about cosmology as a mode and possibility of knowledge (B9 and B19). B9 and B19 provide the limits of the entire sequence, serving, respectively, as an introduction and conclusion to Parmenides' cosmology, while the entire extension between B10 and B18 is strictly cosmological, cosmogonic and anthropogonic: it is cosmological in the broad sense of the term, as it presents what Parmenides' philosophy has to offer regarding cosmic phenomena in general, approaching themes such as lunar phases and the effects of the Sun (B10, 3-4); it is cosmogonic for being especially concerned with the origin of celestial bodies, from the arising of the sky (B10, 5-6) to the becoming of the stars, considering the birth of the Sun, the Earth and the Milky Way (B11); and it is anthropogonic because human beings are not forgotten as part of the cosmos and, again, his cosmology pays special attention to genetics, exposing how the sexual union between women and men and their birth take place (B12, B17 and B18).

The sequence between B10 and B18 contains all Parmenidic physics *stricto sensu*. It doesn't keep to itself a word about opinions. The opinions are theorized in the midst of the two metalinguistic interpositions that I have already exposed – more

precisely in B1 30-32 and B8 53-59 – and in B19, the poem's epilogue.[16] These three passages, in which is said what opinions are and what they ground, will be crucial to situate them in the entirety of Parmenides' poem and thought, as well as to unravel their relationship with cosmology. About this, two types of fragments must be recognized again: (a) those that simply promise to reveal a cosmological knowledge and (b) those that declare the contents of this knowledge. B10 and B11 are promises, announcements of what is yet to be taught to the learner – in the former, the strong tone of promise is marked by the use of verb forms in the future; in the second, by the phrase that gives it the context, preserved by Simplicius.[17] The other fragments, indeed, from B12 to B18, expressly contain knowledge about the cosmos, so Diels' edition is accurate in postponing them to B10 and B11.

Although divisible between those who announce the contents and those who express them, this set of cosmological fragments reveals a very precise and characteristic literary unity in its constitutive elements: **(a) it has denotative semantics, but with some space for connotations and poetic images, especially when it deals with the moon (B14 and B15); (b) it is free from deductions, demonstrations and arguments, without the use of any resource of formal logic; exhibits an explicative reasoning – especially in B16 and B18 – and an expository, affirmative and descriptive discourse, of a theoretical character, understanding "theoretical" as that which refers to its philological and philosophically Greek origin, tenor contents of knowledge apprehended through disciplined empirical observation and contemplation of phenomena**. The phenomena theorized here, objects of (the) sight, of the senses and of the intellection of the observer, are exclusively cosmic, and the expression of a knowledge about them is, therefore, cosmological; but, (c) despite

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[16] According to the testimony of Simplicius, commonly accepted and fully verisimilar (Simplicius. *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Heavens*, p. 558. 7-11).

[17] Cf. Simplicius. *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Heavens*, p. 559.22: Παρμενίδης δὲ περὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἄρξασθαί φησι λέγειν.

these characteristics, it presents an eminently mythical aspect, the extraordinariness of the divine, narrating the action of a goddess who, if not causal, has a driving and regulating force over (the) cosmic reality, since "steers all things" (B12, 3), just as it governs the parturition and the mixtures that sexually reproduce the living beings. **Therefore, the Parmenidic physics affirms a divine potency of a traditionally mythopoetic trait at the center of cosmic dynamics, responsible even for the origin of other gods** (B13) and is more strictly cosmogonic. In view of all this, **I define the style of this literary unity as denotative-explanatory, with mythical and poetic traces; the elocution is theoretical-descriptive, exposing a cosmogony; its genre, mytho-cosmogonic; its vocabulary, whether for being poetic and mythical or theoretical and descriptive, is essentially concrete**.

In general, this third literary unity exhibits a theoretical-scientific, epistemic language, which, if seen retroactively, presents itself as not depurated of mythical and poetic elements that, in the end, become strange to the scientific literature; but, if considered in its historical property, it shows itself to be seminal for the future of what will one day be named natural science. The theoretical-scientific voice adopted by the goddess in the cosmological sequence of the poem seems to result from eyes that theorize from a specific gaze and perspective, that are interested, more particularly, not in the verb "to be", the verb of truth, but in the *becoming* (γίγνεσθαι, B11, 4), in the *arising* (ἔφυ, B10, 6) and in the *nature of the sprouting* (φύσιν, B10, 1), in the *birth* (*nascentem*, B8, 6) and in the *devenir*, whether of the stars (B10, B11), whether of human beings (B12, B17 and B18), or of gods (B13). It is these verbs highlighted above that translate the cosmos in motion and those who are born and live in it – *gignomai*, *gignesthai*, *phuo*, *phuesthai*, but not *einai*. For the same reason, they are the ones who emerge and command his physics; occurrences of the verb "to be" occur only in prosaic use, without conceptual weight and absolutely free from the syntactic novelty with which it is used when the goddess speaks about the truth and the being, and that so animates our bibliographic production. No one studies, and rightly so, the only

two occurrences of the verb "to be" from what we have left of Parmenides' physics, both in B16.[18] His cosmology is eminently genetic because it is *peri phuseos*, and not *amphis aletheies* (B8, 51). This discourse *about the truth* is very well delimited by the goddess, who punctuates her listener when it begins (at B2, 4) and when it ends (at B8, 50-51). Beyond these edges, everything will be untrue, external and foreign to the limits of truth and being.[19] Throughout this discourse, none of the aforementioned verbs, *the cosmological ones*, nor any of their cognates are used, unless to be explicitly rejected by *pistis alethes* (B8, 28), that is, either they are absent, or they are formally and namely excluded from the truth.[20] Particularly significant is the exclusion of the ideas of becoming and (of) birth that underlie, in greek, the reality of the arising and appearing of each *phainomenon*, since the verb *phuo/phuesthai* is equally banished by the persuasion of (the) true speech in B8, 10, which thus shows that also *phusis* is incompatible with the being and with the truth. Repelled from the way of *peitho*, neither physics is part of the order of truth, nor is truth part of physics.

In the domain of truth, the vocabulary is abstract and the highlighted verb, with the right to new uses and syntax, perhaps even a new signification, is *einai*. In the cosmogonic section of the

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[18] There are occurrences of the verb "to be", again prosaic and colloquial, in B9 and B19, however, as I have already stated, these fragments do not have the cosmos as an object of consideration, but opinions and names, which, in turn, say the cosmos.

[19] Bound at their own limits by the firm bonds of *necessity* (B8, 29-32), being and truth are also necessarily finite, *perfectly* circumscribed to their own domain (cf. B8, 32: οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον; and B8, τετελεσμένον). Outside this domain the truth is not.

[20] The goddess excludes from the ambit of beings and truth the "cosmological verbs" and terms derived from them. In the following list I include the verb *ollumi/ollysthai*, because it is practically indissociable from *gignesthai*, accompanying it in almost all occurrences. The exclusion of all forms of becoming, being born and *devenir* is accomplished by the negations of *gignesthai, genesthai, genesis* and *gignomai* in the following verses of B8: 3, 6, 13, 19, 20, 21, 27 and 40. The correlated exclusion of death and perishing, through the negation of *ollusthai* and its derivatives, occurs in verses 3, 14, 21, 27 and 40 of B8.

poem the vocabulary is concrete, sensible, and the verbs are of movement, because *phusis* is "principle of motion",[21] while the being is *akuneton*[22] and it is literally logical to be this *way*. The main forms of movement are, in turn, the birth, the arising, the becoming and the *devenir* intrinsic to all living beings and all phenomena; All of them are, as I have shown, diligently excluded from the being and the truth, so that in his cosmology we see the positive use of these terms and verbs, while in the section devoted to the truth we have their negative use, resulting in *perfect oppositions* for being in accordance to the law of mutual exclusion between logically contradictory terms. When the goddess says that "if was born, is not" (or "if came to be, is not"), she remains obedient to what was previously determined, namely, (a) *that (it) is, is,* and (b) *that (it) is not, is not.* Her argument is essentially logical and preserves the principles of logic grounded here, starting with that of identity, from which it necessarily follows that what is born and becomes, *is not,* as it is explicitly affirmed in the text: εἰ γὰρ ἔγεντʼ, οὐκ ἔστ(ι) (B8, 20). The *route* of "that (it) is not", in turn, was declared *unroutable* (cf. B2, 5-8; B8, 7-9), but unroutable and formally absurd *for a noetic thinking* (B2, 2), but not for *phronein* (B16) and for that *modus* (*hodos*) of thinking. – the opinions – according to how the mortal human being *names*, being persuaded that these nominations are true (B8,38-39).[23] I have already exposed

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[21] Cf. 28 DK A26 (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.,* X, 46).

[22] Cf. B8, 26 e B8, 38.

[23] With this I make clear my position about the dominant sense of *einai* in the poem not being the existential, much less the pure existential. In this regard, I express my agreement with the position defended by Kahn, that pure existentials are late in relation to the period we are dealing with here, and that the archaic existential uses refer to predicative contexts where the existence of something is complemented by the affirmation of a predication about that something. See Kahn (2003b, p. 411ff). This agreement is due to what the poem itself offers: in saying that the becoming *is not*, the goddess is not stating that the becoming does not exist – it indeed is and exists as a cosmic and phenomenal reality, as she herself affirms in the cosmological section of the poem – but that it is not up to it "to be", i.e., the "becoming comes to be", just as "the being is". In this way, by practicing the principle of identity, the semantics of each verb becomes exact, not being confused at all with that of the other, remaining mutually excluded their respective meanings. That the becoming *is not* means only that the "becoming"

in what terms the cosmological claims are not true within Parmenides' philosophical semantics.[24] And here it is necessary to emphasize another firm distinction that the poem establishes and that concerns the differentiation between the *modi* and the ways of thinking, a theme generally neglected in our tradition of commentaries, resulting in a surprising gap: all mentions of the "thinking" and of the "thought" in the poem are related to the being and the truth and use the verb *noein*, the nouns *noos* and *noema* and the adjectives *noeton* and *anoeton*.[25] The only times in which *noein* is related to non-being, in B2, 2 and B8, 8, it is to sentence that they cannot be correlated, as well as the only time a thought concerning sensible reality is evoked, a thought conditioned by the members of the body, the verb used is *phronein* (B16, 3), not *noein*. Likewise, when *noos* is referred to being of "mortals who know nothing" (B6, 4), it is qualified as a "wanderer" (πλακτὸν), just as it mobilizes, *phrenitzing* itself (B16, 3), when is considered its relation to the "very mobile" or "multi-wandering" (πολυπλάγκτων) members of

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does not dispose of the *pollà semata* of "that is", not being ungenerated, stable, purely identical to itself, free from all movement and, therefore, from every perishing or action of time as the being is. The semantics of being, in Parmenides, is given predicate by predicate by the goddess as she binds them to the being. Furthermore, the meaning of "to exist" is subsumed and guaranteed both to the *being* and to the *devenir*.

[24] As for some recent attempts that intend to bring the cosmological fragments to the truth (Conte 2016; Cordero, 2021; Santoro, 2020), even though well elaborated, they end up, in my view, in front of an insurmountable obstacle: the text is categorical regarding the absolute exclusion of the *gignesthai* from the ambit of truth – how, then, to bring there the discourse on the becoming of all things, uniting what the goddess separated? The alternative, on the other hand, of dismembering the cosmology of opinions, but keeping them far from the truth, suffers from the problem of entering in conflict with the description of everything there is to learn, truth and opinions (B1, 28-32), that, as we have seen, make up the integrity of what will be exposed by the work; a third domain to be developed would conflict with the structure that the poem itself points out as its own: either cosmology is part of the truth – but this possibility proves to be unfeasible – or of the opinions. Let us obey the goddess and ascertain, therefore, how the contraction between opinions and cosmology takes place.

[25] The occurrences of this verb and of its cognate forms takes place in B2,2; B3; B4, 1; B6, 1; B6, 6; B7, 2; B8, 8; B8, 8'; B8, 17; B8, 34; B8, 34'; B8, 36; B8, 50; B16, 2; and B16, 4.

the human body. Abstracted from the multiple mobility of the body (B16) and far from a wandering non-knowledge (B6, 6), *noos* also appears in B4, in use *in abstracto*, because it is simply affirmed, free from these contexts and free from any qualification, mainly from a negative or derogatory qualification. Not coincidentally, the occurrence in B4 takes place within the ambit of being and truth. In B16, 4 the goddess states that *noema*, in contrast to *phronein*, is "full" (πλέον), just as equally "full" is the being (B8, 24: ἔμπλεόν). The second and third occurrences of this term always show it in accordance with the *modus* of truth (B7, 2) and with the statement of "that (it) is" (B8, 34).

The positive uses of *noein* and its cognates, once applied exclusively to the being and the truth, prove that the *way* of *truly thinking* is purely noetic and that the being formulated in the way of persuasion is noetically thought: in fact, returning to B8, 34, it is formally said "that is" is a *nóema*, just as the whole discourse of the goddess in this literary unity is qualified by herself as a νόημα ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης, a "noetic thought about truth" (B8, 50-51), in the fourth and last occurrence of this vocable. Analogously, the path of "is not" (B8, 16-17) is declared an "untrue way" (B8, 18), as well as expressly determined as "anoetic" (B8, 17). This set of observations and considerations shows with distinctness that everything that is noetic is true, just as everything that is true is noetic – we are in front of a total co-pertinence. The main corollary of this absolute co-pertinence is that to the other verb "to think" used in the poem, *phronein* (B16, 3), the truth is automatically interdicted. As already seen, the domain in which this *modus* of thinking moves is the physics, a form of knowledge in which the thinking "phrenetizes" itself according to the own mobility and wandering of the bodies and the nature (*phýsis*) of their members (B16.1-3) and of the cosmic phenomena. Another crucial data consists in observing that in this alluded co-pertinence there is inscribed a third integrant, the being itself, because it should not be forgotten either that these two verbs, *einai* and *noein*, are found twice colligated by a *to auto*, in the aforementioned B8, 34, in which it is stated that "the same is to think and that by which the thought is", and in the controversial B3,

with the famous sentence "for the same is to think and to be". In these two verses, "to be" and "to think" are situated in a *sameness*. However, here it is not vaguely a question of any thinking or any thought, but only and nothing but of noetic thinking. This colligation through a *to auto* proves to be even more decisive and relevant because it takes place within a language that operates the principle of identity, that is, it makes use of "to-auto-logies". The noetic thinking is the *modus* of thinking that presides over the handling of those four logical-argumentative resources responsible for the own persuasive power of the true discourse. This way of thinking, however, is not related, like the being and the truth, to the verbs of motion and the realities that they translate, all of which, as already exposed, are methodically expelled from the ambit of what is true. Results from it that it is a thinking depurated from experience, formally and logically non-descriptive or, at best, only self-descriptive, circumscribed to an autonomous and closed circuit (cf. B5). It is here that sets in the serious gap to which I referred when emphasizing that the differentiation between the ways of thinking that the poem presents us has been neglected: the recognition of this difference in the terms exposed here greatly favors the idea that the contents of truth in Parmenides are not related to the experience and the natural cosmos, configuring contents that are essentially formal, which reinforces my thesis that the reality of being and truth is limited to what was later called formal logic.

V

In conclusive terms, I emphasize that the delimitation of the three literary unities that compose the poem, as well as the accurate description of their characteristics, and also allied to the valuable function performed by the passages that I denominated "metalinguistic interpositions", show that the work of Parmenides *scissions* truth and opinions to the extent that it exposes and recognizes two fields of knowledge with completely different natures: the *pure knowledge*, of a logical-argumentative trait to the

point of establishing its own and frankly autonomous language; and the *theoretical knowledge*, which is the result of the cooperation between empirical observation and the use of the intellect, the only possible way to develop knowledge about natural phenomena. In current nomenclature, we can say that the first nature of knowledge entails formal and self-referential languages, while the second encompasses forms of knowing that are open to the knowledge of the world and its countless events, as is the exemplary case of the most diverse sciences of the nature and of the humanities. In Parmenidic nomenclature, simply "truth" and "opinions".

This *scission* establishes the verb "to be" as the verb of truth and perfect knowledge (*tetelesménon*, B8, 42) and the "becoming" as the verb of opinions and the cosmos, since it is a verb that translates both the mobility of the world and of the cosmos the mobility of what we have to say about it: is this the reason why the knowledge about natural reality is varied, multiple and imperfect, whether it is the result of the distraction of the mortals, who opinate uncritically (B6), or the result of the sciences, or do we know any among them that is free from its own history, free from the diligent movement and *devenir* that it makes for the sake of knowledge without ever achieving, not to an absolute degree, its own finality? This does not deny to science the possibility of knowledge, but just indicates its limit; this *way* of knowing can indeed advance, but it advances infinitely, so that there is progress in its endeavor, but never a *final term*, remaining, therefore, as much imperfect as it is progressively perfectible. Our knowledge of everything that becomes is absorbed by the very instability of the *devenir* of what we intend to know, which thus reflects its indomitable multiplicity and inconstancy in the own form of knowledge: it is the real reflection that the nature of what moves and changes continuously imprints on what Parmenides conceptualized as "opinions". At least for us, mortals, the cosmos and the opinions merge, mirroring each other mutually. That is why they are names that express the world and the life, crossing everything (*ta panta*, B1, 31-32): they cross the cosmos in the form of the name and in a manner so radically necessary and inevitable that the cosmos is not, nor will it ever be,

at least for us, the cosmos itself, but a *diakosmos* (B8, 60), the amalgamation between human language and the very things it names, an unbreakable fusion that is impossible to decompose. Therefore, also concerning his physics and cosmology, the Parmenidic philosophy stepped on a path unheard of for mortals (B1, 27): for the first time, a sufficiently clear perception of the natural cosmos is at once a theory of language, since both are indissociable from one another; it is also patent the perception that the reality of the concept, or of the name, if taken in relation to itself, is always other than the reality that the concept *names*. Hence that this knowledge can never be perfect, complete, because always subsists a difference between the reality of the knowledge and the reality of the known.

Never free from this hiatus, the opinions express their impressions about everything in a more or less (im)precise way, but never according to the *modus* of truth: "these things were born and now [they] are / and, from there, [they] will come to an end, once grown" (cf. B19, 1-2). It is only *kata doxan* (B19, 1), i.e., in common language, that it is said that "the things are", because both phenomena in their *devenir* and opinions in theirs cannot – behold the Parmenidic precision – postulate (the) verb "to be" (*einai*), that is, the immobility of this "true being" that the goddess presents to us, since the cosmic reality is that of the arising, of the becoming and of the coming to be continuously, in which the reality of the opinions accompanies it by reflecting it. The mortals give names to things, imposing on them their signs, *episemanticizing* them,[26] *sursignificating* what they are facing and their surrounding, putting significations over the things. These names cover the world with their meanings and are articulated, in turn, exactly as described in B9 and B8 53-59, that is, according to a logic of extremes or opposites: symbolically naming them light and night (B9, 1), straight and curved, cold and hot, is indifferent: all known idioms reveal that the movement of a language, its vocabulary expression, fixes opposite extremes to move freely and fluidly between them, in

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[26] B19, 3: τοῖς δ' ὄνομ' ἄνθρωποι κατέθεντ' ἐπίσημον ἑκάστωι.

order to be able to explore the innumerable gradations of this interval, a resource without which speech itself would be impossible. That is why the opinions, in Parmenidic conceptualization, are not only a supposed stupidity of a lazy and undisciplined intellect, this is just one of its possibilities; the manner how names are articulated is also the same in the expression of any science and all human language, with the exception of that which, between the extremes, does not know any gradation, but its conceptually self-absorbed realities, fully identical to themselves; the one that "either is entirely or is entirely not" (cf. B8, 11), this code intransigently binary, distant and foreign to human speech, which achieves, through a divine voice, the perfect knowledge that Parmenides, himself a mortal, *named aletheia*.

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