

PARMENIDES' CRITIQUE OF THINKING

The *poludēris elenchos* of Fragment 7*

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It is reasonable to suppose that Parmenides' primary objective in writing his famous poem was to provide a correct account of what exists. Much of the long argument of Fragment 8 is aimed at establishing the attributes of 'the real' (*to eon*), and it is the teaching of Fragment 6 that all thinking and speaking must be about the real. Yet we should remember that the goddess who delivers Parmenides' message announces in Fragment 1 that we will learn also about 'mortal beliefs' (*brotōn doxas*) and 'the things believed' (*ta dokounta*). The argument of Fragment 2 begins by listing the ways of enquiry that are 'available for thinking' (*noēsai*). Parmenides' poem is therefore both an enquiry into being and an enquiry into thinking, and his positive theory is both about being and about thinking. In what follows, I offer an account of Parmenides' critique of human thinking, focusing on the crucial, but largely misunderstood, idea of the *poludēris elenchos* mentioned briefly at the end of Fragment 7. I shall argue that in the motif of the *dēris* Parmenides expressed a view of the human capacities for independent thinking that departed from an older and derogatory view, and that by adapting the older idea of the *elenchos* to a new, philosophical, use, he introduced an influential decision procedure into philosophical enquiry.

I The meaning of *elenchos*

In Fragment 7. 3-6, Parmenides' goddess urges her audience not to let custom or habit (*ethos*) force their aimless eye and resounding ear and tongue along the path of what is not. They should not, in other words, make the mistake of trying

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to look at, listen to, or speak about a world in which what is not is implicitly allowed to exist. Instead, they should judge by *logos* (reason or account) the *poludērin elenchos* spoken by her:

κρίναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηρι ἔλεγχον
ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.¹

The renderings of the meaning of *poludērin elenchos* are many and various: 'strife-encompassed proof' (Kirk and Raven), 'very contentious challenge' (Mourelatos), 'hard hitting refutation' (Furley), 'much contending refutation' (Barnes), 'much contested argument' (Robinson), 'much disputed question' (Wheelwright), 'much debated proof' (Vlastos, Cornford). So far we can safely infer only a 'much somethinged something'. The choice of 'refutation' was favoured by Liddell and Scott, and justified to some degree by the character of the fifth-century Socratic *elenchos*. As David Furley explained,² the original meaning of *elenchos*,

¹ Following the text given by Diels-Kranz. I assume without argument that *polupeiron* modifies *ethos* and means 'much-tried'; i.e. 'habitual practice', that *echēssan* modifies both ear and tongue, and that the relevant function of the tongue is not taste but forming words into speech (cf. *Iliad* (Il.), XX. 248: *glossa . . . polees muthoi*). The dominant image in this passage is that of the indeterminacy, the 'unfocusedness' of perceptual experience: the 'untargeted eye' and the 'roaring of the ear and tongue'; for a defence of this view, see A. P. D. Mourelatos's 'Determinacy and Indeterminacy as the Key Contrast in Parmenides', *Lampas*, VIII (1975) and an expanded version in the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, suppl vol 2 (1976).

² 'Notes on Parmenides', in *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy Presented to Gregory Vlastos*, ed E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos, and A. O. Rorty (Assen, 1973), 1-15. A similar claim was made by Montgomery Furth: 'his own word for his argument is *elenchos* which we must assume means for him, as it presently was to mean for Socrates, the technique of refuting an opponent by reasoning from a premise that the opponent accepts to a conclusion that he must regard as intolerable' ('Elements of Eleatic Ontology', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, VI, No 2 (April 1968), 111-32, repr in A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Pre-Socratics* (New York, 1974), 241-70). Furth at least faithfully follows out the implications of viewing the *elenchos* as the Socratic *elenchos* by inventing an opponent (Betathon—a believer in some non-existences) whom Parmenides proceeds to refute on Betathon's own terms. Furth is entitled to his imaginative reconstruction (which he prefaces by a disclaimer for historical accuracy) but it is not correct to say that Parmenides' *elenchos* is mere dialectical criticism, for the repudiation of the two erroneous ways relies crucially on several Parmenidean assumptions about knowledge, truth, and meaning. Furth elsewhere says that Parmenides is 'floating a critique of ways or roads of enquiry' and that there is 'a sole survivor of the critique' (248). This is both true and relevant to the real meaning of *elenchos* in Parmenides (as will be argued shortly), but it cannot be

'shame' or 'disgrace', had been replaced by that of 'refutation', and the reading makes some sense in the context of the poem: since Fragment 8 will soon say that only one way remains (*leipetai*) it seems obvious that the other ways have been refuted. It is therefore this *elenchos* = refutation that we are being urged to judge by *logos*.

It is hard to fault the logic of this crisp disjunctive syllogism, and equally hard to fault the minor *not-q* premiss; the 'shame' meaning of *elenchos* is singularly out of place in Parmenides' account. But it is difficult to accept Furley's disjunction of 'shame' or 'refutation' as a satisfactory account of the meaning of *elenchos* from Homer to Socrates. Chantaine, whose account Furley adopted, was himself less than fully confident of the story he had told.³ Admitting that the etymology of *elenchō* from *elachus* was uncertain, he also acknowledged that 'L'évolution de sens entre le vocabulaire homérique et le grec ionien-attique est remarquable' (335). The etymologies offered by Boisacq and Frisk are equally diffident.⁴ In fact, a survey of the employment of *elenchos* and *elenchō* from Homer and Hesiod up to the middle of the fourth century shows a much larger range of meanings than the 'shame' or 'refutation' disjunction can accommodate. Only when a full sense of the possible choices for *elenchos* is in hand can we make a reasonable choice of the right rendering for the *poludēris elenchos* of Parmenides' Fragment 7.

There is no reason to doubt that in seventh- and sixth-century writers, both the neuter noun form and the verb form convey the idea of shame or disgrace, as in the Muses' famous speech:

Shepherds of the wilderness, things of shame (*kak' elenchea*), mere bellies, we know how to say many false things resembling what is true . . .
(*Theogony*, 26-7)

seriously maintained that Parmenides thought of his account (of ways of enquiry that exist for thinking) as a cross-examination of some misguided individual.

³ Pierre Chantaine, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Paris, 1968, s.v. *elenchō*).

⁴ Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960); Emile Boisacq, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Paris and Heidelberg, 1938).

and in Theognis:

... accursed old age disgraces (*elenchei*) one who is beautiful. (1011)

Tyrtaeus had already spoken of having one's 'splendid appearance (*eidōs*) disgraced (*elenchei*)', but as one might expect in so military-minded a poet, the shame comes 'to one who does not stay and fight' (6. 9). The linking of shame or disgrace with a failure in valour is not peculiar to Tyrtaeus, in fact it was already a constant element of the use of *elenchos* and *elenchein* in Homer. The following are completely typical:

- (a) for *elenchos* (as well as for *elenchiē* and the adjectives *elenchēs* and *elenchistos*):

Son of Tydeus, what has happened to us to make us forget our furious valour, but come here and stand by my side, for a disgrace (*elenchos*) it will be if Hector of the flashing helm captures the ships. (Il. XI. 312-15)

- (b) for *elenchō*:

Telemachus, the stranger that sits in your house does not disgrace you (*ou... elenchei*), I did not miss the mark, nor did I grow weary in stringing the bow. (*Odyssey* (*Od.*), XXI. 424-5)

In the nineteen passages in which either the noun or verb appears, the idea of the *elenchos* is consistently linked with a failure in a military or athletic mission or contest.⁵ Lacking an established etymology for *elenchos* (or *elenchō*), it is not possible to know whether Homer has added the idea of the contest to an older shame word, or whether the Homeric usage is a surviving remnant of an older complex notion of *elenchos* as 'shame incurred through a failure in valour'. If the latter, then the simple 'shame' use of *elenchos/elenchō* in

⁵ This fact was noted by Anne Amory Parry in *Blameless Aegisthus* (Leiden, 1973): 'elenchos and its derivatives in Homer are almost exclusively connected with failures in valor'. Even where combat and feats of physical prowess are absent, there is still an *elenchos* if these noble warriors have somehow failed in their intended purpose. In the embassy of Phoenix to Achilles in Il. IX Phoenix says that Achilles' rejection of the pleas of Ajax and Odysseus would be an *elenchos* of their words and their having come to him. The frequent association of disgrace and reproach with a failure in action is discussed by A. W. H. Adkins in *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960), 30-57. For a dissenting view (though conceding a mainly 'shame in failure' meaning to *elencheiē*), see A. A. Long, 'Morals and Values in Homer', *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, XC (1970), 121-39.

Hesiod and Theognis would represent a selective narrowing of the original meaning. But whether the idea of 'prowess-shame' is the original form or not, it is clear that, after Homer, other writers express the same idea. When Pindar uses forms of the verb *elenchō*, it is to designate just such a shaming in a contest.

... when they went down into the races, they put the Hellenic hosts to shame (*ēlenxan*) through their swiftness of foot. (*Pythian*, XI. 49)

... he was handsome to look upon, and by deed he did not disgrace his beauty of form (*ou kata eidōs elenchōn*) when he won the wrestling match. (*Olympian*, VIII. 19)

It is therefore not surprising that when we first see a masculine form for *elenchos* appear, it means not the neuter 'disgrace' but the *test* or *contest* in which one incurs or avoids disgrace:

For many tales have been told, and in many ways, but to put one's new inventions⁶ to the test by a touchstone (*basonōi es elenchon*) is altogether risky. (*Nemean*, VIII. 20-1)

For Pindar, the ultimate test for human excellence is athletic competition, and the paragon of *aretē* is the 'Olympic' victor. Nowhere is this said more succinctly than in *Olympian*, IV:

This is a word that will never be tainted with falsehood:
Trial (*diapēira*) is the test (*elenchos*) of mortals. (17-18)

The *elenchos* here is clearly not the *to elenchos* of Homer and Hesiod but the *ho elenchos* of *Nemean*, VIII, the testing in which excellence is attained, or, as in *Nemean*, III, disgrace is avoided:

in the contests (*elenchessin*) your Aristocleides did not dishonour (*ouk... emiane*) by being worsted in the pankration. (15-17)

Just as *to elenchos* = shame has been joined by *ho elenchos* = test, so *elenchō* = to shame oneself or another in a test, comes to mean just 'to test' or 'to be a test of'. So at least it appears in Bacchylides' comparison of wisdom and

⁶ *neara d'exeuronta*. I take these 'inventions' to be the poet's own odes (reinforced by the reference to *logoi* at line 21) and the *elenchos* to be the 'trial' by the touchstone of public opinion.

truth with the 'touchstone', the Lydian stone, which served to distinguish gold from inferior metals:

Λυδία μὲν γὰρ λίθος
μανύει χρυσόν, ἀν-
δρῶν δ' ἀρετὰν σοφία τε
παγκρατῆς τ' ἐλέγχει
ἀλάθεια . . .

(Fr 14)

For the Lydian stone indicates gold, but it is wisdom and all powerful truth that shows (*elenchei*) the excellence of men . . .

While the verb *elenchō* had in Pindar retained the idea of shaming oneself, or someone else, in the testing, here, in Bacchylides, the context requires just 'tests for' or 'indicates'. *Elenchei* parallels *manuei*, 'to reveal' or 'indicate', and wisdom and truth must be a touchstone for virtue, and not a shaming of it. It is clear therefore that by the early part of the fifth century, both *elenchos* and *elenchō* had lost the connotation of shame and disgrace characteristic of their employment in Homer, and had begun to designate just the test or testing process through which the true substance of a thing or person could be determined.

The idea of the *elenchos* as the 'acid test' of a person's truthfulness or character is a common refrain in fifth-century writers. In the *Suppliant Maidens*, written in the first half of the century (c.463), Aeschylus writes that 'an unknown companion is brought to the test (*exelenchesthai*) in time' (993), and as Johansen and Whittle explain,⁷ '*elenchetai* denotes a process through which the true nature of a thing is revealed'. We can also see in Aeschylus' plays the first signs of a 'legalized' idea of *elenchos*, the 'cross-examination' or testing of a person to determine his truthfulness or innocence (cf. *Eumenides*, 433: '*exelenche* him and decide justly' and *The Libation Bearers*, 851: 'I wish to *ellexai* the messenger'). One can find in Sophocles' plays both the idea of the *elenchos* as a contest between two persons and the idea of the *elenchos* as the testing of someone's words, that is as examination: 'the two guards *elenchōn* with one another and nearly came to blows' (*Antigone*, 260), 'Eteocles ousted me from my country by persuading the people and not by an *elenchon* of

⁷ Aeschylus: *The Suppliants*, vol iii (Copenhagen, 1980), 285.

hand or deed of war' (*Oedipus Coloneus*, 1297) and 'an *elenchon* of the queen's words' (*Oedipus Tyrannos*, 603). In Euripides, the most common meaning of *elenchos* is that familiar from Pindar and Bacchylides: it is the testing that reveals the true nature of a thing or person:

Having been exposed in the *elenchon*, it now comes out who you are.
(*Alcestis*, 640)

The bow is no *elenchos* of a man, it is a coward's weapon, the real man stands in the ranks and dares to face the spear. (*Heracles* (*HerACL.*), 162-3)

Your wife, fearing that if put to the *elenchon* she might be proved a sinner, wrote a letter . . .
(*Hippolytus*, 1310)

This is what misfortune means among mankind;
upon no man who wished me well at all,
could I wish this acid test (*elenchon*) of friends might fall.
(*HerACL.* 58-9, tr. Arrowsmith)

Herodotus also speaks of the *elenchos* as the test to which someone or something is put:

. . . when I return you will bring your son here before me to be put to the test (*ton paida es elenchon*).
(*History*, I. 209)

The belief in the river Oceanus is grounded in obscurity (*aphanes*) and lacks a testing (*ouk echei elenchos*).⁸

But there is one passage in which Herodotus employs the verb *elenchō* to refer not to the testing or examination of an account, but to the controverting or refuting of someone's story. In II. 115, the men who travelled with Alexander are allowed to tell their own version of what he did, and Herodotus says that 'they *elenchon* his story', which seems to mean that they refuted it.

The idea of an *elenchos* as a refutation is familiar to us from the character which the Socratic *elenchos* takes on in

⁸ *History*, II. 23. Herodotus' statement that this belief does not 'have *elenchos*' has been variously understood: 'does not admit of testing', 'does not have a proof', 'does not have a refutation', 'does not need a refutation'. The presence of the term *aphanes* is however significant, since it reflects a tendency among many fifth-century writers (e.g. the author of *On Ancient Medicine*) to treat the older cosmological beliefs about 'what is above the heavens and below the earth' as 'non-evident', i.e. as beyond the range of what can be tested and known to be true or false. I think it is plausible to suppose that Herodotus is here taking the belief in Oceanus, the encircling river, to be one of those beliefs lying beyond the range of testing.

the early Platonic dialogues. Socrates tests his interlocutors, he cross-examines them, and he routinely refutes them. The first unmistakably 'refutation' uses of *elenchos* occur in the *Protagoras* (at 344b) and *Gorgias* (473e), but the refutation sense of *elenchos* is prominent in Aristotle (it is defined as a *sylogismos antiphaseōs* in the *Sophistici Elenchi*) and in the *peri Theōn* (3. 8) of Philodemus some two hundred years later.

The older meaning of the *elenchos* = testing has now been augmented (not, as we shall see, replaced) by the *elenchos* = refutation, and there is yet another remarkable development. In *Gorgias*' famous 'Defence of Palamedes' composed at some time in the last quarter of the fifth century, *elenchos* seems to mean neither 'testing' nor 'refutation' but 'proof':

And of the things which my accuser himself has said, not one of the things he has spoken is a proof (*apodeixis*), so his own account succeeds only as abuse not having *elenchos*.
(Fr B 11 a, s 29)

and also in section 34:

... you must not prefer *aitiai* to *elenchōn*.

Gorgias appears to be contrasting mere accusations with solid proofs. The most natural explanation for all this is that the *elenchos* which had originally consisted in the testing of a thing's nature or a person's character comes to be used in the context of testing a person's veracity, and those who have passed the test can be said to have had an *elenchos* of their claims, that is a proof, and those who have failed it can be said to have had an *elenchos*, that is a refutation, of theirs. The multiplicity of meanings for *elenchos* in the fifth century would thus stem from a process of diachronic development and bifurcation that is visible elsewhere in Greek and Latin (e.g. in the Greek *sumpherō* where what is 'brought together' becomes both 'benefits' and 'misfortunes' and in the Latin *altus* where *altus*, from *alo* meaning 'nourish', becomes both 'high' and 'deep').

The same is true for the verb *elenchein*. In the *Gorgias*, it is used along with the refutational *elenchos*, and marks not just examination, but refutation (473b9-10):

Polus: That is more difficult to refute (*exelenxai*) than your first point.
Socrates: Not difficult, but impossible, for the truth is never refuted (*oudepote elenchetai*).

Elsewhere *elenchein* must mean, as Georges Daux demonstrated, not actual refutation,⁹ but rather 'cross-examination with the intention of refuting what is said'.⁹ And even as late as Plato's *Republic*, one can find both *elenchos* and *elenchō* in the sense of test/testing rather than either proof or refutation:

... the man who is unable to define in his discourse and distinguish and abstract from all other things the aspect or idea of the good, and who cannot, as it were in battle, running the gauntlet of all tests (*elenchōn*), and striving to examine (*elenchein*) everything by essential reality and not by opinion, hold on his way in all this without tripping in his reasoning—the man who lacks this power you will say does not really know the good itself. . . .
(VI. 534b, tr. Shorey)

We can then offer a thumb-nail sketch of the meaning of *elenchos* and *elenchō* which, while not exhaustive, certainly goes beyond the existing 'shame or refutation' dichotomy. The meaning of shame or disgrace can be seen in the use of *elenchos* in Hesiod and Theognis, but the most common early use of the term is to designate the shame incurred through a failure of military or (semi-military) athletic valour (in Homer, Tyrtaeus, and, for *elenchō*, Pindar).

In Pindar we see the masculine form *ho elenchos* used, without a suggestion of shame or disgrace, to mark an athletic competition and the testing of a poet's creations by public opinion. In Bacchylides (Fr 14) the verb *elenchō* means 'show' or 'be the indicator of', and the idea of the *elenchos* as the 'acid testing' of a thing's true nature, or a person's true mettle is the single most common element of fifth-century usage of the term. Toward the end of the century, we find a more specialized use of the *elenchos* to mark a testing of a person's words for their truth or falsity, and the use of *elenchos* as 'cross-examination' becomes common. In the philosophers of the late fifth and early fourth century, *elenchos* shows a full range of applications, from contests and testings, to cross-examinations, proofs, and refutations.

⁹ 'Sur quelques passages de "Banquet" de Platon', *Revue des Études Grecques*, LV (1942), 252-3. Daux also provides convincing evidence that the verb *elenchō*, as it is used in Andocides' speech 'de Mysteriis' (given in 399 BC) must sometimes be translated as 'cross-examine' and sometimes (even in a succeeding sentence) as 'prove'.

II Eleatic *elenchos*

We do not know the exact date of the composition of Parmenides' poem, but our evidence does not justify placement later than the first quarter of the fifth century. Plato's story in the opening of the *Parmenides* would place Parmenides' birthdate around 515–510 BC. Diogenes Laertius (*Lives*, IX. 231) puts Parmenides' *akmē* in the sixty-ninth Olympiad (504–501 BC) perhaps following Apollodorus' arbitrary choice of the founding of Elea (in 540–539 BC) as the year of Parmenides' birth. We must therefore think of Parmenides as an early fifth-century thinker and writer, drawing heavily on the language and phrasing of Homer and Hesiod, and contemporary with the poets Bacchylides and Pindar. In terms of the evidence supplied by our survey of the usage of *elenchos* outside Parmenides' poem, we should reject 'challenge', 'argument', and 'question' as translations of '*elenchos*', and take the meaning of 'test' or 'testing' as more probable than the later 'proof' and 'refutation'.

At the same time, no conclusions about what *elenchos* probably meant in the early fifth century can suffice for determining what *elenchos* might mean in the writings of a particularly creative thinker, nor can it determine what Parmenides might have meant by *elenchos* in a particular context. '*Elenchos*' might be used to designate a proof or refutation (even if that is not what '*elenchos*' means) just as 'There is some fruit in the kitchen' might be a remark about apples, even if 'fruit' does not mean 'apples'.

It has long been recognized that Parmenides' account introduced into philosophical discourse an element of rigorous argumentation that deeply influenced subsequent philosophizing. Clearly, he succeeded in constructing logical arguments for his view of reality long before Aristotle articulated principles of valid inference and the doctrine of the syllogism. But we must be careful in our ascriptions of logical acumen to Parmenides to avoid making him into more of a logician than his logical arguments will justify. The idea of a deductive proof is not expressed openly, or defined, until Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, the description of a disjunctive premiss will not appear until Theophrastus (at least according to

Alexander's *Commentary*), and the schema for a disjunctive syllogism is first seen in Chrysippus' account of the fifth indemonstrable syllogism. We may (indeed should) view Parmenides as a philosopher who succeeded in marshalling arguments in defence of his conclusions, but once we have distinguished between skill in constructing particular arguments and presenting an analysis of the forms of valid argument, there is no case for viewing Parmenides as a logician.¹⁰

The word *elenchos* appears only once in Parmenides' poem, in line 5 of Fragment 7, immediately following the abuse heaped on the 'two-headed' mortals who think both *estin* and *ouk estin*, and the goddess's injunction to keep our thought from this way, not letting custom force us to steer our wandering eye, echoing ear and tongue down this path. When we are told at this point to *krinai* the *elenchos*, our first thought would naturally be that we should *krinai* the *elenchos* instead of taking the wandering path of mortals (or at least as a response of some sort to mortal thinking) and this would make the *elenchos* into something of a refutation of mortal opinion. The problem with taking *elenchos* in this way is that the refutation of mortal belief (in generation, destruction, etc.) is really the business of Fragment 8 where the various attributes of *to eon* are established, and the various beliefs in 'partial existence' or 'temporary existence' are rejected. Since Fragment 8 begins with only one way

¹⁰ A view urged by Mansfield in *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides und die menschlicher Welt* (Assen, 1964). He takes the *elenchos* to be a proof by disjunctive syllogism (called a 'streitreichen Prüfung' and later 'der widerstreitende Beweis', 89) and constituted by the 'disjunctive' discussion of the two ways available for thinking in Fr 2. On his interpretation, Parmenides is the prototypical Stoic logician. Mansfield does not discuss the fact that *esti* is treated as a premise in Fr 2 rather than a derived conclusion, but it is a serious anomaly for his reconstruction. It is true that only one way *leipetai* by the time of Fr 8. 2, but (as we shall see) this is not sufficient to justify reading the poem as a disjunctive syllogism. If moreover we take the *elenchos* to have already occurred in Fr 2, we are forced to read the injunction to *krinai* in Fr 7 as merely a 'refresher to our memory', and the mention of the *krisis* in Fr 8 as yet another reminder of the *elenchos*. As we shall see, there is a more natural alternative to these heroic measures. The failure to distinguish between 'skill in constructing particular arguments . . . and the analysis of forms of logical argument' was noted by Charles Kahn in his review of Mansfield (*Gnomon*, XLII (1970), 113). The idea of the *elenchos* as a proof by elimination was stated originally by Reinhardt, *Parmenides* (Bonn, 1916), 46–7, and more recently by Ernst Heitsch, 'Evidenz und Wahrscheinlichkeitsaussagen Bei Parmenides', *Hermes*, CII (1974), 411–19.

remaining, whereas Fragment 7 still speaks in terms of several ways, it seems certain that Fragment 8 really does follow Fragment 7. In the natural sense of an aorist participle, an *elenchos* that is *hrēthenta* is an *elenchos* that *has been* spoken. But if so, the proofs against mortal beliefs which are yet to come in Fragment 8 cannot be the *elenchos*.¹¹

But these considerations do not suffice to show that *elenchos* cannot refer to a proof or refutation, for there are proofs (or at least clear attempts at proof) well before the end of Fragment 7. To my mind, the best recapitulation of Parmenides' argument is to be found in Owen's famous 'Eleatic Questions':

The purpose of these arguments is well known: it is to rule out two wrong roads which, together with the remaining right road, make up an exhaustive set of possible answers to the question *estin ē ouk estin*; 'Does it exist or not?'¹²

The right path, according to Owen, is given 'an unqualified yes', the first wrong path (*ouk estin*) an 'equally unqualified no', and the second wrong path (both *esti* and *ouk estin*—i.e. *estin* here or *estin* there, *estin* now or *estin* earlier) is 'two-headed' and moving in opposite directions, 'treating existence and non-existence as different and yet identical'. Owen takes the arguments against generation and destruction, indivisibility, and non-uniformity that run the length of Fragment 8 to reinforce this earlier denial of the second wrong way, and 'thus by elimination he tries to establish the conclusion he wants: *estin*' (57). There is much truth in Owen's account, but on a crucial point it blurs the issue: does the *estin* path remain because it is true (and the others are not), or does Parmenides argue that it is true *because* the other members of an exhaustive disjunction are not? Is it, in short, proven to be true 'by elimination' or proven true while the others are eliminated? The point is crucial because it involves the question of Parmenides' sense of a logical proof,

¹¹ This objection to *elenchos* as 'proof' can be found in Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* (New Haven and London, 1970), 91; Leonardo Tarán, *Parmenides* (Princeton, 1965), 81; Verdenius, 'Der Logosbegriff bei Heraklit und Parmenides II', *Phronesis*, XII (1967), 64; Furley, above n 2, 10.

¹² G. E. L. Owen, 'Eleatic Questions', *Classical Quarterly*, X (1960), 84-102, repr in Furley and Allen, *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, vol ii (London, 1975), 48-81.

and it raises the specific issue of the use of the Stoic fifth indemonstrable as the correct reconstruction of the logic of Parmenides' account. Chrysippus' story about the 'logical dog' (cited by Sextus to provide a sceptical argument against belief in the supremacy of human reason¹³) makes a great deal of just this question of logical acumen. The dog arrives at a three-way road in pursuit of the quarry. He sniffs at each of the first two roads and then, *without sniffing*, immediately sets out down the third road. This, says Sextus, shows that the dog could make a complex application of the fifth indemonstrable: *P* or *Q* or *R*, not *Q*, not *R*, therefore *P*.¹⁴

If Parmenides is to be credited with the logical acumen of Chrysippus' dog, he must perform at least as well. After setting out the exhaustive disjunctive premiss (way *A* or way *B* or way *C*), and after having rejected two of them, he must infer, 'without sniffing', way *A*. He must, in other words, infer the correctness of way *A* from the falsity of the two remaining disjuncts. Failing that, he may be credited with an orderly, serial review of each of the available options, and a rejection or vindication of each of them, but he cannot be rightly said to have proven the truth of *estin* by disjunctive syllogism, or 'by elimination' of the other possibilities.

In at least four different respects, we must ignore salient features of Parmenides' account in order to make it fit this logical mould:

(1) Parmenides does *not* give us a disjunctive statement of the three possible ways.

Come now and I will tell you which are the only ways (*haipei hodoi mounai*) available for thinking, the one (*hē men*) that it is and cannot not be . . . the other (*hē de*) that it is not and must not be . . .

The goddess does *not* tell us that there is at least one way of enquiry available (*not: A* or *B*) but that there are two contrasting ways of enquiry available for thinking. It is true that

¹³ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I, 69.

¹⁴ The form of the fifth indemonstrable is described elsewhere as just *A* or *B*, not *B*, therefore *A*, and the sense of *dia pleionōn* in Sextus' account could be either a 'multiform' version of the simple argument, or a 'repeated' application of it. As Benson Mates explained (*Stoic Logic* (2nd pr, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961), 80), we can derive the desired conclusion through two successive simple disjunctive syllogisms.

later, in Fragment 8, we are given the disjunctions of *estin ē ouchi* at line 11, and *estin ē ouk estin*, but these are embedded within the context of a discussion of the merits of the third way, the confused path of mortals, and amount to an assertion that the third way resolves into either of the first two (the decision on these matters is just in this choice 'it is' or 'it is not'). We do not begin from 'A or B or C', but from 'A and B'.

(2) Before the *ouk estin* path is even mentioned, Parmenides establishes the truth of the first way.

... the one, that it is and cannot not be, that is a path of persuasion, for it connects with truth, the other, that it is not and must not be ...

This is an argument, but it is not a disjunctive syllogism. It argues that the path of thinking 'that it is' is a path of persuasion, because an assertion of the existence of an existing thing is true. This does not mean that the first path asserts that what exists exists, but only that it asserts 'it exists' of something (soon to be labelled *to eon*) that exists. As Aristotle states the same point in the *Metaphysics*, '... but to say of what is (*to on*) that it is (*einai*) and of what is not (*to mē on*) that it is not (*mē einai*) is true (*alēthes*)' (1011b27). A way of thinking that thinks about what exists that it exists, is true, and is therefore a persuasive way to think. Parmenides does not have a precise equivalent for 'entailment' but *opēdei*, which expresses the relationship of 'fittingly adhering' is not an unfortunate choice.¹⁵ In any event, it should be clear that the judgment of the truth of the *estin* path is not postponed until other disjuncts have been proven false, but occurs promptly upon its first presentation. Not

¹⁵ I owe the point to Mourelatos, who cites the evidence showing that *opēdei* means not 'follow after' or just 'attends to' but 'attaches to as is fitting' (e.g. Hesiod, *Erga*, 313: 'excellence and glory *opēdei* to wealth'). Mourelatos however thinks that the goddess Peitho is the subject of *opēdei* and reads 'It is the path of Persuasion for she attends upon, rightfully attaches to, truth.' To read the line in this way, we must forget that the subject under discussion is the first way (we have not been discussing Persuasion) and skip over the most natural subject (the way—*keleuthos* is the nearest nominative) and go back to *Peithous*, a genitive. The alternative, 'it (the path of *esti*) fittingly attaches to truth', makes better grammatical and philosophical sense: a way of thinking that thinks *esti* of what exists is, necessarily, a true way of thinking (since it is entailed by what it means for something to be true) and it is therefore a persuasive way of thinking.

only does Parmenides sniff before running, he selects the first path as the correct path before even testing out the other possibilities. This may show good instincts, or good fortune, but it is no way to conduct a disjunctive syllogism.

(3) The second (*ouk estin*) path is *not* adjudged false. Rather, it is said to be 'beyond learning', since it is impossible to know what does not exist. Here again, we have a complex philosophical argument resting on pivotal epistemological assumptions: you cannot learn anything from thinking 'that it is not', since you cannot come to know what does not exist, for it is not possible to complete or attain what does not exist. The argument is continued in Fragments 3 and 6, to the effect that what does not exist is not available for being, while what exists is available, and hence that we must think and speak being. The real logic of this argument may never be resolved,¹⁶ but it is clearly intended as an argument, and to back up the rejection of the second way in Fragment 2. But what we do not have is an assertion that the second way available for thinking is a *false* way. Later, in Fragment 8, Parmenides will say that this (presumably the *ouk estin* way) is no 'true way' but since this is supposed to explain why it is an unnameable and unthinkable way, and must contrast with the other being called *etētumon*, this must mean *not* that it involves falsehoods (for they are eminently thinkable, as mortals can attest) but that it is really no way of enquiry at all. At best, we can say that the *ouk estin* way has been 'rejected' or 'repudiated', but we cannot say that Parmenides infers the truth of the one path from the *falsity* of the second (or third).

(4) When Parmenides finally states what has been decided (*kekritai*) he does not state that the one is false (or rejected) and *therefore* that the other is true, but only that the one way (again *tēn men*)—the *ouk estin* way—is to be put aside as unthinkable and nameless, while the other (*tēn de*) turns out to be and to be genuine (*etētumos*). What we lack in Parmenides,

¹⁶ I do not pretend to understand Fr 6. Owen's famous diagnosis of its logical blunder (the *de re* interpretation of a modal operator) has never wholly convinced me, but, if the argument does not go roughly as Owen has it, it is not clear how it is supposed to work. For our purposes, it is essential only to recognize that it is an argument, and that it bolsters the case for the choice of the first way over the second.

and what we can see clearly in some of the similar arguments of Philolaus and Gorgias, is a clear sign of the inferred truth: the one is false, and so it is clear that (*dēlon ara*) the other must be true.¹⁷ Not at the outset, nor along the way, nor at the finish, does Parmenides act as one who attempts to establish the truth of one member of an exhaustive disjunctive premiss by establishing as false the remaining disjuncts. If so, then the *elenchos* that we are urged to *krinai* at Fragment 7. 5 neither means nor refers to any eliminative disjunctive syllogism running from Fragment 2. 1 to Fragment 7. 4. Nor is it plausible to suppose that the *elenchos* picks out one of those individual proofs that bolster Parmenides' assessments of each of the ways of enquiry (e.g. that the *estin* path is persuasive, that *ouk estin* is 'beyond learning', etc.); our problem is not that there are no proofs, but that there are too many of them for any one of them to be *the elenchos*.

What the *elenchos* really is can now be understood in light of the evidence of the meaning of *elenchos* in the first quarter of the fifth century, and in light of the serial critique we have seen Parmenides offer. The *elenchos* that has been spoken, and that we are asked to *krinai*, is just the orderly examination of each of the available ways of thinking. It is

¹⁷ There are some striking similarities between Parmenides' account and some arguments in Gorgias and Philolaus: (i) Gorgias DK 82 B 3, s 66: 'If anything exists, it is the existent that exists or the non-existent, or both the existent and the non-existent. But neither does the existent exist, as he will establish, nor the non-existent, as he will demonstrate, nor both the existent and the non-existent, as he will also make plain. Nothing therefore (*ara*) exists'; (ii) *ibid.*, 68: 'If the existent exists, it is either eternal or created, or both eternal and created, etc. Therefore (*ara*) the existent does not exist'; (iii) Philolaus DK 4A B 2: 'All existing things must be said to be (composed of) limited things or unlimited things or of both limited and unlimited things. But they cannot be unlimited only (or limited only), since it is apparent that they are out of neither wholly limited nor wholly unlimited things, so it is clear that (*dēlon ara*) the universe and the things in it are composed from both limited and unlimited things.' Of these three arguments, only the last can properly be called an argument by elimination for the truth of one disjunct through a rejection of the other disjuncts of an exhaustive disjunctive. What each argument shares with Parmenides' account is a tripartite premiss, with the third option being a combination of the previous two. What they do not share with Parmenides' account is their concise formulation in disjunctive form, and clear evidence (in the third case) that the correct option is established (*dēlon ara*) through the rejection of the other possibilities. The similarities were first noted by Reinhardt (*Parmenides*, 65), Mondolfo-Zeller (vol ii, 378), and Burkert (tr. Minar), *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 260.

a test or testing of each of them for their capacity to lead us to truth and knowledge about *to eon*. It can perhaps be termed (as it has occasionally been called¹⁸) a critique of their merits and deficiencies. The first way easily passes the test, for it connects with truth; the second way fails the test for it connects with nothing, or (to avoid offence) does not connect with anything at all. The third way attempts to combine *estin* and *ouk estin* in conceiving of a world of partial and temporary existence, and runs foul of contradiction and impossibility, trying to 'force not-beings to exist'. The account of the ways of enquiry available for thinking from Fragment 2. 1 to Fragment 7. 5 is in short an orderly review of the options before us; three have been put to the test, two have been judged harshly, and one has come through unscathed.

That the *elenchos* is a testing of the available options for enquiry is confirmed by a number of expressions Parmenides employs, beginning with the *krinai* called for at Fragment 7. 5. If in fact a proof or series of proofs had already been given, and *was* the *elenchos*, we might understandably be puzzled as to why any further judgment was called for. One might reasonably ask someone to take heed of, or remember, or learn from a proof, but if a proof has already been delivered, why is there any need to judge it further? But in fact *krinai* is routinely employed to mark the judgment, decision, or finding, that concludes a process of examination or a competitive testing.¹⁹ After an orderly review of the merits and

¹⁸ By Montgomery Furth. See n 2 above.

¹⁹ Cf. Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 443: 'Examine him and pronounce judgment (*all' exelenche, krine d' eutheian dikēn*)'; Thucydides, 1.87: *krinouai boēi* (said of the assembly); Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 803-5: Euripides vows to examine (*basanidzein*) the plays of Aeschylus word by word, but 'who will decide the outcome?' (*krinei de dē tis tauta*). Other trial decision uses of *krisis* can be seen in Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 1. 6. 5; Thucydides, 6. 39; Herodotus, 2. 129. Although he did not cite *elenchos* in this connection, W. A. Heidel did notice the similarity of *krisis* and *pistis* to a judicial proceeding, and thought Fr 8 modelled on it (*Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, XLVIII, No 19 (May 1913), 717-19. It is true that a trial is an *elenchos* and results in a *krisis*, but what is *pistis* may be either the evidence or the outcome (cf. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 1322, *pistin ouk ēlexas*—'you have not proven faithful'). Heidel was right to note the elenctic character of Parmenides' account, but a legal trial is only one of several kinds of possible *elenchoi*.

Diels (*Parmenides Lehregedicht*) took the *elenchos* to be a trial or adjudication of the 'multilateral dispute' among mortal *doxa*, and to be constituted by the

deficiencies of each option, a call for a *krisis* is entirely appropriate, and that is in fact what happens at the beginning of Fragment 8: 'now single remains the account that it is'. This decision marks the 'critical' turning point of the whole account (as Fr 8. 16 reminds us, 'it has already been decided (*kekritai*) that one is to be left aside as nameless and unthinkable and that the other turns out to be and to be genuine'). The proofs against generation and destruction and for indivisibility and uniformity that run the course of Fragment 8 do indeed reinforce the earlier arguments against the way of mortal thinking, but they are not strictly speaking a factor in either the *elenchos* or the *krisis* itself. The idea of a testing procedure resulting in a finding of truth and genuineness is conveyed by the characterization of the remaining path as 'τὴν δ' ὥστε πέλειω καὶ ἐτήτυμον εἶναι' ('the one that turns out to be and to be genuine'). *Hōste, pelein, etētumos* all point to the same fact: a result, an outcome, a certified fact.²⁰

later, *doxa*, section of the poem. He did not consider the possibility that the *elenchos* might have already occurred, ending with the *krisis* at 8. 1 in part, I suspect, because he had placed lines 3-6 of Fr 7 at the end of the long Fr 1, which is far too early for any *elenchos* to have taken place. When he confronted the fact that the *elenchos* would have to have been spoken by the end of the initial fragment, he was forced to regard it merely as a 'prospective' reference to the *elenchos* yet to come in the *doxa* section, surely an odd reading of an aorist participle. Nevertheless, Diels did notice the affinities of the *elenchos* with the idea of authentication conveyed by *dokimōs* (or as he thought *dokimōsai*) and *Prüfung*, at least when understood as a testing or certification, is the correct translation of *elenchos*.

²⁰ As Mourelatos explained, *pelō* (like *teleō*) comes from an IE root *k₂wel meaning 'to turn', and conveys the idea of turning out to be in a certain way (reinforced here by the use of the resultant *hōste*).

The adjective *etētumos*, 'true', 'real', 'genuine' is the word *par excellence* to refer to something that has been put to the test and found genuine. Pindar says:

ὅ τ' ἐξελέγχων μόνος
ἀλάθειαν ἐτήτυμον
χρόνος
'Time, the sole testing
of the real truth'. (Olympian (Ol.), 10. 53-5)

and Theocritus (12. 35-7):

Λυδῆ ἴσον ἔχειω πέτρῃ στόμα, χρυσόν· δοίῃ
πύθονται, μὴ φάυλος, ἐτήτυμον ἀρυραμοιβό.

'... that his mouth is as the Lydian stone by which
the moneychangers discover the gold not false, but true.'

Although the proem of Fragment 1 contains as many, if not more difficulties than Fragment 7, we can now see that the concluding couplet of the proem calls for the kind of certification procedure that the *elenchos* has delivered:

ἀλλ' ἔμψης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσῃ, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντός πάντα περῶντα.

but nonetheless you will also learn these, how the things that are believed had to genuinely be, all of them passing through all. (Fr 1. 31-2)

While the referent of *tauta* in line 31 is unclear (referring back to either the 'all things' of line 28 or the 'mortal opinions' of line 30), it does seem that we are going to learn something about *ta dokounta*, 'the things believed'; namely, how they had to *dokimōs einai*, how they had to assuredly, genuinely, certifiably be.²¹ The *dokimos* man (as Owen and Mourelatos argued) is the genuinely brave or good man (cf. Xenophon, *Institutio Cyri*, 1. 6. 7: *dokimos kalos kagathos*), the man who has been put to the test and not found wanting, that is 'tried and true'. In Aeschylus' *Persians*, being *dokimos* is a matter of having been proven in battle (87). Even if we do not follow Diels's emendation to *dokimōs(ai)*—and its attendant harsh elision—we must still acknowledge that being *dokimos*, or being in a way which is *dokimōs*, involves some sort of *dokimasia*, and some process of *dokimadzein*.

²¹ *Dokimōs einai* is given by Simplicius. Diels emends to *dokimōs(ai)*, reading 'how one should test *ta dokounta* with regard to their reality'. The passage is full of uncertainties and alternate readings, but it is essential for present purposes only that there should be some idea of a test or testing forecast in Fr 1, and this is the case on either reading, *dokimōs einai* or *dokimōsai*. It is also unclear whether *chrēn* states an actual or merely counterfactual necessity; whether it is 'how *ta dokounta* had to become *dokimōs einai*' (allowing that they did so), or 'how *ta dokounta* had to become *dokimōs einai*' (but didn't). Given that mortal *doxa* is castigated by Parmenides as inherently two-headed and muddled, I am inclined to doubt that anything held to be, as an object of *doxa*, will pass the *elenchos* for *dokimōs einai*. For Parmenides, as for Plato's Forms, that which truly is is that which is always, and in every way, never 'not' anything in any way, at any time. Once one has come to realize that what can be said and thought is only, and always, *esti*, one has left the two-headed track of mortal *doxa* and returned to the first and only correct path. There is also a choice to be made in reading either *peronta* or *per onta*, but it is also not critical. *Peronta* need not be given the special twist of 'transcend' (Mourelatos) or 'pervade' (Tarán), but can be just the literal 'passing through'. Though *per onta* has superior manuscript support, the absence of the expected *eonta* form is worrisome, and Mourelatos's reading of *onta qua onta*, seems to me quite an ambitious way to take *per*.

Whether we are dealing with a process of certification of civic officials, or the assaying of gold for purity, or the testing of a warrior for battle, or a witness for veracity, the method for *dokimadzein* remains the same: each must be put to the *elenchos*.

How the things that are believed to be had to gain the status of *dokimōs einai* has never been very clear, for Parmenides tells us only that they must do so 'all of them passing through all', but here also the idea of the *elenchos* is relevant and illuminating. The idea of something happening 'through all' (*dia pantos*) is primarily a temporal one, with an element of consistent performance. In his 'Defence of Palamedes' Gorgias writes that his client has first and foremost been a consistently good man: *dia pantos ap' archēs eis telos anamartētos . . . katharos* (Fr 11 a, s 29) 'through all from the beginning to the end, unfailingly . . . pure'. Mourelatos has made a similar point (204-5) by comparing Parmenides' *dia pantos* with the description of the courageous man given in Plato's *Republic*, the man who can preserve his courage *dia pantos* (429-30). Significantly, the circumstances through which he succeeds in doing so are described at 412b ff as the *agōn*, *hamilla*, *basanos*; that is the *elenchos*. (Mourelatos notes also the similar expression *dia pantōn* at *Republic*, 580b where the judge of a competition is described as *ho dia pantōn kritēs*.) Perhaps the sense of *dia pantos panta perōnto* then is 'all of them (the *dokounta*) passing through the whole process', that is being put to an *elenchos*. There is a striking confirmation of the linking of the *elenchos* with 'going through all' in a passage at *Republic*, 534b-c (not previously mentioned in this connection):

... ὡς περ ἐν μάχῃ διὰ πάντων ἐλέγχων διεξιῶν, μὴ κατὰ δόξαν ἀλλὰ κατ' οὐσίαν προθυμούμενος ἐλέγχειν, ἐν πάσι τοῦτοις ἀπῶτι τῷ λόγῳ διαπορεύεται . . .

... just as in battle, passing through all the tests, zealously testing according to reality and not according to opinion, going through in all these not falling in the account . . .

The prediction of the goddess was that the youth would learn how the things taken to be had to genuinely be, all of them, passing through the *elenchos* set for them. The testing runs from Fragment 2. 1 to Fragment 7. 5-6, when the *krisis* is

called for, and then made. It 'turns out' that only one way is the right way, thinking and speaking 'it is'. The way of 'it is not' and the 'two-headed' way of mortals have both been repudiated. The possibility of thinking of 'what is not', as well as 'both what is and what is not' was considered, and given a fair opportunity to succeed. But like Pheres in the *Alcestis*, when they were put to the *elenchos* it came out what they really were.

III The *poludēris elenchos*

The meaning of the *dēris* element in *poludēris* is not problematic; it is commonly used to designate a battle (in Ibycus, 67, the Trojan war is called a 'much-sung *dēris*') or contest (*Od.* XXIV features a *dēris* for *aretē* between Odysseus and Telemachus) and it has the rough meaning of 'struggle' or 'contest'.²² The *polu-* prefix here, as elsewhere, represents the intensification of a quality or attribute, suggesting both a greater degree of struggle, as well as a multiplicity of struggles.²³ Diels's translation 'streitreiche'—'rich in strife'—nicely captures the basic meaning without forcing an artificial decision between 'much' and 'many' struggles.

The difficulty in understanding Parmenides' phrase lies not in what *poludēris* means, but in what Parmenides means by saying that the *elenchos* is 'rich in struggle'. There are three main options: either the *elenchos* itself actively struggles (against something), or else it is the object (or scene) of the struggling of something else. It is either much contending (or contesting) or it is much contended (or contested). Or both. It is not possible, I believe, to decide the question on strictly morphological grounds; neither the form nor simple meaning of the single word *poludēris* dictates an answer.²⁴ We must turn to the context for assistance.

²² Chantraine derives *dēris* from an original meaning of 'separation, querelle' and adduces the Sanskrit *-dāri-*, 'qui fend' (above n 3, 275). Frisk defines it as 'kampf, streit' and connects it with a root meaning 'zerspaltung, zwietracht', a 'splitting, discord' (above n 4, 382).

²³ Cf. W. B. Stanford, 'Homer's Use of Personal *polu-* Compounds', *Classical Philology*, XLV (1950), 108-10; H. Thesleff, 'Studies on Intensification in Early and Classical Greek', *Societas Scientiarum Fennica: Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum*, XXI, No 1 (1954), 174.

²⁴ Mourelatos held that *poludēris* must mean 'much-contending' and not

On the assumption that struggles require opposing forces, it seems sensible to ask whether there are forces, either individual or sets of them, at work in the events described in Parmenides' poem. There are several. The first is mentioned only two lines earlier when the goddess warns not to let *ethos* force us (*biasthō*) to steer our senses down the erroneous path taken by mortals (Fr 7. 3-4). An *elenchos* = testing would naturally become something of a struggle if it involved a critique of conventional ways of thinking; it would be going 'against the force of habit'. As Descartes put it, 'customary and longstanding beliefs will frequently recur in my thoughts, my long and familiar acquaintance with them giving them the right to occupy my mind against my will and almost to make themselves master of my beliefs'.²⁵

The primary antagonist of Fragment 7 is the force of much-tried customary perceptual beliefs and speech (in short, our entrenched habits of thinking and speaking of changes, generations, destructions, and pluralities). Against this force Parmenides offers us an opposing and, in his view, superior force, roughly speaking, 'the force of reason', but more precisely, the force of the *logos*, that is the account that he has given.²⁶ Parmenides seems clearly to have intended for his poem to supply a *logos* carrying both truth and credibility, and to match up favourably against a set of beliefs lacking in both truth (i.e. the *ouk alēthes* of Fr 8. 17) and trustworthiness (the *pistis* of 1. 30). This is evident from the characterization of truth as having an 'unshaking heart' (1. 29); from the true way being called 'persuasive' (2. 4); from the reference to the strength of *pistis* (8. 13); from the steady (*bebaiōs*) 'much-contested' on morphological grounds, citing the later *poludēritos* as the 'much contested' form. But the *-itos* form signalling 'contested' does not preclude the same sense for the earlier *-is* form (see Buck and Pederson's discussion of the meaning of 'the *-is* form, in *A Reverse Index of Greek Nouns and Adjectives* (Hildesheim and New York, 1970), 14-15). The parallel forms *poluidris* and *polupolis* are relevant; the former may mean either 'much-knowing' or 'of much knowledge', but the latter is just 'much-citied', not 'much-citying'.

²⁵ *Meditation*, I (tr. La Fleur). This is but one of a number of striking parallels between Parmenides' argument and that of the *Meditations*. See n 46 below.

²⁶ I am in partial agreement with Verdenius' view, 'The term *logos* does not mean "thinking", "understanding" or "reason", according to the familiar translations' (*Parmenides*, 64), but I would stick to the basic sense of 'account' rather than 'reasoning, argument'. It is true that Parmenides' *logos* is constituted by a series of arguments, but I am not convinced that this is what *logos* means.

presence of what exists to *noos* (4. 1); and from the certification of what exists as what *dokimōs einai* (1. 32). Parmenides' *logos* aims not just at truth but at persuasion and conviction, and the *elenchos* of the available options for thinking plays the central role in the authentication process. Those who have favoured the 'much contending' reading of *poludēris* have at least this much to be said in support: the *elenchos* seems clearly designed to be a 'forceful', 'hard-hitting', critique and vindication. On balance, the best reading of *poludēris* requires both elements of contending and contested; the *elenchos* has the power to persuade, but it must contend against the 'bias' of well-entrenched conventional beliefs.

But for how long does the *dēris* last? The *elenchos* itself is concluded by the *krisis* called for at Fragment 7. 5, and made at Fragment 8. 1, but it is not obvious that the *dēris* ceases with it. Fragment 8 speaks as if the generationists and destructionists have been routed, driven far off, but the concluding lines at 60-1, suggest that there is yet another *dēris* to be fought: we must also learn the details of mortal beliefs so that no opinion overtakes us in the future (*paralassēi*). Following Long's account of the connection between the *doxa* section and the main arguments, I take Parmenides to be preparing his listener to resist the blandishments of the conventional wisdom on the nature of what exists. His objective is to show that these are all beliefs in which an implicit pluralism remains, and this (with its attendant commitment to not being) has already been exposed as false.²⁷ It is a significant admission on Parmenides' part, for it concedes that the earlier arguments, however forceful they may have been, cannot compel and guarantee right thinking. The *logos* may be a sufficient antidote to the force of habitual perceptual beliefs and ways of speaking, but something more is needed to ensure that one stays on the right course of thought. What that something more is can best be seen by returning to the 'overtaking' metaphor of Fragment 8. 61:

τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἐουκότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὥς οὐ μὴ ποτέ τις σε βροτῶν γνῶμη παρελάσσει·

²⁷ A. A. Long, 'The Principles of Parmenides' Cosmology', *Phronesis*, VIII, No 2 (1963), 90-107.

... the whole ordering of these I tell thee as it seems likely, so that no thought of mortal men shall ever outstrip thee. (tr. Raven)

Paralassēi occurs just once in the poem, and its meaning, as Jonathan Barnes explained, is not transparent:

Some gloss it by 'outstrip' or the like, and explain that knowledge of the Way of Opinion will enable Parmenides to hold his own in argument with any old fashioned cosmologist he may meet. A better gloss, perhaps, is 'get the better of' or 'convince': the goddess, by describing the Way of Opinion and thereby indicating its flaws, will ensure that Parmenides does not succumb to meretricious temptations.²⁸

There is something odd in speaking of a thought or judgment literally 'driving past' us, and a search for a sensible, less literal, reading of *paralassēi* is understandable. The verb *parelaunō*, as some have noted,²⁹ is more at home in descriptions of chariot races, marking the moment when the trailing chariot catches up to the leading chariot from behind, and passes it by. It can also be used to describe a moving object (e.g. a chariot or ship) driving or passing by some stationary one. Parmenides' selection of *parelaunō* has been little discussed, and its presence has sometimes been discounted as incidental, a replacement for the more common *parelthēi* due to metrical considerations.³⁰

I am inclined to think otherwise: *parelaunō* is only one of a whole cluster of terms drawn from the language of chariots, and the chariot *dēris*, that Parmenides exploits to good purpose. The simile of the skillful charioteer plays an important role in his account of right thinking. The *kouros* arrives at the house of the goddess in a chariot (*harmia*) conveyed by horses and immortal charioteers (*hēniochoisîn*, Fr 1. 24). In the proem the youth enjoys something of a royal treatment, simply receiving the welcoming and kind treatment of the goddess and hearing her words. He is passive throughout: he is conveyed, is led, is set down, is carried, is received, his

²⁸ *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2 vols (London, 1979), vol i, 157.

²⁹ Mourelatos, above n 11, 226 n; Long, above n 27, 104 n 2; Furley, 'Parmenides of Elea', *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol 6 (New York and London, 1967), 49.

³⁰ Mourelatos, above n 11, 226 n: 'there is absolutely no hint in the immediate context or elsewhere in the poem that men or their opinions are pictured as charioteers in a race towards truth.' This is an overstatement, as will become evident when Parmenides' description is compared with earlier poetic accounts.

hand is taken, he is spoken to etc. He himself does nothing at all. Beginning with the speech of Fragment 2, the situation changes, as he is issued a steady stream of commands: come, attend (or carry away) my word, reflect on these things, keep away your thoughts, judge, keep in mind, etc. The passage along the way of thought is no longer a guided excursion but something of an ordeal. The *kouros* must, in short, become his own charioteer.

The simile of the skillful charioteer is not of course original with Parmenides; stories about the exploits of skillful charioteers go back as far as Homer and Hesiod, and probably much further.³¹ The chariot contests described by Homer and Hesiod differ sharply, and they serve different purposes. Homer's illustrates (among other things) the education of the youth (Antilochus) by the wise elder (Nestor), and Hesiod's extolls the virtues of hard labour. Both bear striking resemblances to the intellectual tasks set for Parmenides' youth. Hesiod's story (in the *Shield of Heracles*, 305 ff, echoing a passage in *Works and Days*, 292) emphasizes the necessity for hard work and suffering along the path to virtue.³²

Next to them were horsemen hard set, and they contended and laboured for a prize (*aethlōi dēris echon kai mochithon*). The charioteers, standing on their well-woven cars, urged on their swift horses with slack reins; the jointed cars flew along clattering and the naves of the wheels shrieked loudly. So they were engaged in unending toil and the end with victory came never to them, and the contest was ever unwon.

(tr. Evelyn-White)

The similarity between Hesiod's description of the shrieking naves of the wheels and the singing sockets of Parmenides' chariot has been noticed, but the full significance has been missed. First, Hesiod's race is a contest (*dēris*), not simply a journey toward some destination. Second, the charioteers

³¹ The *Rig Veda*, parts of which date from the middle of the second millennium BC, tells the story of the twins *Nāsatya*, a pair of gods similar to the Greek Dioscuri, who rescue mortals in distress. They travel in a chariot 'across darkness' (1. 46. 6) and are associated with a female figure, *Sūrya* (the sun, also called *duhitā sūryasya*, the daughter of the sun).

³² An injunction to keep toward the middle of the road in the travel toward virtue appears in the poems of Theognis, *Elegiacs*, 219-20, 331-2, 335-6. The chariot motif is also used by Pindar when he compares his poems with 'a car set in the pathway of song' and by Theognis, 'the gifts of the muses will carry you abroad' (247 ff).

of Hesiod's poem are unskilled failures, their slack-reined (*chalaiontes*) clattering methods contrasting with that of the expert Iolaus, 'strong Iolaus who stands upon the car and drives straight (*ithuneto*) the curved chariot' (323-4). Both the idea of the contest (*dēris*) and the steering down a controlled course will play a role in Parmenides' teaching.

The same contrast of tight control versus slack rein figures prominently in the teaching of Nestor in Book XXIII of the *Iliad*. There, just prior to the chariot race in the funeral games for Patroclus, Nestor attempts to give Antilochus the keys to victory. Since Antilochus' horses are slower than those of his competitors, the secret to success lies in technique rather than brute strength. Nestor speaks a hymn of praise to *mētis*, the 'cunning intelligence' of the woodsman, the helmsman, and the skilled charioteer, the ability to use timing, strategy, and dexterity, rather than brute force:

... by cunning does a charioteer prove better than charioteer. Another man, trusting in his horses and car, heedlessly roams wide to this side and that, and his horses wander over the course, and he does not hold them in. But he who has a cunning mind, although he drives poorer horses, keeps his eye on the turning post and turns close in, nor does it escape him how at first to keep his horses reined in and to hold them safely while watching the man in front. (318-25)

To improve Antilochus' chances against Menelaus, Nestor explains the unusual lay of the course, explaining that if he, Antilochus, can cut in close at the turning post (*terma*) and take the lead at that point, then no man will overtake him:

... if at the turning post you drive past (*parexelasēistha*) them, then no man will catch up to you, nor pass you by (*parelthēi*), not even if they were driving noble Arion, the swift horse of Adrastus. (344-7)

To mark the turning post, says Nestor, there is a *sēma*. Normally the *sēma* would be just a marker or sign, but here it is also a *sēma* in its secondary sense of 'tomb', a 'monument of some man long ago dead' (331).

Antilochus' execution of the scheme falls short of Nestor's hopes. Ignoring the elder's advice, Antilochus contrives a strategy all his own (*egōn autos technēsomai ēde noēsō*, 415), and decides to drive past Menelaus on a narrow stretch of the road. Scorning Menelaus' plea for him not to pass by

(*paralassai*) until the road widens, Antilochus veers off the track and forces a way past, causing Menelaus to pull up for fear of a collision. His mad dash has earned him a victory, but at the expense of his reputation (as the prototypical teenage driver). Only a belated apology (an appeal to the 'lightweight' cunning of youth) and an offer to return the prize can mollify the offended Menelaus.

There are many morals to Homer's story. It is clearly a lesson on the nature of *mētis* in its various forms, and a tale of excellence and the education of the youth along its path. It is also a story about the possession and exercise of *noos* (cf. line 604, his *noos* conquered by his youth). Antilochus both lacks *noos* himself and, far worse (as both Hesiod and Aristotle would state), he even fails to follow the advice of someone who has it. Prominent in the exercise of *noos* is the ability to identify and be guided by the *sēma*, an association that may stem from a common semantic origin.³³

Let us now listen to Parmenides' words, bearing in mind these passages in Homer and Hesiod. At the outset, the daughters of the sun set the 'much-guided' (*poluphrastoi*) horses in motion (line 4), and the adjective suggests close control rather than just knowledge or discernment.³⁴ The maidens keep the horses and car straight (*ithus echon*) along the broad way (l. 21). The goddess then greets the youth, explains the lesson that he is about to learn, and directs him in his choice of routes. The first way is a way of persuasion since it 'attaches to' truth (*opēdei*). The second way, of *mē eon*, is indicated to be a way from which nothing is ever learned, for it is uncompletable (*ou gar anuston*—literally a 'no win' path),³⁵ nor could you ever direct someone to it, point it out (*phrasais*). Unlike mortals, whose *noos* is steered straight

³³ See Gregory Nagy, 'Sēma and Nōēsis: Some Illustrations', *Arethusa*, XVI Nos 1 and 2 (1983), 35-55.

³⁴ Following the translation given by Mourelatos ('*phradzo* and its derivatives in Parmenides', *Classical Philology*, LX, No 4 (1965), 261-2) rather than as 'wise' (Raven) or 'well-discerning' (Tarán). It is true that Pindar's mules are 'skilled' or 'knowing' (*epistantai* in *Ol.* 6. 25), but the *phras-* element, meaning 'guide' or 'point out' (as in *phrastōr* meaning guide) should not be neglected. It is echoed at *Fr.* 2. 8 and 6. 2, where the middle form is used: we must now figure or point these things out for ourselves (*phradzesthai*).

³⁵ Cf. Sanskrit *sanoti*, 'to win'. The unstated assumption is that knowing is not possible unless there is something there to get to, gain, find out about.

(*ithunei*) only by helplessness (*amēchanīē*), we are to head away (*eirge*) our thought from the path in which what is not is allowed to exist; what does not exist cannot be guided, controlled, or forced to exist in any way (*damēi*).³⁶ Nor should we allow *ethos* to steer (*nōman*)³⁷ our 'unaimed' eye and resounding ear and tongue down this path. Instead we are to select the path of what exists, and along it lie many *sēmata* that it is uncreated and imperishable.³⁸ Parmenides' description sharply contrasts the controlled straight path along the correct route with the wandering straying path taken by mortals who believe that there are such things as divisions, changes, creations, and destructions.

In light of the many borrowings from the language of chariot driving and steering, the message embedded in Parmenides' poem would have been clear to his audience: right thinking requires both a correct choice of routes and a continuing effort to stay on course. The *kouros* must take the advice of a trustworthy guide, follow the *sēmata* that mark the correct way, resist the pull of forces that would lead him to wander off, and avoid being overtaken from behind. In short, the moral of the story is that we must think always

³⁶ Both *eirgō* and *damadzō* combine the two elements of forceful control and steering or aiming. *Eirgō* is both to force something to remain within a boundary, and to ward off a thing from an unwanted destination (cf. *Odyssey* (*Od.*), XII. 219, where Odysseus tries to *eergein* his ship from the cliff). *Damazō* usually means 'taming, subduing, winning', but it can also mean 'guiding' (as in *Pythian* (*Pyth.*), 2. 18: *edamasse* the horses with his gentle hands). The presence of a 'military' motif was noticed by G. Jameson in "'Well-rounded" truth and circular thought in Parmenides', *Phronesis*, III (1958), 15-30. He does not mention *elenchos* in this connection, and he takes the *dēris* to be the repulsing of an attack. For the reasons now being given, the chariot *dēris* is a likelier prospect.

³⁷ Another familiar chariot-driving expression: 'they will guide (*nōmasoisin*) the reins and chariot' (*Pyth.* 4. 18); *hania nōmasanto* (*Isthmian*, 1. 15).

³⁸ As Mourelatos explained, the figure of the *sēmata* giving guide is a familiar one in Homer, but in a way, Hesiod is perhaps the more vital comparison. He also speaks of a *sēma*, the great stone set up at Pytho by Zeus to serve as a sign and marvel to men (*Theogony*, 498-500). The frequency with which Parmenides alludes to Hesiodic ideas in the *doxa* section suggests that, like Heraclitus (Fr 106, Fr 40) Parmenides regarded Heraclitus as one of the more influential sources of mortal *gnōmē*, and hence more to be criticized. Fr 8. 2 might therefore have a pointed meaning: 'along this (i.e. *my*) road there are *sēmata* too, and they all point to no generation and no destruction.' For a recent account of the Hesiodic character of the *doxa*, see Mark Northrop, 'Hesiodic Personifications in Parmenides' A 37', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, CX (1980), 223-32.

and only that it exists, never thinking that it is created, destroyed, divided, changing, moving, or incomplete in any way, never allowing our thoughts to be influenced by how things appear or how we customarily think they are, nor being swayed by the current theories that implicitly reintroduce divisions and contradictions. The *elenchos* has been spoken, and only once, but because the decision that concludes the *elenchos* must continually be reaffirmed in the face of temptations and opposition, it creates a *dēris* that is *polu-*, a struggle that is 'much and many'.

In his account of the *dēris* of thinking, Parmenides employed a familiar poetic simile to make a revolutionary proposal: the individual can and must exercise control over his own *noos* and *noēma*, resisting the suggestive evidence of the senses, and (as the *doxa* section will make evident) his physical condition and circumstances.³⁹ The *kouros* is not to think in terms of the things he meets with,⁴⁰ and his *noos* is not to be just as the day that dawns upon him.⁴¹ He is to exercise control over his own *noos*, leaving the conventional path, and steadfastly taking his *noos* down one that is far off the beaten track of men.⁴²

At the heart of Parmenides' account of thinking was an *elenchos* or testing of the various ways in which mortals might think of what exists. By adapting an older idea of

³⁹ Fr 16 gives us a wholly anomalous account of the physical causes of thought, a *krasis* or mixture that leads to differing thoughts as the proportions in the mixture vary. It is obvious that not only is the heteronomy of this picture at odds with the autonomy of thought implicit in Frs 6-7, but so also are the acceptances of pluralities, opposites, and changes. It must, in short, be understood as a *gnōmē* or *doxa brotōn* to be resisted.

⁴⁰ Cf. Archilochus, Fr 70, 'such is the mind of mortal man . . . for he thinks such things as he meets with.'

⁴¹ Cf. Homer, *Od.* XVIII. 136-7, 'For the *noos* of men on this earth is like the day that the father of gods and men brings to them.'

⁴² The idea that Parmenides is the first to express confidence in mortal capacities to control their *noos* is at odds with the view recently defended by S. M. Darcus ('How a Person Relates to his *noos* in Homer, Hesiod, and the Greek Lyric Poets', *Glotta*, LVIII (1980), 33-44). Darcus thinks that the idea of controlling one's *noos* already appears in Homer, but the evidence she cites does not show this. Six of these passages involve *noos* in its special sense of 'plan', and the rest are either adverbial accusatives, or accusatives of respect (e.g. 'beyond all mortals in *noos*'). The closest one can get to control is *Od.* XIX. 42. *kata son noon ischane*, but this is still 'refrain in your *noos*' or 'refrain according to your *noos*'; we still do not have guidance, direction, control over our *noos*.

a testing of a thing's or person's qualities to a philosophical use, by conducting a serial review of the merits of each of the ways available for thinking, he succeeded in mounting a defence of his philosophy, even in the face of opposition and well-entrenched common sense. Judging from the similarities between his *elenchos* and arguments in philosophers from Gorgias and Philolaus to Socrates,⁴³ Plato,⁴⁴ Aristotle,⁴⁵ and beyond,⁴⁶ the philosophical *elenchos* must be counted one of Parmenides' more influential ideas.⁴⁷

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⁴³ In Plato's early dialogues, we often find Socrates putting various proposals and definitions to the test, using as his touchstone for acceptance their consistency with other propositions already agreed upon by his interlocutors. The Socratic *elenchos* is clearly a matter of cross-examination and, usually, refutation, but the idea of a testing remains. At *Gorgias*, 486d, he calls his *elenchos* a Lydian stone to rub against the soul of the individual to test its quality (a *lithon* used to *basamidzein* the *psychē*).

⁴⁴ In the *Philebus* (52d ff), Plato conducts an *elenchos* of pleasures so that we may make a *krisis* and ranking of the best life. The term *elenchos* appears here and elsewhere in the corpus, but the practice is much more common than the term. In the *Theaetetus* (161e7-8), the 'business of dialectic' is defined as just 'investigating and setting about to test (*elenchein*) one another's perceptions and opinions', paralleling the description of dialectic in the passage earlier cited from the *Republic* (534b-c).

⁴⁵ Among many examples of the *elenchos* procedure: the review of the *endoxa* in *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, putting to the test each of the promising candidates for *eudaimonia*, using as a measure the attributes of self-sufficiency, ultimacy, and epistemic superiority, and concluding in the choice of virtue over the competition of honour, wealth, and pleasure; the review in the *Metaphysics* of the promising contenders for *ousia*, in light of the conditions for substance that must be met—among many others.

⁴⁶ A distant relation of the Eleatic *elenchos* can be seen in Descartes' procedure in the *first Meditation*, putting each of the different kinds of belief to the test of methodic doubt, to see which, if any, has the power to convince him completely. Sense perception, memory, testimony, the truths of mathematics all fail; only the *cogito* possesses the requisite marks of clarity and distinctness to do so. While the similarities of the Cartesian procedure with the ancient *elenchos* may be clear, showing lines of influence between the two would require additional argument. As a conjecture, I would guess that it was adoption of the Socratic *elenchos* as a sceptical technique (see Cicero, *de Oratore*, III. 67; *Academica*, I. 4) and the transmission of techniques of sceptical doubt (through Cicero and others) to the modern French sceptics. For an account of the latter, see Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley, 1979).

⁴⁷ I am indebted to Jonathan Barnes, Robert Boughner, Myles Burnyeat, David Furley, Lawrence Jost, Alexander Mourelatos, and Malcolm Schofield for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

SEPARATION*

Gail Fine

Chōrismos is the only doctrine we can with certainty attribute to Plato.
(J. D. Mabbott¹)

1. Introduction

In *Metaphysics*, 1078b30 and 1086b30, Aristotle says that Plato, but not Socrates, separated (*echōrise*, 1086b4) Forms² or universals; in 1086b6-7, he says that separation is responsible for the difficulties in Plato's theory of Forms. What exactly is separation? Did Plato, but not Socrates, separate Forms? And if so, is this for the reasons Aristotle suggests? Is Aristotle right to find separation so objectionable?

Answers to these questions are disputed. Some believe, for example, that to say that the Form of *F* is separate is to say only that it is *different* from any or all *F* sensible particulars;³ others believe it is rather to say that it *can exist independently* of any given *F* sensible particular;⁴ yet others believe it is to

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¹ J. D. Mabbott, 'Aristotle and the *chōrismos* of Plato', *Classical Quarterly*, XX (1926), 72. Here and throughout the paper, I have transliterated the Greek. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

² I shall follow the practice of many and use an initial capital in 'Form', when the Forms of the middle dialogues that are supposed to be separate are in view; I use an initial small letter when Socratic forms are in view, or when it is (supposed to be) unclear how to view the entities in question.

³ W. D. Ross, e.g., in his *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1924), vol i, xliii, writes that 'to distinguish the universal from its particulars is in a sense to "separate" it. It is to think of it separately, and if the thought is not merely mistaken, this implies that the universal is a different entity from the particulars.' Ross goes on, however, to suggest that Aristotle has more in mind in saying that Plato separated Forms. Donald Ray Morrison, 'Three Criteria of Substance in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: Unity, Definability, and Separation' (Princeton Ph.D., 1983), suggests that what Aristotle means by 'separation' (*chōrismos*) is 'numerical distinctness'; see his ch IV.

⁴ R. E. Allen, *Plato's Euthyphro and the Earlier Theory of Forms* (London and New York, 1970), 132. Allen believes that more than this sort of independent existence is involved in separation; he also believes, for example, that it is part of Aristotle's meaning that Forms are particulars or individuals. However, although Aristotle seems to believe that particularity *follows* from separation, it is not part of what separation *consists in*.