PLATO'S PARMENIDES, PART TWO: A SUGGESTION

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Contemporary interpretations of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* have excluded consideration of a pro-Eleatic intent, on Plato's part, on the grounds that Eleaticism advocates a monism inconsistent with the pluralism implicit in this part of the dialogue.

Some recent interpreters of Eleaticism have suggested interpretations of the Parmenidean doctrine that are accommodating of pluralism, in varying degrees. If such interpretations are viable, then the way is cleared for a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*.

There is historical evidence for the existence of a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation of Part Two in the early part of the present millennium.

A review of the text of the *Parmenides* reveals that it is consistent with, and in places suggests, the adoption of a pro-Eleatic frame of reference for the interpretation of the second part.

From these and further considerations, I will conclude that sufficient evidence exists to warrant a full examination of the viability of a pro-Eleatic intent in the second part of the *Parmenides*, in the light of an alternate understanding of the "Way of Truth" of Parmenides of Elea.
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INTRODUCTION

THE PROJECT

Contemporary interpretations of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* have excluded consideration of a pro-Eleatic intent, on Plato's part, on the grounds that Eleaticism advocates a monism inconsistent with the pluralism implicit in this part of the dialogue.

Some recent interpreters of Eleaticism have suggested interpretations of the Parmenidean doctrine that are accommodating of pluralism, in varying degrees. If such interpretations are viable, then the way is cleared for a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*.

There is historical evidence for the existence of a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation of Part Two in the early part of the present millennium.

A review of the text of the *Parmenides* reveals that it is consistent with, and in places suggests, the adoption of a pro-Eleatic frame of reference for the interpretation of the second part.

From these and further considerations, I will conclude that sufficient evidence exists to warrant a full examination of the viability of a pro-Eleatic intent in the second part of the *Parmenides*, in the light of an alternate understanding of the "Way of Truth" of Parmenides of Elea.
Part I: The Interpretations

The first chapter contains a review of the interpretations of Parmenides of Elea proposed in the twentieth century. The chapter begins by exposing the strict numerical monism exegeses proposed before, and after, 1960. Following this, some of the recent proposals, which interpret Parmenides' doctrine in terms other than strict numerical monism, are presented.

Chapter 2 exposes and discusses the four main types of interpretations of the second part of Plato's Parmenides (hereafter, PP/2) being endorsed in this century. They are: the Anti-Eleatic Interpretation (AEI), which argues for PP/2 containing a criticism of Eleaticism; the Non-Eleatic Interpretation (NEI), which denied there being any connection between PP/2 and Eleaticism; the Neo-Platonic Interpretation (NPI), which finds, in PP/2, a revelation of Plato's views on the nature of first principles; and, the Exercise Interpretation (EI), which sees PP/2 as containing an illustration of method, and/or, of logical exercises.

In the third chapter, the link between Eleaticism and the interpretation of PP/2 is identified as being the interpreter's endorsement of the strict numerical monism understanding of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea.

Chapter 4 exposes and discusses three of the four interpretational paths, for the interpretation of PP/2, taken by interpreters living before and during the Procline era.
(A.D. fifth century). The endorsement patterns of the three are then followed through to the end of the eighteenth century.

Chapter 5 introduces and explains the fourth interpretational path taken by some ancient interpreters. It pertains to a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation (PEI) of PP/2 which finds its purpose to be an inquiry into the nature of the Parmenidean One Being, conducted by means of the dialectical method. The evidence linking this interpretation with Origen the Platonist (ca. A.D. third century), a supporter of "mainstream" Platonism, is also presented.

Part II: Textual Analyses

Chapters 6 and 7 expose, analyze, and discuss, a number of passages in the text of the Parmenides, located prior to Parm. 137c, the point at which PP/2 begins. The aim of these targeted reviews is to establish that the literary framework of the Parmenides supports a pro-Eleatic intent, on Plato's part, for the interpretation of PP/2.

In the Summary, it is suggested that a full examination of the viability of a pro-Eleatic intent in the second part of the Parmenides is warranted.

REFERENCES

Unless otherwise stated, the citations from Plato's Parmenides are taken from Plato, trans. H.N. Fowler, vol.6, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, reprinted 1963, 193-331. The
PART I

THE POEM OF PARMENIDES & PLATO'S PARMENIDES
THE INTERPRETATIONS
The Pre-1960 Interpretations

The early cosmologists had accepted that the world which presents to sensory perception exists: their concern had been to explicate its origin. The theories which they proposed, in this regard, explained the existence of the many things in the world as having been generated from a primordial One or Original Unity (arche, beginning, origin). The twentieth century interpreters, writing before 1960, identified Parmenides' contribution to this cosmological discussion as having been to realize, and to demonstrate by logical means, the impossibility of generating multiplicity from unity.

Francis M. Cornford interprets Parmenides in this manner. He writes:

[Parmenides'] thought is really at work upon this abstract concept; he considers what further attributes can, or cannot, logically belong to a being that is one. At the same time, this One Being is not a mere abstraction; it proves to be a single continuous and homogeneous substance filling the whole of space. . . . Such a being cannot become or cease to be or change; such a unity cannot also be a plurality. There is no possible transition from the One Being to the manifold and changing world which our senses seem to reveal. (1939, 29)

As the cited passage makes clear, Cornford sees Parmenides as having examined the first assumption or
principle proposed by earlier cosmologists. W.T. Stace, on the other hand, seems to be saying that he proposed a first principle of his own. Stace writes:

Hence the thought of Parmenides becomes the effort to find the eternal amid the shifting, the abiding and everlasting amid the change and mutation of things. And there arises in this way the antithesis between Being and not-being. The absolutely real is Being. Not-being is the unreal. Not-being is not at all. And this not-being he identifies with becoming, with . . . the world which is known to us by the senses. The world of sense is unreal, illusory, a mere appearance. It is not-being. Only Being truly is. As Thales designated water the one reality, as the Pythagoreans named number, so now for Parmenides the sole reality, the first principle of things, is Being, wholly unmixed with not-being, wholly excludent of all becoming. (1953, 44)

Other interpreters explicate the Parmenidean intent somewhat differently. Where they all concur is in their understanding of Parmenides’ doctrine as being one which affirms the existence of only one thing or entity, thereby denying reality to plurality.

The Post-1960 Interpretations

Alexander P.D. Mourelatos reports that, relative to the interpretation of Parmenides, there occurred "in the 'sixties and 'seventies, in English language scholarship, that rarest of phenomena in the study of ancient philosophy, the emergence of a consensus" (1979, 3). The four interpretive theses about which most post-1960 interpreters agree upon are:

1. The subject of esti (is) or eînai (to be) is being deliberately suppressed by Parmenides, when he states the two
routes of inquiry, in the second fragment. It is only when his argument unfolds that the subject gradually becomes specified.

2. The negative route "is not" (ouk esti) or "not to be" (mē einai) is prohibited because the sentences that accompany that path do not refer (semantically speaking) to actual entities.

3. Parmenides' argument does not rely on his having confused the predicational and the existential senses of "is".

4. Esti and einai, in the relevant contexts, are to be taken as involving a "fused" or "veridical" usage of the verb "to be". That is, they "have the force of 'is actual' or 'obtains,' or 'is the case,' envisaging a variable subject x that ranges over states-of-affairs" (1979, 3).

While acknowledging the existence of "considerable variation of scholarly opinion that obtains within the consensus," Mourelatos believes that "one may even speak of the emergence of a standard Anglo-American interpretation of Parmenides" (1979, 3) which he calls "SI", for short. This, on the grounds that the four theses outlined above in abstract and schematic form are basic to the interpretation of Parmenides' "Way of Truth".

SI's prototype is contained in G.E.L. Owen's article "Eleatic Questions", originally published in 1960 and reprinted with corrections and additions in Owen (1986). Given the influence which his exegesis has had on the interpreters writing after him, it will be informative to acquire an understanding of the line of reasoning which led Owen to see Parmenides as being, like Descartes, a thinker who started
from an assumption the denial of which is self-refuting.

In the second fragment, the goddess begins her argument by differentiating between two routes of inquiry:

The one - that [it] is, and that [it] cannot not be,  
Is the path of Persuasion (for it attends upon truth);  
The other - that [it] is not and that [it] needs must not be,  
That I point out to you to be a path wholly unlearnable,  
For you could not know what-is-not (for that is not feasible),  
Nor could you point it out. (2.3-8)

Other translations of 2.8 include: "Nor express it" (Taran 1965, 32), and, "Nor utter it" (Kirk & Raven 1957, 269).

The subject of "is" (éstin) and "is not" (ouk éstin) is left unexpressed by the goddess at 2.3, and 2.5, thereby leading the interpreter to query what it could be. Some of Owen's predecessors 'imported' a subject from earlier cosmological theories (Cornford 1939, for example); others, (Owen mentions Diels) take to eon (what-is) as the subject; still others, (Owen mentions Hermann Fraenkel) propose that éstin is used by Parmenides in an impersonal way.

For reasons which he explains in his article, Owen rejects these approaches and leaves the subject blank until the text itself can provide him with enough information to supply one. What he is looking for, it must be noted, is not a grammatical subject for the "is" and "is not" of 2.3 and 2.5, since Owen believes that the text provides sufficient evidence to conclude that Parmenides was "prepared to dispense with one" (1986, 15 n.50). His concern is to establish what
subject will, from the start of her argument, satisfy the description given of it, by the goddess, as she proceeds with this argument.

The third fragment is interpreted by Owen as being an explanation of why the path of "what-is-not" cannot be known or spoken about: it is" ... because the same thing is there for thinking and for being." The fourth, he takes to be a statement of the indivisibility of "what-is" (to eon).

In the sixth fragment, at 6.1, the goddess repeats the claim made earlier at 2.7-8. Then, she restrains Parmenides from following a third avenue of inquiry: namely, the path taken by:

... mortals knowing nothing
By whom being and not-being have been thought both the same
And not the same; ... (6.4, 6.8-9)

In the eighth, she states:

... the decision about these matters depends on this:
Is [it] or is [it] not? but it has been decided, as is necessary,
To let go the one as unthinkable, unnameable
(for it is no true Route), but to allow the other, so that it is, and is true. (8.15-18)

Owen now had the material he needs to supply the subject of 2.3 and 2.5. He sees it as there being three possible ways to answer the question "Is [it] or is [it] not?" (ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν?) which, together, exhaust the possibilities. One can say that "it" does not exist (οὐκ ἔστιν). This path, which seems not to have been taken by anyone, amounts to saying that nothing exists. One can answer that "it" exists, or, that "it" does not exist, depending upon what is the subject, the
existence of which is being queried. This is the avenue taken by mortals who want to say that while cats exists, mermaids do not. Both of these two answers - the unqualified "No", and the "Yes or No" - are prohibited by the goddess, leaving the third answer as the only possibility: an unqualified "Yes [it] exists" (ἐστίν).

What is "it", then, that exists and that cannot not exist (2.3)? Owen finds his answer in the goddess' premise, stated at 2.7-8: that which does not exist can neither be known nor spoken about. Or, what amounts to the same thing, that what does exist can be thought of or spoken about (6.1). And, since the only permissible answer to the question asked at 8.16 is "ἐστίν", Owen concludes that "[w]hat is declared to exist in B2 is simply what can be talked or thought about; for the proof of its existence is that, if it did not exist, it could not be talked or thought about" (1986, 15).

On this understanding of his undertaking, Parmenides emerges as an original thinker who broke new philosophical grounds, in that, unlike the philosophers of his and earlier eras, he did not take the physical world as a datum. As W.K.C. Guthrie puts it:

Like an ancient Descartes, he asked himself what, if anything, it was impossible not to believe; and to him the answer was est: something exists. If we accept Owen's persuasive interpretation of fr.2, not even this was the ultimate premise. That was, like Descartes's [sic], cogito; but the first inference was not cogito ergo sum, but cogito, ergo est quod cogito. (1969, II.20)

For Owen, then, the subject of the second fragment is any logical subject, the formal properties of which are deduced in
the course of the goddess' argument in the "Way of Truth". But he accepts that, "as the argument goes, to eon is a correct description of the subject" (1986, 10). Owen's point is that to eon cannot be taken as the subject from the start of the argument because "Parmenides purports to prove that it is a correct description, and that . . . his proof is not a disingenuous petitio principii, and therefore he cannot be assuming it from the start" (1986, 10).

The overall argument, on the SI analysis, has the same force that the pre-1960 analysis had, of identifying Parmenides' doctrine with numerical monism. (See Mourelatos 1979, 4, for an outline of the steps which lead to this conclusion.)

Some of the interpreters to have endorsed SI include David Gallop (1984); G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven, and M. Schofield (1990); and Montgomery Furth (1974).

The Dominant Understanding

Since all the interpretations exposed above, regardless of when they were written (before or after 1960), hold that the Parmenidean doctrine is one which affirms the existence of only one thing or entity, it becomes possible to say that the understanding which is dominant (that is, most endorsed) in this century, is one which interprets Parmenides as expounding a strict numerical monism. In the remainder of this study, when I mention the "Dominant Understanding " or "DU", it is to be taken as being a reference to the strict numerical monism understanding of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea.
The exegeses proffered by Alexander P.D. Mourelatos (1970, 1979) and Jonathan Barnes (1979) helped to open the door to interpretations of Parmenides which, in one way or another, abandon the notion that numerical monism is that thinker's central thesis.

Barnes' article contains his analyses of the nine passages in the "Way of Truth" cited by scholars as being the textual support for Parmenides' monistic thesis. His findings, relative to the content of these passages, is that none of them "states or argues for real [i.e., numerical] monism" (1979, 17). So, he tentatively concludes "that it is not the case that Parmenides was a monist" (1979, 20). As for the reason why the doxographers make him a monist, Barnes' explanation is the following:

Melissus soon became the chief representative of the Eleatic School; and Parmenides' obscure verses were read - and misread - in the light of his successor's clear prose. The careless conflation of the two men by Plato began a tradition which still trammels us. (1979, 21 n.77)

Mourelatos argues, contra SI, for the "is" of the two routes of the second fragment to be "syntactically copulative" (1979, 10). By "syntactically copulative", he means that Parmenides does not only leave out the subject of "is" at 2.3 and 2.5, but also the predicate complement.

In his understanding of the eighth fragment, Mourelatos follows SI's exegesis with the following important addition: "the attributes of what-is are obtained through a refutation
not of plurality and difference as such but of contrastive-complementary characterizations" (1979, 10). He explains in thus:

Through an elenchus of such paired oppositions as "after vs. before" (B8.10), "greater vs. lesser" (B8.23–24), "here vs. there" (implicit in B8.29–32), "stronger vs. weaker" (B8.45, 8.48), the goddess establishes -respectively- that what-is is agêneton, "ungenerable," oude diaireton, "nor divisible," akinēton, "immobile," and tetelesmenon, "fully developed, perfect." As with the paired forms of the "Doxa," one item in each pair "may not properly be named." But in enforcing the krisis the complementarity is abolished, and the item selected is radically redefined as a reduced or neutral attribute of what-is. (1979, 10–11)

What follows from this interpretation of Parmenides is that his monism "is strictly a non-dualism, or anti-dualism" (1979, 11). Mourelatos writes:

It is with Zeno, Melissus, and Empedocles that the conception of monism becomes embedded in a dialectic of the One and the Many. Introducing this nuance of a distinction between Parmenides and the other two Eleatics makes intelligible the conspicuous absence of the language of hen and polla, as well as of the formula hen to pan, "all things are one," from the Parmenides [sic] fragments; but it does not deny the otherwise strong conceptual-dialectical ties that bind these three philosophers into a single group. (1979, 11)

Four other contemporary interpreters to have proposed alternates to the Dominant Understanding of Eleaticism are: Mitchell H. Miller Jr. (1979, 1986); Milton K. Munitz (1974, 1986); Lawrence J. Hatab (1990); and Patricia Kenig Curd (1991).

Miller believes that when one pays close attention to the
substances of both the proem and the Doxa part of the poem, of Parmenides of Elea, the "dominant interpretation [is] problematic". This is because:

Parmenides' monism is dialectical, founded on the disclosure of the internal reference of the contraries of Ionian cosmology to 'nothing' and, in turn, of 'nothing' to being-as-such. Since, within this context, being emerges as the being, as such, of the contraries, the contraries emerge as beings. The precise irony and pointed language of a number of passages in B4, B7, and B8 indicate that Parmenides recognized the implication of this - that the unity of being includes plurality even while it precludes heterogeneity - and began to wrestle with the consequent problem of the ontological status of difference. (1986, 200 n.45)

The understanding of Parmenides proposed by Munitz centers around his distinguishing between esti and eon. He writes:

Much of the standard, traditional interpretation of Parmenides' philosophy has been vitiated by permitting a basic confusion to be made between esti and eon. The result has been to attribute to Parmenides the outrageous view that there is no change, no motion, no coming into existence or going out of existence, no plurality of things and events in the world. This absurd thesis need not be saddled on Parmenides. For once the distinction is recognized between being (eon) and 'that is (esti), what Parmenides wishes to affirm of being - for example, that it is ungenerated and imperishable - need not be taken as applying to particular existents or beings. To attribute to Parmenides the view that denies the existence of plurality and change is to convict him of a flagrant rejection of the most ordinary experience, let alone of what is presupposed in any more sophisticated scientific investigation of the facts of nature . . . it convicts Parmenides of a form of madness. It also makes totally incomprehensible . . . the obvious and
incontestable fact that Parmenides himself, in the *Doxa* section of his *Poem*, is engaged in the same type of scientific, physical, and cosmological inquiry. It assigns to Parmenides the most glaring inconsistency in his own thought. (1986, 39-40)

According to Munitz, what made Parmenides such a great philosopher is that he was a multi-levels thinker: that is, he apprehended the world from many perspectives. Munitz explains it thus:

What [Parmenides] has to say when he discusses ontology and the general notion of Being, on the one hand, and what he is engaged in trying to understand when he, and others, are engaged in trying to describe and explain ordinary natural phenomena and the structure of the cosmos, on the other, are two different matters. The theses Parmenides holds about Being do not in the least conflict with or make otiose the work of the scientist or the deliverances of everyday experience. These are two separate though related dimensions of what we can say about the world in which we live. If one accepts, with Parmenides, that Being is eternal, unchanging, indivisible, and totally unique, this in no way requires these metaphoric and negative terms of description, used in connection with Being, to hold also for the domain of ordinary experience or the phenomena investigated by the scientist. The two live side by side and are perfectly compatible with one another. (1986, 40)

Hatab begins by admitting that the idea of Parmenides denying the possibility of change and nonbeing is one which has some textual support, and then goes on to say:

But the way in which the argument is interpreted and the translations chosen to render the original Greek can introduce philosophical problems which perhaps were never intended. . . . perhaps change and negation are illusions; but Parmenides attributes them to human opinion (fr.9), which is a less drastic term than illusion. The real problem, however, is the strong
claim in the way of truth that such ideas are impossible and unthinkable. This seems counterintuitive, as does the proposed conclusion that nothing in reality is changing. Furthermore, one wonders why Parmenides would even allow an extensive discussion of such ideas in the way of opinion.

I think the problem lies less with Parmenides and more with his interpreters, for two reasons. First, they assume the precedence of a formal deductive method and clearly established rules of logical classification, as if Parmenides were executing his thought in the same way as Plato and Aristotle, for example. Secondly, the translations of Parmenidean "Being" are too often derived from a reified sense of "entities" or "beings". The result is the usual picture of Parmenides' argument: Since the categories being and nonbeing exclude each other, then a being or an entity must always remain in being and cannot be thought to not be. Therefore nothing ever changes (i.e., loses certain states of being) or goes out of being . . . But I think Parmenides might be having words he did not intend put in his mouth. The "problem" of change might be a pseudoproblem owing to a misapprehension of the meaning of Being in the poem. This shows itself when einai and other terms are translated as "it is" or "things that are" or "beings", renderings which seem more appropriate for the way of opinion (individual entities) than the way of truth. For Parmenides, Being itself is to be distinguished, I think, from any sense of a particular being or entity. . . . As a consequence we find Parmenides thinking the Being of beings rather than Being as beings (i.e., as simply a generalization of all things that exist). (1990, 187-8)

The alternative interpretation of the Poem preferred by Hatab centers on the grammatical function of the "is" implying the general notion of disclosure. He writes:

I would read the way of truth in the following manner. Parmenides' objections to non-Being do not refer to a supposed correlation of entities and opposite states (beings and nonbeing). Rather, if Being means disclosure, then talking about
non-Being would imply something that is impossible: disclosing something not disclosed. . . . If Being means disclosure and disclosure means thought and language, then it is impossible to think or speak non-Being, i.e., nondisclosure, since any thinking or speaking is a mode of disclosure. Hence Being is everpresent, self-contained, unchangeable, in this sense. Such, I think, is a much more plausible reading of the way of truth. Being, therefore, is not something static but an all-encompassing process, more a verb (be-ing) than a noun (entity). Accordingly, the "truth" of Being mentioned in the prologue can be identified with disclosure as such (a-letheia, unconcealment), and Being can be connected with the primal meaning of physis. (1990, 188-9).

Curd believes that Parmenides should be interpreted in terms of his having shared the concerns of his predecessors and contemporaries. The theories which would have been of particular interest to him, in Curd’s opinion, would have been the ones proposed by the Milesians, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus. However, she sees Parmenides as not having been concerned only with ascertaining the truth of these theories, "but also with the criteria a philosophical theory of being must meet in order to be an acceptable account of how things really are" (1991, 245).

On Curd’s exegesis of the "Way of Truth", an acceptable (to Parmenides) account of being or reality would find the fundamental entity (or entities), posited by a particular theory as being what underlies and explains the phenomena, capable of satisfying the following four criteria (taken from 8.1-6): "what is is (1) ungenerable and indestructible, (2) indivisible, (3) immobile, and (4) complete or perfect" (1991, 254).
To illustrate: Thales proposed "water" as being the one and only real thing underlying and explaining the phenomena. Were Parmenides to question Thales's theory, it would be for the purpose of ascertaining whether "water" could actually serve in that capacity. For "water" to pass Parmenides' four criteria, it would have to be ungenerable and imperishable, indivisible, and so on. If it fails to satisfy any one of the four, then "despite being a single thing that is supposedly named or called 'being' it cannot be the ultimate underlying reality; and Thales' system fails" (1991, 256).

Curd differentiates among three kinds of monism: material, numerical, and predicational. Material monism holds that the many things in the world are constituted of one single elemental substance. Proponents of material monism include Thales (water) and Anaximenes (air). Numerical monism asserts the existence of one thing or item in the world. It is this kind of monism which has traditionally been attributed to Parmenides.

Influenced by Jonathan Barnes' (1979) article, which she mentions in this regard, Curd's analysis of the text of the "Way of Truth" leads her to argue for Parmenides' "arguments about the only true account of being show[ing] him to be committed to predicational monism. Whatever is must be a predicational unity; but this is consistent with there being many ones" (1991, 243). She defines "predicational monism" as "the claim that each thing that is can be only one thing; it can hold only one predicate, and must hold it in a particularly strong way" (1991, 242-3). By "a particularly
strong way", Curd means the following: "all claims of the form 'X is f' are claims of what X is by nature, so that no internal divisions are possible; no claim that has the form 'X is by nature not-f' are allowed" (1991, 263).

Predicational monism "rules out the possibility of change; what is completely and in its nature only one thing, F, say, cannot change in any way at all" (1991, 260-1). However, in and of itself, predicational monism does not rule out there being many one beings or fundamental entities, providing each entity fulfills the requirement of holding to only one predicate in this strong way.

In the Appendix of her article, Curd shows that predicational monism plus Parmenides' principle "éstin è ouk éstin?", entails numerical monism. However, she also holds that Parmenides himself did not notice this entailment. Therefore, in terms of the present study, her interpretation can be classed together with the alternatives to numerical monism.

These brief expositions of the views of Miller, Munitz, Hatab, and Curd, do not do them justice. My purpose was to show that there are a number of ways to understand Parmenides which, while respecting what is stated in the extant fragments and thereby interpreting Parmenides' position in terms of some kind of monism, do not rule out the possibility of plurality.
CHAPTER TWO
PLATO'S PARMENIDES
TWENTIETH CENTURY INTERPRETATIONS OF PART TWO

Nearly a century ago, A.E. Taylor wrote:

Few monuments of antiquity have provoked and continue to provoke so much discussion as the Parmenides of Plato. There is hardly any question, whether of fact or of interpretation, raised by this dialogue upon which the most divergent opinions have not been held by equally competent authorities. (1896, 297)

Despite a sustained and extensive output of articles and books published in the intervening years, Taylor's comment continues to hold true. The section of the dialogue which is the most debated in terms of its interpretation begins at Parm. 137c and runs to the end of the dialogue. It is usually referred to by the interpreters as "the second part". (In this study, it is referred to as "the second part"; "part two"; and "PP/2".)

Since Antiquity, two types (often called "traditions" in the literature) of interpretation have been associated with the second part of Plato's Parmenides, the metaphysical and the exercise. An exercise type of interpretation finds PP/2 to be the illustration of an exercise or method. The interpretations classifiable under the metaphysical tradition find PP/2 to have a metaphysical conclusion. In the present context, the term "metaphysical" is to be taken in its broadest sense, so as to include topics more accurately rendered by words like "theology", "ontology", "worldview", 21
and, "philosophical system".

THE METAPHYSICAL INTERPRETATIONS

The Anti-Eleatic Interpretation (AEI)

As its name is intended to suggest, AEI accepts that the subject (or, one of the subjects) of PP/2 is the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea, and, that at least some of its content constitutes a criticism of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea. The seriousness of the criticism ranges from, fatal to the viability of this position, to, correctional in intent. Kenneth Sayre’s exegesis is an example of the former. He argues for PP/2 containing a "refutation of the dictum of the historical Parmenides in the most definitive way possible" (1978, 145-6). F.M. Cornford’s interpretation is an example of the latter. Cornford states: "It does not seem to me impossible that Plato should represent Parmenides as supplying material which could be used for the correction of his own doctrine" (1939, 134 n.2). Two of the other interpreters who have argued for PP/2 correcting the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea are H.F. Cherniss (1932) and W.F. Lynch (1959).

What speaks strongly against the viability of the Anti-Eleatic Interpretation is that (as Part II of this study will demonstrate) the literary framework of the dialogue supports a pro-Eleatic, not an anti-Eleatic, intent on the part of Plato for the dialogue as a whole, and, especially, for PP/2. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that the same author who, in the Sophist, has a character named the "Eleatic
Stranger" say that he is committing "parricide" on "father Parmenides" before daring to question the latter's admonishment regarding exploring the route of "things that are not" (Sophist 241d, 237a) would, in another dialogue, have a character whom he names "Parmenides" and seeming to refer to Parmenides of Elea, refute or correct the doctrine of the historical Parmenides without having first established a reason to do so. One recalls that, in the Sophist, Plato qua author provided cause to go against the admonition of Parmenides of Elea.

Some of the supporters of AEI have argued for Plato using PP/2 to demonstrate to Parmenides' followers that his doctrine contains internal discrepancies. On this understanding, the fact that the protagonist which undertakes this demonstration is named "Parmenides" is to be taken as being a gesture of respect on Plato's part. Two interpreters to have so argued are F.M. Cornford (1939) and Paul Friedländer (1969).

If this were true, then given the importance which Plato puts on education in his entire corpus, it does not seem to make sense that he would assign what is described in the text as the proper philosophical training of Socrates (Parm. 135d, 136a, and 136c) to a literary character whose historical namesake he believes to hold a doctrine which is internally inconsistent.

The Non-Eleatic Interpretation (NEI)

The label "Non-Eleatic" is an umbrella term which will be used here to group together those metaphysical interpretations
which find the subject of PP/2 to be other than the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea, and, its subject-matter to pertain to other than that thinkers' doctrine. Often the 'replacements' suggested are the Platonic Idea of Unity, and, a Platonic content - that is, a thesis within the ambit of Plato's doctrinal views. As for the purpose of PP/2, two of the suggestions proposed are: (a) that it undertakes to lay down some aspects of a Platonic ontology; and (b) that it makes points pertinent to the discussion about Ideas-sensibles participation which took place in the first part of this dialogue. Supporters of (a) include F.M. Cornford (1939), W.F. Lynch (1959), and Kenneth Sayre (1978, 1983). Supporters of (b), include K.P. Johansen (1956), W.G. Runciman (1959), R. S. Brumbaugh (1961), J.N. Findlay (1978), Julius M. Moravcsik (1982), R.E. Allen (1983), Mitchell H. Miller Jr. (1986), Patricia Kenig Curd (1986, 1988), and Constance C. Meinwald (1991).

The fact that the Non-Eleatic proposals can link the content of PP/2 with the content of the first part of the dialogue, and thereby provide a concrete connection between the two main parts of the Parmenides, is an asset to this position. But the 'price' paid by these exegeses comes by way of their rejecting that the passage at Parm. 137b, where Parmenides informs those present that he will be using his own hypothesis as the sole subject of PP/2, is a reference to the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea.

Both NEI and AEI interpreters have serious difficulties reconciling their interpretations with the literary
framework of the dialogue. There is, however, a sort of Platonist interpretation which may not be subject to this difficulty: namely, the Neo-Platonic Interpretation (NPI). Since the Neo-Platonists regard Plato's views in the Parmenides to be at least roughly consistent with those of Parmenides of Elea, there is, for them, no problem reconciling the literary framework with the content of PP/2 as they interpret it.

The Neo-Platonic Interpretation (NPI)

The school called "Neo-Platonism" sees PP/2 as containing a revelation of Plato's views on the nature of first principles. The trademark of NPI is the belief, shared by all its supporters, that the "One" of the First Hypothesis of PP/2 (from Parm. 137c to 142a) refers to the Transcendent Principle which is unknowable to the human mind and characterizable only by negations. Neo-Platonic commentators disagree among themselves as to how many different "ones" are exposed in the remaining Hypotheses of PP/2, but they do concur that this section of the dialogue explores a hierarchy of levels of beings, and, that the "ones" (at least two) therein defined are immanent, derivative, and existing, constructs. The interpreters which Cornford (1939, p.viii) names as having endorsed NPI in this century are: Jean Wahl, Max Wundt, A. Speiser, and Enzo Paci.

The standard criticism levelled against the Neo-Platonic Interpretation is that, not being able to claim any textual support, it has a need to impose an artificial structure upon
the existing one. Referring to Wahl et al, Cornford says: "All these writers would, I think, admit that this revelation of mystical doctrine could never have been discovered by anyone who had nothing more to go upon than the text of the dialogue itself" (1939, 131). (See also Allen 1983, 189-195.)

THE EXERCISE INTERPRETATION

The Exercise Interpretation (EI)

The supporters of the Exercise Interpretation deny that the purpose of PP/2 is the imparting of metaphysical doctrine. As for what is its purpose, some EI endorsers, including Gilbert Ryle and Thomas W. Bestor, stress the demonstration of a particular method. Ryle argues for PP/2 being a demonstration of "the two-way Zenonian method of argumentation, dressed up in questioner-answerer style" (1963, 145-6). Bestor believes that PP/2 "was written for the Athenian Academy and for students - as an elementary training manual in the [aporematic] method which the Academy specialized in teaching" (1980, 68). Other interpreters, including Richard Robinson and David Ross, stress the notion of exercise or training. Robinson finds PP/2 to be "an exercise or gymnastic [which] does not in itself attain truth of any kind; but it sets the muscles of the mind in a better state to obtain truth hereafter" (1942, 176). Ross says that the only reason Parmenides undertakes the exercises of PP/2 is to train Socrates in "philosophical thinking" (1951, 83). So educated, the latter will then be better equipped
intellectually for the "ultimate grasping of philosophical truth" (1951, 99). In some EI interpretations, it is hard to separate the two components. Paul Shorey, for example, argues for PP/2 providing mental training "in a kind of logical exercise that the multitude will deem foolishness. The method of such mental gymnastics is to select a [sic] hypothesis and work out all the consequences of both its affirmation and its negation" (1958, 289).

Both the "illustration of method" and the "training exercises" understandings of the purpose of PP/2 can claim textual support: the former at Parm. 135d7, 136e6; the latter, at Parm. 135c8, 135d4, 136a2, and, 136c5.

Note that EI has a negative thesis ("the purpose of PP/2 is not the imparting of metaphysical doctrine") and a positive thesis ("the purpose of PP/2 is to illustrate an exercise or method of training"). In this study, I will not refer to someone as an exponent of EI unless she or he endorses both the negative and the positive theses.

Given that it relies on claims which are unambiguously stated in the text, the positive thesis of EI is difficult to ignore, and, to fault. Accordingly, many metaphysical interpreters accept that training and/or the illustration of a particular method is one of the purposes, but not the primary one, of this part of the text.
CHAPTER THREE
THE LINK BETWEEN THE DOMINANT UNDERSTANDING OF ELEATICISM
AND THE INTERPRETATION OF PART TWO OF PLATO'S PARMENIDES

There is no contemporary interpretation of the Parmenides
which espouses a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation (PEI) of PP/2. In
other words, no contemporary interpreter has argued for PP/2
having as its purpose the expounding or disclosing or refining
of the Parmenidean doctrine. Why not?

In order to hold PEI one must identify some metaphysical
content to PP/2, and hold that this metaphysical content is a
version of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea. One also wants
to take the literary framework of the Parmenides at face
value. So doing, means identifying Plato's protagonist with
his historical namesake and accepting that the subject of PP/2
is the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea.

Technically, exponents of PEI need only attribute to
Plato some view as to the doctrine of the historical
Parmenides. But, in actuality, each assessor of the viability
of PEI allows his or her own view as to the doctrine of the
historical Parmenides to colour the attribution to Plato. An
interpreter is not likely to attribute to Plato a view
concerning Parmenides' doctrine which she or he finds wholly
implausible based on evidence all of which Plato had at hand.

As it happens none of those offering alternative
interpretations to strict numerical monism have provided a
detailed interpretation of PP/2 capitalizing on the
alternative understanding of the historical Parmenides. (Curd
{1986, 1988} endorses NEI which argues for the subject of PP/2 being the Idea of Unity, and for Plato's Parmenides not representing his historical namesake.) The outcome of this state of affairs is that the contemporary exponents of the metaphysical interpretation of PP/2 see an insuperable obstacle to identifying the metaphysical content of PP/2 with the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea. This is because some of the claims made about "the one" (to hen) in PP/2 are inconsistent with the Dominant Understanding of Eleaticism. For example, whereas DU affirms that Parmenides expounded numerical monism, PP/2 describes "the one" as being "in other" (Parm.145e), and mention is made of there being "other things" besides "the one" (Parm.157b). Given these inconsistencies, the choices available to the contemporary interpreters endorsing DU are the following.

When these interpreters accept that the subject of PP/2 is the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea, they have no choice but to endorse EI or AEI. As to which of these two interpretational positions will be chosen, that depends on whether they believe that the content of PP/2 is relevant in a manner other than as 'material' for the illustration of a particular methodology. If no, then EI; if yes, then AEI.

The interpreters who do not take the subject of PP/2 to be the One of Parmenides of Elea, may endorse either EI or NEI. Here again, which of the two is chosen depends on how the content of PP/2 is taken by these interpreters. If it is perceived as being relevant in a manner other than as 'material' for the illustration of a particular methodology,
then NEI; if not, then EI.

It is to be noted that the positive thesis of EI can be endorsed by both AEI and NEI interpreters as a non-primary purpose for PP/2. This is because EI is 'neutral' as to what is its subject, in the sense that its value is as 'something' to use to learn a particular methodology or to do some logical exercises. Also, acceptance of DU need not have any influence on the interpreter's understanding of PP/2, if she or he endorses EI as the sole purpose of PP/2.

Some interpreters endorse both AEI and NEI; some AEI, NEI, and EI. As part of the present discussion, I will be demonstrating two of the lines of thought which background these multi-purpose endorsements.

The interpreters who endorse NEI do not accept the following: (a) that the literary Parmenides is to be identified with Parmenides of Elea (Parm. 128a-c); and (b) that the subject which will be submitted to dialectical analysis in PP/2 is the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea (Parm. 137b).

However, their lack of acceptance of (a) and (b) does not mean that they fail to adequately account for these passages in their proposals. Admittedly, a few interpreters do not, as, for example, Chung-Hwan Chen, who, taking "the One" to be a "shortened form of expression for the Idea of the One", explicates, in a footnote, his choice by saying: "That the process of inference in the second part of the dialogue [PP/2] is performed with the One as a special case cannot be doubted. On this point, cf.137B" (1944, 105, 105 n.4). However, the majority address themselves to this issue, usually by claiming
to have found actual textual support and overtones aimed at
disassociating the protagonist named "Parmenides", by Plato,
from his historical namesake. This will be demonstrated in
Part II.

In contrast, the interpreters who endorse AEI do
recognize and accept the claims made at Parm. 128a-c and 137b.
A number of them identify the First Hypothesis of PP/2 as
being where the Parmenidean doctrine is criticized, while
others see the criticism as being more widespread. To
illustrate: F.M. Cornford endorses what has been called the
"ambiguity theory" relative to the subject of PP/2. He sees
"the One" and "the many" being used like "blank cheques"
(1939, 113) the value of which varies with each hypothesis and
interpretation of that hypothesis. When the text is examined
from the perspective of "the One" symbolizing the One Being of
Parmenides of Elea, Cornford states that the First Hypothesis
proves that the "One of Parmenides, if it is to be (as he
said) absolutely one, unique and without parts, cannot have a
whole series of attributes which Parmenides assigned to it"
(1939, 134). The Second Hypothesis refutes, among others, the
statement of Parmenides of Elea to the effect that his One
Being is indivisible by demonstrating that "an extended
continuous magnitude with spherical shape . . . must be
infinitely divisible in the ordinary sense" (1939, 139). Subsequent Hypotheses refute other claims held to be true by
the Eleatic doctrine, when that doctrine is given the Dominant
Understanding.

When Cornford uses the perspective of postulating "the
One" to be symbolizing the Platonic Idea of Unity, the purpose of PP/2 is perceived to be the laying down "in outline, [of] the foundations of the ontology which underlies all the later [Platonic] dialogues" (1939, 245).

As just demonstrated, what permits Cornford to argue for both AEI and NEI is finding the subject of PP/2 to admit to various interpretations with each providing a particular understanding of PP/2. R.E. Allen is, to my knowledge, the only interpreter who endorses AEI and NEI while maintaining that the sole subject of PP/2 is the Platonic Idea of Unity. Allen (1983, 183) argues for there being an accidental purpose to PP/2 emanating from the fact that the Idea of Unity, described as "that which is just one", in the First Hypothesis, is homologous with the One Being of Parmenides of Elea. That being the case, any conclusions which follow from the examination conducted in the First Hypothesis apply mutatis mutandis to the Parmenidean One.

In the next two chapters, I will be reviewing the interpretational history of PP/2 prior to the nineteenth century. The goal of this undertaking is to find out how the interpreters writing before the last two centuries interpreted PP/2. The relevance of this information to the present study is the following. As explained above, when the interpreters endorse the Dominant Understanding of Eleaticism, their also accepting that the content of PP/2 is Eleatic and relevant to PP/2's purpose in a manner other than as 'material' for the illustration of a particular methodology, leads them to endorse the Anti-Eleatic Interpretation; a position which is
critical of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea. If there are any ancient pro-Eleatic interpretations, this is evidence that there were ancient rejections of Eleaticism as being a doctrine which affirms a strict numerical monism.
Up to and including the eighteenth century, the interpreters of PP/2 agreed on the following points: the literary Parmenides speaks for his historical namesake and holds to the latter’s doctrinal views; the hypothesis which he subjects to dialectical analysis, in PP/2, is the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea; and, there is only one subject, and only one purpose, for PP/2. The key issue about which the interpreters disagreed, prior to the nineteenth century, pertained to the purpose of PP/2.

Proclus (A.D. 410/12-485), whose Commentary on Plato's Parmenides is one of our main sources of information for the period from Aristotle to the fifth century, in a section which he devotes to exposing and criticizing the exegeses extant in his and earlier eras (Comm.I. 630.28-640.16), discusses four positions, each holding to a different purpose for PP/2. In this chapter, I will expose three of these positions. The fourth will be introduced and discussed in the next chapter.

Some of Proclus' contemporaries and predecessors argued for the sole purpose of PP/2 being "logical exercise". As to what motivated these thinkers to adopt this interpretation, Proclus writes:

For there are three main parts, speaking generally, of the dialogue, as these interpreters analyse it: one part puts forward the difficulties in the doctrine of Ideas, another contains a concise statement
of the method in which it is thought lovers of truth must practise themselves, and the third works out an example of this same method as applied to the One of Parmenides. All these parts have one end, to afford practice in the exercise of logical disputation. (Comm. I.634.7-14)

This interpretational path, called the "Exercise Interpretation (EI)" in the present study, is still taken today.

Other ancient philosophers, living before and during Proclus' era, argued for PP/2 being an antithesis type of composition which had Zeno as its target. Proclus describes this position as follows:

For while Zeno produced a rich and varied show of arguments aimed at catching out the partisans of the Many, and brought forth in his refutation not less than forty arguments revealing contradictions in their position, Plato himself, they say, in rivalry with this energetic opponent of plurality, produced this varied show of arguments with reference to the One, showing in the same way as he contradictions about the same subject. As Zeno refuted the many by showing that they are both alike and unlike, the same and different, equal and unequal, so in the same way Plato shows that the One is like and unlike, different and not different, and so for all the other contradictory predicates, both affirming and denying the contradictory propositions, and not, like Zeno, simply affirming them. (Comm. I. 631.26-632.12)

As this path effectively attacks the Eleatic position, it is an instance of AEI, but, as the cited passage makes clear, these ancient interpreters did not see Plato's intention as having been to criticize the Eleatic doctrine. Rather, they see him as engaging himself in producing these numerous arguments contra the Parmenidean One as a show of one
upmanship on his part targeted at Zeno's prowess in the art of destructive argumentation.

The third of the four interpretational positions endorsed in Antiquity is the Neo-Platonic Interpretation. This is the position endorsed by Proclus and the other Neo-Platonist interpreters of PP/2. As mentioned earlier, the purpose which the Neo-Platonists identified with PP/2 is the revelation of the Platonic views on the nature of first principles. NPI has had very few supporters in this century.

The situation remained much the same in the Middle Ages and up to the nineteenth century, according to the research work of Raymond Klibansky (1943). The interpretation most endorsed in these times was NPI. It is evident that the socio-political climate of the times favoured this particular understanding of PP/2, but not to be belittled as to the role it played in the endorsement of NPI, are the facts that most readers were not familiar with the Greek language, and, that the only translation of the Parmenides available for a number of centuries, was the Latinized version of Proclus' Commentary which ended at the end of the First Hypothesis.

There was, at least, one dissenting voice which tried to make itself heard over the prevailing Neo-Platonic winds: that of Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). After having examined the whole dialogue (he had a knowledge of Greek) and focused his attention on the structure of the text, Pico concluded that the dialogue "is not to be considered as dogmatic, but as a mere exercise in dialectic" (Quoted in Klibansky 1943, 320).

Whereas we have evidence that NPI and EI continued to be
endorsed in the Middle Ages through to and including this century, Klibansky makes no mention of there having been any interpreter who argued for either AEI or NPI.

What Klibansky’s evidence does show, is that the notion of PP/2 being a targeted polemic was part of the proposal of Jean de Serres (ca. sixteenth century). Serranus (his Latinized name) stated that the form of the text was an attack on the Eleatic deductive method. However, Serranus’ interpretation must be classified as Neo-Platonic in that he claimed that the work dealt with the Transcendental One, the First Cause of all beings, in the First Hypothesis.

It has now been established that the Non-Eleatic Interpretation did not receive any endorsement prior to the nineteenth century. Although AEI was supported, these earlier interpreters did not argue for Plato having intended to criticize the Parmenidean doctrine in PP/2, as have the AEI interpreters of the last two centuries. Rather, they perceived Plato’s intention as having been to better Zeno’s argumentative skills (the interpreters living during and before the Procline era), or, to attack the Eleatic deductive method (Serranus).
CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRO-ELEATIC INTERPRETATION

We have it on the authority of Proclus that some of his contemporaries and predecessors supported a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation of PP/2. The version of PEI endorsed by these early interpreters found the purpose of PP/2 to be an inquiry into the nature of the Parmenidean "Being", conducted by means of the dialectical method. Proclus, in his Commentary on Plato's Parmenides, describes PEI in the following manner:

Some say, however, that the intent of the dialogue is directed towards matters of substance, and that the logical exercise is introduced for the sake of these substantive questions, although these interpreters do not import the more recondite doctrines to explain the method. Some of them have said that the inquiry is about Being. Plato proposes to confirm through the agency of these persons themselves [Zeno and Parmenides] how they asserted Being to be one, and by means of the methods they were accustomed to use, Zeno vigorously criticising the many and Parmenides expounding the One Being; for cathartic discourses must precede perfective ones. (Comm. I.635.23-636.6)

Some interpreters contend, as we have said, that the theme [of PP/2] is Being, and they cite the declaration of Parmenides at the beginning that he will take for argument his own One, and this is, they say, Being. (Comm. I.638.6-8)

Using these and other pertinent Procline passages as building materials, it is possible to identify some of the salient points of this Pro-Eleatic Interpretation.

The entity subjected to dialectical analysis in PP/2 is referred to as "the one" (hen) by the literary Parmenides, in
the Parmenides (Parm. 137b, 137c, and throughout PP/2). This entity is the "Being" (to eon, what-is) of the Poem of Parmenides of Elea. It is not surprising that Plato’s Parmenides would refer to "Being" as "the one", because, says Proclus, "[s]uch is the common interpretation of Parmenides’ doctrine" (Comm. I.638.9).

The verdict reached by the supporters of PEI, vis-à-vis the First Hypothesis of PP/2 (from Parm. 137c to 142a), is that it is "about a subject which ... is without substance (anhupostatos)" (Comm. VI.1065.2-4). Of PEI’s analysis of the First Hypothesis, Proclus further writes:

Some people have therefore been persuaded by this passage [Parm. 142a] to say that the First Hypothesis reaches impossible conclusions, and so that the [Transcendent of Being] One is not a real subject. For they associate all the negations into one hypothetical syllogism: "If the One exists, it is not a whole, it has not a beginning, middle, or end, it has no shape," and so on, and after all the rest, "It has no existence, is not existence, is not expressible, is not nameable, is not knowable." Since these are impossibilities, they concluded that Plato himself is saying that the [Transcendent of Being] One is an impossibility. (Comm. VII. 64K.1-8)

The Second Hypothesis, from Parm. 142a to 155e, is an inquiry into the nature of the Parmenidean One, conceived as immanent first principle. Proclus does not discuss how PEI renders the remainder of the hypotheses of PP/2 other than to say that this school of thought argues for PP/2 being an examination of "merely the One Being" (Comm. I.638.14) of Parmenides of Elea. (See also Comm. I.636.21, cited below.)

The supporters of PEI explain the link between the two
main parts of the Parmenides in the following manner. In PP/1, Socrates proposes a Theory of Ideas which is based on a worldview in which the Ideas exist as separate entities. Parmenides' criticism of the theory introduced by Socrates is targeted at the difficulties associated with explaining how the sensibles can participate in the Ideas, given that Socrates construes Ideas as remaining always the same. PP/1 ends with Parmenides stating that, regardless of the difficulties associated with Idea-sensible participation, a person cannot deny the existence of non-changeable Ideas for the following reason:

[I]f anyone, with his mind fixed on all these objections and others like them, denies the existence of ideas of things, and does not assume an idea under which each individual thing is classed, he will be quite at a loss, since he denies that the idea of each thing is always the same, and in this way he will utterly destroy the power of carrying on discussion. (Parm. 135b-c)

The passage just cited has been taken by many contemporary thinkers as being supportive of the position that Plato's Parmenides does not speak for the historical person, since Parmenides of Elea would not have endorsed plurality. However, an interpretational position like PEI, which identifies Plato's Parmenides with his historical namesake, could use it to support the position that Plato held to an understanding of Parmenides' doctrine which does not wholly deny plurality. It is just that the kind of pluralism which this monist would accept would be one which, like Spinoza's, has its origin in monism. From Proclus' discussion
of PEI, this is how this school of thought understands the
Platonic understanding of the Parmenidean doctrine. He writes:

They say that Plato himself lauds Parmenides and testifies of the arguments here that they have a most noble depth in them. At least in the *Theaetetus* (183e) Socrates says that when he was very young he met Parmenides, then quite an old man, and heard him philosophizing about Being - not logical gymnastics, but profound conceptions - and he fears that they will not understand his words and will fail completely to grasp what he means. By all this [Plato] shows that the purpose of the inquiry now under way is an important one, and that the method introduced serves that important purpose and is understood as a necessary preliminary to the inquiry about Being, and that the difficulties connected with the Ideas are additional incitements to us to apprehend the One Being, for the plurality of Ideas has its foundation in the One Being, as the corresponding number does in its monad. Consequently, if we analyze the dialogue and range in order its various segments, we would say that what is most aimed at is its final end, viz. to expound the truth about Being in the Parmenidean sense. (Comm. I.636.6-21)

In his *Commentary* Proclus does not name the persons who proposed PEI. But, that Origen the Platonist, a one-time classmate of Plotinus, and a supporter of "mainstream" Middle Platonism in the third century, was prominent amongst them, is the conclusion reached by H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink (1974,II.x-xx). They compared Proclus' discussion of the views of Origen, relative to the nature of the first principle, in Book II.4 of his *Platonic Theology*, with the passages in the *Commentary* which discuss the school of thought called the Pro-Eleatic Interpretation in this paper, and concluded that the same theses attributed to the named Origen, in the *Theology*, were attributed anonymously in the
Commentary.

The worthiness of Origen's exegesis of PP/2, relative to the one undertaken by the Neo-Platonists, is described by Saffrey and Westerink in the following terms:

From an historical point of view, this information on the position of Origen is of the greatest interest. We have, therein, the proof that, like Plotinus, Origen undertook an in-depth exegesis of the *Parmenides*, and we can be assured that it was Ammonius, the Master which they both shared, that had directed them towards this Platonic text. Furthermore, we observe that Origen's exegesis, of the *Parmenides*, is more dialectical than theological: it is a logical analysis of the propositions which led Origen to conclude against the validity of the First Hypothesis and, afterwards, against the reality of its subject. In this too, perhaps, the position of Origen is closer to that of his Master Ammonius, than was the position of Plotinus. (1974, II.xix, translated from the original French by the present writer)

Becoming aware of the existence of a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation for PP/2 has important consequences for contemporary work devoted to the study of Plato's *Parmenides*. Regarding the interpretation of the Parmenidean fragments, it associates an understanding of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea as being accommodating of pluralism with (at least) one person who was a member of the "mainstream" view of Platonism.

As for the interpretation of PP/2, the Procline evidence cited and discussed in this paper serves to make us aware that, at one point in time, at least one "mainstream" Platonist (Origen) held to an understanding of Eleaticism which permitted a pro-Eleatic reading of PP/2: that is, a reading which is favourable towards the doctrine of Parmenides.
of Elea.

To put the last two paragraphs in an historical context, I need to add this comment. NPI, as an interpretation of PP/2, can be perceived as being a pro-Eleatic (small "p") position in the sense that it sees the Platonic Worldview being developed in PP/2 as being assimilative of Eleaticism. In that sense, then, NPI is neither critical of, nor neutral towards, its construal of Eleaticism, relative to PP/2.
PART II

PLATO’S PARMENIDES

TEXTUAL ANALYSES
CHAPTER SIX
PLATO'S PARMENIDES
THE INTRODUCTORY AND TRANSITIONAL PARTS

The passages reporting Plato’s intention, relative to the identity of his protagonist and to what is to be the subject and purpose of PP/2, are located in the Introductory and Transitional Parts (Parm. 126a to 128e, and, 135c9 to 137c4, respectively). In this chapter, I will be exposing and reviewing these passages, and two other, which are suggestive of PP/2 being an encore performance for Parmenides.

"PARMENIDES" REPRESENTS PARMENIDES OF ELEA

In the Parmenides, Plato’s protagonist criticizes the Theory of Ideas proposed by Socrates and undertakes to illustrate the method which he must learn in order to be capable of properly philosophizing. Since the Theory of Ideas is the ‘backbone’ of Platonism, and, given the importance that Plato puts on "education" (Republic, Laws), it would seem highly unlikely that he would have entrusted these two tasks to someone other than a thinker whom he respects and whom he believes to be capable (intellectually-speaking) of doing the work. Parmenides of Elea is one such person, as the passages at Theaetetus 183e (cited below) and Sophist 217c attest. (Also Parm. 135a-b, which is discussed below.)

Another aspect of the text which favours associating the literary Parmenides with his historical namesake is Plato’s
linking him with Zeno. The two Eleatics are associated, in a literary way, not just for the duration of their stay in Athens, but for some time before that: we are told that rumour is that the two had been lovers in the past (Parm. 127b), and Zeno mentions having heard Parmenides speak "a long time" ago (Parm. 136e).

The most important clue to the identity of the literary Parmenides is given in the following passage. Addressing himself to Parmenides, Socrates says:

For you, in your poems, say that the all is one, and you furnish proofs of this in fine and excellent fashion; and [Zeno], on the other hand, says it is not many, and he also furnishes very numerous and weighty proofs. (Parm. 128b)

It is to be noted that, in addition to mentioning the "poems" of Parmenides, Plato has Socrates identify what is argued for in that work ("that the all is one", where by "all" is meant "existences" (Parm. 128d-e)). Also important is the fact that Zeno’s "proofs" are described by Socrates as being an indirect defense of Parmenides’ doctrinal position.

ONE SUBJECT FOR PART TWO

The text supports there being only one subject for PP/2 which will be examined as conditionally proposed to be true, and conditionally proposed to be false. When Parmenides describes the method of training which Socrates has to learn, he says: "you must consider not only what happens if a particular hypothesis is true, but also what happens if it is
not true" (Parm. 136a). As part of his thrice repeated explanation (Parm. 136a-c) on how to conduct a dialektical inquiry, Parmenides makes mention of using one, and only one, subject per inquiry. Furthermore, Socrates understands Parmenides as telling him to use one hypothesis, because he asks the latter: "Why do you not yourself frame an hypothesis and discuss it to make me understand better?" (Parm. 136c).

**THE SUBJECT IS THE HYPOTHESIS OF PARMENIDES OF ELEA**

The passage which establishes that it is the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea which is to be subjected to dialektical analysis in PP/2 is the following. Addressing himself to the assembly, Parmenides says:

> Or, since you are determined that I must engage in a laborious pastime, shall I begin with myself, taking my own hypothesis and discussing the consequences of the supposition that the one exists or that it does not exist? (Parm. 137b)

Two issues have now been established. There is to be only one subject for PP/2, and, it is to be the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea. Another query is not so easily resolved. It pertains to the words used by Plato to describe the hypothesis itself. A number of interpreters have reported that they lend themselves to numerous possible translations. Richard Robinson explains it this way:

[The] hypothesis itself is most remarkably vague. Among the conceivable translations into English are these: "If everything is one," "If it is one," "If the one exists," "If unity exists," "If unity is one." On reflection we may well be amazed that, given
such a cryptic and ambiguous phrase, anyone should immediately infer consequences therefrom, and not rather ask himself what it means. (1942, 162)

As for which translation ought to be chosen, Robinson leaves the question open. But this has no bearing on his exegesis, given that he endorses EI.

R.E. Allen’s position is different from Robinson’s in that, as a supporter of NEI, he argues for the sole subject of PP/2 being the Platonic Idea of Unity. Like Robinson, Allen finds it difficult to translate this phrase, but he limits the possible choices to two, for the following reason:

The Greek is printed without certain key accents because accents were unknown to Plato, and the very attempt to supply them involves interpretation: it requires a choice between estin as existential or predicative, and hen as predicate or subject. That is, there is a choice between a disjunction of the form "whether it is one or not one," or of the form, "whether one is or one is not. (1983, 182)

Of these two possibilities, Allen states that the translation which must be chosen is the second of the two he mentions. Why? Because, the "it", in "whether it is one or not one", refers to the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea, and this hypothesis cannot be chosen for the following reason:

In the first place, the One Being [of Parmenides of Elea] cannot be participated in because there is nothing else besides it, but the subject of the hypotheses that follow [in PP/2] can be participated in: it is an Idea. Second, the One Being precludes the possibility of ‘others,’ whereas the exercise to follow assumes that they may exist. (1983, 182)

That Allen’s choice is motivated by his endorsement of the Dominant Understanding of Eleaticism cannot be denied, as
the passage just quoted makes clear. But, of equal importance to this study, is the fact that he admits to the plausibility of the first translation which, if chosen, would, as he puts it, "trace the consequences of the hypothesis that the All is one and its denial - the consequences, that is, of assuming or denying Parmenides' One Being" (1983, 182).

The point to grasp is that both choices are viable, on Allen’s own admission. The text supports the choice not taken by Allen. This, by virtue of the passages earlier cited aimed at establishing that the literary Parmenides is to be identified with his historical namesake, and, because this historical namesake actually has an hypothesis (stated in the text as "all is one") which is associated specifically with him.

Allen supports his choice by a factor external to the text, namely his endorsement of DU. This support is viable, given that (as earlier demonstrated) some of the claims made in PP/2 and some of the claims made in the "Way of Truth", relative to the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea, are inconsistent on DU. Nor is he the only interpreter to have rejected the "Eleatic-connection" which some passages establish. Robert Scoon, Mitchell H. Miller Jr., and Constance C. Meinwald have also interpreted the text in this manner.

Scoon argues for the literary Parmenides representing "Plato's state of mind at the time [the Parmenides] was written" (1942, 115). He rejects associating the literary Parmenides with his historical namesake for the following reasons:
The 'Parmenides' and the 'Zeno' of this dialogue are clearly different from the historical figures of the same name. Parmenides took a definite position and argued that the world "must need be" what he said it was — there was no hypothesizing, such as we have in the present dialogue.

Furthermore, the concepts with which 'Parmenides' works in this dialogue are different from those of Parmenides and Zeno. . . . Also Parmenides definitely maintained that "it is", whereas Plato considered the possibility that the one is not; and for Parmenides there could be no 'others', and neither he nor Zeno ever used the expression, so far as we know. It is therefore a mistake to suppose that Plato is here concerned primarily with Eleatic monism. (1942, 126)

Miller admits that the passage at Parm.137b appears to be recalling the historical Parmenides' proposition which was cited at Parm. 128a8-b1, namely "all is one". On this understanding, it would be the case that "the one" is a reference to the Parmenidean Being (to eon). But Miller rejects this possibility. He writes:

Plato's Parmenides, at least, has disowned the traditional monistic interpretation of this "being"; as we discussed earlier . . . both he and the older Zeno as well are represented as rejecting the younger Zeno's defense of him, and both apparently approve Socrates' positing of forms in distinction from things. (1986, 76-7)

Relegating the whole issue to an endnote, Meinwald writes:

There is still the minor infelicity that Parmenides says he is starting from his own hypothesis of The One. But we need not remove this: it is part of the creaking of the machinery that is inevitable given (what cannot be doubted) that Plato presents a character who has some of the traits of the historical eleatic but is also a researcher into Platonic forms. (1991, 177 n.16)
Since the identity of Plato's Parmenides is an important issue, relative to the interpretation of PP/2, I will be returning to it in the next chapter. Meanwhile, let me balance three observations against the interpretational position which holds that it is not the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea which is subjected to dialectical analysis in PP/2, primarily on the grounds that Plato's intention was not to have his literary character taken as representing his historical namesake.

Arguing for the literary Parmenides being a fictional character (Allen 1983, Peck 1953-4, Rochol 1971, Meinwald 1991), or, the mouthpiece of Plato himself (Shorey 1958, Scoon 1942, Ross 1951, Lynch 1959, Runciman 1959, and Findlay 1978) cannot be used to support the claim that Plato's character is using something other than the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea as the subject of PP/2. This is because even a fictional "Parmenides" could use the hypothesis of the historical one.

Two, were the protagonist called "Parmenides" by Plato to be using anything other than the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea, as his subject for PP/2, while referring to it as "my own hypothesis" (Parm. 137b), the words "my" and "own" instantly become terms demanding further query. This is because the two suggest that the hypothesis has particular meaning to, or a particular association with, the speaker. Parmenides of Elea does have a particular hypothesis linked to him in the text of the Parmenides, but the text does not provide any evidence capable of associating a fictional
"Parmenides" (one not identifiable with Parmenides of Elea), or Plato’s mouthpiece, with an hypothesis which would have any particular significance to this speaker.

Three, given that *Parm.* 137b is a key passage, in that it states what is to be the subject of PP/2, and inasmuch as the Greek is ambiguous relative to this passage, would it not be incumbent on Plato to make sure that his readers would render the hypothesis in the manner which he intended?

If one answers "yes" to this question, then the terms "myself", "my" and "own" (*Parm.* 137b), when read in tandem with the passages establishing that the "Parmenides" of the dialogue holds to the hypothesis of his historical namesake, can be perceived as 'identifiers' used by Plato to associate the subject of PP/2 with Parmenides of Elea. They would have been required, given the numerous possible renderings.

If a "no" answer is given, then the three terms are not only redundant, but highly misleading for the reader. This is because, when interpreted in the light of the passages earlier cited in this study, they point to the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea. Given this state of affairs, the interpreter has to ask herself or himself what would be Plato’s motivation to engage in such blatantly misleading practices.

Some interpreters (for example, Cornford {1939}, whose position was partly described in Chapter 3) would not see this as misleading on the part of Plato, but rather as part of the "training" which Socrates must undergo to become a better thinker. Hence, to realize that the hypothesis admits to a
number of possibilities, and to review each and every one of them (as Cornford did), one at a time, is to be perceived to be part of the Parmenidean training method.

The text of the Transitional Part does not support this line of thought. As earlier demonstrated, only one hypothesis is to be the subject of PP/2, not many hypotheses, each one derived from the same words in the text, and, each examined one at a time. For example, how could the "hypothesis of Zeno’s", which is "if the many exists", used as an example by Parmenides at Parm. 136a, be perceived by any reader as intentionally ambiguous, given the discussion of it in the Introductory Part? How could Parmenides’ other examples, at Parm.136b-c, which consist of his naming some Ideas (likeness, unlikeness, motion and rest, creation and destruction, being and non-being) be taken as intentionally ambiguous? If one accepts the interpretational position taken by Cornford, relative to there being many different understandings of "the one" requiring analysis, then one has to account for it being only the hypothesis actually chosen by Parmenides which admits to this possibility. That Plato would have presented examples which do not admit to this possibility, and then gone on to use an hypothesis which does as the subject of PP/2 is, I submit, describable as being a misleading manoeuvre on his part.

PART TWO, AS ILLUSTRATING "THE METHOD"

The interpretational expectation which Plato sets up by
means of a number of passages located in the Transitional Part, relative to PP/2's purpose, is that the literary Parmenides will illustrate "the method of training" (Parm. 135d) which he prescribes for the young Socrates. This method, often referred to as the "deductive method" or "dialectic", is described by Parmenides as being the same one which Socrates heard Zeno practice, the only difference being that, in order "to get better training" Socrates must not only consider what follows from supposing that a particular hypothesis is true, he must also find out "what happens if it is not true" (Parm. 135e-136a).

HAS PART TWO MORE THAN ONE PURPOSE?

The text leaves open the possibility that PP/2 will contain more than an illustration of the dialectical method. Three times, in the Transitional Part, the notion of "truth apprehension" is mentioned in relation to the undertaking of PP/2. But it is unclear whether these mentions are suggesting that this apprehension is a consequence of becoming proficient in the art of dialectical analysis, or, more immediately, a part of the dialectical process itself. The relevant passages are the following. Parmenides tells Socrates that he must "exercise and train [himself] . . . otherwise, the truth will escape you" (Parm. 135d). After having repeatedly explained the procedural method, Parmenides tells Socrates that he must examine his chosen hypothesis in the manner which he explained, "if you are to train yourself completely to see the
truth perfectly" (Parm. 136c). Finally, speaking to Socrates, Zeno tells him: "for the many do not know that except by this devious passage through all things the mind cannot attain to the truth" (Parm. 136e).

Two observations originating from something said in the text are supportive of the position that the content of PP/2 is relevant to its purpose in a manner other than as 'material' for the illustration of a particular methodology.

Zeno's investigation of the hypothesis of the supporters of the many did yield immediate doctrine-related results: it demonstrated that the worldview or doctrine which postulates that "existences are many" is one which, when followed to its conclusions, is found to lead to absurdities. The only absurdity actually mentioned in the text, and identified as having been the subject-matter of Zeno's first treatise, is the following:

That if existences are many, they must be both like and unlike, which is impossible; for the unlike cannot be like, nor the like unlike. (Parm. 127e)

The text does not state the manner by which Zeno would have arrived at this conclusion, but it can be surmised that he was referring to a logical absurdity. That would explain why he would find this result to be more absurd than the testimony of our senses versus the 'truth' of reason. To exemplify: whereas our senses report the existence of many things in the world, Parmenides, on DU, argues for reason telling us that all these existents are, in reality, only one existent. It is to be expected that Zeno would think of
logical (reason-generated) absurdities as being more serious that sense versus reason absurdities, since Parmenides of Elea affirmed the superiority of reason over sensory perceptions: the former yielding knowledge; the latter, mere opinions.

Since Parmenides, in PP/2, is to undertake the same kind of activity undertaken by Zeno, and inasmuch as he is going to be using his own hypothesis, it seems plausible to expect that reading PP/2 will provide the reader, not only with a demonstration of the manner by which a particular methodology is applied to the analysis of a supposition, but also to the understanding of what consequences follow from holding to the position that "existences are one".

Furthermore, given the association with "truth" given to reason by Parmenides in his Poem, one would expect that the deductions which follow from submitting the Parmenidean hypothesis to dialectical analysis would not have been perceived by either of the two Eleatics, or Plato (the actual writer of PP/2), as being logically absurd.

The second observation pertains to some comments made by Parmenides to Socrates immediately after he had demonstrated to the latter that one of the ramifications of the theory which he had proposed (in PP/1) is the deprivation of knowledge to God:

And yet . . . these difficulties and many more besides are inseparable from the ideas, if these ideas of things exist and we declare that each of them is an absolute idea. Therefore he who hears such assertions is confused in his mind and argues that the ideas do not exist, and even if they do exist cannot by any possibility be known by man; and he thinks that what he says is
reasonable, and, as I was saying just now, he is amazingly hard to convince. Only a man of very great natural gifts will be able to understand that everything has a class and absolute essence, and only a still more wonderful man can find out all these facts and teach anyone else to analyse them properly and understand them. (Parm. 135a-b)

If Parmenides and Socrates are the persons to whom the teacher-student descriptions refer to, then it would seem plausible to expect that Parmenides qua teacher will show Socrates how to "properly" analyse the nature of things - specifically, their classes and essences - in PP/2. Part Two will, therefore, have a metaphysical purpose which is inseparable from the methodological (exercise) one. This is because, as the passage makes clear, there is a right and a wrong way to conduct a metaphysical (ontological) inquiry. Parmenides, the person who is "still more wonderful" than "a man of very great natural gifts" knows the proper way, but Socrates does not. This is why, in Parmenides' opinion, Socrates was not successful in his attempts "to define the beautiful, the just, the good, and all the other ideas" (Parm. 135e).

Providing one accepts that Parmenides is to be identified with his historical namesake, and that what is said about the "teacher" (at Parm. 135a-b) is a reference to this person, the passage reveals just how much respect Plato had for Parmenides of Elea. He has Parmenides describe the "teacher" as almost divine (as "still more wonderful" than "a man of very great natural gifts") and this brings to mind the way Plato had described Parmenides of Elea in another Platonic
dialogue. In the Theaetetus, Socrates had said:

A feeling of respect keeps me from treating in an unworthy spirit Melissus and the others who say the universe is one and at rest, but there is one being whom I respect above all. Parmenides himself is in my eyes, as Homer says, a 'reverend and awful' figure. I met him when I was quite young and he quite elderly, and I thought there was a sort of depth in him that was altogether noble. (Theaetetus 183e-184a)

PART TWO, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ANCIENT GREEK HISTORY

In the interest of presenting both sides of this issue, it could be said in favour of the Exercise Interpretation that this is not as 'fall-back' or 'wanting' a position as it would seem to be (for us who have come to expect more out of a Platonic dialogue that just the illustration of a particular methodology), when one 'places' this purpose in an historical context. From the perspective of Ancient Greek History, Plato may have had a very good reason to present this particular method on its own merits.

It is generally accepted that "philosophy", described as being a rational way to (attempt to) understand ourselves and our world, made its appearance in the Greek world in the sixth century B.C. with Thales of Miletus. Prior to that, the Greeks acquired their 'information' about the world, its nature, and its origins from myths. The feature of mythical disclosure of interest to the present discussion is that it is not a participatory activity. It is a 'given': man's role is to passively and unquestioningly accept what is reported to him.
What makes Thales (640-546 B.C.) the first philosopher, in the opinions of Aristotle and others, was not to have proposed that every thing can be reduced to water - if he actually did, since he never committed his thoughts to paper. Rather, it was his using his own rational ability to deduce a "one" from the "many". Unlike the early Greek poets who were the 'reporters' of the 'given', Thales conducted his own natural inquiry into the nature of things. He may have looked at the world around him, observed how much water there was in the universe; how water could present to perception as either a liquid, or a solid, or vapour; and, how water was necessary to the preservation of human, animal, and vegetal lives. He may then have engaged in what we (today) would call "inductive reasoning" to propose that water was the one element present in all things.

However he did it, the important point is that Thales looked beyond or through the sensory deliverances to identify what could be the unifying factor which all the many things in the world shared in common. He, therefore, made a distinction between appearance and reality: the world does not appear to be all water-like, but, in reality, it is, or could be, all water.

For Thales to have proceeded from observing the many things in the world to his proposing what could be the one element which they all shared in common, he had to have a method: he had to have decided, prior to undertaking his observations, what it is he was looking for. (In Greek, the
meaning of *methodos* is that it represents a "pursuit", or "a following after". Having a 'method' is the mark of a philosophical inquiry: man’s conscious mind shapes the form which his inquiry will be taking: first the observations of nature, then inductive generalization, in the case of Thales.

Like Thales, Parmenides of Elea differentiated between the appearance, and the reality ‘behind’ or ‘inside of’ the appearance. But he also distinguished between two manners of apprehending this reality: the way of the senses, and the way of reason or truth. The latter, as described in the "Way of Truth", introduces to Philosophy the process of *logical deduction*. It a moot point whether Parmenides 'borrowed' the process from mathematics in order to apply it to ontological inquiries, or, whether he is its originator. What matters is that the process of logical deduction, as a method for conducting ontological inquiries, seems not to have been part of Philosophy until Parmenides published his *Poem*.

Viewed from this perspective, for Plato to have written PP/2 solely for the purpose of introducing the deductive method to the philosophical community seems not to be 'wanting'. Rather it could have been Plato’s way to acknowledge, in writing and for posterity, the debt which Philosophy owes to Parmenides of Elea.

**PART TWO, AN ENCORE PERFORMANCE FOR PARMENIDES?**

The text strongly suggest that this is not the first time that Parmenides subjects his own hypothesis to dialectical
analysis. When pressed by those present to "show his meaning by an example and not to refuse", Parmenides' reply is:

I must perforce do as you ask. And yet I feel very much like the horse in the poem of Ibycus - an old race-horse who was entered for a chariot race and was trembling with fear of what was before him, because he knew it by experience. . . . So I am filled with terror when I remember through what a fearful ocean of words I must swim, old man that I am. (Parm.137a-b)

Another passage informs the reader that Zeno was present when Parmenides undertook to do this labourious work. Addressing himself to Parmenides, Zeno says:

So I, Parmenides, join Socrates in his request, that I myself may hear the method, which I have not heard for a long time. (Parm.136e)

It can be argued that Zeno's way of putting the matter suggests only that, a "long time" ago, in Zeno's presence, Parmenides engaged himself in demonstrating "the method". It does not say that the supposition which he used to demonstrate "the method" that long time ago was his own hypothesis. I would not attempt to refute this interpretation of Zeno's comment.

What suggests that it was his own hypothesis which Parmenides had used as his subject that earlier time is that the task ahead, as he well remembers, is tedious and very lengthy, and that he feels himself trembling with apprehension at the mere memory of it. Now, pressed into service, old man that he is, he would be looking to the easiest way to get this ordeal over with. Had he used his own hypothesis before (that long time ago), then he would have already 'ran that race' so
to speak (to follow up on the race-horse analogy). So it would only be a question of repeating himself, as opposed to making use of a new subject and starting a race which he never ran before.

More to the point, the tone and the discussion of the Introductory Part make it clear that the two Eleatics are convinced that their understanding of the nature of Reality is the true or correct one. And neither Zeno nor Parmenides could be certain of that, had they not subjected the hypothesis that "all is one" to dialectical analysis, since it is the only ("except by", at Parm. 136e, cited above) manner by which the truth can be attained.

On the face of it, the issue of whether Parmenides had engaged himself in submitting his hypothesis to dialectical analysis before seems to be a trivial one, unworthy of more than a bare mention - if that. I submit that it is not a trivial issue. Rather, as the following observations will demonstrate, the two encore passages are interpretationally significant.

On the supposition that it was his own hypothesis which Parmenides used that long time ago, the passages establish the possibility that there is, or could have been, more to the Parmenidean doctrine that was revealed in the Poem. But, that this 'more' was never written down by Parmenides, hence Zeno's mention of having heard the method. It need not be the case that there actually is more to the Parmenidean doctrine, of course, just that Plato is inserting this possibility in the mind of his readers. Why?
To begin with, it would permit him to present a protagonist who affirms the need to assume a plurality of Ideas (Parm. 135d) without risking being accused of violating the doctrinal views of his protagonist's historical namesake. Reading the "Way of Truth" leaves most interpreters with the impression that Parmenides was a strict numerical monist. This kind of monist would not endorse plurality. But if Parmenides had revealed more of his doctrinal views, orally, that long time ago, then it could be the case that he is not a strict numerical monist, but a monist-pluralist: that is, a thinker who holds to a kind of monism which is acceptive of plurality.

From this perspective, the statements made in the "Way of Truth" could be perceived as pertaining to the "one" aspect of a worldview which also has a "many" dimension. The doctrine's "one" aspect would be the apprehension of Reality yielded by reason-only; its "many" aspect, by sensory perception aided by reason.

As to why the "many" dimension would not have been discussed in the Poem, it is because the goddess stated her intent to be to inform Parmenides about: "What route of inquiry alone there are for thinking;" (2.2) and the route "on which mortals knowing nothing / Wander two-headed;" (6.4-5).

The "many" dimension which would be part of the worldview which contains the "for thinking" aspect described in the "Way of Truth" would not be the route taken by "mortals knowing nothing". Rather, it would be the route taken by mortals who know something: they would know the "truth" about the nature of Reality.
Another observation which can be made about the encore passages is that they report an instance where Parmenides of Elea would have examined an hypothesis (it need not be his own, for this possibility to obtain) using the same method which he will be using in PP/2. Why Plato would have wanted to inform his readers of this "other occasion" is by way of anticipating and addressing the objections which could be made regarding the two texts (the "Way of Truth" and PP/2) not making use of the same methodology.

Robert Scoon, whose position was cited in the beginning of this chapter, is one such interpreter. Another is J.N. Findlay. Findlay justifies holding to the position that it is "the mature Plato" (1978, 146) whom the literary Parmenides represents, on the grounds that the eight Hypotheses of PP/2 "are not Eleatic in content or method, and could never have been entertained by the historical Parmenides" (1978, 145).

R.E. Allen also makes use of this discrepancy as part of his support for not taking Plato's Parmenides to be representing his historical namesake. Allen writes:

Parmanides himself is portrayed as a Platonist . . . his method of argument is itself Platonc, using a respondent and making use of the things the respondent agrees that he knows (cf. 137b, Meno 75d). (1983, 65-6)

The claims of Scoon, Findlay, and Allen are weak in the light of the two encore passages. The discrepancies which exist between the method used in the "Way of Truth" and the method used in PP/2, by Parmenides, are accounted for by the fact that Plato sets up an earlier instance, by way of these
two passages, when Parmenides used the same method which he will be using in PP/2.
The present chapter reviews the first part of Plato’s dialogue (PP/1), from Parm. 129a to 135c8. I begin by identifying what Plato’s Parmenides accepts and rejects of the theory proposed by Socrates in PP/1. This topic is reviewed because some interpreters have used the manner by which “Parmenides” is represented by Plato, in PP/1, to argue for the literary Parmenides not representing his historical namesake. I will then discuss two ways to interpret Plato’s description of the character he calls “Parmenides”. The chapter ends by introducing the possibility of Plato having thought of Parmenides’ doctrine in terms of it being one which is a kind of monism acceptive of plurality, at the time he wrote PP/2.

"PARMENIDES’" POSITION RELATIVE TO SOCRATES’ THEORY

PP/1 begins with Socrates introducing what, in the Phaedo (at 100b) he referred to as his "theory of causation". He postulates the existence of intelligible (abstract) entities which are the cause of the sensibles acquiring their existences and characteristics. While Socrates has no difficulty understanding how the sensibles could have many characteristics, some of them contrary to each other, he states that he would be "amazed" if someone could show him that the same state of affairs exists for the intelligible
entities he calls "ideas" (Parm. 129a-130a).

It is after hearing this statement that Parmenides first enters the conversation. After complimenting Socrates on his "talent for argument", he asks him the following question:

Tell me, did you invent this distinction yourself, which separates abstract ideas from the things which partake of them? And do you think there is such a thing as abstract likeness apart from the likeness which we possess, and abstract one and many, and the other abstractions of which you heard Zeno speaking just now? . . . And also . . . abstract ideas of the just, the beautiful, the good, and all such conceptions? (Parm. 130b)

The aspect of this conversation which I want to highlight is that the issue which Parmenides targets, at the very onset, is the one pertaining to the separation of Ideas from their instantiations. As to why they have to be construed as existing apart from the sensibles, it is because Socrates' theory (which will be referred to as the "Theory of Ideas" in this study) includes the postulation of a worldview comprised of two different kinds of realities.

What follows is a discussion of what many interpreters have called the "Problem of Participation". How do the sensibles partake of (have a part of) the Ideas, given that the latter are described as being and remaining always whole, changeless, and motionless? Socrates presents various ways by which this could happen, which Parmenides rejects by way of identifying the problem associated with each one of them. As part of this conversation, Parmenides will stress, three more times, that it is Socrates' separation of Ideas from the sensibles which is at the core of his difficulties. He will
also indirectly tell Socrates that his definition of "ideas" is in need of review. The relevant passages follow:

Do you see, then, Socrates, how great the difficulty is, if we maintain that ideas are separate, independent entities? . . . you do not yet, if I may say so, grasp the greatness of the difficulty involved in your assumption that each idea is one and is something distinct from concrete things. (Parm. 133a-b)

These difficulties and many more besides are inseparable from the ideas, if these ideas of things exist and we declare that each of them is an absolute idea. (Parm. 135a)

For you try too soon, before you are properly trained, to define the beautiful, the just, the good, and all the other ideas. You see I noticed it when I heard you talking yesterday with Aristoteles here. (Parm. 135c-d)

Yet, Parmenides also states:

But on the other hand . . . if anyone, with his mind fixed on all these objections and others like them, denies the existence of ideas of things, and does not assume an idea under which each individual thing is classed, he will be quite at a loss, since he denies that the idea of each thing is always the same, and in this way he will utterly destroy the power of carrying on discussion. . . . Then what will become of philosophy? To what can you turn, if these things are unknown? (Parm. 135b-c)

The conclusion which I draw from the cited passages (including Parm. 130b quoted at the beginning of this chapter) is that, while Parmenides supports the view that one must assume the existence of a plurality of changeless Ideas if discussion is to remain possible and philosophy is to survive, he rejects Socrates' way of defining them. Specifically, he rejects Socrates describing Ideas as separate, independent,
entities which are distinct from concrete things. So, although Parmenides accepts one tenet of the Theory of Ideas (the one pertaining to the need to assume a plurality of Ideas), he does not accept the theory-as-a-whole.

The implication which I extract from this conclusion is that Parmenides believes he knows how the Problem of Participation can be either dissolved or resolved. It is not only the passages cited earlier which convey this impression to the reader, but also the very tone of PP/1; the way Parmenides directs the course which the conversation takes like, for example, changing the day comparison used by Socrates to that of a sail (Parm. 131b-c); and, his telling Socrates that he is too hasty in attempting to define "the beautiful, the just, the good, and all the other ideas" (Parm. 135c), the inference here being that, once he is properly trained, he will have no difficulty undertaking this task, or, in some way, resolving the questions which give rise to it.

Two passages in other Platonic texts, when examined together, could be interpreted as being indicative that Socrates eventually succeeded in dissolving or resolving the Problem of Participation, as a result of his having listened to what Parmenides said in the Parmenides. In this passage, referring to what was said during their meeting (the one reported in the Parmenides), Socrates says of Parmenides: "I am afraid we might not understand his words and still less follow the thought they express" (Theaetetus 183e).

The following is stated as part of a discussion of the Problem of Participation. Socrates says:
First, whether we ought to believe in the real existence of monads of this sort; secondly, how we are to conceive that each of them, being always one and the same and subject neither to generation nor destruction, nevertheless is, to begin with, most assuredly this singly unity and yet subsequently comes to be in the infinite number of things that come into being - an identical unity being thus found simultaneously in unity and in plurality. Is it torn to pieces, or does the whole of it, and this would seem the extreme of impossibility, get apart from itself? It is not your question, Protarchus, but these questions, where the one and many are of another kind, that cause all manner of dissatisfaction if they are not properly settled, and satisfaction if they are. (Philebus 15b)

The Philebus passage, it is to be noted, re-states the Problem of Participation in terms similar to those used, by Parmenides, to present it in PP/1. Parmenides had, then, asked Socrates: "Well, then, does each participant object partake of the whole idea, or of a part of it?" (Parm. 131a). In the Parmenides, Parmenides went on to demonstrate to Socrates that either choices - be it a part, or the whole, of the Idea that the sensibles have a part of - cannot obtain. In the Philebus, Socrates can be interpreted as speaking in terms of being one person who has resolved this issue to his satisfaction. But, looking at the Theaetetus passage, it would seem that it took him some time to do so. (See also Philebus 16a-c.)

PLATO'S PORTRAYAL OF "PARMENIDES"

Mitchell H. Miller Jr. (1986) and Constance C. Meinwald (1991), whose views were exposed in Chapter 6, seemed to have
had the passage at Parm. 135b-c (cited in the previous segment) in mind as their primary reason for opting not to identify the literary Parmenides with his historical namesake. W.G. Runciman (1959) and R.E. Allen (1983) actually cite it as part of their support for claiming that Plato's protagonist does not represent Parmenides of Elea. Runciman writes: "the historical Parmenides would certainly not have expressed the acceptance of the theory of forms which we find at 135a-d. He does not argue as a monist" (1959, 151). Allen expresses much the same view but puts it differently, saying: "Parmenides himself is portrayed as a Platonist: he accepts the theory against which he states perplexities, and its attendant pluralism (135b-c)" (1983, 65).

If Allen and Runciman are stating that the literary Parmenides endorses the very same theory which Socrates describes and which Parmenides criticizes, in PP/1, then I submit that a close reading of the passage at Parm. 135b-c and of the whole of PP/1 does not support this claim. What Parmenides does, and does not, accept has already been identified in the previous segment.

Furthermore, it does not follow that his affirming the need to assume a plurality of Ideas requires Parmenides to also accept the dualistic (two worlds or two different kinds of realities) worldview proposed by Socrates in PP/1. This is because accepting plurality is accommodated under a monistic-pluralistic worldview; that is, under an understanding of the world which postulates that it is constituted of only one kind of reality.
That such an alternative exists and was actually postulated by the ancient interpreters, relative to the doctrinal position of Parmenides of Elea, has been demonstrated in this study. Origen, and the other PEI supporters were such interpreters. They argued, Proclus tells us, for "the plurality of Ideas having its foundation in the One Being" (Comm. I.636.17-18, cited in full in Chapter 5). So did Proclus and other followers of NPI as the following passage attests:

Parmenides, then, in showing that Being is one, also set up the plurality that his critics saw, not only perceptible plurality (he gave us this in the section of his poem called The Way of Opinion; for this is what he called sense-objects, as did also another Pythagorean, Timaeus), but also intelligible plurality; for in the intelligible world all the things unified with one another make up a divine number. (Comm. II.723.12-18)

However, the passage at Parm. 135c-d must be addressed because a strict numerical monist would not argue for the need to assume the existence of a plurality of Ideas. And, just reading the "Way of Truth" favours an understanding of the Parmenidean doctrine as being one which affirms a strict numerical monism.

How the four contemporary interpreters named above account for this passage is by using it as support for the view that the literary Parmenides is not to be taken as representing his historical namesake: hence, that "P"≠P, where "P" symbolizes the literary character, and P, the historical person. Then, partly on the strength of "P"≠P, they go on to argue for the subject of PP/2 not being the hypothesis of
Parmenides of Elea. In the previous chapter, I questioned the soundness of creating an interpretational link between the protagonist's identity and the subject of PP/2, in the specific case of those who reject that "P"=P. In this section, my task will be to assess the worth of the "P"≠P position versus the "P"=P one.

Those interpreters who accept that Plato's protagonist represents his historical counterpart fall into two groups, which I will call 'Group A' and 'Group B'. What differentiates Group A from Group B is that only the former endorses the Dominant Understanding of Eleaticism, which takes Parmenides of Elea to be a strict numerical monist. Group B endorses an understanding of Eleaticism as being a monistic doctrine which is acceptive of plurality. The third group, Group C, argues for the literary character not representing Parmenides of Elea. Group C shares one point in common with Group A in that the interpreters in both groups hold to DU.

The text of the Parmenides is Group C's worst critic in that even the interpreters in this group would be hard-pressed to deny that some passages (many of them cited and discussed in this study) actually create an unambiguously-stated link between Plato's protagonist and Parmenides of Elea. Admittedly, on DU, the passage at Parm. 135c-d is problematic and does lead its endorsers to question Plato's intent, relative to the identity and doctrinal views of his protagonist. But note that two choices proffer equally plausible resolutions for this problem. One can say that Plato intended his protagonist to represent Parmenides of Elea, and
that the latter's doctrinal views are monistic-pluralistic. This is Group B's position endorsed by the supporters of PEI and of NPI. Or, one can say that Plato did not intend his protagonist to be taken as representing Parmenides of Elea. This is Group C's position, endorsed by the supporters of NEI.

If Plato intended for "P"≠P, then the following questions emerge and demand answers. Why would he include so many passages in his dialogue intended to support that "P"=P, if he intended to sever that connection at Parm. 135c-d? Why confuse the reader by inserting passages which support "P"=P, and a passage which supports "P"≠P, on the Dominant Understanding? Why devote the Introductory Part to a discussion of Parmenides' and Zeno's connections with themselves and with the supporters of the many; relationships which could very well have been actual ones? Why bring up the hypothesis which Zeno's submitted to dialectical analysis in his Treatise again, in the Transitional Part, as being the first subject which Parmenides uses as his example to explain the methodological procedure which will be illustrated in PP/2? Why link the method of training which he will illustrate in PP/2 to the one used by Zeno in his Treatise? Finally, if Plato wanted a fictional (in the sense of one who has no historical counterpart) character, or a mouthpiece, why not call his protagonist the "Athenian Stranger", or, better still, why not introduce a new character?

All these questions are indirectly generated by the interpreter holding to DU. This is because, it is this endorsement which (as earlier demonstrated) motivates him or
her to subsequently reject that "P"=P. And, it is rejecting that "P"=P, while endorsing DU, which directly generates these questions.

Let us now look at the position of Group A which is the one endorsed by the twentieth century supporters of AEI. As earlier said, the passage at Parm. 135b-c demands the interpreter’s attention, because it is problematic for those interpreters who endorse DU. Group A endorses this understanding and does support the "P"=P position. By not having addressed the impact which this passage has on their interpretational position, the Group A interpreters are tacitly (or, perhaps unknowingly) disregarding the fact that, on their position, Plato’s portrayal of Parmenides of Elea is inconsistent and actually erroneous, relative to the former’s doctrinal views. This is not a trivial state of affairs because their interpretation of PP/2 is that "Parmenides" criticizes the doctrine of his historical namesake.

For Group B, the passage is question supports their understanding of Plato as not having understood the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea as being one which expounds a strict numerical monism. Given that a strict numerical monist would not have said these words, their utterance by a Platonic character named "Parmenides" and intended (by Plato) to be identified with Parmenides of Elea, supports their belief that Plato endorsed a monistic-pluralistic understanding of the Parmenidean doctrine.

Of the three, the interpretational position endorsed by Group B is the only one which does not generate either
questions or portrayal inconsistencies, relative to what is stated in the dialogue, prior to the beginning of PP/2. It is also the only position which can claim an 'ancestry' which includes both "mainstream" Platonists (ca. A.D. third century) and Neo-Platonists.

WHAT IS THE PLATONIC UNDERSTANDING OF ELEATICISM?

If Plato, at the time he wrote the Parmenides, did believe that the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea was, or could be, understood as being monistic-pluralistic, then it would seem plausible to find some indication of it in the text of the Parmenides.

Two aspects of the text discussed earlier could be perceived as being such an indication on Plato's part. They are his portrayal of his protagonist, and, his including in the text the two encore passages. Relative to the former, it was demonstrated that the better interpretational supposition is the one taking Plato as having endorsed the monistic-pluralistic understanding. When one assumes that Plato endorsed DU, numerous questions and issues arise which cannot be satisfactorily answered, particularly when viewed in the light of there being an interpretation which does not generate them. As for the two encore passages, they establish an instance when Parmenides of Elea could have revealed more of his doctrinal position than was expounded in the "Way of Truth".

It will be argued that Plato, in the Introductory Part of
the Parmenides and in his other dialogues, is consistent in presenting the Parmenidean doctrine as being one which affirms a strict numerical monism. To exemplify:

It strikes me that Parmenides and everyone else who has set out to determine how many real things there are and what they are like, have discoursed to us in rather an offhand fashion. . . . In our part of the world the Eleatic set, who hark back to Xenophanes or even earlier, unfold their tale on the assumption that what we call 'all things' are only one thing. (Sophist 242c-d)

In this passage, it is the Eleatic Stranger who is speaking. In the one to follow, the speaker is Socrates.

But I had almost forgotten, Theodorus, another school which teaches just the opposite — that reality 'is one, immovable, being is the name of the all,' and much else that men like Melissus and Parmenides maintain in opposition to all those people, telling us that all things are a unity which stays still within itself, having no room to move in. (Theaetetus 180d-e)

In these passages, as in all the other ones pertaining to the Parmenidean doctrine in the Platonic Corpus, the speakers are other than "Parmenides". The only time that "Parmenides" is given an opportunity to "speak" is in PP/2. So, accepting that "P"=P, and that the subject of PP/2 is the hypothesis of Parmenides of Elea, permits the interpreter to examine the contents of PP/2 from the perspective of Plato having given Parmenides of Elea the chance to explicate his doctrine in more details than was done in the "Way of Truth". Of course, it need not be that Parmenides, the historical person, actually held to Plato's understanding of his views. All that is being suggested is that this is what Plato, at the time he
wrote PP/2, believed could be a plausible interpretation of a fully-developed Parmenidean Worldview.

However, if Plato's Parmenides is to be identified with Parmenides of Elea, then, what is said in the latter's Poem has to be accommodated by an alternate to the Dominant Understanding of Eleaticism. And, given some of the "pluralistic" claims made in PP/2, the alternate interpretation would have to be one which perceives Parmenides' doctrine to be a kind of monism accepive of plurality. That such interpretations have been proposed, by both ancient and contemporary interpreters, has been demonstrated in this study.
SUMMARY

In this study, it has been demonstrated that contemporary interpreters reject considering there being a pro-Eleatic intent, on the part of Plato, relative to the second part of the *Parmenides*, because of their acceptance of the Dominant Understanding of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea as advocating strict numerical monism.

Some contemporary interpreters have given a number of reasons why DU should be rejected. Many of them favour a monist-pluralistic understanding of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea; a view which is acceptive of pluralism within a monistic framework.

In the early part of this millennium, and perhaps earlier, some interpreters endorsed a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation. They interpreted the purpose of PP/2 to be a non-critical inquiry into the nature of the Parmenidean One Being, conducted by means of the dialectical method. The existence of a Pro-Eleatic Interpretation of PP/2 indicates that some earlier interpreters rejected the Dominant Understanding of Eleaticism.

The literary framework of the text of the *Parmenides* supports accepting a pro-Eleatic intent on Plato’s part, relative to PP/2.

Taken together, these points support the need for undertaking a thorough study which will have as its goal examining the Poem of Parmenides of Elea in the light of the reasons given by contemporary interpreters of Eleaticism, and
by the ancient interpreters of PP/2, for the rejection of the Dominant Understanding. If this bears fruit, then the viability of a pro-Eleatic intent on Plato’s part for PP/2 can then be examined, using an alternate understanding of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea.

Each of these two tasks is huge, and the mere availability of their undertakings does not guarantee their success. But one thing is clear even now. The door is wide open towards an interpretive line of the Parmenides, Part Two, that should be attractive to two classes of interpreters: those so independently dissatisfied with DU as a full account of the doctrine of Parmenides of Elea as to expect Plato to be equally open to a pluralism-accommodating understanding of Parmenides’ doctrine; and, those for whom the literary framework of the dialogue seems to point sufficiently clearly to a pro-Eleatic intent as to render ultimately unsuccessful the currently proposed interpretations of PP/2.
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