Book Notes

Presocratics

JAAP MANSFELD

Hermann Diels’ magisterial and still eminently useful edition with introduction and commentary of Parmenides’ verbatim fragments has been reprinted. It is nice to have this hardback next to one’s tattered copy of the 1897 volume. Burkert’s preface is illuminating (a computer accident, alas, has disturbed the Greek words on p. xiii), and De Cecco’s amplification of the nineteenth-century bibliography very helpful. We do know that fr. 15a DK, first published by Pasquali in 1910, is not included, and that Diels in fr. 1 of this edition (as in the Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta of 1901 and the earlier editions of the Fragmente der Vorsokrater) sticks to Sextus’ cento of what now are frs. 1 + 7.2-5 + 8.1a + 8.1b-2a DK; he defends Sextus’ ἃθομος (ἄθομοι), translating ‘lebendiger Weg’. See his commentary, p. 63.

Earlier volumes of S. Mouraviev’s Heraclitea have been presented in this journal, 45 (2000) 346-7 and 48 (2003) 165-7. Two more volumes have since been published, viz. the final instalment, more important for Rezeptionsgeschichte than for Heraclitus himself, of the huge and useful text-collection (for M.‘s presentation of the texts see 45 (2000) 346), as well as a volume with selected texts, illustrations, and commentary dealing with Heraclitus’ life, death, portraits, and book. Apart from the CD-Rom added to vol. II.A.3 (the contents, with corrections, of vols. II.A.1-3), and from the corrections printed vol. II.A.4

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P. Curd’s study of Parmenides and his influence on early Greek philosophy, first published eight years ago, has been reprinted with an introduction to the paperback version and supplementary bibliography (pp. xvii-xxix). C. follows Cordero and Nehamas in arguing that at Parm. frs. 6 and 7 DK two ways are distinguished, not three, which entails that the way ‘that it is not and that it is necessary that it is not’ of fr. 2.5-7 coincides with the way of mortals at fr. 5.4-9, that is to say with the world according to the opinions of humans which is announced in the proem, fr. 1.30-2, and described in the second part of the poem, beginning at fr. 8.50. The snag is that we are told at fr. 2.6 that the way ‘that it is not and that it is necessary that it is not’ is a path that is ‘entirely indiscernible’ (παναπεψυφη), or (as C. translates, p. 58) ‘wholly without report’. I fail to see (and am not alone) in what way this epithet should be applicable to the second part of the work.

The new introductory pages clarify and restate C.’s position in the book of 1997, esp. her original and clever but somewhat mysterious argument about ‘predicational being’ (I hope I have got it right): something that ‘is’ has to be one of a kind, or basic entity; it must possess a unified nature (pp. xx-xxi). Only lonely Being (fr. 8), which is wholly of such a single kind, and complete, and unshaken, does have this character, but Fire and Night do not qualify, because each of them is merely what the other is not (p. xxv). I have not yet come round to this view because I believe that these elements do have specific qualities, viz. ‘fire’, ‘fine-structured’ etc., and ‘night’, ‘heavy’ etc. That they fail to qualify in the same way as Being has other reasons, into which I shall not enter now. The legacy of Parmenides according to C. involves that Empedocles e tutti quanti have to provide elements that not only are capable of the same behaviour as Fire and Night (mixing and separating to produce the phenomena), but also meet Parmenides’ conditions for ‘predicational’ being: a revision of the quite general view that these substances have to meet some of Parmenides’ conditions for being, in whatever special sense of being is argued in the context of a particular interpretation. This revision is consistent with C.’s interpretation of Parmenides’ ontology.

S. Trépanier’s monograph on Empedocles focuses on the relation between literary form and philosophical content in the verbatim remains of what, so he claims, was a single poem. The fragments dealing in one way or other with metempsychosis and the ban on meat/flesh as well as the Eleatic passages are distributed over the space of 232 lines before fr. 17 we now know

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