

Book Notes

Presocratics

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Phronesis XLIII/3

Finally there is a major study from Princeton on Parmenides and his influence on subsequent Presocratic thinking and on Plato's theory of forms.⁴ Patricia Curd introduces her basic thesis on Parmenides' so-called "monism," uses it to find a new relevance for the cosmology of the *Doxa*, and, in the light of her interpretation, reviews the physical theories of Anaxagoras, Empedocles and the Atomists. Curd distinguishes between "numerical monism" which asserts that only one thing exists, (the standard interpretation which she claims is only applicable to Melissus) and "predicational monism" – that each thing that is can be only one thing. Previously the standard interpretation had been attacked by Mourelatos, who emphasised Parmenides' anti-dualism, and Barnes, who denied any form of

³ Gred Ibscher, *Demokrit: Fragmente zur Ethik, Griechisch/Deutsch, Neu übersetzt und kommentiert, Einleitung von Gregor Damschen*. Philipp Reclam, Stuttgart, 1996. DM 10.00 (paperback). ISBN 3-45-009435-6.

⁴ Patricia Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1998. pp. xiii + 280. \$45.00, £32.50 (hardback). ISBN 0-691-01182-6.

monism, but Curd has her own claim: “To be a genuine entity, something that is metaphysically basic, a thing must be a predicational unity, a being of a single kind (μονογενές, B8.4), with a single account of what is; but it need not be the case that there exists only one thing” (p. 5). The problem of the interpretation of *esti* in Parmenides can then be resolved by taking it as predicational, of a particularly strong sort, rather than existential, and the subject is “what it is to be the genuine nature of something.” What Parmenides rejects are standard early Presocratic “opposites,” and the assumption of two basic opposites in the *Doxa* is the reason for it being unacceptable, for opposites fail to meet the criteria of predicational monism set out in B8. The later Presocratics should not then be viewed as battling against Parmenides, but rather to be continuing his exploration of the nature of basic entities and their relation to the world presented to the senses. They are concerned to show that their plural entities do indeed meet the criteria Parmenides laid down for predicational monism.

Curd works through the stages of her argument with a scrupulous regard for the Presocratic texts, and, in extensive footnotes, engages with the main scholarship on them, as she tackles Parmenides’ *Alêtheia* and *Doxa*, the work of the younger Eleatics and the pluralists, and, more briefly, the fragments of Philolaus and Diogenes of Apollonia. Finally, and provocatively, there is a brief section titled “The Last Presocratic: Plato and the Legacy of Parmenides,” in which some key Platonic passages (notably *Symposium* 210e6-b5, first noticed by Solmsen, *Euthyphro* 5d1-6e1 and *Meno* 74d4-e2) show Plato deliberately drawing on Parmenides as Socrates is represented searching for the metaphysical requirements of a genuine entity.

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