

Rough English Translation of the Portuguese based on Google

Journal of Ancient Philosophy Vol. III 2009 Issue 1

University of Sao Paulo and the University of Campinas

Journal Website: <http://www.filosofiaantiga.com/>

Mourelatos, Alexander. *The Route of Parmenides. Revised and Expanded edition*. Las Vegas – Zurich – Athens: Parmenides Publishing, 2008

Maintaining the "course" in the route of Parmenides

The book by Mourelatos is a mandatory reference for anyone who wants and intends to dedicate himself to the studies on Parmenides of Elea (sec. VI-V a.C), by the meticulous philological work, the analytic severity, the speculative breadth, the amplitude of the bibliographical debate with the critical contemporary one, that is, by the erudition that reveals in sciences of the antiquity. Everything that is placed here is to service and articulate the multiple layers of significance that is enclosed in the 116 verses that arrived of the poem of Parmenides, one of the biggest texts of the western philosophical tradition.

I read Mourelatos, for the first time, while obtaining my Master's degree, in the 80's: I sought to understand, in the article "Metaphysical Ingenuous of Things" (1973), re-printed as chapter 10 of this volume, the way the author interpreted the plan of the roads. Later I read the book "The Route of Parmenides" (1970), object of the present new edition and expansion (2008), to evaluate the resolved problem of the verb "to be". In 2005, I reread some chapters, to reevaluate his characterization of *doxa*, in function of my research on the ways of its appearances in the *Republic* of Plato. I reread, now, with great curiosity, this extensive new edition, that establishes the book and articles (with the care of maintaining the numbering of the original pages of the book, which is very comfortable for the re-readers) and still added an unpublished article by Gregory Vlastos, "Names of Being in Parmenides", probably written in the 60's, but never published.

His work has a sufficiently singular enough profile, for the time and the academic environment where it was initially conceived, that is, in the U.S.A. during the 60's-70's. Having studied in Yale, Mourelatos is a professor in the University of the Texas – Austin since 1965, where he founded and drove the post-graduate program in Ancient Philosophy, with great international recognition ever since, as the researcher, adviser, professor and *lecturer*.

In the years of obtaining his doctorate at Yale, he dedicated himself to the studies of analytic metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of the mind and to "logic of the transcendental arguments", under the influence marked of Kant and Wittgenstein. The reading of the *Parmenides* of Burnet awakes the fact "the question of the connection between thought and reality" already to have been raised before by Plato. What was initially to be a simple article transforms-itself, with the endorsement of the then adviser Wilfrid Sellars (1912-1989), into a thesis for his doctorate – *The Philosophy of Parmenides*. The interest is to argue the relationship between the mind and reality, using an archaic model of apprehension of reality (Homer and initial Greek literature), in which the mind is driven to the world and "gathers things" (p.xv), and that depends on linguistic intuitions that would come very close to, or even would be identified with the "medieval realism and nominalism, beyond the modern theories of the significance as reference and the truth as correspondence".

In 1970, *The Route of Parmenides*, was published by the Yale University Press (in an era that the English term route [pron. *ru: t* or *raut* / route] had not yet become homonym of *roust* [pron. *raut* / failure], which the author warns in the foreword). The present volume (2008) comes organized in three parts: Part I, with the text of the book from the 70's, some corrections and alterations; Part II, with the reprint of three articles (from the 70's), that reinforce some, but that also modify central theories of the original book; Part III, with the unpublished article of Vlastos.

The thesis of his doctorate differs from the book, insofar as his conception of the profound thoughts that would contain what he calls the "Interpretation Standard", itself is read Anglo-Saxon, of the "Truth" in *Parmenides*, that is, even with variations, could be summarized in the following theories: A. deliberate suppression of the subject of the verb *esti*, to allow the subject to be specified, while the argument develops; B. suppression of the negative, because its phrases do not mention the real entities; C. not to tangle between the hurt predicate and existential of the "is"; D. use of the verb to be in verifying sense, in the prominent contexts (p.350-351). The proper author, later, recognizes that this standard of outside interpretation is elaborated prematurely, should be abandoned to a large extent. Insofar as it understands that, for *Parmenides*, the negative propositions are refused, all the propositions start to only have one and the same referring one. It is that what would characterize his thesis from Yale, that is, to maintain that, in the poem, there is a "numerical monism" or

a "logical monism", approaching Parmenides of the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and by Russell, while "logical atomists" (p.xvi).

The thesis of his doctorate enters the publication of the book, while the author studied with Havelock, Kirk, Vlastos and Owen, reads the Greek poets, questions the logical amplitude of his reading of the roads and searches the connections between the text of Parmenides and the cosmologists. The formula "X is really Y", that, in the first road or route, call of the "Truth" of Parmenides, would function like a mere plan, in "Doxa", it starts to receive diverse values, that is, Light and Night; the second part of the poem would configure, like this, the vision of world by the mortals formulated to include philosophical beliefs, the common sense and the use of the common language, that is, an equivalent archaic one that Sellars called the "clear image" of the things.

In the successive chapters, Mourelatos faces the *epic Form* of the poem with insight, deals with the syntactic structure of the composition of the verses, the use of hexameters and also the emergent philosophical vocabulary, with his revisions of the semantic, showing the as much as Parmenides is a debtor of the epic formulae, but also distinguishing the record of its formulations by the religious cults. Having as reference the work by Black, *Models and Metaphors* from 1962, which distinguishes three modalities from the use of models and metaphors: the substitution, the comparisons and the metaphors in the strong sense, the indispensable ones, because it associates a thing or an idea which is generally has implicated another associated thing or idea.

The notion of route or path, is the most cognitive dimension and its deviations are analyzed in *The most cognitive search of the road* and *The uncertainties of that of what is-not*. The author adopts the idea that in the poem itself it is about the one, alone effective path, that is "is", of the "Truth", that is a line of inquiry, a kind or theoretical possibility (without predicate material); but the use of the proposition "is" cannot be regarded in the nature of the proposed things by the mortals; upon doing that, the mortals reveal a kind of road "is not", that is impossible, impracticable. Alone a positive road can be accepted of "predicate speculative", conception that, in the foreword of 2008, the author indicates that would be able to be better expressed through the expression "predicate of theoretical identity" (e.g. a table is (even) a cloud of electrons). What the mortals do, applying assertions and denials to the said beings, in general, without criteria, will never have to reach cognitive; for

we will differentiate to "Doxa", we should perceive that there is, in Parmenides, a comprehension of the distinction between forms of talk "apparent" and "real".

For the author, the road of "is" is, in last analysis, empty, that is, it must to be able be translated to the terms of the logical plan "something is something", without being incompatible with the description made by the philosopher as "metaphysical speculation". The "is" of Parmenides is a stronger term, that is, a hybrid between the hurt predicate and identity (p.79); that he refuses the term "not" or to a negative predicate in general; what is rejected is the use, in the context of the cosmological research, of propositions of that kind "is really not-F", without bigger qualifications; he rejects the negative constitution, that is in the world, as part of its basic structure.

Mourelatos recognizes, like this, the singularity of Parmenides, either in relation to the *History* of Herodoto, or regarding the research *katà phýsin* of Heraclitus, considering that the poem has more to do with explanation and interpretation of what with inquiry. The fact of that the eleata appeal to such logical-linguistic apparatus, shows an immense bother, but also a great speculative effort to understand what would be a road of the "is not". The author criticizes Taran by assimilating the second (is not) and the third roads (of the mortals) (p.91n47), therefore insists that "Doxa" of the mortals would not be able to be a "third" resultant road of the combination between being and not being. It would have, therefore, been the only Route, to the "Truth" (it is valid to observe the translation in such a way "alétheia" as of "tò eón" by "reality" or "the real", p.67); the bias that would be the second route is formulated, only to be forbidden. "Doxa" is not a road. Throughout the book it works with the ample contraposition between "Alétheia" and "Doxa".

In *Signs and The limits of the Reality*, deals with the signals that maintain the course of the road of "is". The analysis of fragment 8 reduces the *semantic* to four, that they are investigated and analyzed with detail. The being is "is not generated", "indivisible", "motionless" and "complete". It is important to recognize that many of the fundamental elements of the subsequent analyses that were made in the following decades already are present in the analysis by Mourelatos. He in fact, dismantles the poem "line by line", being able to, perhaps, sin for excess, but never by omission. In *Persuasion and allegiance*, develops an analysis, probably unpublished in the 70's, of the complexity and the reach of the semantic field of *peíthein* – to coax, associated to *pístis* – fidelity, relating

the talk poetic parmendean with Hesíodo and Ésquilo, emphasizing the paper of the persuasion and the affectivity not just in the opinionated talk, but also in the road of the truth.

The commitment of the mind with the reality analyzes the relationship between thought and language with reality, discusses the archaic versions of the thought modal in Parmenides, explaining difficult lines of fragment 8. It proposes a parallelism with the logical Atomism (Russel and Wittgenstein), according to which would have an "implicit ontological commitment" recognizable in the poem; and still, would be recognizable to necessary periods of training in the relation between thought and reality that would be analogous to the terms we have developed in the thought of Parmenides. I highlight what it says about the "primitive names" (in direct relation of reference) that would assign "atomic objects" and that would be comparable to the *onómata* (index) of the mortals of the poem. What is *logic* common / *xunón*, in the controversy of Heraclitus, and being that is the same / *tautón*, in the diagnosis of Parmenides, would be the object of the effective thought and the referring one of the names of the mortals, who do not know about this E, and therefore, cannot recognize it. The argument of verses 8.38-41, with convincing enough results, recuperates the interpretation of Woodbury (1958) and will be resumed in the unpublished article of Vlastos, at the end of the book. Woodbury (assisted and developed by Vlastos) reads, in 8, 38-39 "with regard to that, everybody those (names) were nominated...", and not "Therefore, everybody those (names) will be mere words...", wanting to say the names of the mortals, even so speak to see to be and to perish, only can have as referring the being. The interest and value of this new version, looks to me, to be beyond necessary for the argument to maintain the general approach that is made between analytic and Greek.

Doxa as acceptance is one of the high points of the book, for being really innovative and enlightening of a strong subject of the poem, frequently simplified in excess. Mourelatos analyzes with subtlety 1, 31-32, pointing out the rhetorical juxtaposition between *dótimos* and *tà dokoúnta*, exploring the relations between appearance and opinion, the nuances of the verb *dokéo* (in its aspects and subjective sub-aspects and objective), the relations between *dokein tini* and *phainesthai tini*, etc. It finishes arriving to an interpretation that proposes that we understand *doxa* as an acceptance criteria and volitional acceptance, not mere passive reception of impressions; accepting is in accordance with the norm, therefore, a grave approval, with resonances in contractual and lawful formulas; its linguistic analysis exposes the subtleties, not just of the old morality, but also of the diverse

levels valuations of affective pacts in functioning, that leaves its mark in the linguistic differentiations in the most surprising ways. *Doxa* as acceptance could imply "to agree explicitly or through the conduct of acts or offers of another person, in order that a contract be concluded and that the part become lawfully linked" (p.200-201). For that, the legal notion of "unfeasible" becomes key: legally, that is open to be, occasionally, considered impracticable, an agreement that can finish or to be annulled, is always in well determined conditions. It think *doxa* from that notion of "reversible" is revealing of the contractual or agreed dimension signed between the citizens, regarding values and representations that become, like this, hegemonic, without that, however, they lose its vulnerability.

The author still recognizes the fact that the terms in *dok-* had started to have a depreciative connotation in the development of Greek philosophy and that it is necessary find the equilibrium in the interpretation of the same ones. The relative terms to *doxa* do not deserve the pessimism load that the subsequent anthropological reflection will confer to them; even later, they will be able to be recognized in contexts of big cognitive success. *Doxa* is not an alone impulse, but unites a bundle of affection and significance: examining, care, approval and sanction; the author thinks, at last, that upon criticizing, "the philosopher is not seeking a sitting duck", and more, "that we will have them in *dok-* maintain their positive aspect, although "defeasible", is conditioned so *that* the philosophical attack *as* the *doxa* will make sense, where it has to itself tie". In this context, so much of what makes up of the *doxa* are important: what the mortals accept as valid or true and the way they questioned already by Parmenides, and more still by Plato. Xenophanes, the tragic and Plato are called to supply examples and contexts that clarify important nuances of the refined one and consistent interpretation that Mourelatos proposes is the problem of the *doxa* in Parmenides.

In *deceptive Words*, its proposed a comparative chart between *doxa* and *althea*, built in we will have linguistic and conceptual terms, that shows enlightening resemblances and contrasts between him to be described in the fragment 8 and the cosmo of the second part of the poem (p.248). What results is a mitigated vision of the relationship between the two part of the poem, that are related so much by resemblance as by contrast; a position nuance that prefers tension,

ambiguity and same irony, instead of controversy and contradictory exclusion, without exclude severity and linguistic analysis detailed.

The appendices are very helpful for the researcher of Parmenides. *The hexameter of Parmenides* discusses the appropriation that the philosopher makes of the epic hexameter (not only epic), with its variations of metric units, frequencies and cense, discussing with Fränkel and Porter. However, before what Mourelatos calls of "irregularities" metric or "reasons esthetics", "poetic liberty" and rhythm "wobbly", its difficult of discern between worthy judgment and purely technical judgment. They follow others appendices, *Interpretations of the "is" without subject and THE meaning of khré and cognates*. In this, it discusses some dimensions modal of the syntax parmenidean, between the need and the persuasion. It translates *khré* not as "is necessary", but like "is correctly, due or appropriate" – in the scope of the adaptation, of the settlement or of the accommodation to certain determined demands by different contexts (subjective emphasis in *khre* / "should" and lens in *gave* / "ought it to you"), with the denial indicating not an absence of need, but a negative injunction (he is not correct do such thing). The last appendix presents *the Text of the fragments* of the poem, from the edition of Tarán (1965).

In Part II of the book, *Heraclitus, Parmenides and ingenuous metaphysics of the things* brings the reprint of the article from 1973, through whose reading we be able to evaluate that, in fact, there is no change, but maintenance of course "in the route of Parmenides". Between the theory and the book and between the book and the articles, the adjustments are small; what stays clear is that each subsequent publication sets out aspects that were implicit in the previous, without contradicting the main theories. Mourelatos inherit of Sellers a negative value perspective regarding the pre-socratic philosophers, expressed in terms such as vision "ingenuous" or use of "primitive language", by opposition to the "refinement" and to the language "in perfect logical order", "more subtle and refined" of the big subsequent philosophers (n.5, p. 302; p04). The visions of world that do not have a "texture propositional" (*lógos*) they are judged lower, primitive or ingenuous, reinforcing, like this position (naturally outdated) of that of the pre-socratics configure a "still not" of the western philosophy. Upon revealing those judgments, in the articles, he shows it was compromised to partial and reducing committed with partial visions and reducers, which were not set out in the book.

If Heraclitus goes beyond the ingenuous realism, recognizing polarities and relations, Parmenides not just in the "Doxa", but even in the road of the "Truth" would translate to supposed NMT ("Naïve Metaphysics of Things"), where the "things", thought individually, healthy attributed "names" isolated, by opposition to the thought of relations and with "texture propositional", that is not another one thing that the philosophy of the platonic dialogues and of the logical Aristotelian one, considered as "highly sophisticated". It is seen for example, a significant passage: "After all of accounts, who was certain above all this, was the mature Plato, after having developed the doctrine of the communion and the mixture of the forms, not Parmenides, especially with regard to the meaning of " it is not F" (p.328).

It is worth it to observe that, in the following years, evaluations of the period pre-socratic had been made with more subtlety and depth, for example, for Marcel Detienne, in *the Masters of the Truth in Archaic Greece* (1981), where the author if considers one "prehistory" of the Greek notion of "truth", without be founded in a "fiction" wittgensteiniana, but analyzing texts of the Greek literature properly dictates. With regard to this necessary point, the perspective of Mourelatos finishes for coming close itself to the one of a Havelock, for example, in his *Foreword to Plato* (1963), in spite of the big literary erudition, is not going to avoid useless as much as so deprecatory value judgments for the comprehension of the first Greek philosophers.

Giving tests of its undeniable philosophical and philological erudition, Mourelatos discusses with Heidel, Reindhardt, Burnet, Cherniss, Cornford, etc. the repercussion of its workmanship is evident also in the way as it is cited in texts of posterior authors. In the *Etudes sur Parménide* (1997), collective work organized by Pierre Aubenque, Mourelatos is cited by diverse authors, with certain consensual recognition of the competence of his linguistic analysis, but not in a similar way, in what plays to the its interpretations or to the philosophical consequences that it extracts. Couloubaritsis, for example, resumes the parallelism between truth and *doxa*; O' Brien discusses details of the linguistic analysis. Cassin, in turn, resumes the parallelism with the epic poetry, in particular with the Odyssey, to construct a proper and original interpretation. Dixsaut mentions the connections by him proposed with epic poetry and, still, accepts as O' Brien the suggestion of the term "speculative poetry" for reference to the language of the poem of Parmenides.

In the sequence, we have the texts about the *Determination and indetermination, be and be not ourselves fragments of Parmenides*, that is the reprint of the article of 1976 and *Some alternatives in the interpretation of Parmenides*, which is the reprint of the article of 1979. And part III, named *The scope of the nomination: Gregory Vlastos (1907-1991) about B8.38 and others matters*, is a homage to the big studios North American, with the publication of the unpublished article "*Names*" of him be in *Parmenides*.

A restraint that remains, regarding the book, in general, is connection to the impression of that, upon superimposing so strictly the logical-grammatical structure of the language to the verses of Parmenides, his analysis tends to be reducing, even though instructive; the excess of formalization hinders, on the other hand, that let us contrast what the poem has of archaic with ours so deep-rooted grammatical mental habits, and for another one, it hinders despite letting us be surprised for what the philosopher-poet eleata represents as innovation for the reception of section V a.C. It stays patent with the absence of a minimum structural vision of the history of ancient Greek culture, in which the texts talked between itself, for beyond the presence or absence of formal markers, that is, in historical terms and philosophical forts, and not only with regard to the instrumental uses logical. Even when the author speaks of the recognition of the immense debt that Parmenides had with the tradition myth, in his analysis of the plan of the roads in general, the equivalence that is made between road and enunciated logical is quick too; that does with its approaches, in fact, tends to minimize the insertion of the philosophical poem in the culture or the effective meaning of the mythic dimension of the text. The following passage shows the curious way that Mourelatos thinks the insertion of Parmenides in the history of the culture and of Greek philosophy: "Everything that suggests that Parmenides was not unconscious of the paper that his philosophy be able to have (and in fact it had) in the history. If it felt that he was putting the human thought in the route (way) for the metaphysical critical one, and he felt that he was primarily fixing and delimiting the concept of reality, this hunch completely was confirmed by the subsequent developments" (p.135).

Finally, the reading of the texts of Mourelatos, in his successive editions, sample as much as one an author can maintain itself solidly consistent along a path of research.

Marcelo Marques (UFMG)