

Parmenides 2

**Doxa**

- a cosmology of concentric ‘rings’, in which hot-rare elements alternate with cold-dense elements, separated by rings where these elements mix: the cosmos is enclosed externally by a boundary solid like a ‘wall’, and at the centre of the system, there is a body that is equally solid (A37, B12);
- the theory that the sky, the stars, the Milky Way, and the sun are made of exhaled and compressed fire (A37, A38, A39, A41), air is a secretion of the earth (A37), the earth is generated through the precipitation of a dense element (A22) and has its roots in water (B15a);
- the theory that the moon shines by reflecting sunlight (A42, B14, B15) and is derived from a denser and colder mixture than that of the sun (A43);
- the recognition of the identity of the ‘morning star’ and the ‘evening star’ (A1, A40a);
- the discovery of the Earth’s sphericity (A1, A44) and its division into five different climatic zones (A44a);
- a theory on the generation of human beings from the heat of the sun (A1) and the fiery nature of the soul (A45);
- a naturalistic explanation of the relationship between body and mind (B16);
- an embryogenetic theory on the sex of the unborn child based on the position of the semen in the ovaries (A53, A54, B18);
- theories about differences between males and females, sensation, memory, old age, and death, which are all understood in terms of thermal variation (A46, A46a–b, A52, A53);
- an explanation of sight as the emission of prehensile light rays emanating from the eyes (A48);
- a panpsychist theory that everything possesses a form of knowledge (A46).<sup>4</sup>

(from Massimo Pulpito 2025)

**The two ways**

Come now, I will tell you ... the only routes of inquiry that are for thinking: the one, that [it] is and that it is not possible for [it] not to be, is the path of Persuasion (for it attends upon Truth), the other, that [it] is not and that [it] must not be, this indeed I declare to you to be a path entirely unable to be investigated: For neither can you know what is not (for it is not to be accomplished) nor can you declare it. [Fr.2]

For the same thing is for thinking and for being. [Fr. 3]

It is right both to say and to think that it is what-is; For it can be, but nothing is not. [Fr.6]

Just one story of a route is still left: that it is. [Fr.8]

### A third way (?)

You must be informed of everything, both of the unmoved heart of persuasive reality (30) and of the beliefs of mortals, which comprise no genuine conviction; **nevertheless you shall learn these also, how it was necessary that the things that are believed to be should have their being in general acceptance**, ranging through all things from end to end. (transl. Coxon, Fr. 1.28–32; cf. 8.50–52)

It is necessary to say and to think that What Is is; for it is to be, / but nothing it is not. These things I bid you ponder. / For I shall begin for you from this first way of inquiry, / then yet again from that along which mortals who know nothing / wander two-headed: for haplessness in their / breasts directs wandering understanding. They are borne along / deaf and blind at once, bedazzled, indiscriminating hordes, / who have supposed that it is and is not the same / and not the same; but the path of all these turns back on itself. (part of Fr. 6)

John Palmer: “who have supposed that it is and is not the same / and not the same” (an intermingling of being and not-being altogether) ≠ [it] is not and that [it] must not be.

### A reconstruction of the TRUTH (based on Cohen)

**Stage 1:** Establish the central thesis (fr. 2, 3, 6, 7):

(CT) **What-is-not cannot be thought about or spoken about.**

**Stage 2:** From (CT) derive the characteristics of Being (fr. 8):

**Positive:** Being is ungenerated, deathless, not ever was it, nor yet will it be / whole and uniform, still, perfect/complete, single, continuous, etc.

**Negative:** There is no change (generation, destruction, motion, qualitative change)  
There is no plurality.

### Against generation/coming to be

For what generation will you seek for it?

How, whence did it grow? That it came from what is not I shall not allow

You to say or think— for it is not sayable or thinkable

That it is not [ . . . ] (line 6b– 9a)

Nor will the force of conviction allow anything to come to be from Being, beyond itself; wherefore neither to have come into being nor to perish has Justice loosened her fetters to permit it, but holds it tight. (Fr. 12– 15a)