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The Verb εἰμί and Its Benefits for Parmenides' Philosophy

<https://doi.org/10.1515/rhiz-2023-0008>

Abstract: Parmenides believed that he had found the most reliable way of theorizing about ultimate reality. While natural philosophers conceptualized phenomenal differences to explain cosmic change, Parmenides used the least meaningful but most versatile verb in Ancient Greek to engage in a purely intellectual exploration of reality – one that transcended synchronous and asynchronous differences. In this article I explain how the verb εἰμί was useful to Parmenides in his attempt to overcome natural philosophy. First, I argue that the Eleatic philosopher regarded νοεῖν and εἶναι as equivalent because εἰμί-clauses enabled him to express arguably any conceivable content without providing significant additional meaning. I then show that Parmenides' concept of *being* implies the present tense and the imperfective aspect but is grounded in the lexical content of the verb εἰμί, which entails no inherent temporal limits. This explains why ἔστι, ἐόν, and εἶναι could be used to indicate unbounded actuality, regardless of whether these forms represented lexical predicates or auxiliaries for predication. Finally, I maintain that the suitability of εἰμί for talking about all kinds of things without introducing temporal limits allowed Parmenides to avoid what he saw as two mistakes made by natural philosophers: identifying ultimate reality with something that cannot cover the full extent of thought and confusing actuality with present occurrence.

Keywords: Parmenides, being, thinking, ultimate reality, εἰμί, predicator, lexical content

Article note: This research was funded in whole by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [M 3075-G]. I thank Klaas Bentein for his advice during my stay at Ghent University in spring 2022. I thank Lesley Brown and Matt Dougherty for taking the time to read and comment on the penultimate version of this work.

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Introduction

Eleatic ontology emerged as a reaction against natural philosophy. Ancient Greek natural philosophers represented the universe as an¹ arrangement of processes and posited an original stuff whose transformation gave rise to cosmic diversity. Parmenides, on the contrary, refused to identify ultimate reality with a specific material substance, such as water, air, or fire, and limited himself to asserting the actuality of ultimate reality in order to draw the consequences that fitted his worldview.² He deemed his path-breaking deduction more fundamental than natural philosophy and set the course for Greek metaphysics by claiming that both thinking and being were coextensive with ultimate, immutable reality. Some lyric poets had already attributed to humans the power to transcend physical constraints through the apprehension of objects that do not act upon sensory organs, but Parmenides himself seems to have understood that the verb εἰμί in itself neither specifies the nature nor limits the actuality of its subject, or of what is said about that subject.³

In support of this account, I will argue along the following lines:

1. Preconceptions about *being* prevent us from understanding Parmenidean ontology. Parmenides equated νοεῖν with εἶναι (B3) under the assumption that the content conveyed by τὸ εἶν (= οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα) was the expression of νοεῖν (B8.34–36). This content is so difficult to grasp because εἰμί is not only the least meaningful verb in Ancient Greek but also a function word. Still, Parmenides' concept of *being* can be revealed by linguistic analysis, for it must be captured by finite and nonfinite εἰμί-clauses.⁴

1 On the question of whether some of them postulated more than one κόσμος, see Cornford (1934).

2 The ἀρχή sought by natural philosophers could be seen as the ultimate reality, that is, as that which is fundamental to all things. However, Parmenides was convinced that the most fundamental condition cannot be distinguished in any way, although it must be entailed by everything that can be distinguished in any way. I deliberately do not specify the concept of *ultimate reality* further, so as not to commit Parmenides to a particular representation of ultimate reality. Toward the end of Section 5, I will note that ultimate reality for Parmenides seems to be that which is common to all that subsists, obtains, endures, or pertains, regardless of time limits.

3 Although Parmenidean “being” does not admit potentiality (cf. ἀτέλεστον in B8.3 and ἀτελεύτητον in B8.32), I am not using the term ‘actuality’ in a strict Aristotelian sense. As will become clear at the end of Section 5, *actuality* should be taken here as the inherent feature of that which subsists, obtains, endures, or pertains, considered in its subsistence, “obtainance”, endurance, or “pertainance”, respectively. The complication is that Parmenides seems to have associated such a feature with that which is common to all that subsists, obtains, endures, or pertains, and therefore seems to have identified it with ultimate reality.

4 See item c at the end of Section 5 for details.

2. Parmenides' concept of *being* is symbolized by the present forms of the verb εἰμί in their functional relation to the clause, not only as lexical units conveying a certain predicable notion, which would also be expressed by the future forms of the same verb (ἔσται).⁵ As a lexical verb, εἰμί was very poor in meaning; it conjured up a very abstract notion of *subsistence* and took on different specific meanings according to the subject and context in question (e. g., *be alive, present, actual, in force, located*, etc.). Nevertheless, as an auxiliary for predication, εἰμί maintained its durative aspect and served to state arguably any content without notional interference.⁶ Moreover, leaving aside the imperfect (ἦν), the present forms of εἰμί served to state predicative content without temporal limits because they only expressed the present tense (ἔστιν) and the imperfective aspect (έόν and εἶναι).⁷
3. Parmenides had reason to believe that “being” surpassed the principles proposed by Ionian natural philosophers. These principles accounted only for the positive aspect of variation across a polar continuum (e. g., for brightness, not for darkness) and were meant to explain synchronous and asynchronous differences, not what all ascertainable things have in common. Parmenidean “being,” by contrast, covered the entire extent of thought and allowed for an investigation of ultimate reality, which was supposed to transcend differences and oppositions. Now, I do not claim that Parmenides grasped reality in a way that natural philosophers could not, but rather that he thought that the verb εἰμί allowed him to grasp ultimate reality.

5 For the possibility that the future forms of εἰμί express a different content, see Section 5.

6 This will become clearer before Section 6, but it means that εἰμί as a functional verb does not significantly affect the lexical semantics of predication. Here is an *ad hoc* example in English. The copula in ‘You were the cause of my misfortune’ extracts grammatical categories (e. g., tense) from ‘You caused my misfortune.’ However, the verb *to be* does not significantly affect the lexical semantics of predication, unlike the semicopula *to become* in ‘You became the cause of my misfortune.’ On the difference between copulas and semicopulas, semicopulas and pseudocopulas (e. g., ‘You proved to be the cause of my misfortune’), see Kahn (2003), pp. 203–205 and Hengeveld (1992), pp. 30–45. Now, the non-interference of εἰμί is precisely what allowed Aristotle to ignore the tendency of thinkers like Lycophron to suppress the verb εἰμί in both nonverbal predication and periphrastic constructions with participles (cf. Arist. *Ph.* 185^b25–186^a3). Indeed, εἰμί does not convey enough content to be a proper categorematic term, nor does it significantly affect the lexical semantics of predication.

7 Investigations and explanations usually follow an order that is the reverse of the order of demonstrations. However, the present investigation will be lengthy, and it may be appropriate to anticipate one of the main conclusions of Section 5: The content of νοεῖν and εἶναι (infinitives) is the νόημα (noun) οὐνεκεν ἔστι (noun clause), which is expressed by τὸ έόν (substantivized participle). Now, the expression of the “thought that it is” always carries two types of content: (1) proper predicative content, which is not conveyed by the verb εἰμί itself and falls under one of the Aristotelian categories, and (2) functional information, such as tense and aspect.

1 Thinking and being have the same content

Parmenides apparently claimed that thinking and being are the same thing, but scholars debate whether this is what he really meant.⁸ The identity of thinking and being seems to defy common sense,⁹ and what appears to be an obvious translation of τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι (B3¹⁰), namely 'For the same thing is thinking and being' or 'For the same thing is to think and to be,' has gained many objectors over time. In what follows, I will focus on grammar as much as possible so as not to introduce bias into my interpretation of B3. Understanding Parmenides is more important to me than presenting him as a thinker who does not offend the spirit of our time.

Even if B3 is a complete main clause with the subject in the nominative, as it seems to be,¹¹ νοεῖν and εἶναι do not have to be the subject of that clause. Since "[t]he Greek infinitive was originally the dative of an abstract noun,"¹² several interpreters believe that the infinitives in B3 are dative.¹³ If that were the case, ἐστίν would not necessarily link a subject with a nonverbal predicate and the infinitives would specify the purpose or status of τὸ αὐτό, regardless of the referent of this phrase. It goes without saying that the copular nature of the clause would mainly depend on whether the dative segments are predicative or not (cf. *S is there for thinking* with *S is for thinking*). Either way, this reading does not result in the equation of νοεῖν and εἶναι, but in the claim that τὸ αὐτό is or is there for thinking and being. This is certainly not an equative sentence; however, such a construction could still involve some kind of equivalence: if τὸ αὐτό substitute for a noun phrase, B3 would imply that whatever value satisfies *x is for νοεῖν* also satisfies *x is for εἶναι*.

There are some objections against this reading despite its grammaticality.¹⁴ Parmenides asserts that τὸ ἐόν does not await completion (cf. ἀτέλεστον in B8.3

⁸ For a complete and representative example of this, see Wedin (2014), pp. 202–229.

⁹ Cf. Long (2005), pp. 236–237.

¹⁰ I quote Parm. in abbreviated form: B00. All other quotations from *Vorsokr.* follow the format DK 00 B 00.

¹¹ But see Furness Altman (2015), p. 200.

¹² Monro (1891), p. 207.

¹³ For example: Barnes (1982), p. 124; Bernabé Pajares (2007), p. 23; Bormann (1971), pp. 10, 35; Burnet (1930), p. 173; Cornford (1939), p. 31; Coxon (2009), p. 58; Curd (2015), p. 4; Dalfen (1994), p. 200; Eggers Lan and Juliá (2008), p. 477; Furley (1973), p. 11; Gallop (2013), p. 57; Gómez-Lobo (1985), p. 72; Guthrie (1965), p. 14; Hölscher (2014), p. 9; Ketchum (1990), p. 175; Kirk and Raven (1957), p. 269, n. 344; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983), p. 246, n. 2; Mourelatos (2008), p. 75, n. 4; O'Brien (1987), p. 19; Palmer (2009), p. 365; Tarán (1965), p. 41; Wedin (2014), pp. 23, 202; Zeller (1856), p. 398.

¹⁴ For a collection of criticisms, see Giancola (2001), pp. 638–645 and Marcinkowska-Rosół (2010), pp. 62–69.

and ἀτελεύτητον in B8.32), but a sentence like ‘The same thing is (there) for thinking and being’ presents being as something that need not be actual. Consider a sentence like ‘All peppers are there to dry,’ which presents desiccation as something that is meant to occur but not before a certain point in time, or a sentence like ‘These pencils are for coloring,’ which presents coloring as a possibility in need of actualization. A similar problem arises if we grant a modal sense to the combination of εἶμι and infinitives.¹⁵ Sentences such as ‘The same thing is allowed to think and be’ and ‘The same thing can think and be’ present being as something possible, admitted, or permitted, while Parmenides claims that being is somehow necessary, obligatory, or mandatory (cf. οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι in B2.3, χρῆ [...] ἐὼν ἔμμεναι in B6.1, and ἀνάγκη in B8.16). At the same time, some evidence may counter this argument, for Parmenides may also have spoken of being as something possible, admitted, or permitted (cf. ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι in B6.1).

There is another objection worth mentioning. Since the supporters of this reading usually translate B3 as ‘For the same thing is (allowed) to be thought of and be’ or ‘The same thing can be thought of and be,’ they have been accused of overlooking selectively the active voice of νοεῖν and taking τὸ αὐτό as both the object of thinking and the subject of being.¹⁶ This is withal a minor objection, for nothing prevents grammatical subjects from being agents and patients at the same time (e. g., ‘Bill killed John and was killed by John’s wife’). Besides, the semantic role of the subject in accordance with this reading would not be determined by the voice of the infinitives,¹⁷ but rather by ἐστίν, which is the verb of the sentence. From a semantic point of view, the referent of τὸ αὐτό would not be an agent or a patient, but a theme, i. e., something located in the (abstract) space; and it would be as a theme that τὸ αὐτό should be connected with the datival infinitives.

Of course, νοεῖν and εἶναι could also be in the nominative case, as often seen in sentences that link two infinitives to define one of them as a lexical entry. For example, there is a sentence structurally identical to B3 in Plato’s *Cratylus*: τὸ γὰρ εἶρεν λέγειν ἐστίν (398d7–8), where λέγειν is undoubtedly in the nominative. This second reading has many adherents,¹⁸ but presents us with a different challenge,

¹⁵ Cf. Thanassas (1997), pp. 82–83, n. 134.

¹⁶ For example, by Calogero (1962), p. 328 and Mansfeld (1964), pp. 63–64.

¹⁷ Furlley (1973), p. 11, n. 35 makes a similar argument: “The infinitive is functioning as a verbal noun, and at that level distinctions between active and passive disappear.”

¹⁸ Année (2012), p. 159; Cassin (1998), p. 79; Cerri (1999), p. 149; Conche (1996), p. 87; Cordero (2005), p. 219; Couloubaritsis (1990), p. 370; Diels (1897), p. 33; Diels and Kranz (1960), p. 231; García Calvo (2018), p. 50; Giancola (2001), p. 636; Gigon (1968), p. 252; Heitsch (1991), p. 17; Jaeger (1964), p. 117; Kahn (2009b), p. 163; Karsten (1835), p. 33; Laks and Most (2016), p. 39; Llansó (2007), p. 36; Loenen (1959), p. 33; Mansfeld (1964), p. 67; Mansfeld and Primavesi (2012), p. 323; Montero (1958), p. 350;

namely to identify the subject of the resulting copular clause.¹⁹ Indeed, we should not exclude the possibility that the infinitives are the subject of the sentence, because, as argued by Heidel (1913), p. 720 against Burnet (1930), p. 173, “[a]ny good grammar will supply abundant examples of the substantive use of the infinitive, with or without the article, earlier than the date of Parmenides.”²⁰

Now, someone might think that τὸ αὐτό, which occupies the first position in the sequence, is clearly the subject of ἐστίν. If this were the case, τὸ αὐτό could either establish an endophoric reference, as in ‘For this very thing is thinking and being,’ or stand for anything discernible, as in ‘For x is thinking and being,’ where $x = x$. The latter occurs, for instance, in *Metaph.* Γ.3 1005^b19–20:

τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἅμα ὑπάρχειν τε καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν ἀδύνατον τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτό
For the same [thing] cannot pertain and not pertain simultaneously to the same [thing] and
in the same [respect]

However, neither definiteness nor word order are critical to the identification of the subject in B3. In Greek, “the subject of a copular verb may be indefinite”²¹ and word order follows a rather discursive configuration.²² For this reason, we may also want to explore the possibility that τὸ αὐτό is not the subject but the predicate of the sentence, considering that τὸ αὐτό does not even need to be a referential phrase. DK 90 B 1.1 shows that τὸ αὐτό can be a relational predicate:

τοὶ μὲν γὰρ λέγοντι, ὥς ἄλλο μὲν ἐστὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἄλλο δὲ τὸ κακόν· τοὶ δέ, ὥς τὸ αὐτὸ ἐστὶ
For some say that the good is one [thing] and the bad [is] another [thing], but others [say] that
[both] are the same [thing]

According to the *Dissoi Logoi*, some philosophers argued that τὸ ἀγαθόν and τὸ κακόν are two different things, while others argued that τὸ ἀγαθόν and τὸ κακόν are the same thing (τὸ αὐτό ἐστὶ). Yet, we can also render τὸ αὐτό in this passage

Reale (2001), p. 45; Riezler (2001), p. 27; Scuto (2005), p. 30; Sedley (1999), p. 120; Thanassas (1997), p. 277; Untersteiner (1958), p. 131; Verdenius (1964), p. 35; Vlastos (1953), p. 168, n. 1.

¹⁹ Frege's (1892) distinction between the “predicative use” and the “equative meaning” of the verb *sein* shaped the philosophical concept of *copula*. However, I will use a linguistic concept of *copula*, according to which copulas in general “fulfill certain syntactic functions” (Pustet 2003, pp. 2–3). Verbal copulas, in particular, display grammatical categories, such as tense, that cannot be expressed by nonverbal phrases. This is why Mikkelsen (2005) and Geist (2006) consider sentences with definite noun phrases in the verb phrase to be copular clauses.

²⁰ See also van Emde Boas et al. (2019), p. 580.

²¹ Bakker (2009), p. 176.

²² Cf. Kiss (1995), p. 5.

as ‘the same (as each other)’ or ‘identical (to each other),’ which is not a referential phrase but a relational predicate, similar to ‘brother.’ Compare ‘Castor and Pollux are brothers (to each other)’ with ‘Castor is Pollux’s brother,’ where ‘Pollux’s brother’ is a concept and not an object, in Frege’s terms. This has a very simple explanation: the semantic nucleus of τὸ αὐτό is an adjective that expresses the reciprocal notion of identicalness.²³ Not surprisingly, τὸ αὐτό sometimes behaves like relational adjectives complemented either by a dative or by καί, such as ἴσος ‘equal.’²⁴ Note that Mansfeld and Primavesi (2012), p. 323 only take the first infinitive as the subject of B3: “denn das Erkennen ist dasselbe wie das Sein.”

Judging by the oldest testimony of B3, τὸ αὐτό should be taken as a relational predicate. In his attempt to prove that Greeks were plagiarists, Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* VI.2.23.3) quotes Parmenides and assumes that B3 was the model for two other passages. The first one is Hdt. 6.86γ:

τὸ πειρηθῆναι τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ ποιῆσαι ἴσον γενέσθαι²⁵
that having queried the god [i. e., having requested the god’s approval to act] and acting turn
out to be equivalent

The second one is Ar. *Fr.* 691:

δύναται γὰρ ἴσον τῷ δρᾶν τὸ νοεῖν
For thinking is equal in power to doing

Revealingly, the alleged plagiarisms use the relational adjective ἴσος to assert that the powers, effects, or consequences of the actions denoted by the infinitives in question are somehow the same. The quote from Herodotus states that the consequence of πειρηθῆναι is equal to the consequence of ποιῆσαι, while the quote from Aristophanes states that the power of νοεῖν is equal to the power of δρᾶν. Of course, being is not an action; but thinking is an intentional action, and the content to which νοεῖν is related²⁶ may coincide with the content associated by Parmenides with εἶναι. It is reasonable to believe that every object of thought can be expressed by a verb like εἰμί. Even Russell (1903) once claimed that “[b]eing is that which belongs to every conceivable term, to every possible object of thought – in short to everything that can possibly occur in any proposition, true or false, and to all

²³ Cf. van Emde Boas et al. (2019), p. 342.

²⁴ Cf. van Emde Boas et al. (2019), pp. 377, 402–403.

²⁵ δύνασθαι ed. Wilson.

²⁶ Remember Brentano’s (1874) definition of intentionality: “die Beziehung auf einen Inhalt” (p. 115).

such propositions themselves" (p. 449). Therefore, Parmenides could have held that νοεῖν and εἶναι have the same content, restricting the identity of νοεῖν and εἶναι to a respect that goes unmentioned in B3, namely, as to content, as if we eliminated the dative τῇ γνώμῃ that restricts the scope of ὁ αὐτός in Th. 3.38.1.1:

Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ὁ αὐτός εἰμι τῇ γνώμῃ
So, for my part, I am the same as to judgment

I do not mean that we should specifically insert τῇ γνώμῃ into B3, but that it is reasonably likely that the identity in B3 is tacitly limited by Parmenides (as to content) in a way analogous to how the identity is explicitly limited by Thucydides in this passage (as to judgment).

2 Cognizance and fullness of content

The correlation between νοεῖν and εἶναι suggests that what Parmenides called τὸ ἐόν may not be sensible, and that is what the second oldest testimony of B3 tells us. Just before quoting B3, Plotinus says that Parmenides "reduced ὄν and νοῦς to the same thing, and did not place τὸ ὄν among sensible things" (εἰς ταὐτὸ συνῆγεν ὄν καὶ νοῦν, καὶ τὸ ὄν οὐκ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ἐτίθετο, *Enn.* 5.1.8.16–17). Nevertheless, we should not endorse Plotinus' words without further examination, because Parmenides associated human thought with organic processes. According to Aristotle, Parmenides did not distinguish φρόνησις 'cognizance' from αἴσθησις 'sense perception',²⁷ and Parmenides himself states in B16 that human νόος depends on the physical makeup of each individual, which must include sense organs and sensory processes.

ὥς γὰρ ἐκάστοτ'²⁸ ἔχει κῤῃσις²⁹ μελέων πολυκάμπτων³⁰, / τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρέστηκεν³¹.
τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ / ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν / καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλεόν ἐστὶ νόημα.

²⁷ Cf. *Metaph.* Γ.5 1009^b12–25.

²⁸ ἐκάστοτ' Arist. *Metaph.* E1: ἐκάστοτε Thphr. *Sens.*: ἕκαστος Arist. *Metaph.* E²: ἐκάστῳ Arist. *Metaph.* A^b.

²⁹ κῤῃσις Stephanus: κῤῃσιν mss. "Schwierigkeiten bereitet ἔχει, da der bruchstückhafte Text uns über das Subjekt des Satzes im unklaren läßt. Um dieser Schwierigkeit abzuweichen, versuchten die einen Handschriften ἕκαστος, Stephanus aber κῤῃσις" (Heitsch 1991, p. 191).

³⁰ πολυκάμπτων Arist. *Metaph.*: πολυπλάγκτων Thphr. *Sens.*

³¹ παρέστηκεν Thphr. *Sens.*: παρίσταται Arist. *Metaph.*

For as the combination of the much-fluctuating limbs comes about each time, so is the power to think disposed in humans; for what the constitution of the limbs in humans cognizes is the same, in each and every case; for the full is thought [i. e., for what is full is an act of thinking].

The meaning of B16 has never been clear, but I draw two conclusions from this fragment. First, human νόος attains awareness of different things through time because it depends on the temporary state of each individual cognizer. Second, what the physical constitution of all individuals cognizes (φρονέει) is the same thing in all cases, namely τὸ πλεόν. Theophrastus' commentary on B16 has led several interpreters to believe that τὸ πλεόν refers here to what prevails in a mixture.³² But πλέος means 'full' in B9.3, and τὸ πλεόν most likely characterizes each act of νοεῖν, each νόημα, as the adjective ἐμπλεος 'quite full' (lat. *impleo*) describes the subject of ἐστίν in B8.24.³³

οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστὶν ὁμοῖον· / οὐδέ τι τῇ μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἴργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι, / οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἐμπλεόν ἐστιν ἑόντος. / τῷ ξυνεχῆς πᾶν ἐστίν· ἑὸν γὰρ ἑόντι πελάζει. (B8.22–25)

Nor is [it] separately graspable, since [it] is all alike; nor [is] there anything more, which would prevent it from holding together, nor [is there] anything less, but [it] is all quite full of being. Therefore, [it] is all continuous: for being makes contact with being.

Whatever the correct translation of πλέος is, this adjective qualifies things as not allowing any gap, and B16 is stating that φρόνησις has no blanks. Plenitude, or the corresponding quality, would be inseparable from cognizance according to Parmenides. Not even on the plane of human cognizance, where diversity prevails, would it make sense to speak of real gaps.

Since ancient times it has been said that Parmenides denied the reality of sensible things.³⁴ But all he did was acknowledge the limitations of sense perception and criticize his peers for believing that synchronous and asynchronous differences allowed them to talk sense about nonbeing. B16 contains an expression that illustrates Parmenides' understanding of human knowledge very well: τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρέστηκεν 'so is the power to think disposed in humans.' Greek popular and religious beliefs attributed νόος not only to humans but also to gods. For example, Xenophanes' supreme deity ὁρᾷ 'sees,' νοεῖ 'apprehends,' and ἀκούει 'hears' (DK 21 B 24), and surpasses humans in δέμας 'extent' and νόημα 'thought' (DK 21 B 23). Thus, in approaching Parmenides, we should keep in mind that the power to νοεῖν transcends the human condition and is not limited by par-

³² For a critical assessment of Theophrastus' commentary, see Laks (1990).

³³ Cf. Hershbell (1970), p. 5 and Gallop (2013), p. 87.

³⁴ Cf. Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114b5–7.

ticular bodily constraints. Remember that Anaxagoras, a post-Parmenidean, was fully convinced that νοῦς was a self-subsistent power controlling the universe and governing living beings from within (DK 59 B 12). Now, Parmenides regarded νοεῖν as a capability given to human beings, but he also considered human cognizance inferior to divine awareness. B6.4 uses a poetic formula that belittles the reach of human knowledge, βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν 'mortals who know nothing'.³⁵ We find the same expression in lyric poetry: for instance, when Semonides³⁶ and Theognis³⁷ exalt divine νόος and lament human inability to foresee and influence the course of events. Parmenides' goddess never denies that mortals are able to νοεῖν, but she constantly deplores human inability to take full advantage of that faculty: "for the ineptitude in their chest" – she says in B6.5–6 – "directs a wandering νόος" (ἀμηχανίη³⁸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον). Mortals fixate on sense perception and lose sight of what is not subject to synchronous and asynchronous distinctions. Note that B6.7 ridicules those who talk about nonbeing by calling them blind and deaf (κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε), that is, by attributing sensory deprivation to them. Of course, for someone like Parmenides' goddess, the worst consequence of a sensorily mediated access to reality on the part of the mortals is that, given the transitoriness of phenomena, mortals could validate and disseminate theories that involve nonbeing:

οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῆι εἶναι μὴ ἔοντα· / ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἵργε νόημα /
μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολῦπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω[³⁹] / νωμᾶν ἄσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἠχῆσσαν
ἀκουήν / καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον / ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα. (B7)

For this shall not be imposed at any time, that things that are not are; so you better keep your thought away from this path of inquiry, and do not let custom force you along this much-frequented path to exercise an aimless eye and a resonant ear and tongue; rather, discern judiciously the much tested proof expounded by me.

35 See Torgerson (2006).

36 Semon. *Fr.* 1.1–5: ὦ παῖ, τέλος μὲν Ζεὺς ἔχει βαρύκτυπος / πάντων ὅσ' ἐστὶ καὶ τίθησ' ὅκηι θέλει, / νοῦς δ' οὐκ ἐπ' ἀνθρώποισιν, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἡμεροῖ / ἃ δὴ βοτὰ ζοοῦσιν, οὐδὲν εἰδότες / ὅκως ἕκαστον ἐκτελευτήσει θεός 'Oh boy, loud-thundering Zeus controls the end of everything that is and allots it as he wishes; there is no νοῦς in men, but, ephemeral, we live like grazing beasts, not knowing at all how god will put an end to each one.'

37 Thgn. 1.138–141: οὐδέ τῳ ἀνθρώπων παραγίνεται, ὅσσα θέλῃσιν· / ἴσχει γὰρ χαλεπῆς πείρατ' ἀμηχανίης. / ἀνθρώποι δὲ μάταια νομίζομεν εἰδότες οὐδέν· / θεοὶ δὲ κατὰ σφέτερον πάντα τελοῦσι νόον 'To none of men comes as much as he desires: for [man] is restrained by the limits of grievous ineptitude. We men assess vain ideas and know nothing; gods fulfill everything according to their own νόος.'

38 Note that ἀμηχανίη also appears in Thgn. 1.139.

39 This comma appears in *Vorsokr.*

Humans are constrained by bodily conditions, but they can still apprehend objects that are not given to their senses. This may seem obvious to us, but Parmenides lived about 500 years BC and the noun νόος and its cognates have a history of their own.⁴⁰ If we compare Homer with the poets of the 7th and 6th centuries, we will notice that the contrast between human νόησις and αἴσθησις is weaker for the former than for the latter.⁴¹ As stated in *Od.* 1.57–59, Odysseus cannot grasp Ithaca with his νόος because he is far from his homeland:

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς / ἰέμενος καὶ καπνὸν ἀποθρῶσκοντα νοῆσαι / ἧς γαίης, θανέειν ἱμείρεται
But Odysseus, longing to grasp the smoke leaping up from his land, yearns to die

Yet Sappho already assumes that human νόος can reach objects even if they are not the object of sensation:

[]σαρδ[.].] / [] __πόλ[α]κι τυίδε [ν]ῶν ἔχοισα (*Fr.* 96.1–2 LP)
[being in] Sardis, having often her νόος here

Parmenides is closer to Sappho than to Homer in this regard, for B4 states that human νόος is able to grasp distant objects without involving nonbeing.

λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόωι παρεόντα βεβαίως / οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὼν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχουσθαι /
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντῃ πάντως κατὰ κόσμον / οὔτε συνιστάμενον.
But, even so, gaze upon distant things as [being] certainly present to [the] νόος: for you will not stop being from holding on to being, neither by dispersing [it] everywhere everyway according to an arrangement nor by putting [it] together.

Sense perception limits cognizance in that the perceiver only becomes aware of certain differences and proximate objects, but the ability to νοεῖν has a wider scope. It is not impeded by bodily constraints and is capable of considering distinct things as cohering into a subsistent whole.⁴²

The notion of *plenitude* characterizes any form of cognizance, whether human or divine, and plays a major role in both parts of Parmenides' poem. However, the fullness of thought does not really clarify why Parmenides equates the content of thinking with the content of being. Such equivalence is difficult to elucidate, but B2 gives us a clue to understanding the relationship between thinking and being. At

⁴⁰ There is much literature on the subject, but see von Fritz (1943), (1945), (1946).

⁴¹ "Wenn Archilochos und Sappho das Seelische abhoben von den körperlichen Organen, die auf Stoß und Druck des Außen reagieren, und dessen eigene Dimension entdeckten in der Spannung und Intensität und in seiner Fähigkeit, sich über körperlich Getrenntes hin auszubreiten ..." (Snell 2011, p. 94).

⁴² This will become clearer in Sections 5 and 6.

the methodological bifurcation preceding the Way of Truth, Parmenides' goddess proposes two mutually exclusive schemes of inquiry, to wit, "is" and "is not," and B2.5–8 makes it reasonable to infer that τὸ εἶναι can not only be thought, but also expressed, considering that τὸ μὴ εἶναι amounts to lack of knowable and expressible content.⁴³

εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας, / αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι· / ἢ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν⁴⁴ τε καὶ ὥς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι, / Πειθοῦς ἔστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείη γὰρ ὅπηδε), / ἢ δ' ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς χρεὼν ἔστι μὴ εἶναι, / τὴν δὴ τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν· / οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ εἶναι (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν) / οὔτε φράσαις.

Come on, then, I myself will tell – and you retain the message once you have lent an ear – precisely which are the only ways of inquiry to think over: the one, that ____ is⁴⁵ and that it is not [possible ~ allowed ~ right] that ____ is not, is the way of Conviction (for it attends upon Truth); the other, that ____ is not and that it is a requirement that ____ is not, this one I surely declare utterly inscrutable: for you could not even notice [i. e., become aware of] nonbeing (for [this is] not achievable) nor could you tell it.

Before exploring the connection between being and verbal expression, I would like to address two issues of interest:

⁴³ See item f at the end of Section 5.

⁴⁴ According to Hermann (1801), p. 89, "ἔστι non est simpliciter copula, sed adiunctum habet praedicatum, et significat nunc exstat, nunc revera est, nunc licet." Devine and Stephens (1994), p. 356 remind us, however, that this rule has been disputed. The prosodic accent of ἔστι "muss auf seiner stellung beruhen. Das stimmt vortrefflich zu der doctrin der ältern griechischen grammatiker, die von einem bedeutungsunterschied zwischen ἔστι und ἔστι nichts wissen, vielmehr lehren, dass das letztere stehe am satzanfang, und wenn οὐ, dem andere καὶ und ὥς, andere ausserdem noch εἰ, ἀλλά und τοῦτο beifügen, dem verbum unmittelbar vorhergeht" (Wackernagel 1877, p. 466; nouns are not capitalized in the German original). Hdn.Gr. 3.1.553.10–12: τὸ ἔστιν ἡνίκα ἄρχεται λόγου ἢ ὅτε ὑποτάσσεται τῇ οὐ ἀποφάσει ἢ τῷ καὶ ἢ εἰ ἢ ἀλλά συνδέσμῳ ἢ τῷ ὥς ἐπιρρήματι ἢ τῷ τοῦτο, τῇ καὶ τῇ ὁξεῖαν ἔχει ἐπὶ τοῦ ε' The ἔστιν [is not enclitic] whenever it is at the beginning of the sentence, or when it is subject to the negation with οὐ, or to καὶ, or to εἰ, or to the conjunction ἀλλά, or to the complementizer ὥς, or to τοῦτο, in which case it has the prosodic accent on the ε'. Hdn. Gr. 3.2.22.22–23: τὸ ἔστιν ἐγκλιτικόν ἔστιν, εἰ μὴ ἄρχεται ἢ μὴ προηγείται ἢ οὐ ἀπόφασιν 'The ἔστιν is enclitic if it is not at the beginning [of the sentence] or goes after the negation with οὐ.' See also Vendryes (1904), pp. 109–110, Kahn (2003), pp. 420–434, Mourelatos (2008), pp. liv–lv, Coxon (2009), pp. xiii–xiv.

⁴⁵ The question of whether Greek philosophers recognized the different "senses of being" became a popular topic in the last century. Concerning the sense of "being" in Parmenides, Wedin (2014), p. 7 identifies five views in addition to his own: (1) existential, (2) veridical, (3) predicative, (4) a confusion of existential and predicative, (5) a coherent conjunction of existential and predicative, and (6) a disjunctive inclusion of existential and predicative. I address this question at the end of Section 4, also in Section 5.

1. Lewis (2009) has criticized the modal upgrades of ἔστιν and οὐκ ἔστιν in B2 (i. e., οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι and χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι, respectively). His point is that Parmenides could have incurred in the fallacy “of shifting from the necessity of the consequence to the necessity of the consequent” (p. 5). That is, Parmenides could have failed to differentiate *necessarily (is, then is)* from *(is, then necessarily is)* and *necessarily (is not, then is not)* from *(is not, then necessarily is not)*. However, Parmenides’ modal expressions have a strong deontic flavor and could have a more directive meaning than we think. Methodologically speaking, the first alternative (ἔστιν) is a *necessary condition for* noetic investigation, and since no intellectual investigation can be carried out without an object toward which thought is directed, the second alternative (οὐκ ἔστιν) *must be rejected*. The modal upgrade could simply mean that both scenarios, which are mutually exclusive, *must* be maintained as such at all times throughout the investigation, i. e., *must* not be combined. We should not forget that Parmenides’ goddess is initiating a young man into the quest for truth.
2. The lack of a subject for ἔστιν in B2 is also a concern. Some scholars have even suggested that Parmenides makes an impersonal use of ἔστιν,⁴⁶ but εἰμί is never an impersonal verb in the strict sense. No one would ask what or who is raining when faced with the statement *It’s raining*. Such a question could be answered by turning to preternatural participants, such as Zeus (ὅτε Ζεύς, *Il.* 12.25), which are not necessary to understand the state of affairs in question; that is why they have tended to disappear throughout history. In contrast, a statement like *It is* or *It is so* triggers the question *What is that which is?* or *What is that which is so?*, respectively. Ancient Greek is a pro-drop language and does not require overt pronouns occupying the position of the subject because Greek morphology is sufficiently informative. The subject of ἔστιν is in the third person singular, nominative case,⁴⁷ and Parmenides must have had a reason for not making explicit reference to it. Perhaps he believed that his recipients knew what he was talking about; perhaps he did not want to specify that subject by lexical means; perhaps he was thinking of anything that could be an object of thought. What stands out is that B2 gives more importance to the verb than to the subject in question.

⁴⁶ Tarán (1965), pp. 36–38 and, in a weaker form, Cordero (2005), pp. 78–80. For the implausibility of an impersonal use of εἰμί, see Kahn (1968), p. 125, Robinson (1975), p. 625, and Finkelberg (1988a), p. 39.

⁴⁷ However, see Section 5.

3 Being as the content of judging and thinking

If τὸ εἶναι purports expressible content, then the fact that Parmenides' mouthpiece speaks Ancient Greek will facilitate our understanding of such content. Natural language displays a variety of information, and two things are clear from a linguistic point of view: Parmenides discards some forms of the verb εἰμί when talking about being and combines ἔστιν, εἶναι, and εἶναι in a very informative way. I will look at the two things separately.

Concerning the first point, Parmenidean “being” is inseparable from the imperfective aspect: a type of grammatical aspect that presents states of affairs without considering their limits, if they have any. Besides present forms, the verb εἰμί only has non-perfect future forms, which are neutral with regard to aspect.⁴⁸ It did not develop the forms that express the perfective and the perfect aspect, that is, aorist and perfect forms, respectively.⁴⁹ Therefore, εἰμί could not bring boundaries into focus, which is necessary to highlight the discontinuity, the liminal nature, the attainment of completion, or the outcome of a given state of affairs. I will discuss this peculiarity in more detail in Section 5, where I will also address Parmenides' exclusive use of the present tense of εἰμί.

What I want to emphasize now is that, in crucial passages of Parmenides' poem, ἔστιν appears in nominal clauses. B2.3, B2.5, and B8.9 introduce ἔστιν in ὅπως/ὥς-clauses, implying that “being” can be the notional content of a complement clause. Moreover, it seems that “being” could be the object of verbs of saying and intellectual knowledge, or the content of the corresponding actions, because Parmenides associates it with φράζω, φημί, λέγω, γινώσκω, and νοέω,⁵⁰ that is, with verbs that are usually complemented by declarative infinitives, supplementary participles, or finite forms introduced by complementizers, such as ὅτι, ὥς, ὅπως, or οὐνεκά.⁵¹ Now, my point is that since the finite form ἔστιν, the participle εἶναι, and the infinitive εἶναι could complement verbs of saying and intellectual knowledge, Parmenides must have thought that the information provided by εἰμί was intellectually apprehensible and verbally expressible, and that is exactly what I read in B8.34 and B6.1.

⁴⁸ Cf. Rijksbaron (2002), p. 1; van Emde Boas et al. (2019), p. 406; de la Villa Polo (2020), p. 625.

⁴⁹ Cf. van Emde Boas et al. (2019), pp. 405–406; de la Villa Polo (2020), pp. 624–625.

⁵⁰ Cf. B2.8, B3, B4.1, B6.1, B6.6, B7.2, B8.7–9, B8.34–36.

⁵¹ The declarative force of οὐνεκά, or οὐνεκεν, derived from an original causal value. According to Monro (1891), pp. 240–241, the transition between these two uses can be seen in *Od.* 7.300, where οὐνεκά does not assign a cause, but connects the fact expressed in the relative clause with a verb of saying or knowing: ἐνόησε / παῖς ἐμή, οὐνεκά... The double value of οὐνεκεν is of particular importance when dealing with B8.34 (see below).

Similar to B3, B8.34 establishes the equivalence of thinking and being:

ταὐτὸν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα

Thinking is the same as [*indefiniteness*] thought *that* ____ is [Or, incorporating the conclusions of Section 1: To think amounts to an(y)⁵² act of thinking *that* ____ is]

However, what Parmenides considers equivalent to νοεῖν here is not εἶναι as in B3, but νόημα (οὐνεκεν ἔστι), whose linear order, i. e., (οὐνεκεν ἔστι) νόημα, could be an example of hyperbaton. Other interpreters believe that the second relatum of the equivalence is not νόημα, but οὐνεκεν, to which they attribute some sort of causal value.⁵³ For that reason, they translate B8.34 along the following lines: 'Thinking and that on account of which there is thought are the same,' 'Thinking and that for which there is thought are the same,' and 'Thinking and that because of which there is thought are the same.' Yet, to read οὐνεκεν ἔστι as a nominal clause specifying the content of νόημα⁵⁴ is consistent with both the intentional nature of thinking and the concept of "being" as object of thought (cf. B2.7, B4). According to my interpretation, οὐνεκεν ἔστι and εἶναι are two ways of presenting the same thing, and the νόημα οὐνεκεν ἔστι is equivalent to νοεῖν in that it expresses the act of thinking. That is why Parmenides adds the following explanation:

οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφασμένον ἔστιν, / εὐρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν (B8.35–36)

for without being, in which [it] is expressed, you will not find thinking

52 "En griego no existe un artículo indeterminado propiamente dicho. La ausencia de artículo expresa indefinitud, pero [...] un referente indeterminado puede admitir una lectura específica o inespecífica: *un hombre concreto* [...] frente a *un hombre cualquiera*" (Méndez Dosuna 2020, p. 459).

53 Some of them stress the finalistic nature of causation: for example, Burnet (1930), p. 176; Diels (1897), p. 39; Kahn (2009b), p. 163. Most of them express a general causal value, often indistinguishable from the mere reference to something toward which thought is directed: for example, Bormann (1971), p. 43; Cerri (1999), pp. 153, 235; Cordero (2005), p. 220; Couloubaritsis (1990), 238; Coxon (2009), p. 74; Curd (2015), p. 8; Eggers Lan and Juliá (2008), p. 480; Giancola (2001), p. 645; Heitsch (1991), p. 31 [das, woraufhin Erkenntnis ist]; Hölscher (2014), p. 15; Karsten (1835), p. 39; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983), p. 252; Mansfeld (1964), pp. 84–85 [das, worauf der Gedanke sich richtet]; Mansfeld and Primavesi (2012), p. 329; Montero (1958), p. 350; Mourelatos (2008), p. 170; Palmer (2009), p. 369; Reale (2001), p. 53; Riezler (2001), p. 33 [das, um dessentwillen Erkenntnis ist]; Scuto (2005), p. 44; Sedley (1999), p. 120 [that with which thought is concerned]; Thanassas (1997), p. 281; Untersteiner (1958), p. 149; Wedin (2014), p. 143. I suppose that Llansó (2007), pp. 40, 147 and García Calvo (2018), pp. 60, 196 belong to this group.

54 In this regard I agree with those who believe that οὐνεκεν is a complementizer: for example, Année (2012), p. 171; Barnes (1982), p. 141; Bernabé Pajares (2007), p. 27; Cassin (1998), p. 89; Conche (1996), p. 128; Cornford (1939), p. 43; Dalfen (1994), p. 208; Diels and Kranz (1960); Gallop (2013), pp. 40, 71; Gómez-Lobo (1985), p. 113; Guthrie (1969), p. 39; Kirk and Raven (1957), p. 277; Laks and Most (2016), p. 47; O'Brien (1987), p. 40; Tarán (1965), p. 86; Verdenius (1964), p. 40.

Parmenides' goddess is telling the κοῦρος that ἐόν (= οὐνεκεν ἔστι) is the manifestation of νοεῖν, and her clarification is pertinent because neither νοεῖν nor the νόημα οὐνεκεν ἔστι are found among sensible things.⁵⁵

B6.1 argues along the same lines. Due to the many factors at play, there are many ways to construe χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι.⁵⁶ Does this sentence contain one or two nonfinite clauses? Which infinitive is complementing the χρή-clause? Is τό an article proper or a demonstrative pronoun? Is ἐὸν the object of λέγειν and νοεῖν, the subject of ἔμμεναι, or a predicative expression? Does ἔμμεναι act as a copula? In my view, the sentence contains a main χρή-clause with an elided copula and a subordinate nonfinite existential clause, namely ἐὸν ἔμμεναι. The function of λέγειν and νοεῖν is not clear, but I read the whole phrase τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τε as an accusative of respect. The meaning that follows from this reading is very simple: *Judging and thinking must be about being, for those actions have some content rather than none, i. e., for the content of judgment and thinking cannot be nothing at all.*

χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε⁵⁷ νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, / μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν (B6.1–2)

It is required that, in judging⁵⁸ and thinking, there be something that is: for [that]'s [allowed] to be,⁵⁹ and [it] is not nothing.⁶⁰

Both translations coincide to some extent with Parmenides' claim according to Simplicius: “whatever one says or thinks is being” (ὅπερ ἂν τις ἢ εἴπῃ ἢ νοήσῃ τὸ ὄν ἐστι, in *Ph.* 86.29). Furthermore, B6.1–2 explains why Parmenides' doctrine was

55 It is hard not to connect this with Leibniz [1765] (1996), p. 111: “*Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu, excipe: nisi ipse intellectus.*” Now the soul includes being, substance, one, same, cause [...] and many other notions which the senses cannot provide.” What does not depend on the senses in Parmenides' view will become clearer in Section 6.

56 I will not discuss each of them in detail. Kahn (2009c), pp. 189–191 and Marcinkowska-Rosół (2010), pp. 91–101 comment on five possible translations.

57 If we are to accept τό as transmitted in the manuscripts: “It is a requirement that, in judging, in thinking [...].”

58 According to B7.5, λόγος (< λέγω) implies judgment.

59 Or: ‘for that's being’ = ‘for that's what being is.’ In this case, we would have what Kölligan (2007), p. 91 calls “*emphatische Kopula*.” The subject would be in the previous clause and the assertion would have an emphatic sense, as in τό μοι ἔστι ταλαύρινον πολέμειν (*Il.* 7.239) ‘For me, that's fighting as a bearer of a bull's-hide shield’, i. e., ‘That's what I call fighting as a bearer of a bull's-hide shield.’

60 In Greek, this would sound more like ‘nothing, however, [it] is not,’ since the predicative expression μηδὲν would be an example of what Matic (2003) calls “*exclusive contrastive topics*.” Topics of this kind, “always appear at the very beginning of the clause” (pp. 603–604) and “may be non-referential” (p. 604).

famously applied in good or bad faith to reject the falsity of any act of λέγειν⁶¹ and why the Stranger of Elea in Plato's *Sophist* is so interested in justifying falsehood. Still, as we will see in Section 6, the content of what Parmenides called λέγειν and νοεῖν was epistemically grounded in the notion of plenitude; it was not just any representation.

4 The meaning of τὸ εἶναι and τὸ ὄν ψιλόν according to Aristotle

Assuming that “being” can be expressed in words, I will shed light on the Parmenidean notion of *being* by resorting to the most comprehensive explanation of λόγος before the Hellenistic period, namely the Aristotelian theory of sentencehood. This theory revolves around the distinctions between ὄνομα and λόγος, λόγος σημαντικός and λόγος ἀποφαντικός, and ὄνομα and ῥῆμα, the last of which will prove to be very helpful in understanding the semantic import of the verb εἰμί.

According to *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*, speech has meaning because it consists of conventional tokens (σύμβολα) of nonconventional soul affections (παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς) that resemble (ὁμοιώματα) things (πράγματα).⁶² However, not all linguistic unities are semantically comparable. Words (ὀνόματα) and sentences (λόγοι), for example, signify in a different manner: while the meaning of words coincides (ἔοικε) with a thought (νόημα) without composition or division (ἄνευ συνθέσεως καὶ διαίρεσεως),⁶³ the meaning of sentences depends on the combination of words.⁶⁴ To put it another way: lexical forms, such as *house* and *shelter*, signify differently than

61 Cf. Pl. *Euthyd.* 283e7–285a1, 286b7–287a5; *Tht.* 188c9–189b6. Frede (1992), p. 397: “There are problems about the very possibility of false statements. For a statement, in order to be a statement at all, has to manage to say something, that is, there has to be something that gets said by it. But both in ordinary Greek and in the language of Greek philosophers a false statement is one that says what is not (or: what is not being). Yet what is not being does not seem to be something that is there to get said. Hence it would seem that there is nothing that gets said by a false statement. But in this case it fails to be a statement. So it seems that there can be no false statements.”

62 Cf. *Int.* 1 16^a3–8.

63 Cf. *Int.* 1 16^a13–15. Aristotle associates word meaning with φάσις ‘utterance, expression’ in *Int.* 4 16^b27.

64 This is why propositional truth and falsehood involve combination and division: *περὶ γὰρ σύνθεσιν καὶ διαίρεσιν ἐστὶ τὸ ψευδὸς τε καὶ τὸ ἀληθές* (*Int.* 1 16^a12–13).

grammatical units such as *A house is a shelter*, which is a clause, and, as it stands, also a complete sentence.⁶⁵

Every sentence is a meaningful arrangement of words, but only declarative sentences are part of a potential contradiction⁶⁶ and may be true or false.⁶⁷ For example, 'Be polite' is a meaningful string of words, but such a sentence does not make a statement, even though it has a negative counterpart in 'Don't be polite.' 'You are polite,' on the other hand, is a declaration (ἀπόφανσις) because it does make a statement that contradicts 'You are not polite.' Note that these pairs of examples differ in mood, for it seems that Aristotle associated indicative mood with declarative sentences.⁶⁸ Now, what is beyond doubt is that Aristotle could not conceive of declaration without tense: "It is necessary" – he says – "that every declarative sentence consists of a verb or a [verb] variation:⁶⁹ for not even the formula of 'man,' unless 'is,' 'will be,' 'was,' or something like this is added, is a declarative sentence at all."⁷⁰

Moreover, it is because a ῥήμα encodes tense that it is something more than a word, as we read in the following passage:

Ῥῆμα δέ ἐστι τὸ προσσημαῖνον χρόνον, οὗ μέρος οὐδὲν σημαίνει χωρίς· ἔστι δὲ τῶν καθ' ἑτέρου λεγομένων σημειῖον. λέγω δ' ὅτι προσσημαίνει χρόνον, οἷον ὑγεία μὲν ὄνομα, τὸ δ' ὑγιαίνει ῥῆμα· προσσημαίνει γὰρ τὸ νῦν ὑπάρχειν. καὶ αἰεὶ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων σημειῖόν ἐστιν, οἷον τῶν καθ' ὑποκειμένου. [...] – αὐτὰ μὲν οὖν καθ' αὐτὰ λεγόμενα τὰ ῥήματα ὀνόματά ἐστι καὶ σημαίνει τι, – ἴσῃσι γὰρ ὁ λέγων τὴν διάνοιαν, καὶ ὁ ἀκούσας ἡρέμησεν, – ἀλλ' εἰ ἔστιν ἢ μὴ οὕτω σημαίνει· οὐ γὰρ τὸ εἶναι ἢ μὴ εἶναι σημειῖόν ἐστι τοῦ πράγματος, οὐδ' ἐὰν τὸ δὴ εἴπῃς ψιλόν. αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστιν, προσσημαίνει δὲ σύνθεσίν τινα, ἣν ἄνευ τῶν συγκειμένων οὐκ ἔστι νοῆσαι. (Int. 3 16^b6–10, 16^b19–25)

65 In Int. 4 16^b27–28, Aristotle associates sentential meaning with κατάφασις, i. e., with (affirmative) ἀπόφανσις. Even so, declarative sentences are only a subset of sentences.

66 ἀπόφανσις δὲ ἀντιφάσεως ὅποτερον οὖν μόριον, ἀντίφασις δὲ ἀντίθεσις ἥς οὐκ ἔστι μεταξὺ καθ' αὐτήν, μόριον δ' ἀντιφάσεως τὸ μὲν τι κατὰ τινὸς κατάφασις, τὸ δὲ τι ἀπὸ τινὸς ἀπόφασις (APo. I.2 72^a11–14) 'A declaration [is] either part of a contradiction, and a contradiction is an opposition that, of itself, does not allow for a midway. The part of a contradiction [imputing] something to something [is] an affirmation; the one [withdrawing] something from something is a negation.'

67 Int. 4 16^b33–17^a3: ἔστι δὲ λόγος ἅπας μὲν σημαντικός [...] ἀποφαντικός δὲ οὐ πᾶς, ἀλλ' ἐν ᾧ τὸ ἀληθεύειν ἢ ψεύδεσθαι ὑπάρχει 'While every sentence is meaningful [...], not every [sentence] is declarative, but only those in which the [possibility of] saying something true or false arises.'

68 Int. 4 17^a3–4: οἷον ἢ εὐχὴ λόγος μὲν, ἀλλ' οὐτ' ἀληθὴς οὔτε ψευδής 'for example, the [expression of a] wish is a sentence, but it is neither true nor false.'

69 The grammatical term 'case' (lat. *casus*) comes from the verbal noun πτώσις 'falling,' which covers name and verb inflection as well as lexical variation. I translate it as 'variation' because, according to Aristotle, verbs proper indicate present tense, while the forms indicating another tense are just variations of the verb.

70 ἀνάγκη δὲ πάντα λόγον ἀποφαντικὸν ἐκ ῥήματος εἶναι ἢ πτώσεως· καὶ γὰρ ὁ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου λόγος, ἐὰν μὴ τὸ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται ἢ ἦν ἢ τι τοιοῦτο προστεθῇ, οὕτω λόγος ἀποφαντικός. (Int. 5 17^a9–12)

Verb is what indicates time; none of its parts signifies separately; it is a sign of the [things] that are said with respect to something else. I say that it indicates time in the sense that *health* [is] a name, while *is-healthy*⁷¹ [is] a verb: for the latter indicates ‘to pertain now.’ And it is always a sign of the things that pertain, such as those concerning a subject. [...] Now, verbs, insofar as they are said by themselves, are names and signify something – for he who says [them] brings the process of thinking to a standstill and he who listens remains still –, but they do not yet mean whether [the signified thing] is or [is] not. Indeed, to be or not to be are not a sign of the πράγμα, not even if you merely utter ‘being.’ Indeed, this is [i. e., means] nothing; it rather indicates a composition that cannot be thought of without its components.

The Aristotelian notion of ῥῆμα does not perfectly coincide with the part of speech that we call ‘verb,’ but it does make sense if we refine our view of syntactic categories. Aristotle’s notion of ὄνομα merges our concepts of *word* and *noun/name*,⁷² while his notion of ῥῆμα conflates our concepts of *inflected verb form* and *predicate*. However, such a discrepancy loses significance when we realize that Aristotle is distinguishing the lexical meaning of content words from the grammatical categories marked on Greek verbs, above all tense. Therefore, without reading too much into Περὶ ἑρμηνείας, we may say that a ῥῆμα is both a predicate and a predicator.⁷³ It is a predicate because it says something about a subject, and it is a predicator because it encodes functional information that most theorists would consider necessary for predication, especially tense.⁷⁴

If we consider the verb εἰμί in the light of the Aristotelian notion of ῥῆμα, we will see how peculiar this verb is. If τὸ εἶναι does not signify any πράγμα and τὸ ὄν ψιλόν does not represent anything in particular, it is because the verb εἰμί needs categorematic terms to acquire specific meaning. The Aristotelian notion of πράγμα is often misunderstood. It is true that πράγμα is the concrete noun of πράξις ‘action,’ but this does not justify Ackrill’s (1963) translation of πράγμα as ‘actual thing.’ If πράγματα were actual things, why would Aristotle refer to univer-

71 Aristotle understands ὑγιαίνει as a state. When he describes the attainment of health, he uses the aorist of ἔρχομαι and the aorist of ὑγιαίνω. Cf. αἰεὶ ὑγιαίνει with πρὸς τὸ ὑγιαίνειν ἐλθεῖν in *Cael.* II.12 292^b13–17.

72 In some passages also with our concept of *subject* (cf. *Int.* 10 19^b36–20^a3), as in *Pl. Sph.* 262B6–7.

73 “A predicator is the verb in its functional relation to the clause. It is comparable to the grammatical relations of subject and object” (*SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms*, s. v. predicator). Lenci (1998) makes use of this notion in his vindication of pre-Fregean theories of predication, including, of course, the Aristotelian one: “The predicator is an indexed predicate and corresponds to the idea of a predicate to which a time of evaluation has been assigned” (p. 262).

74 This makes pure nominal sentences, which are very common in Ancient Greek, so interesting from a theoretical point of view. Do they omit or simply not require verb morphology? See Lenci (1998), pp. 241–242.

sal terms as πράγματα in *Int.* 7 17^a38–b3? Swiggers and Wouters (1996), pp. 133–134 find support in Aristotle's *Organon* for their translation of πράγμα in the Τέχνη γραμματική as 'object of thought' because in a logical and linguistic context the word πράγμα stands for categorematic or referring terms (e.g., ἄνθρωπος as καθόλου and Καλλίας as καθ' ἑκάστων). Moreover, the word πράγμα often stands for predicative content that lacks functional information needed for ἀπόφανσις. This is clear in *Cat.* 10 12^b5–16, where we learn that finite forms, such as τὸ κάθηται – οὐ κάθηται 'sits – sits not' are examples of ἀπόφανσις, while nonfinite forms, such as τὸ καθῆσθαι – μὴ καθῆσθαι 'sitting – not-sitting/to sit – not-to-sit' are examples of πράγμα.⁷⁵

Making a technical use of a practice that we already observe in Plato, Aristotle uses εἰμί to represent the functional values involved in predication. Even when he explains propositions like ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος as opposed to propositions like ἔστι δίκαιος ἄνθρωπος, where ἔστι is a third term attached to a predicative expression,⁷⁶ he does not emphasize the lexical meaning of εἰμί. Even then, he emphasizes the temporal value of verbs: τὸ γὰρ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται ἢ ἦν ἢ γίγνεται ἢ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, ῥήματα ἐκ τῶν κειμένων ἐστίν· προσσημαίνει γὰρ χρόνον 'For 'is,' 'will be,' 'was,' or 'becomes,' and all other things like these are verbs based on what has already been established: indeed, they indicate time' (*Int.* 10 19^b13–14).

Aristotle uses εἰμί as a tense marker because this verb plays the role of predicator to perfection but requires the concurrence of other terms to convey specific predicative content, that is, content that may or may not pertain (ὑπάρχειν) to a subject. This is why εἰμί stands out from all other lexical, copulative, or auxiliary verbs. No other Greek verb distinguishes the two aspects of predication with the same clarity, as can be shown by using the Aristotelian figures of predication. The σχήματα τῆς κατηγορίας typify predicates under the heading τὸ ὄν because the verb εἰμί could predicate any content with as little lexical interference as possible.⁷⁷ Table 1 separates the functional values of predication, expressed by the verb εἰμί, from the categorial content of verbal and nonverbal predicates.

⁷⁵ For an excellent discussion of the meaning of πράγμα in Aristotle, see de Rijk (2002), pp. 104–115.

⁷⁶ *Int.* 10 19^b19–20, 29–30: Ὅταν δὲ τὸ ἔστι τρίτον προσκατηγορηθῇ [...]. τὸ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐνταῦθα καὶ τὸ οὐκ ἔστιν τῷ δικάῳ καὶ τῷ οὐ δικάῳ πρόσκειται 'Whenever 'is' is predicated additionally as a third [term] [...] For 'is' and 'is not' are attached here to 'just' and 'not just'.'

⁷⁷ Note that Aristotle is unsure whether εἰμί in its copulative function should be classified as an ὄνομα or a ῥήμα: λέγω δὲ οἷον ἔστι δίκαιος ἄνθρωπος, τὸ ἔστι τρίτον φημι συγκεῖσθαι ὄνομα ἢ ῥήμα ἐν τῇ καταφάσει 'I mean, for example, *is-just-man*; [in this case,] I say that 'is' is collocated as a third [term], whether name or verb, in the affirmation' (*Int.* 10 19^b20–22).

Table 1: Being and categorial content

Category	Example	Analysis	Predicator	Predicate ⁷⁸	Contrast
οὐσία	ἄνθρωπος	noun ⁷⁹	is/was/will be	an animal/ a dog	not a plant/not a cat
ποσόν	δίπηχυ	adjective	is/was/will be	6 months old	not 9
ποιόν	λευκόν	adjective	is/was/will be	round	not square
πρός τι	διπλάσιον	adjective	is/was/will be	a father to his son	not an uncle to his son
πού	ἐν Λυκείῳ	prepositional phrase	is/was/will be	inside the kitchen	not outside the kitchen
ποτέ	χθές	adverb	is/was/will be	today	not tomorrow
κεῖσθαι	ἀνάκειται	finite verb form	is/was/will be	upright	not prostrate
ἔχειν	ὑποδέδεται	finite verb form	is/was/will be	wearing skirt	not wearing pants
ποιεῖν	τέμνειν	nonfinite verb form	is/was/will be	closing ⁸⁰ his eyes	not opening his eyes
πάσχειν	τέμνεσθαι	nonfinite verb form	is/was/will be	(being) pushed	not (being) pulled

The verb εἰμί surely appears sometimes as the main or only word in the verb phrase, and someone could argue that, in such cases, it has enough lexical content to be a predicate in its own right. However, the question is not whether εἰμί can be a predicate, but whether its meaning can be specified without expressing categorial content, such as position in time, position in space, quantity, or some abstract formulation of these notions. It is certainly said that εἰμί conveys the rather obscure concept of *existence*, to which lexicologists so confidently cling, but such a preconception deserves closer examination.

Existential sentences⁸¹ are correctly associated with the quantificational concept of *existence*, but the fact that such constructions frequently include gram-

⁷⁸ I modify Aristotle's examples to make them sound better in English.

⁷⁹ Nouns and adjectives are in the nominative because they are predicative expressions over the subject of a main clause. Of course, οὐσία 'beingness' is no exception (cf. *Metaph.* Z.17 1041³²–³⁹).

⁸⁰ We are not sure that, in Classical Greek, the periphrastic construction of εἰμί + participle had a different aspect from that of the corresponding finite verb form. Whether εἰμί + present participle came to have a value similar to that of the English progressive is a diachronic question that depends on many factors. See Bentein (2016), pp. 218–227.

⁸¹ Those in which the verb (usually in the third person) precedes a subject (usually indefinite), which does not behave as a prototypical grammatical subject. See Jespersen (1963), pp. 154–156 and (1984), pp. 129–131.

matalized locative expressions might suggest that they belong to the spectrum of locative sentences.⁸² English *there*, Spanish *-y*, or Italian *-ci* would be examples of such “grammatical fossilization.” Moreover, existential constructions with verbs like εἰμί have been explained as inverse copular sentences that use expletive pronouns as placeholders for a nonverbal predicate, obtained by detaching a determiner from a determiner phrase.⁸³ I will not start a digression on formal syntax, but will merely stress that existential constructions delimit the extension of a noun phrase by focalizing indefinite determiners or non-universal quantifiers, which are more important for their existential meaning than the verb.⁸⁴ For example, German *geben* and Spanish *haber* are used in them, and εἰμί is not the only Greek verb used in existential constructions. For example, the verb κεῖμαι ‘lie, be placed, be set’ is also used to assert existence in Greek, and this allows us to appreciate the lexical poverty of the verb εἰμί contrastively. The verb κεῖμαι contributes predicative content that is missing in εἰμί-sentences, and this content can be translated into English with a predicative expression such as ‘available’, as in *Int.* 3 16^a30–31: τὸ δ’ οὐκ ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ὄνομα· οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ κεῖται ὄνομα ὃ τι δεῖ καλεῖν αὐτό ‘Not man’ is not a name; and there is not even a name available by which one should call that.’

In all persons, when εἰμί is used as a standard intransitive verb, it seems more clearly to express a lexical predicate. Yet the lack of semantic specificity is evident in these cases too, for we cannot specify the meaning of εἰμί unless we know what is being talked about, unlike what would happen if we come across a verb whose lexical content is obvious, say, *to swim*. Here we have an example:

Ητ. ἀλλ’ ἀνατρέψω γ’ αὐτ’ ἀντιλέγων·

οὐδὲ γὰρ εἶναι πάνυ φημί δίκην.

Κρ. οὐκ εἶναι φῆς;

Ητ. φέρε γάρ, ποῦ ’στιν;

Κρ. παρὰ τοῖσι θεοῖς.

Ητ. πῶς δῆτα δίκης οὔσης ὁ Ζεὺς

οὐκ ἀπόλωλεν, τὸν πατέρ’ αὐτοῦ

δήσας; (Ar. *Nu.* 901–906)

INFERIOR JUDGMENT [ἡττων λόγος]. But I will overturn them by contradicting them: for I claim that Justice is not at all.

SUPERIOR JUDGMENT [κρείττων λόγος]. Are you saying that she is not?

⁸² See Lyons (1967), Clark (1978), Hoekstra and Mulder (1990), Freeze (1992), Koch (2012).

⁸³ Cf. Moro (2017), p. 183.

⁸⁴ Frege (2001), p. 15 [before 1884]: “Wenn aber der Inhalt der Aussage des Urteils ‚Menschen existieren‘ nicht in dem ‚existieren‘ liegt, wo liegt er dann? Ich antworte: in der Form des partikulären Urteils. Jedes partikuläre Urteil ist ein Existentialurteil, das in die Form mit ‚es gibt‘ umgesetzt werden kann. Z. B. ‚Einige Körper sind leicht‘ ist dasselbe wie ‚Es gibt leichte Körper‘.”

IJ. Come on! Where is she?

SJ. Among the gods.

IJ. How, then, Justice being [in force], Zeus has not perished for fettering his father?

If we only read the first two lines of this excerpt, we might think that εἶναι means ‘to exist’ and not ‘to live,’ for Justice, whose reality is in question, is not precisely an individual living being. Of course, if we take into consideration that the status of δίκη is comparable to that of a law, we might say that εἶναι means ‘to be in force.’ After all, the verb εἰμί in the passage does entail vigor, that is, some sort of effectiveness that Aristophanes constricts to a certain realm (cf. ποῦ, παρά).

The meaning of εἰμί in its standard intransitive use can be glossed with a wide variety of durative, stative, or locative predicates depending on the semantic type of the subject and the context of use (e. g., *S is... alive, present, actual, in force, located*, etc.). We can certainly associate the verb εἰμί in these cases with the traditional notion of *existence*, but we must also recognize that the term ‘existence’ is just a wild card that blurs differences that can be better described with specific predicates. Aristotle famously explored the meaning of ‘being’ considering these differences, especially the differences associated with the various kinds of οὐσία. According to his theory, each thing has *actual* being in a different way. This particular way of having being was expressed by Aristotle with stative predicates that describe a specific form or certain constitution of matter,⁸⁵ such as those underlined below, for he thought that matter, and not the terms by which we refer to concrete entities, is the real subject of such differences:

ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι καὶ τὸ ἔστι τοσαυταχῶς λέγεται· οὐδὸς γὰρ ἔστιν ὅτι οὕτως κεῖται, καὶ τὸ εἶναι τὸ οὕτως αὐτὸ κεῖσθαι σημαίνει, καὶ τὸ κρύσταλλον εἶναι τὸ οὕτω πεπυκνώσθαι. ἐνίων δὲ τὸ εἶναι καὶ πᾶσι τούτοις ὀρισθήσεται, τῷ τὰ μὲν μεμίχθαι, τὰ δὲ κεκράσθαι, τὰ δὲ δεδέσθαι, τὰ δὲ πεπυκνώσθαι, τὰ δὲ ταῖς ἄλλαις διαφοραῖς κεχρησθαι (*Metaph.* H.2 1042^b25–31)

Therefore, it is clear that ‘is’ is also said in so many ways: for [it] is a threshold because [it] is placed in such a way, and ‘being’ means *its being placed in such a way*, and ‘being ice’ [means] *being solidified in such a way*. The being of some things will even be defined by all of these [differences], some [parts] being mixed, others being blended, others being bound, others being solidified, and others being subject to the remaining differences.

τὸ γὰρ αἴτιον τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσιν ἡ οὐσία, τὸ δὲ ζῆν τοῖς ζῶσι τὸ εἶναι ἔστιν, αἰτία δὲ καὶ ἀρχὴ τούτου ἡ ψυχὴ. (*de An.* II.4 415^b12–14)

For the causative of being in all things is beingness, and for living beings ‘being’ is [i. e., means] ‘living,’ the cause and principle of which is the soul.

⁸⁵ Arist. *Metaph.* Z.17 1041^b4–5: ἐπεὶ δὲ δεῖ ἔχειν τε καὶ ὑπάρχειν τὸ εἶναι, δῆλον δὲ ὅτι τὴν ὕλην ζητεῖ διὰ τί <τί> ἔστιν ‘But, since being must hold on and pertain, it is clear that one investigates why matter is something.’

5 The meaning of Parmenidean “being”

To clarify the Parmenidean notion of *being*, I will focus on natural language. More specifically, I will pay attention to the fact that εἰμί plays the role of predicator providing a minimum of lexical meaning. Verb morphology is the best starting point for an investigation of εἰμί as a predicator, since we have seen Aristotle using forms of εἰμί to make metalinguistic reference to verb inflection. However, Parmenidean “being” could still involve lexical features. Aristotle tells us that “being” cannot be thought of (νοῆσαι) without categorematic terms, but B8.34 implies that οὐνεκ ἐστὶ is a νόημα, and this could mean that ἐστὶ-clauses convey certain meaning as a whole (e. g., propositional content) or that ἐστὶ has meaning of its own (i. e., lexical content). In what follows, I will show that both possibilities may concur, for nothing prevents the lexical features of a verb from operating above the level of the lexical predicate. Otherwise, there would be no difference between εἰμί and γίγνομαι in their copulative function, but in fact these two verbs affect the semantics of predication differently⁸⁶ when they link a subject to a nonverbal predicate (e. g., *Human beings are ~ become cruel*).⁸⁷

Grammatical categories not exclusively marked on verbs are of minor importance in the study of a predicator. The third person marked on ἐστὶν only reaffirms that neither the goddess nor the youth whom she is addressing is a suitable subject for this form. The singular number of ἐόν and ἐστὶν is of little use without a nominal phrase that allows us to make sense of it. In Greek, “neuter plural subjects normally fail to trigger plural agreement on the verb,”⁸⁸ and we cannot even assume that τὸ ἐόν is semantically singular because substantivized adjectives and participles can express a covert quantification (e. g., what is > something ~ anything ~ everything that is). The neuter of τὸ ἐόν is not very significant either, for it only tells us that the gender distinction is irrelevant when it comes to the referent of such an expression, which could even be linguistic in nature, given that many languages refer to predicative expressions or complete propositions in the neuter. Consider the pronominalization of predicative expressions in Spanish: – *¿Acaso la vida es bella* _[FEM.]? – *Sí, lo* _[NEUT.] *es*.

⁸⁶ Copulative and auxiliary verbs affect predication without being part of the lexical predicate (see note 6). The Aristotelian correlate for “lexical predicate” is categorial content, underlined in the following examples: ‘Pierre is French,’ ‘Pierre teaches (French),’ ‘Pierre is teaching (French).’ That the verb *to be* here is not part of the lexical predicate can be easily shown because English places the auxiliary before the subject when asking questions: ‘Is Pierre French?’, ‘Does Pierre teach (French)?’, ‘Is Pierre teaching (French)?’

⁸⁷ On the notion of nonverbal predication, see Hengeveld (1992) and Roy (2013).

⁸⁸ Fleischer, Rieken and Widme (2015), p. 20.

Since we are dealing with verb forms, we should concentrate on the grammatical information encoded by Greek verbs only. With this in mind, we could start by pointing out that the active voice of ἔστιν, ἐόν, and εἶναι does not allow us to describe the subject of those forms as an agent, for being is not an action.⁸⁹ If we continue to analyze verb morphology, we will notice the indicative mood of ἔστιν, and it will seem obvious to us that Parmenides verbalizes the ways of inquiry in the indicative mood, since the epistemic disposition of declarative mood and the factuality expressed by the realis modality befit a sentential scheme that attends upon truth or reality. However, Parmenides does not focus on mood, but rather on tense. There is no doubt that the present tense is constitutive of Parmenidean “being,” because the goddess thinks that it is not proper to speak about it in the past or the future tense:⁹⁰

οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν, / ἔν, συνεχές (B8.5–6)

nor was [it] at some time, nor will [it] be, since [it] is now all together, one, continuous

I have already alluded to tense and aspect at the beginning of Section 3. Since εἰμί had past and future forms, the rejection of non-present forms depended on Parmenides' deliberation to some extent. The exclusion of the perfective and the perfect aspect, however, was never a matter of choice, because εἰμί had only imperfective and aspect neutral forms.

Table 2: The grammatical morphology of Parmenidean “being”

Values	Specifically verbal?	Level of relevance
third person	no	low
singular number	no	low
neuter gender	no	low
active voice	yes	low
indicative mood	yes	medium
present tense	yes	high
imperfective aspect	yes	high

Parmenides' concept of *being* is undeniably associated with the present tense and the imperfective aspect, but it must contain more temporal information than the Greek verbal system provides. Otherwise, Parmenides would not have contrasted

⁸⁹ For the middle future forms of εἰμί, see note 91.

⁹⁰ “Unter εἶναι versteht Parmenides dort, wo er das Wort terminologisch gebraucht, nicht ‚sein‘, sondern ‚gegenwärtigsein‘” (Heitsch 1971, p. 427).

the present tense of εἰμί with temporal expressions that have a different lexical meaning. B8.5 only distinguishes the present tense (ἔστιν) from the non-present tenses (ἦν and ἔσται), but B8.20 formulates a similar distinction in terms that can no longer be reduced to tense, as they combine information from various domains:

εἰ γὰρ ἔγενετ', οὐκ ἔσται, οὐδ' εἰ ποτε μέλλει ἔσεσθαι

for if [it] had an origin, [it] is not, nor if [it] is going to be at some point in the future

B8.20 replaces the tense markers ἦν and ἔσται with forms that convey a specific lexical meaning. The form ἔγενετο indicates past tense, and as an aorist that expresses perfective aspect, it certainly alludes to bounded past events by grammatical means. Nevertheless, the verb γίγνομαι, as a lexical item, denotes *emergence* and entails a temporal limit, a beginning. Similarly, μέλλει ἔσεσθαι expresses more than futurity. Unlike ἔσται, which only indicates that something will hold in the future,⁹¹ the prospective periphrasis μέλλω + infinitive is “more modal than temporal.”⁹² The combination μέλλω + infinitive should have originally meant some sort of intention, and in Parmenides' time, it surely denoted some kind of predetermination, either that of predestined, probable, or imminent events. Now, why did Parmenides use these other temporal expressions? The forms ἦν and ἔσται in B8.5 are marked for tense, but tense is a deictic category that tells us more about the position from which the time deixis is made than about the state of affairs in question.⁹³ For example, the fact that some state of affairs obtained before, or will obtain later, does not imply that it does not obtain now. It all depends on the logical subject under discussion and what is said about it. Expressions such as ἔγενετο and μέλλει ἔσεσθαι, in comparison, presuppose that something, either the subject or

⁹¹ The middle future forms of εἰμί hardly signified anything more than futurity. We are not to affirm that the future of εἰμί expressed any kind of change. The subjects of intransitive verbs with active present but middle future forms are usually affected, but the subjects of εἰμί are an exception to this rule (cf. Allan 2003, p. 178, n. 315). Besides, the eventive meaning that can be ascribed to the future forms of εἰμί in certain constructions (e. g., ἔσται μοι ‘there will be for me’ > ‘I will have’ > ‘I will get’) depends more on the idiosyncratic factors of the language into which they are translated than on the meaning of the verb form (*pace* Kulneff-Eriksson 1999, p. 45). Of course, the actualization of future states of affairs can be seen as an event; even Aristotle says πάντα οὖν τὰ ἐσόμενα ἀναγκαῖον γενέσθαι ‘it is surely necessary for all things that will be [i. e., for all future things] to happen’ (*Int.* 9 18^b14–15). However, Aristotle uses γενέσθαι here precisely because ἔσεσθαι does not express the eventive meaning that he wants to convey.

⁹² Markopoulos (2008), p. 21. Cf. Arist. *Div.Somn.* 2 463^b28–29: ὅλως γὰρ οὐ πᾶν γίνεται τὸ μελλῆσαν, οὐδὲ τὸ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐσόμενον καὶ τὸ μέλλον ‘For, in general, not everything impending happens, nor is what will be the same as what is impending.’ Chiara Monaco brought this passage to my attention.

⁹³ Cf. Heitsch (1971), p. 427.

what is said about it, is not actual at some point in time. That is why Parmenides reinforces the tense marking in B8.5–6 with adverbials: οὐδέ ποτέ rejects the discontinuity, νῦν reaffirms the actuality, and ὁμοῦ πάν ἔν asserts the simultaneity of τὸ ἑόν.

Table 3: An explanation of tense and aspect

Interval 1	Primitive	Interval 2	Value	Example
reference	AFTER	event	past tense	<i>I went home</i>
reference	WITHIN	event	present tense	<i>I go⁹⁴ home</i>
reference	BEFORE	event	future tense	<i>I will go home</i>
focus	AFTER	event	perfect aspect	<i>(By that time,) I had eaten</i>
focus	WITHIN	event	imperfective aspect	<i>I was eating (when he arrived)</i>
focus	OVERLAPS WITH	event	perfective aspect	<i>I ate two cookies (in 1 minute)</i>
focus	BEFORE	event	prospective aspect	<i>(At that time,) I was going to eat</i>

Some clarifications will be helpful in understanding the relationship between Parmenidean “being” and time. Natural language encodes time by means of tense, grammatical aspect, lexical aspect, temporal adverbs, temporal particles, and discourse patterns.⁹⁵ Yet all temporal distinctions expressed by these means reflect primitive topological notions, such as AFTER, WITHIN, OVERLAP, or BEFORE.⁹⁶ As shown in Table 3, tense and grammatical aspect result from ordering time intervals according to such primitives. Tense interrelates the time of a temporal reference with the time of an event, that is, it “deictically refers to the time of the event or state denoted by the verb in relation to some other temporal reference point.”⁹⁷ Aspect interrelates a focused time with the time of an event, that is, it determines “a temporal view of the event or state expressed by the verb.”⁹⁸ Therefore, both grammatical categories depend on the event denoted by the verb, and more specifically on the type of that event: while tense points to a certain event from a given position, aspect highlights a particular status or phase of that event. For instance, if we consider the present tense of Parmenides’ ἔστιν, the reference falls WITHIN,

⁹⁴ The English present expresses habitual aspect.

⁹⁵ Cf. Klein (2009), pp. 40–41.

⁹⁶ I follow a number of authors who have developed Reichenbach’s (1966), pp. 287–298 system of tense: Zagana (1990); Stowell (1996), (2007); Klein (1994); Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria (2000), (2004), (2007), (2014); Arche (2014).

⁹⁷ SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms, s. v. tense.

⁹⁸ SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms, s. v. aspect.

not outside⁹⁹ (AFTER OR BEFORE) the event. If we consider the imperfective aspect of Parmenides' ἔστιν, ἐόν, and εἶναι, the focus falls WITHIN the event too, because it is neither outside nor OVERLAPPING with that event. However, this is not the whole story, because the state denoted by εἰμί has no inherent limits and because Parmenides used εἰμί to make a statement that is not restricted to a particular time. I will deal with these two issues separately.

Verbal event boundaries can be brought into focus by grammatical means, but the concrete expression of grammatical aspect depends on the lexical content of verbs. This is evidenced by the fact that certain verbs are incompatible with some types of grammatical aspect. For example, some durative verbs did not develop aorist forms because the perfective aspect expressed by the aorist requires a possible ending that the meaning of prototypical durative verbs does not entail.¹⁰⁰ This kind of lexical coercion could explain the defectiveness of εἰμί, whose lexical aspect is said to be durative, adynamic, and atelic (i. e., the state of affairs expressed by it persists over time, does not involve any type of change, and has no inherent endpoint).¹⁰¹ In any case, the lexical content of εἰμί does not involve the succession of two different or opposite states,¹⁰² unlike functionally similar intransitive verbs, such as the semicopula γίγνομαι. Table 4 shows that εἰμί and γίγνομαι have different temporal entailments even if they express the same tense and grammatical aspect. When εἰμί is considered without regard to a particular subject or predicative content, it does not entail temporal limits; γίγνομαι, in contrast, implies limits under the same conditions.

These entailments are brought about by εἰμί as a predicator and must be involved in all εἰμί-sentences, whether ascriptive, equative, existential, or other, for there is no sentence without a grammatical predicate. It makes no difference whether εἰμί links a subject to a nonverbal predicate or not because there are lexical features that persist through the process of verbal copularization, i. e., of applying an intransitive verb to link a subject to a nonverbal predicate.¹⁰³ Take for

⁹⁹ Aristotle would say 'around': ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὸ ὑγίανεν ἢ τὸ ὑγιανεῖ οὐ ῥῆμα, ἀλλὰ πῶσις ῥήματος· διαφέρει δὲ τοῦ ῥήματος, ὅτι τὸ μὲν τὸν παρόντα προσσημαίνει χρόνον, τὰ δὲ τὸν περίεξ 'Likewise, *healed* or *will heal* [are] not a verb either, but a variation of a verb. They differ from the verb in that [ὑγιαίνει] indicates the present time/tense while [ὑγίανεν and ὑγιανεῖ indicate] what [lies] around [the present]' (*Int.* 3 16^b16–18).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. de la Villa Polo (2020), p. 622.

¹⁰¹ These values correspond to "states" in the classification of Vendler (1957).

¹⁰² I follow the notion of lexical content put forward by Klein (1994), pp. 81–95.

¹⁰³ "When a form undergoes grammaticization [*sic*] from a lexical to a grammatical function, so long as it is grammatically viable some traces of its original lexical meanings tend to adhere to it, and details of its lexical history may be reflected in constraints on its grammatical distribution"

Table 4: Lexical meaning and time

Form	Aspect/Tense	Gloss	Temporal entailments
ἦν	imperfective past	<i>S was</i> <i>S was P</i>	<i>and nothing prevents S from being now or later</i> <i>and nothing prevents S from being P now or later</i>
ἐγίγνετο		<i>S came into being</i> <i>S became P</i>	<i>and necessarily was not before some point in the past</i> <i>and necessarily ceased to be non-P at some point in the past</i>
ἔστι(ν)	imperfective present	<i>S is</i> <i>S is P</i>	<i>and nothing prevents S from having been before or continuing to be after</i> <i>and nothing prevents S from having been P before or continuing to be P after</i>
γίγνεται		<i>S comes into being</i> <i>S becomes P</i>	<i>and necessarily was not before now</i> <i>and necessarily ceases to be non-P now</i>
ἔσ(σε)ται	aspect neutral future	<i>S will be</i> <i>S will be P</i>	<i>and nothing prevents S from being before that time</i> <i>and nothing prevents S from being P before that time</i>
γενήσεται		<i>S will come into being</i> <i>S will become P</i>	<i>and necessarily will not be until that time</i> <i>and will necessarily cease to be non-P at that time</i>

example another Greek semicopula, namely, πέλω ‘be in motion, come into being, turn out to be.’

συμφερετὶ δ’ ἀρετὴ πέλει ἀνδρῶν καὶ μάλα λυγρῶν (*Il.* XIII.237)
 but collective valor arises even from badly battered men
 οὐ μὲν πως ἄλιον πέλει ὄρκιον... (*Il.* IV.158–59)
 but by no means does an oath prove fruitless...

While πέλει in *Il.* XIII.237 is the semantic core of the predicate, πέλει in *Il.* IV.158–59 is an auxiliary for nonverbal predication. Yet the lexical content of πέλω has similar implications in both cases. *Il.* XIII.237 presents the subject of πέλει as the result of adding forces, whereas *Il.* IV.158–59 presents the predicative as the outcome of a sequence of events.

Now, tense does not bring event boundaries into focus, but can be more or less relevant depending on what is being said. Tense marking is particularly important

(Hopper 1991, p. 22). This is the so-called “principle of persistence,” one of the five principles of grammaticalization proposed by Hopper.

when an utterance can fall outside the time of an event, that is, when someone is talking about something temporary or saying something that does not always apply to what is being talked about. For example, the present tense of 'are three' makes a significant distinction when I talk about my brother's children, considering that my brother's children were not always three. But the present tense of 'is three' is much less significant when I talk about the sum of two and one, given that the sum of two and one is three irrespective of time. We mark the present tense on the latter sort of assertions because our utterance occupies a position in time and makes reference to something that is actual at that time, not because our utterance refers to something whose actuality is temporally limited. Parmenides uses the present tense of εἰμί in the Way of Truth because the lexical content of εἰμί always applies to what I call 'ultimate reality,' i. e., that which is common to all that is and whose actuality is not restricted to a particular time.

This explains why Parmenides mentions timelessness and immutability in B8.36–38, right after asserting the equivalence of thinking and being.

ταῦτόν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα. / οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφασισμένον ἔστιν, / εὐρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν· οὐδ' οἱ χρόνος ἐστίν<,> ἢ ἔσται / ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν / οὔλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμεναι· ... (B8.34–38)

To think amounts to an act of thinking *that* ____ is. For without being, in which [thinking] is expressed, you will not find thinking. And there is no time [interval] for this, or there will be something else besides being, since Moira certainly bound it to be whole, immutable: ...

Simplicius transmits two versions of B8.36. The most edited one is οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται 'for nothing is or will be,' or οὐδὲν γὰρ <ἢ> ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται with Preller's supplement.¹⁰⁴ However, Coxon (2009) argues convincingly that this first version is "an adaptation of Parmenides' words made by Simplicius to bolster his misinterpretation of [B6.1–2]" (p. 333), whereas the second version, namely, οὐδ' εἰ χρόνος ἐστίν

¹⁰⁴ This version is accepted, for example, by: Année (2012), p. 170; Barnes (1982), p. 141; Bernabé Pajares (2007), p. 26; Bormann (1971), p. 42; Burnet (1930), p. 176; Cassin (1998), p. 88; Cerri (1999), p. 152; Cornford (1939), p. 43; Couloubaritsis (1990), p. 238; Curd (2015), p. 8; Diels (1897), p. 38; Diels and Kranz (1960), p. 238; Eggers Lan and Juliá (2008), p. 480; Gallop (2013), p. 70; Gómez-Lobo (1985), p. 112; Guthrie (1969), p. 39; Heitsch (1991), p. 30; Hölscher (2014), p. 14; Karsten (1835), p. 38; Kirk and Raven (1957), p. 277; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (1983), p. 252; Laks and Most (2016), p. 48; Mansfeld (1964), pp. 84, 101; Mansfeld and Primavesi (2012), p. 328; Mourelatos (2008), p. 170; O'Brien (1987), p. 41; Palmer (2009), p. 370; Reale (2001), p. 52; Riezler (2001), p. 32; Scuto (2005), p. 43; Tarán (1965), p. 83; Untersteiner (1958), p. 148; Verdenius (1964), p. 39; Vlastos (1953), p. 168; Zeller (1856), p. 401. An alternative version, οὐδ' ἦν γὰρ, was proposed by Bergk (1886), p. 81 and followed by Cordero (2005), p. 215.

ἢ ἔσται,¹⁰⁵ reproduces Parmenides' words, albeit faultily.¹⁰⁶ Since it is difficult to make sense of εἰ in this second version, Coxon transforms οὐδ' εἰ χρόνος into οὐδὲ χρόνος and translates "And time is not nor will be another thing alongside Being." In my opinion, Marcinkowska-Rosół (2010) offers a better solution: she transforms οὐδ' εἰ χρόνος into οὐδ' οἷ χρόνος and translates "Und für dies gibt es keine Zeit, oder es wird etwas anderes außer dem Seienden geben" (p. 141), for she understands ἢ to mean 'or else, otherwise.' Her reading is certainly consistent with the timelessness of Parmenidean "being."¹⁰⁷ The noun χρόνος seems to derive from a verb denoting the action of seizing (PIE *ǵ^her-),¹⁰⁸ and B8.36–38 definitely alludes to the temporal limits of change. Moira allotted time to transient things, but destined τὸ εἶναι to remain complete and immutable. Moreover, it is the wholeness and immutability of τὸ εἶναι that makes the typical notions of natural philosophy inapplicable to the subject matter of the Way of Truth, considering that the actuality of ultimate reality is beyond synchronous and asynchronous differences.

... τῷ πάντ' ὄνομα(α) ἔσται, / ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ, / γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὀλλυσθαι, εἶναι τε καὶ οὐχί, / καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροῖα φανὸν ἀμείβειν. (B8.34–41)
... in regard to it, just words will be all that mortals posited, convinced that it is true, to be born and to perish, to be and not to be, to change place and to transmute the shining face.

Before I close this section, I want to tie up a few loose ends in order to appreciate the benefits of the verb εἰμί for Parmenides' philosophy.

- a) Parmenides was in a position to claim that thinking and being share content because εἰμί-clauses could express any thought without notional interference (e. g., compare how γίγνομαι and πέλω provide significant additional meaning

¹⁰⁵ This version is considered, with or without modifications, by Bredlow in García Calvo (2018), p. 61 [οὐδ' ἐν χρόνῳ]; Conche (1996), p. 126 [οὐδὲ χρόνος]; Coxon (2009), p. 75 [οὐδὲ χρόνος]; Llansó (2007), p. 40; Marcinkowska-Rosół (2010), p. 141; Sedley (1999), p. 120; Solana Dueso (2001), p. 41; Thanassas (1997), p. 280. An alternative version, οὐδὲ χρέος, was proposed by Stein (1867), p. 792 and modified by García Calvo (2018), p. 61 [οὐ δέ χρέος].

¹⁰⁶ Some commentators believe that the mention of time here is senseless (e. g., Verdenius 1964, p. 40 and García Calvo 2018, pp. 150–152), but I tend to agree with Coxon. The first version is part of a series of isolated quotations that Simplicius uses to support a particular argument. The second version, contrariwise, is included in a long extract presented by Simplicius as proof that his general interpretation of Parmenides is not a forgery – and because Parmenides' work (σύγγραμμα) was already difficult to find (cf. σπάνις); this quotation is extensive (52 verses) and does not focus on the passage in question.

¹⁰⁷ For the discussion about Parmenidean "timelessness," see Hoy (1994); Manchester (1979); Owen (1966); Schofield (1970); Tarán (1965), pp. 175–188 and (1979).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Porzig (1942), p. 346.

and affect predication by lexical means). By way of illustration, the complement clause in the formula *The νόος thinks that [S] is [P]* would stand for the νόημα οὐνεκεν ἔστι as the expression of thinking.

- b) Unlike Aristotle, who emphasized that τὸ ὄν indicates a composition that cannot be thought of without its components, Parmenides did not attach much importance to categorematic terms because he took for granted that τὸ ἐόν involves conceivable and expressible content. Proof of his commitment to noematic content is the identification of τὸ μὴ ἐόν with lack of content (B2.5–8).
- c) Parmenides highlighted the present imperfective forms of εἰμί over categorematic terms because he was mostly interested in the functional information provided by εἰμί-clauses. Parmenidean “being” amounts to categorial content¹⁰⁹ + functional information, including the lexical features that affect predication above the level of the lexical predicate. The common content of νοεῖν and εἶναι (infinitives) is therefore the νόημα (noun) οὐνεκεν ἔστι (noun clause), which is expressed by τὸ ἐόν (substantivized participle) and carries two kinds of content: proper predicative content, which is not conveyed by the verb εἰμί itself and falls under one of the Aristotelian categories, and functional information, such as tense and aspect.
- d) Although Parmenidean “being” was conceivable and expressible, we cannot say whether Parmenides distinguished between objects and concepts, concepts and propositions, propositions and states of affairs, states of affairs and facts, facts and entities, entities and attributes, etcetera.¹¹⁰ He certainly associated the information provided by ἔστι, ἐόν, and εἶναι with the actuality of what is – whether this means the actuality of what subsists, obtains, endures, or pertains – and coupled this actuality with ultimate reality.
- e) What Parmenides called “being” held up despite the passage of time and was probably seen as necessary, in the sense that actual being necessarily excludes the opposite possibility¹¹¹ or that obtaining states of affairs are fixed and cannot

109 According to Eudemus (*Fr.* 43.15–18 Wehrli), Parmenides did not make categorial distinctions: Παρμενίδου μὲν οὖν ἀγασθεῖη τίς ἂν ἀναξιοπίστοις ἀκολουθήσαντος λόγοις καὶ ὑπὸ τοιούτων ἀπατηθέντος, ἃ οὕτω τότε διεσαφεῖτο; οὔτε γὰρ τὸ πολλαχῶς ἔλεγεν οὐδείς, ἀλλὰ Πλάτων πρῶτος τὸ δισσὸν εἰσήγαγεν... ‘Now, one should not be surprised if Parmenides drew untrustworthy conclusions and was deceived by such things, which had not yet been made clear in his time; indeed, no one used to say *in many ways*, but it was Plato who first introduced *in a double way*...’

110 For the applicability or inapplicability of these terms to ancient Greek ontology, see Kahn (2009a), pp. 36–37 and Kimhi (2018), p. 121. On the discursive articulation of things (i. e., entities and attributes indistinctly) among early Greek philosophers, see Mourelatos (2008), pp. 299–332.

111 If this were so, the modality involved in B2 would not be merely directive (deontic) and could be connected with Arist. *Int.* 9 19²³–24: τὸ [...] εἶναι τὸ ὄν ὅταν ᾗ [...] ἀνάγκη ‘To be is necessary for being [i. e., for what is], whenever [it] is.’

change.¹¹² What is certain is that the lexical content of εἰμί did not entail temporal limits. Even if εἰμί was the least meaningful verb in Ancient Greek, it still expressed [+DURATIVITY], [-DYNAMICITY], and [-TELICITY], and did not imply the succession of two different or opposite states.

- f) Parmenides did not think of *being* in specific terms, according to which *being P* is opposed to *not being P*. He was interested in *being* without specifications and thought that even if something is *not P*, it can still be something else, regardless of whether it is different or even contrary to *P*.¹¹³ Parmenidean τὸ μὴ ἓόν is akin to Plato's μηδαμῶς ὄν (*Sph.* 237B7, 240E2, 240E5), not to Plato's ἔτερον (*Sph.* 257B3–4), for it is not the denial of a positive determination, as when we say that something is not bright because it is dark.¹¹⁴ Parmenides opposed *being something (either P or other than P)* to *being nothing (neither P nor other than P)*¹¹⁵ and argued for the impossibility of the latter. This applies to both synchronous and asynchronous differences: indeed, if the difference between *P* and *not P* does not involve a break in being, and if being holds up despite the passage of time, then the transition from *P* to *not P* will be irrelevant to the study of being. I will discuss this in more detail in the next section.
- g) Since nonbeing is ungraspable and unspeakable from Parmenides' perspective (B2), anything *P* or *non-P* falls within the scope of thinking and being on the condition that both *P* and *non-P* represent conceivable and expressible content (e. g., *bright* and *non-bright*, i. e., *dark*). That is why thought is necessarily full of being and makes no room for lack of content according to Parmenides (B16,

112 If so, Parmenidean “being” would be nontransient in Pollock's (1984, pp. 8, 56) terms, and Parmenides could be an actualist of a certain lineage: “Parmenides' conception of modality is likely to have been an ‘actualist’ one, where possibility and necessity range not over possible worlds but over states of affairs at different times in the actual world. Thus what is and cannot not be will be whatever is (what it is) actually throughout the history of this world. Likewise, what is not and must not be will be whatever is not (any thing) actually at any moment in the world's history” (Palmer 2009, p. 100).

113 As in the fifth hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* (i. e., εἰ δὲ δὴ μὴ ἔστι τὸ ἓν, 160b4), which negates something specific (εἰ ἓν μὴ ἔστιν, 160b6), not everything else (cf. εἰ μὴ ἓν μὴ ἔστιν in 160b6–7). The anteposition of μὴ explains the accentuation of ἔστιν in this passage (cf. van Emde Boas et al. 2019, p. 290), so we need not attach an “existential” meaning to the verb (*pace* Cornford 1939, p. 219).

114 Cf. Cherniss (1932), p. 123; Cordero (1986–1987), p. 285; Ferejohn (1989), p. 267, n. 23; Furth (1968), p. 119; O'Brien (1991), pp. 328–330; Palmer (1999), p. 137, n. 27.

115 As in the sixth hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* (i. e., ἓν εἰ μὴ ἔστι, 163c1), which negates being without specifications (i. e., ἓν εἰ μὴ ἔστι). Such a negation would be tantamount to absence of beingness (οὐσίας ἀπουσίαν, 163c3) and would imply that what is not (τό γε μὴ ὄν, 163c7) is not in any way or sense (ὅτι οὐδαμῶς οὐδαμῇ ἔστιν, 163c6), i. e., that it does not partake of beingness in any sense (οὐδέ πῃ μετέχει οὐσίας, 163c6–7).

B4), who found in noematic completeness a foothold to theorize about ultimate reality. It is true that what all objects of thought have in common cannot be grasped separately (B8.22), but unlike nonbeing, ultimate reality cannot be missing in anything that is (cf. παντὸς ἐδεῖτο in B8.33). The last section of this article will make it clear that the coextension of ultimate reality with thinking and being gives meaning to Parmenides' entire poem, not only to its first part.

6 Overcoming natural philosophy?

Parmenides' goddess delivers two speeches, each with a different epistemic status.¹¹⁶ The first one renders the "imperturbable heart of quite-compelling Truth,"¹¹⁷ which is both "a reliable explanation and a thought about reality."¹¹⁸ The second one is "a deceptive array of words"¹¹⁹ that brings into alignment humanlike conjectures that cannot be fully trusted.¹²⁰ "I let you know this orderly disposition, adjusted in every respect," – says the goddess to the κοῦρος – "so that no mortal theory will ever get past you."¹²¹

Parmenides' whole poem became known as a work *περὶ φύσεως*,¹²² but only its second part really deals with the evolutionary process denoted by the verb φύω 'produce, make grow, beget' and its derivatives.¹²³ The first part concerns something immutable (ἀκίνητον)¹²⁴ and divine, in the Aristotelian sense.¹²⁵ It displays Parmenides' view of the world *sub specie aeternitatis* and tries to prove that ultimate reality subsists in spite of synchronous and asynchronous differences. Note that each σῆμα in Table 5 symbolizes a way in which ultimate reality fills τὸ πᾶν, which is seen as a plenum.

116 ὁ δὲ γνώριμος αὐτοῦ Παρμενίδης τοῦ μὲν δοξαστοῦ λόγου κατέγνω, φημί δὲ τοῦ ἀσθενεῖς ἐχοντος ὑπολήψεις, τὸν δ' ἐπιστημονικόν, τουτέστι τὸν ἀδιάπτωτον, ὑπέθετο κριτήριον, ἀποστὰς καὶ <αὐτὸς> τῆς τῶν αἰσθήσεων πίστεως 'Parmenides, his [i. e., Xenophanes'] acquaintance, condemned conjectural reasoning – I mean the one involving weak assumptions – and adopted the scientific criterion, that is, the infallible one, since he too had given up faith in the senses.' (S.E. M. 7.111.1–4).

117 Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεμές ἦτορ (B1.29).

118 πιστὸν λόγον ἢ δὲ νόημα ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης (B8.50–51).

119 κόσμον ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν (B8.52).

120 Cf. δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἐνὶ πίστις ἀληθείης (B1.30).

121 τὸν σοὶ ἐγὼ διάκοσμον εἰκότα πάντα φατίζω, ὡς οὐ μὴ ποτέ τις σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσει (B8.60–61).

122 Cf. Simp. in Cael. 556.25–26.

123 Cf. B10.1, B10.5–6, B19.1.

124 Cf. B8.26, 38.

125 Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* E1.

Table 5: The signs of its plenitude

Σῆμα ¹²⁶	Contextual meaning
ἀγένητον ‘unoriginated’	Ultimate reality cannot not cover a prior interval
ἀνώλεθρον ‘indestructible’	Ultimate reality cannot not cover a posterior interval
οὔλον ‘whole, compact’	Ultimate reality does not allow gaps or interstices
μουνογενές ‘one of a kind’	Ultimate reality does not allow numerical discontinuity
ἀτρεμές ‘unshaken’	Ultimate reality does not move within encompassing limits
ἀτέλεστον ‘without end’	Ultimate reality does not need to complete its development

Parmenides’ doctrine has been fairly associated with the Orphic tradition.¹²⁷ The epithet πολύποινος ‘much-punishing’ appears only in Parmenides’ proem (B1.14) and in the orphic fragment 233 (Bernabé = 158 Kern = Procl. *In R.* 2.145.3), and in both cases it is applied to Δίκη ‘Justice.’ This is illuminating because Parmenidean Δίκη allows the κοῦρος to enter the realm of revelation, beyond synchronous and asynchronous differences,¹²⁸ while Orphic Δίκη signals the presence of Zeus, ἀρχὸς πάντων ‘ruler of everything.’¹²⁹ There is no doubt that the Way of Truth is theological in some sense, but Parmenides did not aim to demonstrate the existence or attributes of God.¹³⁰ He was concerned with proving the plenitude of the universe, whose content was supposed to be immediately apprehensible by an unimpeded thought, as the one that Xenophanes ascribed to the most powerful of gods. Parmenides’ teaching is not comparable to the natural theology of monotheistic religions. It should be contrasted with Ionian natural philosophy, for it attempted to avoid two unfortunate implications of material monism,¹³¹ namely, the identification of ultimate reality with something that cannot cover the full extent of thought

¹²⁶ μόνος δ’ ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο / λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν· ταύτηι δ’ ἐπὶ σήματ’ ἔασι / πολλὰ μάλ’, ὡς ἀγένητον ἔδον καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἔστιν, / οὔλον, μουνογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἡ δ’ ἀτέλεστον ‘But there still remains alone the account of the way that ___ is; on this [way] there are very numerous signs that, since ___ is, ___ is unoriginated and indestructible, whole, one of a kind, as well as unshaken and without end’ (B8.1–4).

¹²⁷ See Bernabé Pajares (2004), p. 55.

¹²⁸ Cf. B1.11–21. “The essential point about this place is that it is the *meeting place*, where opposites are undivided. Here there is no meaning in the familiar oppositions between Earth and Sky, Earth and Tartarus, Earth and Sea, because this is their common origin” (Furley 1973, p. 4).

¹²⁹ Cf. [Arist.] *Mund.* 7 401^b5.

¹³⁰ Cf. Jaeger (1964), p. 125.

¹³¹ Finkelberg (1988b) makes a similar point: “The problem of the monistic conception of reality, insoluble when approached on physical terms, was solved by Parmenides by inventing the notion of Being” (p. 12). I would not call Parmenidean “being” an *invention*, though.

(hereafter 'Thales' mistake') and the confusion of actuality with present occurrence (hereafter 'Anaximander's mistake').

Thales' mistake. Material principles¹³² used to explain differences across a polar continuum cannot be identified with ultimate reality because they do not cover the entire scope of thought. Whether Thales of Miletus held that all things reduce to water¹³³ or not, whoever claims such a thesis must admit the lack of water in addressing the difference between, say, dirt and mud. Since dry things contain less water than wet things, dirt must lack water in comparison to mud, and water must fall short as a universal principle. As we move across the continuum towards the dry pole, our mind, not our senses, notices that more and more parts of water are missing, that water covers less and less volume. Such cognizance is possible because the mind is always aware of the totality or, as stated in B16.4, because τὸ πλεόν ἐστὶ νόημα.

The same applies to Anaximenes' theory, which attributed natural priority to air¹³⁴ and explained cosmic diversity in terms of density. Anaximenes conceived μεταβολή 'transformation' as the generation (γένεσις) of different material configurations.¹³⁵ According to him, air gives rise to different consistencies depending on its degree of rarefaction or condensation. When extremely rarefied, air assumes the form of fire, but it gradually turns into wind, vapor, water, and earth, until it reaches the maximum degree of condensation and takes the form of rock. Although Anaximenes claimed that both fire and rock are made of air, the distribution of air across the scale πῦρ > ἄνεμος > νέφος > ὕδωρ > γῆ > λίθος could not be homogeneous.¹³⁶ The aggregation¹³⁷ of primeval matter would have to be greater, say, in granite than in fire, and the air mass would have to admit larger and smaller interstices. We also know that because τὸ πλεόν ἐστὶ νόημα.

Anaximander's mistake. Milesian philosophers emphasized the temporal aspect of change. Anaximenes himself "said that unlimited air is the principle out of which [all things] originate, those that originate [now], those that have originated [until now], and those that will be [from now on], as well as god and deities, while

132 Arist. *Metaph.* A.3 983^b6–8: τῶν δὲ πρώτων φιλοσοφησάντων οἱ πλεῖστοι τὰς ἐν ὕλης εἶδει μόνας ᾗθησαν ἀρχὰς εἶναι πάντων 'Most of the first philosophers considered only the [principles that are] material in kind to be principles of all [things].'

133 This does not necessarily follow from Arist. *Metaph.* A.3 983^b18–984^a5.

134 Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* A.3 984^a5–7.

135 Cf. Hippol. *Haer.* 1.7 2–3, also Simp. in *Ph.* 24.26–25.11.

136 I agree with Cherniss (1964), p. 379 that the specific principle chosen by Anaximander is not essential to his own theory.

137 πύκνωσις δὲ καὶ μάνωσις σύγκρισις καὶ διάκρισις (Arist. *Ph.* VIII.7 260b7–13).

the rest [of things originate] from the descendants of these [things].”¹³⁸ Temporality was especially important for Anaximander, who believed that time confined beings within limits: “He also speaks of time” – says Hippolytus – “as if the generation and the destruction of beings were bounded.”¹³⁹ Anaximander described change as a sequence of events and used the present participle of εἶμι in a way that Parmenides would not have approved. Indeed, the only seemingly authentic fragment of Anaximander implies a hiatus in being:

Τῶν δὲ ἐν καὶ κινούμενον καὶ ἄπειρον λεγόντων Ἀναξίμανδρος μὲν Πραξιάδου Μιλήσιος Θαλοῦ γενόμενος διάδοχος καὶ μαθητὴς ἀρχὴν τε καὶ στοιχεῖον εἶρηκε τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον, πρῶτος τοῦτο τοῦνομα κομίσας τῆς ἀρχῆς. λέγει δ’ αὐτὴν μῆτε ὕδωρ μῆτε ἄλλο τι τῶν καλουμένων εἶναι στοιχείων, ἀλλ’ ἐτέραν τινὰ φύσιν ἄπειρον, ἐξ ἧς ἅπαντας γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανούς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους· ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών. δίδοναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν, ποιητικωτέροις οὕτως ὀνόμασιν αὐτὰ λέγων... (Simp. in Ph. 24.13–21)

Among those who say that [the principle] is one, mutable, and unlimited, Anaximander, son of Praxiades, Milesian, who became Thales’ successor and disciple, said that the principle and element of beings is the unlimited, having introduced for the first time this very term of ‘principle.’¹⁴⁰ He claims that¹⁴¹ this [principle] is neither water nor any other of the so-called ‘elements,’ but some other unlimited nature, from which all heavens and arrangements in such [heavens] originate: in the things where the origin of beings resides, towards them the destruction [of beings] takes place too,¹⁴² as required. For these [i. e., beings,] grant justice and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the array of time, claiming such things in this way, with very inventive words...

Since Parmenides referred the present forms of εἶμι to some sort of timeless actuality, he would never have said that “being” – *what actually is* – begins or ends at some point in time. Perhaps he called “being” what we would call “subsistent.” Perhaps he was an actualist for whom *being* belonged to everything that is ever the case in the actual world regardless of when it takes place. Perhaps he associated

138 ἀέρα ἄπειρον ἔφη τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶναι, ἐξ οὗ [τὰ γινόμενα <καὶ> τὰ γεγονότα καὶ τὰ ἐσόμενα καὶ] θεοὺς καὶ θεῖα γίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ἐκ τῶν τούτου ἀπογόνων (Hippol. Haer. 1.7.1–2). “τὰ γινόμενα – τὰ ἐσόμενα καὶ seclutit Marcovich ut glossema ad τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ” (Wöhrlé 2012, p. 278).

139 λέγει δὲ <καὶ> χρόνον, ὡς ὠρισμένης καὶ τῆς γενέσεως τοῖς οὖσι καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς (Hippol. Haer. 1.6.1.4–5).

140 Or: ‘having applied for the first time this very term [i. e., ‘unlimited’] to the principle’. Cf. Wöhrlé (2012), p. 129, n. 1.

141 According to Kahn (1960), pp. 166–167, here begins what Anaximander said, whether the text is a literal quote or not.

142 Wöhrlé (2012), pp. 131 opens the quotes here.

“being” with the actuality of a universal substance.¹⁴³ What is clear is that Parmenidean “being” holds up despite the passage of time.

I have argued elsewhere that Parmenides could have used another verb to talk about what appears and disappears with time, namely πέλω.¹⁴⁴ My point is that we should seriously consider the possibility that πέλειν does not stand for εἶναι in B6.8,¹⁴⁵ contrary to what practically all interpreters assume in adherence to the questionable belief that πέλω was a poetic equivalent of εἰμί for Homer.¹⁴⁶ Unlike εἰμί, which stemmed from the stative root *h₁es- ‘be,’ πέλω was originally a motion verb stemming from *k^wlh₁- ‘go round,’ as does the Skt. *cáratī* ‘to move around, wander, drive (on the meadow), graze.’¹⁴⁷ Now, there is hardly any doubt that Homeric πέλω evoked dynamicity,¹⁴⁸ and it sometimes flatly denoted a telic event,¹⁴⁹

143 In this case, the present imperfective forms of εἰμί would refer to the actuality of ultimate reality, where all particularities fuse. Parmenides may have been a generous monist who believed that everything that is converges into the same actual plenum. That seems to be the meaning of ἐὸν ἐόντι πελάζει ‘being makes contact with being’ in B8.25. Moreover, Parmenides could have related everything that is to a single *totality* of reference, just as Aristotle related it to a single *entity* of reference. However, Parmenidean ontology differs from Aristotelian usiology in that Parmenidean ἐόν, which is not separately graspable (διαρετόν, B8.22), cannot be identified with one particular nature (μία τις φύσις, Arist. *Metaph.* Γ.2 1003^a34), whether simple or not (*pace* Curd 1991). Such absence of specificity is what makes Parmenidean ontology so problematic from a logical point of view.

144 See Alcocer Urueta (2020), pp. 32–33.

145 Of course, the lexical discrepancy has not gone unnoticed. See, for example, Année (2012), pp. 59–69 and (2013), p. 480, Llansó (2007), pp. 116–117, and Woodbury (1958), p. 154.

146 This belief is endorsed by Aubenque (1987), p. 104, Bernabé Pajares (2019), p. 75, Kahn (2003), p. 206, Keep (1895), s. v. πέλω, and O’Brien (1987), p. 52, among others. However, determining the synonymy of two lexical items solely on the basis of metric rests on disputable premises. First, it presupposes that the author, e. g., Parmenides, wanted to convey the meaning of one lexical item, e. g., εἰμί, where we find another item, e. g., πέλω (*petitio principii*). Second, it assumes either that the author had no other way to meet meter requirements than to use the lexical item under consideration, e. g., πέλω, which is false, or that the author, e. g., Parmenides, wanted to imitate a certain model, e. g., Homer, which is speculative and debatable.

147 Cf. Beekes (2010) s. v. πέλομαι. See also *IEW*, pp. 639–640, *LIV*, pp. 386–388, Watkins (1985), p. 33.

148 Cf. Waanders (2000), p. 268.

149 Authoritative lexica tend to emphasize the nonstative aspect of πέλω/πέλομαι. Monro (1891) pp. 33, 38: ‘turn, come to be.’ LSJ, s. v. πέλω: ‘come into existence, become, be.’ Cunliffe (2012), s. v. πέλω: ‘turn out to be, come to be, become, come into being.’ Führer (2001), s. v. πέλομαι: ‘sich (herum)bewegen, vorkommen, sich (gewöhnlich) ergeben, herrühren, sich erweisen, (üblich) sein.’ Montanari (2015), s. v. πέλω: ‘come into existence, develop, become, turn out to be, exist, be.’ Diggle (2021), s. v. πέλω: ‘come into existence, turn out to be, become, exist, be.’ Autenrieth and Kaegi (2013), s. v. πέλω: ‘bewegen, geschwungen werden, stattfinden, ausgehen, werden, entstehen, geschehen, sich erweisen, ergeben, sein.’

e. g., in the aorist¹⁵⁰ and in the middle voice,¹⁵¹ which is the most common in Homer. So if πέλω was still some kind of eventive verb for Parmenides, then B6.8–9 could be criticizing the confusion of occurring (or recurring) and not-being:

[...] οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται¹⁵² / κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα, / οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτόν νενόμισται / κοῦ ταῦτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος. (B6.6–9)
[...] and they are carried away again and again, deaf as well as blind, stupefied, undiscerning hordes, for whom to occur and not to be are usually considered the same, and not the same, the journey of all [of them] is reversible.

If πέλω had been an eventive verb for Parmenides, B6.6–9 would not directly condemn the contradictory coordination of being and not being, but the inability of mortals to avoid Anaximander's mistake. Accordingly, the goddess would deny that phenomenal succession entails nonbeing. Mortals would believe that the succession of two events, say, X and Y, involves nonbeing, either because Y *was not* before taking place or because X *will not be* after “granting justice” to Y. However, mortals would not be able to witness or show nonbeing at any time, and they would find it difficult to maintain the annihilation of X once X reappears. Natural phenomena were almost certainly seen as recurring events by Parmenides, who most likely drew on Hesiod's representation of day and night as a recurrent relay (cf. B1.11–14 with *Theog.* 736–757).

This is not to say that Parmenides was not interested in natural development, for he dealt extensively with generation and destruction (B19). Moreover, there are no solid grounds for denying that the second part of the poem, where we still find Ανάγκη (B10.6) and a female deity ruling everything (B12.3), expounds Parmenides' own natural philosophy. Although the goddess rejects the truth of mortal beliefs, she conforms humanlike opinions to the Truth and proposes a theory of nature.

Taking B9 at face value, Parmenides' natural philosophy supposed two complementary principles, which covered the whole universe:

αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νύξ ὀνόμασται / καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσι τε καὶ τοῖς, / πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου / ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρωι μέτα μηδέν.

Nevertheless, since all things were designated light and night and these [designations were applied] to these and those things according to the corresponding powers, all is full of light and night without shine, both of them equal, since nothing [comes] with neither of them.

150 For example, in the Homeric formula ἄπερος ἐπλετο μῦθος (*Od.* 17.57, 19.29, 21.386, 22.398).

151 For the semantic difference between πέλω and πέλομαι, see Neuberger-Donath (1980).

152 Note that φορέω is the frequentative of φέρω.

Both principles must have interacted erotically, as is often the case in theogonies and cosmogonies. Such a cosmic intercourse would at least explain the meaning of B13, where Eros is said to be the first god to be excogitated by the personification of genesis: *πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων* 'As the very first of all deities, [Γένεσις] excogitated Eros.'¹⁵³

Parmenides has gone down in history as a recalcitrant monist, but the deceptive nature of the goddess' second speech lies precisely in its dualism. The second speech covers with two principles what the first speech covers with the sole notion of *being*. Parmenides' natural philosophy was not true according to the high standards of the goddess; neither was it monist. Aristotle tells us that Parmenides assumed two principles to account for phenomenal diversity,¹⁵⁴ and the final part of B8 seems to expose the failure of material monism. Milesian philosophers assumed two distinct aspects of nature, but they only recognized one, believing that a gradualist explanation of phenomenal differences allowed them to dispense with acknowledging the other (i. e., what is not P, not water, not air, not bright, etc.).

μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν· / τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεῶν ἐστίν – ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι
εἰσίν – / τάντῃ δ' ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο / χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῇ μὲν φλογὸς
αἰθέριον πῦρ, / ἥπιον ὄν, μέγ' ἐλαφρόν, ἐωυτῷ πάντοσε τωῦτόν, / τῷ δ' ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωῦτόν·
ἀτὰρ κάκεινο κατ' αὐτό / τάντῃ νύκτ' ἄδαῃ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθέες τε. (B8.53–59)

Regarding appearances,¹⁵⁵ they actually decided to designate two means of distinction: one of which is not required – in this they are misled –.¹⁵⁶ They judged [them] contrary as to [their] mass and placed [their] features apart from each other: here, the ethereal fire of flame, which is mild, extremely light, identical to itself in every respect, but not identical to the other; and yet also that which is in itself the opposite, unconscious¹⁵⁷ night, a tight and heavy mass.

¹⁵³ This should be compared with Anaximander's τὸ γόνιμον: φησὶ δὲ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ αἰδίου γόνιμον θερμοῦ τε καὶ ψυχροῦ κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου ἀποκριθῆναι 'He said that what has the virtue of engendering heat and cold was secreted from the eternal at the moment of birth of this world-order' (Eus. *PE* 1.8.2).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Metaph.* A.5 986^b27–987^a2.

¹⁵⁵ I read *μορφὰς* as an accusative of respect. For the text and syntax of this passage, see Woodbury (1986).

¹⁵⁶ This passage is widely discussed by commentators. See, for example, Long (1963), pp. 98–104. In my opinion, the goddess is saying that mortals assume two principles, even if they believe that only one is necessary and pretend that the other does not exist.

¹⁵⁷ The adjective *ἄδαῃς* does not mean 'dark,' it means 'unknowing.' Cognizance is associated with the luminous principle (cf. Coxon 2009, p. 348), and Parmenides is saying that night is incognizant. We should not translate *ἄδαῃς* as 'ungraspable' either, because a meaningful explanation has no room for an ungraspable principle.

Now I come to the end of this work. The contrast with Milesian philosophy makes it easier to appreciate the two main benefits of the verb εἰμί for Parmenides' philosophy in its historical context.

1. The verb εἰμί arguably served to present any predicative content without significantly affecting the lexical semantics of predication (Section 4), thus preventing Parmenides from identifying ultimate reality with something that could not cover the full extent of thought (Thales' mistake). Noematic plenitude must have had methodological consequences for Parmenides, for whom different and even opposite contents had the same right to be insofar as they were, not only thinkable, but also required by the completeness of thought (i. e., for explanatory purposes). For example, the bright principle and its opposite are both necessary to account for dimness, and verbs like εἰμί can be used to speak "impartially" of lightness and darkness, i. e., of *what is light* or *lightening* (what lightens or makes things light) and *what is dark* or *darkening* (what darkens or makes things dark).
2. The verb εἰμί also prevented Parmenides from confusing actuality with present occurrence (Anaximander's mistake). Parmenidean "being" evoked some kind of timeless actuality that was accessible to the νόος and expressible by the verb εἰμί. The connection between timelessness and thought does not require much explanation. Noetic, intellectual activity is usually understood as the apprehension of immutable objects, whether abstract, ideal, or real. However, in order to understand why ἔστι, ἐόν, and εἶναι are the most suitable verb forms to express atemporal states of affairs, we must recognize certain linguistic facts: first, present imperfective forms do not put temporal limits into focus; second, and more importantly, the lexical content of εἰμί does not imply the succession of different or opposite states (Section 5).¹⁵⁸

These advantages enabled Parmenides to theorize about ultimate reality without restricting its nature or actuality by discursive means. It is true that B8.42–49 ascribes an ultimate limit to the universe, but such a limit represents the all-encompassing extent of thinking and being. Besides, since Parmenides could not conceive of an endless actual plenum,¹⁵⁹ he found it necessary to take a stand on the

¹⁵⁸ This is not only due to the fact that εἰμί is a stative verb, for the lexical content of many stative verbs involves a contrast between two states. For Spanish *quedar*, see Morimoto and Pavón Lucero (2007), p. 42. For Portuguese *ficar*, see Schmitt (1999). For German *bleiben*, see Schlücker (2007).

¹⁵⁹ Παρμενίδης μὲν γὰρ ἔοικε τοῦ κατὰ τὸν λόγον ἐνὸς ἅπτεσθαι, Μέλισσος δὲ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ὕλην (διὸ καὶ ὁ μὲν πεπερασμένον ὁ δ' ἄπειρόν φησιν εἶναι αὐτό) 'Indeed, Parmenides seems to cling to

first Kantian antinomy (i. e., *Die Welt ist in Grenzen eingeschlossen*). The connection between full actuality and determinacy was common among Greek philosophers,¹⁶⁰ and viewing the world as a closed totality is a commonplace of philosophy in general.¹⁶¹

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πείρας πύματον, τετελεσμένον ἐστί / πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ, / μεσσοθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ· τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μείζον / οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἐστι τῇ ἢ τῇ. / οὔτε γὰρ οὐκ ἔδν ἐστι, τό κεν παύοι μιν ἱκνεῖσθαι / εἰς ὁμόν, οὔτ' ἔδν ἐστὶν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἔδντος / τῇ μάλλον τῇ δ' ἥσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστὶν ἄσυλον· / οἷ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἴσον, ὁμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει.

However, since there is a farthest limit, it is perfect from anywhere, similar to the volume of a well-rounded sphere, equally matched from the center in all directions: for it is required that it does not turn out to be a bit bigger or a bit smaller here or there. For neither is there nonbeing, which could prevent it from reaching what is one-and-the-same, nor is there being such that there could be, of being, more here and less there, since it is all inviolable: indeed, equal to itself from anywhere, it stretches evenly within limits.

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what is conceptually one, while Melissus to what is materially [one] (this is also why the former says that it is limited, while the latter says that it is unlimited)’ (Arist. *Metaph.* A.5 986^b18–21).

160 τὸ ἀόριστον οὖν εὐόκασι λέγειν, καὶ οἰόμενοι τὸ ὄν λέγειν περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος λέγουσιν· τὸ γὰρ δυνάμει ὄν καὶ μὴ ἐντελεχείᾳ τὸ ἀόριστόν ἐστιν ‘They seem to refer to the indeterminate, and believing that they refer to what is, they refer to what is not: for what is potentially and not fully actual is the indeterminate’ (Arist. *Metaph.* Γ.4 1007^b26–29).

161 “Die Anschauung der Welt sub specie aeterni ist ihre Anschauung als – begrenztes – Ganzes” (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 6.45).

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