

The metaphor of the path seems to carry us decisively out of the poetic proem, with its branching and multivalent *hodos poluphēmos*, and onto the terrain of ontology, where *logos* unites with *to on* in a sublimity of the real and true. Forcefully prohibiting the impossible detour into Is Not and the wandering of Doxa, the goddess insists that we follow the single remaining “utterance of road” (*μυθός οδοίο*), and readers have generally obeyed her command, traveling a unidirectional ascent from duality to unity, from physics to metaphysics, and from the doubleness and duplicity of human language to the univocal true *logos* of Being. And yet if Parmenides’s path does suggest such an ascent, it misleads, because like Hegel’s *Aufhebung* it retains what it cancels: negativity, doubleness, polyvalence. Indeed, the new landscape resembles the old so much that we might wonder whether the straight road has merely brought us back to where we began (a circle to which we will circle back at the end of the chapter). Perhaps the authoritative *μυθός οδοίο* glossed as “Is” is, after all, just a myth consisting of a metaphor. The thesis (or metaphor) of language as a Wittgensteinian ladder supposes that the destination can be separated from the journey, the philosophical *telos* from the linguistic process by which it is reached. This is, of course, the thesis of metaphor itself: that ideas can be separated from the image that “conveys” them. But that metaphorical thesis, itself conveyed metaphorically, merely reproduces metaphoricity *en abyme*, as Derrida proposes.⁵⁰ However far it goes and however undeviating the path, then, metaphysics cannot escape metaphor. Parmenides’s road is a metaphor of that futile attempt.

BOUNDS OF BONDS

If with his novel language of “Is” Parmenides attempts to sublate *logos* as Being, he also exploits metaphorical language to secure that sublime Being. With the recurring metaphor of Anankē’s bonds or bounds, Parmenides strives to subordinate *logos* to *to on*, to ensure that metaphor works in the service of metaphysics, faithfully articulating its essential truths. And yet, as we shall see, these images also have a truth of their own: the metaphor of bonds does not merely describe a preexisting and always-existing substance but instead secures its substantiality, defining its very essence. A necessary supplement to Being’s totality, the origin of a Being without origin and limit of a Being with no beyond, the metaphor deployed to stabilize Being consistently destabilizes and deontologizes it, showing again and again that *To Eon* requires *logos* to achieve its innate form. Necessity’s bonds of bounds are thus the tie that binds—and unbinds—Parmenides’s ontological project as a whole.

The metaphor of bounds/bonds appears multiple times in the poem in slightly different configurations. We find the image first at B8.13–15/D8.18–20 where Dikē (Justice) is said to hold *To Eon* in her fetters (*pedēisin*), not slackening them so as

50. Derrida 1982b, 262.

to allow it to be born or die. The image of bondage recurs at B8.26–33/D8.31–38. There we first get Being “unmoving in bounds of great bonds” (*en peirasi desmōn*) and then, four lines later, mighty Anankē (Necessity) holding Being “in bonds of a boundary (*peiratos en desmoisin*), which confine it all around.” There are three more echoes toward the end of the Aletheia in the references to the bondage of Moira (Fate) at B8.37/D8.42 (*Moir' epedēsen*) and the boundaries of the sphere of Being at B8.42/D8.47 (*peiras*) and B8.49/D8.54 (*peirasi*). Finally, in B10.6–7/D12.6–7 the image recurs in the physical world, where Anankē is said to have bound (*epedēsen*) the heavens so that they have “boundaries” (*peirat[a]*) of stars.

This network of images connects binding and bounding, both literal and figurative, physical and metaphysical. *Desmos* is concrete: it denotes an implement for tying or attaching, and in the plural *desma*, bonds or chains or (by metonymy) imprisonment. It is thus semantically close to the *pedai*, fetters or shackles, that appear at B8.14/D8.19 and (in the verbal form *pedaō*) at B8.37/D8.42 and B10.6/D12.6. *Peiras* denotes an end or limit, both in a concrete local sense of a geographical boundary and in a more abstract sense of completion or consummation.⁵¹ The two words are joined in two mirroring phrases: “in boundaries of bonds” (*en peirasi desmōn*, B8.26/D8.31) and “in bonds of a boundary” (*peiratos in desmoisin*, B8.31/D8.36). A. H. Coxon complains that the former makes no sense “since it treats the image as prior and the concept which it illustrates as secondary.”⁵² Indeed, Parmenides's apparent indifference to the order of the phrase makes it surprisingly difficult to segregate image and concept or to decide which has priority, the metaphysical limits of Being or the metaphorical chains by which it is bound.

On first view, that decision would seem simple. For Parmenides, Being is bounded: this is one of its primordial qualities.⁵³ Rejecting the indistinct *apeiron* of Anaximander, Parmenides envisions Being as perfect because it is complete (*tetelesmenon*, B8.42/D8.47). It is delimited by nature, although its limit is purely conceptual, not spatial. That limit is internal to it, not something separate or extrinsic; and it is “furthest” or “ultimate” (*pumaton*, B8.42/D8.47), encompassing

51. In Homer it can mean a tackle or rope, and Coxon (2009, 72) translates it so at B8.26/D8.31: “in the coils of huge bonds.” But it seems clear from B8.42/D8.47, B8.49/D8.54 that Parmenides uses it at least sometimes in the broader sense, and Coxon (74) takes it thus at B8.31/D8.36: “in the bondage of a limit.” I agree with Mourelatos (2008c, 28): “It is probably correct to visualize the polymorph deity as engaged in ‘binding’ with every occurrence of the word *πεῖρας* in the text.”

52. Coxon 2009, 327. This, as we shall see, is precisely the challenge of this metaphor.

53. Cassin 1998, 55. This is in marked contrast to Melissus, who adopts Parmenides's monadic Being but predicates its singularity on its boundlessness (B2–6/D3–7). The question of Being's spatial extension poses “a puzzling choice between a literal and a metaphorical interpretation of ‘limit’” (Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983, 253). As they note, if the limits are spatial, Being must have an outside and Parmenides is to be condemned for “his apparently uncritical exploitation of the metaphor of limit (i.e. of what we would take to be a metaphor)” (254). See also Tarán 1965, 115–19; Gallop 1984, 18; and Sedley 1999, 117–19. For Owen (1960, 100) this is where Parmenides's thought comes up against the limits of his expressive resources; cf. Fränkel 1975, 35.

everything that is, a closed sphere with no outside. Thus Parmenides insists on the boundaries of Is but also insists that there is nothing beyond those boundaries—only the impossible, limitless indeterminacy of Is Not.

The binding metaphors in B8/D8 are generally read as a vivid figurative expression of Being's determinate totality, a heuristic device Parmenides uses to convey both this paradoxical boundedness and its ontological necessity. A metaphor wielded by a personification, this conspicuously poetic figure seems to belong to the world of *doxa*. The goddesses Anankē, Moira, and Dikē, who appear—apparently interchangeably—as bearers of the bonds/bounds, are akin to the “much-punishing” Dikē who in the proem holds the keys to the double gate of Night and Day (B1.14/D4.14) and the mysterious feminine *daimōn* who in B12/D14 stands at the center of the cosmos and “directs all things” (*panta kubernāi*, B12.3/D14.3), both of them residents of our physical world. The goddesses' multiple names or identities and even their gender likewise associate them with the binarisms and polysemy of human *doxa*.⁵⁴ The deontological deities of B8/D8 also work in close association with the goddess who directs the poem's exposition and embodies its argumentative force: they encircle and constrain Being (*amphis eergei*, B8.31/D8.36) in the same way as that goddess encircles truth (*amphis alētheiēs*, B8.51/D8.56) and constrains (*eirgō*, B6.3/D7.3; *eirge*, B7.2/D8.2) the *kouros* in his journey to it.

Affiliated with the act of poetic enunciation but standing within the pure realm of Being, Anankē and her sisters may be read as personifications of metaphor itself. With their vivid imagery, they help ferry us mortals across the conceptual divide from our everyday world of phenomena, opinions, and names to the abstract register of reality, that mysterious world of *Esti* and *To Eon*. But Anankē not only transports us imaginatively to that metaphysical realm; as we shall see, she also acts in and upon it, imposing her force on it and shaping it from within. Metaphor dwells within the halls of metaphysics, simultaneously preserving Being and contaminating its unadulterated essence, introducing multiplicity and difference.⁵⁵

The image of Anankē's bonds/bounds is connected in B8/D8 to the necessity of Being and of its intrinsic qualities. Binding images are often associated with Anankē in archaic Greek, as Heinz Schreckenberg has shown, as well as with Moira and Dikē.⁵⁶ Through the concrete imagery of physical bondage they

54. Aëtius identifies them as different names for the same deity (A32/R55a, A37/D15a), followed by Mourelatos 2008c, 26, 160–63; and Coxon 2009, 280–81.

55. The ontological status of these goddesses is a bedeviled question. Couloubaritsis (2008, 66) puts the problem succinctly: if they are real, then there is something besides Being; if they are fictional, Being risks resting on a fiction. Tor (2023b, 261–65) situates them within a larger tension between Parmenides's doctrine of Being and the human language in which he describes it. Cf. Morgan 2000, 81–87; and Cherubin 2018.

56. Schreckenberg 1964; see also Onians 1951, 310–42. Binding may be part of *anankē*'s etymology: Chantraine (1968, 83) suggests derivation from *anankōn* (“take in the arms”). Cassin (1998, 57, 151) develops this association, connecting *anankē* to the image of the sphere as circle.

represent the constraint of the inevitable. Parmenides reinforces this metaphoric connection by the presence of *Anankē*, *Moira*, and *Dikē*, divine personifications of necessity. These deities are shadowed by their nonpersonified avatars *anankē*, *moira*, *themis*, and *dikē* (B8.16/D8.21, B1.26–28/D4.26–28), and are also closely associated with the abstract expression *khareōn estin* or *khrē*, by which Parmenides denotes the necessity or propriety of Being's unqualified existence (B8.11/D8.16) and of its essential characteristics (ungenerated, B8.9/D8.14; thinkable, B6.1/D7.1; homogeneous, B8.45/D8.50).⁵⁷ Via the oscillation of majuscule and minuscule, Necessity and her chains would seem to be a simple personification, a poetic elaboration, of the abstract metaphysical necessities of Being.

And yet, the very presence of this personified Necessity might make us wonder about the binding force of Being's supposedly inherent qualities. Consider the first instance of the image at B8.7–15/D8.12–20.

πήι πόθεν αὐξηθέν; οὐδ' ἐκ μὴ ἔόντος ἔάσσω
 φάσθαι σ' οὐδὲ νοεῖν· οὐ γὰρ φατὸν οὐδὲ νοητόν
 ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἔστι. τι δ' ἄν μιν καὶ χρέος ὕρσεν
 ὕστερον ἡ πρόσθεν, τοῦ μηδενὸς ἀρξάμενον, φῦν;
 οὕτως ἡ πάμπαν πελέναι χρεών ἔστιν ἡ οὐχί.
 οὐδέ ποτ' ἐκ μὴ ἔόντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ισχύς
 γίγνεσθαι τι παρ' αὐτό· τοῦ εἴνεκεν οὕτε γενέσθαι
 οὕτ' ὅλλυσθαι ἀνήκει Δίκη χαλάσασα πέδησιν,
 ἀλλ' ἔχει.

How did it grow, from what? Not from Nonbeing: I will not allow
 you to say or to think that, for it cannot be said or thought
 that it is not. What need could have impelled it to grow,
 either later or sooner, if it began from nothing?
 Thus it must either be entirely or not be.

Nor out of Nonbeing will force of conviction ever let
 anything be born beside it [Being]. For this reason,
 Justice has not loosened her bonds and let it be born or die,
 but she holds it.

Just prior to this we were told that Being is unborn and undying (B8.3/D8.8). This is part of its primary essence—indeed, these are its first two defining predicates. That essence is reasserted in this passage as a matter of necessity, both ontological and logical, in accordance with Parmenides's conflation of reality and truth (discussed in the last section). The innate necessity of Being's ungenerated state

57. See Palmer (2009, 360–61) on the challenge of distinguishing common nouns from proper names in Parmenides. *Khrē* also expresses the impossibility of Nonbeing (B2.5/D6.5), as well as the obligatory path toward perceiving the difference between the two (B1.28/D4.28, B1.32/D4.32, B8.54/D8.59). Mourelatos and Pulpito (2018) show that *khrē*- words in Parmenides connote necessity as propriety. Palmer (2009) views the necessity of *Is* as the essence of its being: it is what is and must be, in contrast to the contingent things of *doxa*.

is sustained by the logical argumentation that is often considered Parmenides's signal philosophical contribution: since one cannot point to a necessity for its generation (*ti . . . khreos*, B8.9/D8.14) it is therefore a necessary conclusion (*houtōs . . . khreōn*) that Being be entirely. Aligned so closely with Being's own necessities, logical reasoning takes on a deontological force of its own, a *pistios iskhus* or "force of conviction" (B8.12/D8.17). The many causal conjunctions form a logical chain around Being.⁵⁸ The goddess adds her forceful command to this double necessity: she will not allow us to say or think that Being is generated from Nonbeing, "for it cannot be said or thought." Dikē with her fetters brings up the rear. Her prohibition (*out' . . . anēke*) picks up that of *pistios iskhus* (*ephēsei*), and *tou heineken* ("for this reason") makes her causally subsequent to those prior forms of necessity. If necessity is really necessary, though, then Dikē's fetters would seem surplus to requirement, a tertiary backup to the necessities that inhere within Is as part of its essential nature and the logical exposition of that nature.

We see the same dynamic at B8.26–33/D8.31–38.

αὐτὰρ ἀκίνητον μεγάλων ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν
ἔστιν ἄναρχον ἄπαυστον, ἐπεὶ γένεσις καὶ ὀλεθρος
τῆλε μάλ' ἐπλάχθησαν, ἀπῶσε δὲ πίστις ἀληθής.
ταύτον τ' ἐν ταύτῳ τε μένον καθ' ἑαυτό τε κεῖται
χοῦτως ἔμπεδον αὐθὶ μένει· κρατερὴ γάρ Ἀνάγκη
πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τὸ μιν ἀμφὶς ἔργει
οῦνεικεν οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐὸν θέμις εἶναι·
ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδευές· [μὴ] ἐὸν δ' ἀν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο.

Moreover, unmoving in bounds of great bonds
it is without beginning or end, since birth and death
have wandered far off: true conviction thrust them away.
Remaining the same and in the same place it lies by itself
and thus remains fixed there, for mighty Necessity
holds it in bonds of a boundary, which confines it all around;
for this reason it is not right that Being be imperfect.
For it is not lacking; if it were, it would lack for everything.

At the beginning of this passage, the bonds/bounds belong to Being itself. The phrase seems like an extension of the predicates (*akinēton*, *anarkhon*, *apauston*), an expression of Being's unalterable nature. Again this ontological necessity is buttressed by the force of logical argumentation, the *pistis alēthēs* which, like *pistios iskhus* in the previous passage, precludes the logical possibility of birth and death. The bounds/bonds come into Anankē's hands at B8.30–31/D8.35–36. As in B8.7–15/D8.12–20, this divine personification seems to be a mere supplement to Being's

58. Mourelatos (2008c, 3) notes that Parmenides uses *gar* "almost to the point of obsession." He offers a clear explication of the logic of this passage (94–111). See also the detailed analysis of Evans (2021), with careful consideration of the causal role of Dikē/Anankē.

own immanent necessity and the logical conclusions that entails. But again we might ask why Being—or Parmenides—needs this superfluous deity. Are their own necessities, ontological and logical, not binding enough?

A supplement to Being's totality, an extraneous element it requires to be complete and whole in itself, this metaphor calls into question the primacy and force of supposedly metaphysical necessities. Further, the metaphor may even precede and produce those necessities. At B8.13–14/D8.18–19 Dikē's bondage is the consequence of Being's ungenerated state: “For this reason (*tou heineken*), Justice has not loosened her bonds.” But at B8.30/D8.35 the causality is reversed: it is because (*gar*) mighty Anankē enchains Being that it is autonomous and unmoving, not the other way around. Further, it is because (*houneken*) Anankē encloses Being on all sides that it is not right (*themis*) for it to be unbounded (B8.32/D8.37).⁵⁹ If the deity's bondage is the cause of Being's necessities and not just its consequence, we cannot write the image off as a mere heuristic device or rhetorical elaboration. Instead, the metaphor actively shapes the metaphysical realm; it becomes the origin of the condition without origin that it is enlisted to describe.

If Necessity's bonds are necessary to determine Being's immanent qualities, then those qualities are not actually immanent and Is is not essentially or inevitably what it is. Nor can the ontology of Is be secured by the chain of Parmenides's logic, for not only is that logic contradictory, as we just saw; its persuasive force—*pistios iskhos* (B8.12/D8.17) and *pistis alēthēs* (B8.28/D8.33)—is itself a personification, another poetic fiction that grounds the metaphysical realities it purports merely to express.⁶⁰ Anankē's intervention thus challenges the very necessity she seems designed to enforce by raising the unthinkable possibility that Being, in all its autotelic perfection, is the effect—not the cause—of the metaphor that encircles it.

The metaphor of Anankē's bounds/bonds makes *To Eon* what it is and must be. But in the process it deontologizes it, undermining both its necessity and its very being. The goddess's bounds/bonds hold Being together, rendering it whole, coherent, and indivisible. Both Anankē and Dikē are said to “hold” Being (*ekhein*, B8.15/

59. Gallop 1984, 36n50: it is uncertain whether *houneka* means “because” or “therefore,” “and consequently whether the subject's not being ‘incomplete’ is a premiss for the preceding statement or an inference from it.” He translates “wherefore” (cf. Mourelatos 2008c, 121n18). *Tou heineken* at B8.13/D8.18 clearly makes the impossibility of something being born of nothing (*tou* refers to the prohibition of *pistios iskhos*) the final cause of Dikē's hold: “therefore” (Coxon, Gallop); “that is why” (Laks-Most). Evans (2021, 3–13) notes the unexpected causal relations in these passages and draws a similar conclusion, that Anankē binds Being itself, not merely trustworthy claims (Mourelatos 2008c, 25–28, 151–62) or inquiry (Cherubin 2004) about it.

60. At B8.12/D8.17 *pistios iskhos* “will not allow” Being's generation; at B8.28/D8.33 *pistis alēthēs* “thrust it away.” The former is loosely correlated with Being's ungenerated nature (*oude*), but the latter is the cause (*epei*) of that nature. We might also notice the dramatization of logic in the dialogue of question and answer at B8.7–11/D8.12–16, B8.19–20/D8.24–25. These questions are rhetorical but also continue the dialogue between goddess and *kouros* that structures the poem as a whole.

D8.20, B8.31/D8.36; cf. B10.5/D12.5, B10.7/D12.7).⁶¹ Their embrace would seem to reinforce Being's inherent coherence, literalizing the adjective *sunekhes* that is one of the primary predicates of *To Eon*: “now it is whole all together, one, coherent” (*nun estin homou pan, hen, sunekhes*, B8.5–6/D8.10–11; cf. B8.25/D8.30). Its coherence is a property of its singularity and unity: because Being is one and whole it is “holding together” (*sun-ekhes*), with no internal intervals or disjunction.

But of course the prefix *sun-* and the concept of coherence logically apply only to something with parts, that is, something that is fundamentally *not* one. This paradox is elaborated in B4/D10. This fragment may contain the first occurrence in the poem of the term *to eon*, the substantive participle that Barbara Cassin calls the “proper name” of Being.⁶² If so, in its first appearance, unified Being is polyform.

λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόῳ παρεόντα βεβαίως.
οὐ γάρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἔοντος ἔχεσθαι
οὕτε σκιδνάμενον πάντῃ πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὕτε συνιστάμενον. (B4/D10)

See these things that though absent are securely present to the mind.
For you will not sever being from holding onto being,
neither scattered in every way everywhere throughout the cosmos
nor gathered together.

Being cleaves to being. The diction of containment elsewhere associated with *Anankē* is here internal to *To Eon* itself, and its violence is shifted from the force that contains Being to the force that would be required to sunder it: *apotmēgō* is used in Homer of severed body parts. But even as the goddess declares that schism impossible it is happening at the level of grammar, as *To Eon* is split between nominative and genitive, the subject and object of *ekhesthai*. The violent syntactical severance is replicated by semantic severance in the first line's pluralization of Being and its scission into presence (*pareonta*) and absence (*apeonta*). The very denial of disunity bespeaks its possibility. *To Eon* cleaves to itself (*ekhesthai*) precisely against that possibility of cleavage.

We find the same irony at B8.22–25/D8.27–30.

οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἔστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ὅμοιον.
οὐδέ τι τῇ μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἴργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι,

61. One of the most common verbs in the Greek language, *ekhein* is used relatively sparingly in Parmenides and almost never in the typical sense of “to have.” Being cannot have anything, because that would require positing something separate from Being but equally real. Instead, *ekhein* occurs in the context of the image we are examining, in the sense of “to hold,” and with the goddess as its subject. The exceptions prove the rule: the verb means “to possess” at B16.1–2/D51.1–2 and B10.7/D12.7, both in relation to the phenomenal world. This bland verb thus encodes a philosophical thesis (as Derrida puts it) about the unity and coherence of *To Eon* and its difference from phenomena.

62. Cassin 1998, 39. She believes this fragment followed B8/D8 (Cassin 1998, 214–17), as do Laks-Most.

οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἔστιν ἔόντος.
τῶι ξννεχὲς πᾶν ἔστιν ἔὸν γὰρ ἔόντι πελάζει.

Nor is it divisible, since it is all similar;
it is not at all more in this place, which would prevent it from cohering,
nor at all less, but it is all full of being.
Therefore it is all cohesive, for being draws near to being.

Being is “all similar” (*pan estin homoion*, B8.22/D8.27): there is no internal difference to prevent it from holding together. As in B4/D10, the act of containment (*sunekhesthai*) is not Anankē's but Being's own, but the goddess's presence is felt in the verb *eirgoi* in B8.23/D8.28: the same verb is used at B8.31/D8.36 of Necessity, who holds (*ekhei*) Being “in bonds of a boundary that confines (*eergei*) it all around.” As in the previous passage, force is located not in the bond that holds *To Eon* together but in the futile attempt to sever it. But again, what prevents Being from fully cohering is the language that describes that coherence: *Eon* draws near to *Eon*, it is full of *Eon*. Both subject and object, container and contained, *Eon* is linguistically divided and doubled in a way that undermines its ontological singularity and wholeness. Perhaps it is significant that Anankē is not explicitly present in these two passages. Without her metaphorical chains, Being falls apart. Far from a supplementary articulation of a primary ontological coherence, it starts to look like Anankē's metaphorical chains are all that hold Being together.⁶³

If Anankē holds Being together she also holds it apart, segregating and protecting it from Nonbeing. In fact, the preposition *amphis*, which I have been translating “around,” can also mean “separate”; thus the same bonds that “confine Being all around” (*amphis eirge*, B8.31/D8.36) also hold it in sublime isolation. Parmenides, as we have seen, embraces the paradox of determination without negation, a determinate presence unshadowed by absence. Is is in its opposition to Is Not: “The choice (*krisis*) lies in this: Is or Is Not” (B8.15–16/D8.20–21). But Is Not is not: unthinkable and unnamable, it has no reality (B8.17/D8.22; cf. B2.5–8/D6.5–8). Necessity herself presides over the verdict governing the critical distinction between them (*kekritai d'oun, hōsper anankē*, B8.16/D8.21). And yet in the very process of enforcing this crucial opposition, her bonds sustain and substantiate the negativity to which the poem denies substance. B7/D8 begins:

οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῆι εἶναι μὴ ἔόντα.
ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἴργε νόημα
μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω.

Never let this prevail (*damēi*): that things that are not be.
But you restrain your thought from this route of inquiry,
and do not let the habit of much experience force you down this route.

63. Tor 2023b, 264–65 notes a similar tension in regard to B8.34–41/D8.39–46 between Being's innate indivisibility and the bonds of Moira, whose very name suggests division; cf. Cherubin 2017, 258.

Damēi, to break or tame, subdue or dominate, establishes a hypothetical struggle between Being and Nonbeing over the latter's existence.⁶⁴ That potential existence is negated the moment it is thought, yet that thought still needs to be forcibly avoided (*eirge*) and the thinker protected from the "habit of much experience" (that is, *doxa*) that would force (*biasthō*) him to think it. The goddess responds vigorously to the threat of Nonbeing's violence. She does not wield the bonds herself in this passage but commands the *kouros* to constrain himself and resist the very thought that Nonbeing might someday (*mēpote*) dominate so as to claim a being for itself. The violence of the language suggests a contest between the goddess and Nonbeing waged on the field of the philosopher's character (*ethos*) and thought (*noēma*).

But it is not only the philosopher who must be protected from this assault of negativity. At B8.48/D8.53, the sphere of Being is described as "inviolate" (*asulon*) in its internal uniformity and homogeneity:

οὐτε γὰρ οὐκ ἔὸν ἔστι, τό κεν πάνοι μιν ἰκνεῖσθαι
εἰς ὄμον, οὐτ' ἔὸν ἔστιν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἔόντος
τῇ παλλὸν τῇ δ' ἡσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ἄσυλον.
οὐ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἵσον, ὄμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει. (B8.46–49/D8.51–54)

For neither is there Nonbeing that could stop it from reaching
its like, nor is there any way that, being, it could be
more being here and less there, since as a whole it is inviolate.
For equal to itself from all sides, it reaches likewise to its boundaries.

The verb *sulaō* denotes violation or violent deprivation. If Nonbeing were to exist it would prevent Being from achieving total uniformity and in this way would despoil it of its perfect wholeness. Again Anankē is absent, but we get her telltale diction: Being extends to its limits in all directions (*homōs en peirasi kurei*, B8.49/D8.54), unmixed and uninterrupted up to its ultimate limit (*peiras pumaton*, B8.42/D8.47). Contained within its boundaries, Being is safe against the depredation of Nonbeing. Without those encircling *peirata*, Nonbeing's being would negate the negation (*a-sulon*) that makes Being inviolable and insinuate itself forcibly within the walls of Is. *To Eon* would become a heterogeneous mix of Is and Is Not, something Parmenides declares impossible and unthinkable. But in defending against this horror, the imagery grants Is Not a potential (though negated) force and effectivity that the poem as a whole vehemently repudiates.⁶⁵

64. Used for breaking wild animals, *damnēmi* may connote the same sort of violent constraint as Anankē's fetters: Chantraine (1968, 250) defines it as "réduire par la contrainte"; see also Schreckenberg 1964, 1–6, 106–109. This struggle is reinforced by the phrase *poludērin elenkhon* ("testing with much strife") at B7.5/D8.5, discussed by Lesher (1984).

65. The assault of Nonbeing on Being's integrity is dramatically enacted in the triple repetition of line-initial negations in the passages that assert Being's indivisibility (B4.2–4/D10.2–4, B8.22–24/D8.27–29). The metaphor also forecloses the possibility of Nonbeing's generativity. B8/D8 insists that Is

In this ambivalent fashion, the metaphor mediates Parmenides's paradox of determination without negation, in a single gesture repudiating Nonbeing and reproducing it as Being's constitutive outside. Moira's bonds ensure that *ouden gar <ē> estin ē estai allo parex tou eontos* (B8.36–37/D8.41–42): simultaneously, depending on the translation, that “there is or will be nothing else (*ouden* . . . *allo*) outside of Being” and that “Nothing (*ouden*) is or will be, something else (*allo*) outside of Being.”⁶⁶

The goddess's fetters hold Being together; they hold it apart. Finally, they also hold it in place, preventing movement, alteration, becoming. *Doxai* wander and change; without determinate *peirata*, they “pass (*perōnta*) entirely through everything” (B1.32/D4.32). Being, by contrast, is “unmoving in bounds of great bonds” (*akinēton megalōn en peirasi desmōn*, B8.26/D8.31). *Akinēton*, it can neither change nor move.⁶⁷

ταῦτον τ' ἐν ταῦται τε μένον καθ' ἔαυτό τε κεῖται
χοῦτως ἔμπεδον αὐθὶ μένει· κρατερὴ γὰρ Ἄνάγκη
πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἔέργει,
ούνεκεν οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐὸν θέμις εἶναι·
ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδευές· [μὴ] ἐὸν δ' ἄν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο. (B8.29–33/D8.34–38)

Remaining the same and in the same place it lies by itself
and thus remains fixed there, for mighty Necessity
holds it in bonds of a boundary, which confines it all around;
for this reason it is not right that Being be imperfect.
For it is not lacking; if it were, it would lack for everything.

Parmenides's immobile Being may be modeled on Xenophanes's god, who “always remains in the same place, not moving at all” (Xenoph. B26/D19). But while Xenophanes's *theos* holds himself still—he can make everything tremble without moving (B25/D18)—Parmenides's metaphysical deity is intrinsically *akinēton* yet still requires external constraints. In this regard it more closely resembles the Titan Prometheus, whom in Hesiod's *Theogony* “a great chain

can never arise from Is Not, and it is this impossible, unthinkable genesis that first conjures Dikē, who “has not loosened her bonds and let it [Being] be born or die, but she holds it” (B8.13–15/D8.18–20). Eliminated from Being, generation is counterintuitively attributed (under negation) to Nonbeing.

66. Gallop (1984, 24–28) moots the possibility of a connection to the *outis* pun in *Odyssey* 9 (proposed by Hershbell 1972), but finds the idea of an entity called Nothing in Parmenides unlikely. We will return to the language of negation in chapter 5.

67. Mourelatos (2008c, 115–35) understands *akinēton* as the impossibility of Being's “self-alienation,” its “dislocation from its own proper place” and nature (118). Cf. Curd 1998, 83–94. Of course, without Nonbeing, movement is impossible anyway (as the atomists realized: see chapter 5, below), rendering the fetters once again logically superfluous.

restrained by necessity" in Tartarus (615–16).⁶⁸ The double intertext invites us to ask: if Being is *akinēton* by nature, why does it need to be shackled in place? What would it do if it weren't shackled and "confined all around" by powerful Anankē? Would it go wandering, like the moon with its "alien light" (B14/D27; cf. B10.4/D12.4), or like foolish two-headed mortals stumbling down their "back-turning path" (B6.9/D7.9)? Would it emulate the shimmering, shifting phenomena, eternally altering place and color (B8.41/D8.46)? Or worse yet, would it wander off down the forbidden path of Nonbeing (B8.54/D8.59)? The goddesses curb such ontological errancy.

Its immobility is a condition of Being's perfection and wholeness (B8.32–33/D8.37–38). But if prohibition bespeaks desire, Anankē's chains force the question of Being's desire and insinuate the possibility of its lack. Coxon identifies behind the binding image in this passage a further allusion to *Odyssey* 8.275, where Hephaestus plans to trap Ares and Aphrodite together in bed in "unbreakable, inescapable chains (*desmous*) so that they would remain there unmoving" (*empedon authi menoien*).⁶⁹ We know what passion Hephaestus is trying to curb. But what is the passion of Is? What does *Eon* want that the goddess's chains hold it back from obtaining? Even to ask this question is to imagine that Being *does* want, and therefore lacks. It is not "not lacking," *ouk epideues*, as B8.33/D8.38 claims. Furthermore, in the all-or-nothing logic of this line—which is the logic dictated by the *krisis* "Is or Is Not" (B8.15–16/D8.20–21)—if Being lacks for anything it lacks for everything. It not only contains nothing: it becomes nothing.⁷⁰

Thus the metaphorical bonds that make Being perfect make it imperfect: divided, frustrated, lacking. Parmenides's bondage metaphor does not serve Being as a passive supplement to its absolute presence, securing its necessities and faithfully communicating its inherent qualities. Instead, as we have seen, it actively constitutes that metaphysical presence, along with its necessity and qualities. Its chains protect *To Eon* but in the process constrain it, leaving it immobile, isolated, and inert. Its need for these superfluous bonds, moreover, exposes the fragility of Being. Without the bondage of Parmenides's metaphor, Being would come apart;

68. On the parallels with Xenophanes's god, see Long 1996, 143, 148; Coxon 2009, 327–29; Bryan 2012, 97–100; and Tor 2017, 313–17; and with Hesiod's Prometheus, Coxon 2009, 327–28; Ranzato 2015, 166–70; Morgan 2022; and Tor 2023b, 262.

69. Coxon 2009, 329. At *Od.* 8.340 the bonds are "boundless" (*apeirones*), a Parmenidean collocation *avant la lettre*. *Empedon* further evokes Odysseus's marital bed (*Od.* 23.203; Zeitlin 1996, 29–31; Cassin 1998, 55n2; and Folit-Weinberg 2022, 281–300). Eros plays a prominent role in the Doxa (B13/D16) but enters the Aletheia only via the Homeric intertext.

70. There is a textual crux in B8.33/D8.38 involving (tellingly) the intrusion of an extrametrical negation: see Coxon 1968, 72–73; and Sider forthcoming, ad loc. The final verb of the passage ties together this nexus of themes: *edeito* could be from *deō* "to bind" or from *deō* "to lack," the verb that also supplies the impersonal form *dei*, "it is necessary." The two verbs are apparently unrelated etymologically but they overlap aurally and share many forms in common.

violated by Nonbeing, wandering like *doxai*, it would be revealed as precisely *epideues*—lacking its own proper identity as *To Eon* and requiring a metaphor to make good that lack.

LIKE A WELL-ROUNDED SPHERE

The metaphor of Anankē's bonds, and indeed the Aletheia as a whole, reaches its limit in the simile of the sphere.

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πεῖρας πύματον, τετελεσμένον ἔστι
πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὅγκωι,
μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ· τὸ γὰρ οὕτε τι μεῖζον
οὕτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἔστι τῇ ἢ τῇ.
οὕτε γὰρ οὐκ ἐὸν ἔστι, τὸ κεν παύοι μιν ἵκνεῖσθαι
εἰς ὄμόν, οὔτ' ἐὸν ἔστιν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἐόντος
τῇ μᾶλλον τῇ δ' ἡσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ἀσυλον.
οἱ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἵσον, ὄμῶς ἐν πειρασι κύρει. (B8.42–49/D8.47–54)

Moreover, since there is a furthest boundary,
it is perfected from all sides, like the bulk of a well-rounded sphere,
equal everywhere from its center. For it must be neither greater
nor smaller at all in this place or that.

For neither is there Nonbeing that could stop it from reaching
its like, nor is there any way that, being, it could be
more being here and less there, since as a whole it is inviolate.
For equal to itself from all sides, it reaches likewise to its boundaries.

Parmenides's Being gets its spherical shape from its metaphorical limits: it is in reaching for its furthest boundary (*peiras pumaton*, 42/47) and maintaining itself inside its boundaries (*en peirasi kurei*, 49/54) that Is becomes perfect and spherical. With the repetition of *peiras*, the bounding metaphor neatly encircles the sphere, defining it “from all sides” (*pantothēn*, 43/48, 49/54).⁷¹ These *peirata* are strictly speaking unnecessary, since a sphere is a figure whose limits are intrinsic: they are not imposed from without but defined from within by a determinate relation to the center, as Parmenides emphasizes (*messothēn*, 44/49).⁷² In this sense, the sphere in and of itself is a geometric representation of the finite nature of *To Eon* and the fulfillment of Parmenides's dream of a bounded entity with no beyond. In

71. On the link between *peirar*, *telos*, and the circle, see Onians 1951, 426–66; Detienne and Vernant 1978, 279–326; Cassin 1998, 59; and Mourelatos 2008c, 31, 123–29. It makes little difference to my argument whether we understand the *sphaira* as a sphere (shape) or a ball (object), as it is taken, e.g., by Sedley (1999, 121); and Iribarren (2018, 142–53).

72. The *meson* renders Parmenides's sphere three-dimensional but is not otherwise a significant reference point: it is not a stop on the goddess's itinerary, much less its *telos*. One can circle around (*amphis*) Being, but never penetrate to its center.