

Guide to Lecture 13: Parmenides and the Eleatics Part 2

A) **Parmenides's Prologue.** Need to grant it its own integrity, not just as a literary borrowing.

a) **Stages in Prologue:**

- i) Carried in chariot by two mares to a goddess. (Diurnal motion from east to west; compare to Egyptian solar bark and Apollo's chariot, and to Plato's *Phaedrus*; goddess owning road might be a personification of *aither*, a ring of fire embracing and governing the universe.)
- ii) Guided by two solar maidens. (Heliades was a legendary seven-island paradise in the south; parallels with Plato's *Republic*.)
- iii) Axle of wheel makes sound like a pipe; driven by two rounded wheels. (Two wheels are either the luminaries or the circles of the celestial equator and ecliptic; axle is the polar axis, acts as a string or metaphorical pipe, maybe producing notes in accordance with latitudinal proportions.)
- iv) Leave night for light; gates of roads of night and day; contained by lintel and stone threshold. (Diurnal motion brings Parmenides from Ascendant to Midheaven; rising and setting signs; gates to and from underworld; upper limits of heaven and heaven below the earth.)
- v) Gates high in sky, filled by huge doors opened by goddess Justice. (Door studded with rivets and nails: fixed stars.)
- vi) Maidens convince Justice to open gate.
- vii) Greeted by goddess; he has been sent by Right and Justice.

b) Other possible relations to astrology.

Logos & Light Lecture Series

© 2009 Benjamin N. Dykes, PhD

- i) Solar chart probably arrives in 9th house. Two possibilities:
 - (1) Natural 9th house signifies religion and God; Sun has joy in 9th, and is also the “light of the mind” and “organ of perception of the soul” (Valens); goddess says Parmenides should gaze on invisible things present to thought.
 - (2) 9th house of Thema Mundi (Pisces), domicile Lord Jupiter and exalted Lord Venus: Jupiter signifies Justice (cf. goddess Justice) and Venus ritual purifications—so again a religious house.
 - ii) The place where Parmenides is, is the temple or domicile of the goddess.
 - iii) Cf. Greek *theōreō*, to “gaze upon, contemplate,” but with oracular connotations. We associate both theory and religion with the 9th.
 - iv) Should this make us re-think the “sudden invention” version of Hellenistic astrology’s origin?
- c) **Other reinterpretation notes**
- i) The whole world below the stars is the realm of mere mortal opinion. It at least seems things come to be, but ultimately you can only *know* Being, which has no change.
 - ii) Denigration of earthly existence: wreaths of fire about the earth, the earth ruled by a goddess who sends us to have sex and have “hateful” birth; connection to Gnostics; the world will not end as many hope. But in the Gnostic myth, the world is ruled by Ialdabaoth, not his mother Sophia/Lewd wisdom.

B) Melissus.

- a) From Samos (home of Pythagoras), born sometime before 441 BC.

Logos & Light Lecture Series

© 2009 Benjamin N. Dykes, PhD

- b) Emphasizes that Being is the One; the One is *complete*. The One also does not feel pain or distress; the One is also all *alike*, not *unlike* (Plato turns the latter into a Form/Idea).
 - c) Possible interpretation of his criticism of change: change is a concept that refers to Being; but Being is complete and entire, it does not have the partial or fragmented or incomplete character that is also implied in change; therefore change is a contradictory notion.
- C) Zeno.** Born ca. 490 BC, perhaps Parmenides's lover; appears in Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*. Famous for his paradoxes of motion.
- a) **The Achilles.** Achilles races a tortoise (to whom he gives a head start); but Achilles can never catch up to the tortoise, because he must always reach the point where the tortoise was last; but by that time the tortoise will have moved again.
 - b) **The Dichotomy.** Cannot travel across a space, because one must reach the half-way point; then the half-way point of what is left; and so on. One can get close to, but never reach, the other side of the space.
 - c) **The Arrow.** An arrow shot from a bow is at rest, because at every point in time it is in a single space, it is where it is *now*. It cannot really go anywhere, else it would not be in a particular place.
 - d) **The Stadium.** (See diagram). Suppose two series of objects pass by one another and by a stationary series. The two moving series will move past the stationary one at a normal rate, but past each other at twice the rate; therefore motion is contradictory.

* * * * * Angels

← * * * * * Brewers

Cardinals * * * * * →

e) Aristotle's solution to The Dichotomy.

- i) The Dichotomy asks you to try crossing infinitely many spaces in a finite time, which is impossible.
- ii) But what is really going on is that it assumes you could *actualize* infinitely many spaces. The distance is *actually* finite, it is only *potentially* infinite. But there is no such thing as an *actual* infinite. Therefore when you cross the space, you are crossing an actual finite, not actualizing an infinite. Only when you are trying to actualize the infinite do you fall into the trap.
- iii) *Dykes's comments.* This classical solution shows how strange reality is, because the way one attempts to actualize the infinite is simply by *noticing it*. The finitude/infinitude really belongs to the space itself, but we are actualizing through our minds (or even if we have a machine trying to do it for us).