

# “...goaded perhaps by Parmenides” – Preliminaries to a Platonic Problem

Herbert Hrachovec

**Summary:** Donald Davidson, in his *Truth and Predication*, suggests that Plato's concern with “gluing together” subject and predicate in assertive sentences might be traced back to Parmenides. Taking his lead this paper discusses the connection, proceeding in three steps. A short overview of the literature on Parmenides' fragment B2 will be given and a Davidsonian move to reduce the complexity of the hermeneutical situation will be proposed. Secondly, given this reduction, a Parmenideian tableaux will be put forward and compared to our present understanding of elementary propositional and predicate logic. This will provide the basis for the concluding discussion of Plato's characteristic transformation of Parmenides' dictum into the bundle of arguments that give rise to the problem of the unity of propositions.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, famously, begins with the claim that the world is everything that is the case. And it proceeds to explain that, as a consequence of this, the world cannot be conceived as an accumulation of things, but rather consists of facts. It has rarely been recognised that these presuppositions are a perfect match to an observation Plato puts forward in his *Sophistes*. “Lion, stag, horse”, according to this remark, is a list of things rather than a “λόγος” and cannot express a state of affairs. Verbs have to be mixed with nouns for sentence formation (*Sophistes* 262c): Only if “εἶδοι” (forms, concepts) are interwoven, discourse can arise (*Sophistes* 259e). Donald Davidson takes these Platonic observations as the point of departure for his investigations into “the unity of the proposition”. One cannot interweave list items; there has to be some “glue” holding together propositions. But given the necessary difference

between things (names) and whatever makes for their configuration in states of affairs (sentences), the problem of how they can be made to fit together emerges. “Surely a sentence knits these two entities together . . .” (Davidson 2005: 92).

Starting with Plato, Davidson traces the problem throughout the history of Western philosophy. The present contribution is, however, not concerned with the unfolding of this issue. (Cf. Hrachoves 2008) Taking up a hint of Davidson’s it looks into the opposite direction. Here is the remark:

What is of present interest is that Plato, goaded perhaps by Parmenides, introduced the problem to Western philosophy . . . (Davidson 2005: 83)

Davidson does not elaborate, but his footnote points to Plato’s discussion of the famous Parmenideian counsel to choose the path of “being” rather than that of “not being”. The Platonic discourse about states of affairs is the result of a critical examination of Parmenides’ considerations which, consequently, belong to the pre-history of the problem of the unity of the proposition Davidson is concerned with.

I will proceed in three steps. A short overview of the literature on Parmenides’ fragment B2 will be given. It is impossible to present the elaborate and controversial discussions on this topic in detail. A Davidsonian move to reduce the complexity of the hermeneutical situation will be proposed instead. Secondly, given this reduction, a Parmenideian tableaux will be put forward and compared to our present understanding of elementary propositional and predicate logic. This will provide the basis for the concluding discussion of Plato’s characteristic transformation of Parmenides’ *dictum* into the bundle of arguments that give rise to the problem of the unity of propositions.

## Approaches to Parmenides B 2.3 and B 2.5

The most recent, comprehensive account of the scholarly discussion surrounding the Parmenides fragment can be found in Maria

Marcinkowska-Rosól's, magisterial dissertation on the Parmenidean conception of "νοεῖν" (noein). Marcinkowska-Rosól (2010) The philosopher finds himself confronted with a Goddess which presents her with a choice between two ways to go:

1. 'ὅπως ἔστω' and 'ὡς οὐκ ἔστω μὴ εἶναι' (hopos estin, hos ouk estin me einai)  
"that (?) is and that not being is not"
2. 'ὡς οὐκ ἔστω' and 'ἔστω μὴ εἶναι' (hos ouk estin, esti me einai)  
"that (?) is not and not being is"

Understanding these formulaic expressions has turned out to be difficult. There are (at a first approximation) three different kinds of approaches that should be mentioned. Interpreters (1) are struggling to get a grasp on the syntax and semantics of those words. But since these turn out to be non-standard constructions (2) they also have to cope with the characteristic peculiarities of the formulae. The obvious syntactic irregularity in "ὅπως ἔστω" is the lack of a subject expression. "That (?) is" immediately raises the question of *what* is supposed to be (or not to be). Several proposals have been made to supply a plausible supplement or to avoid the problem in a different way. (3) And there are a number of remarkable treatments of Parmenides outside the constraints of logical analysis, approaching "Being" in a more continental way (Heinrich 1982; Austin 2007; Wilkinson 2009).

According to the conventions of standard grammar (including hidden presuppositions) the use of ἔστω should be supplemented with some subject matter. One option is to suppose that Parmenides talks about any object of thought, knowledge (Owen 1960; Kahn 1986) or investigation (Barnes 1979). Another one is to cast the net even wider and read him as referring to the whole of reality (Verdenius 1966; Tugendhat 1992) which, eventually, seems quite close to the traditional insertion of "Being". Ordinary language is not designed to easily deal with the semantical indeterminacy provoked by the syntactic ellipsis. Given a background in symbolic logic it seems natural to regard "ἔστω" as an unsaturated expression and to try to deal with its indeterminacy in contemporary ways.

An influential approach along these lines has been pioneered by Guido Calogero as early as 1936 (Calogero 1936, 1977). He considered the Parmenideian ἔστιν as a kind of metalanguage variable (cf. Mourelatos und Vlastos (2008): 51ff.), indicating the predicative form of sentences. Parmenides should, according to this reading, be taken to use the expression under consideration as an indicator of a common feature of all object-language sentences. “Is” could then be rendered as “...is...”, indicating possible substitutions for arbitrary subjects und predicates. Finally, it has been argued that philology and/or logical analysis cannot resolve this particular puzzle, which has, therefore, to be tackled within a more enterprising imaginative style. The interplay between immediacy and distance have, among other motives, been proposed as general philosophical concerns (Henn 2003: 119). A detailed discussion of these issues cannot be provided here. The paper is focussed on D. Davidson’s remark linking the Platonic motive back to Parmenides, so we have to start with Plato’s basic intuition that in uttering an affirmative sentence one is joining nouns and verbs (“συμπλέκων τὰ ῥήματα τοῖς ὄνμασι” (*Sophistes* 262d). The question is: How does Parmenides enter the picture? Within a traditional hermeneutical approach the question amounts to a two-folded challenge. In addition to understanding the phrases from Parmenides’ poem an understanding of Plato’s understanding of Parmenides has to be presupposed for a comparison to be made. Since scholarly opinions on the fragment (and on Plato’s response) diverge to a considerable degree, this is a herculean task. A different approach will be taken here. Following the lead provided by Calogero and Mourelatos the Parmenides formula will be regarded as an advice concerning investigative sentences of an object language. It’s peculiar character will be highlighted by reference to the famous Quine-Davidson thought experiment proposing a radical interpretation of a jungle language. How would a charitable interpretation of the Parmenides quote look like if we try to locate it within the framework of attempts to understand incomprehensible utterances from scratch? What message can be contained in these pronouncements?

According to Plato's suggestion sentences synthesize nouns and verbs to achieve assertive force. Relative to this standard view Parmenides' 'ὄπος ἔστω' seems – at first sight – to provide a *structure* that may be imposed upon those words rather than to communicate some particular content. If we, tentatively, placed the Parmenideian prompt into a “jungle setting” one thing is obvious: It would be impossible to develop an understanding of a foreign language starting with this particular segment. We could not relate the sounds to any particular observable event. Since ἔστω pointedly *lacks* any handle connected to an actual environment, observers would necessarily be at a loss concerning its straightaway meaning – at least as long as basic meaning is supposed to arise from a person's capability to match language with sense impressions. (An ontological point of view actually hinges on the rejection of this presupposition.) If an explorer were to pick out something like “is” from the linguistic data, trying to find some definite thing or action it might indicate, she would – by design – fail. I take this as an argument supporting the reading of ἔστω as standing in for a logical form. If this expression is doing some work, i.e. if it is not a superfluous add-on accompanying an utterance (like a cough), it has to function one level up from nouns and verbs.

A further observation concerns the determination of logical forms. If the meta-language interpretation is granted, the Parmenideian proposition is quite unique. Whereas “gavagai” is by construction open to different parsings, ἔστω cannot be read as an opaque sentence. It is impossible to unfold it into components that could, in various configurations, constitute meaningful sentences. Its function is to turn certain lists into sentences: “Theaitetos, sitting” ⇒ “Theaitetos is sitting”. Lists lack assertive force and consequently the “is” can be taken as indication of the assertive character of a sentence. “Gavagai”, on the other hand, is to be scrutinized for component sub-expressions unified in some particular assertion. Two different one-word prompts have to be distinguished. First level utterances can, according to the premise of radical interpretation, be systematically parsed into familiar constituents, if we

are dealing with a comprehensible language at all. But there will be no similar analysis of the second kind of utterance. Whatever its semantic role, it cannot consist in some material contribution to a sentence's meaning. It cannot, in an ordinary sense, interact with its components, like (e.g.) Socrates and wisdom. Keep this in mind for the coming discussion of how sentence unity is to be achieved.

## The parmenideian tableaux

The jungle scenario does not allow expressions of logical form as starting points for investigations. Its purpose is precisely to show how ontology is underdetermined by sense perception. Taken at face value the procedure is powerless when applied to an isolated auxiliary verb; radical translation is, after all, to be achieved in an empirical setting. Some logical vocabulary has, however, to be included in every radical interpretation: it would be impossible to construct an appropriate pattern without e.g. a simple set of logical connectives. But notice that the indeterminacy of translation also holds for those expressions. There is no guarantee that the supposed negation operator works as expected. If we regard the Parmenides fragment as a strange utterance to be made sense of, a convenient way is to take it as an ontological pronouncement articulated in an object language. ("Things can be touched.") The task then becomes to analyze the fragment by means of our contemporary hermeneutical equipment.

The reader is given a clearly symmetrical verbal pattern:

- (1a) ὅπως ἔστιν / ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν μὴ εἶναι
- (1b) that (?) is / that not being is not
- (2a) ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν / ἔστι μὴ εἶναι
- (2b) that (?) is is not / not being is

Let ἔστιν and εἶναι be indicators of the form of predication. ὅπως and ὡς designate the conjunctive "that", οὐκ and μὴ are read as negation operators. Given this linguistic frame a field of possible

logical constellations opens up. In contrast to common interpretational strategies we are focussing on the *formal* features of these two lines taken out of their wider context. While this procedure cannot claim to offer an adequate reading of Parmenides' poem, it is sufficient to highlight certain features of his thinking that drew Plato's criticism. They will, as it turns out, be the Parmenideian provenance of the problem of the unity of the proposition.

Maria Marcinkowska-Rosól has proposed to read "ἔστω" and "οὐκ ἔστω" as names of thoughts (cf. 2010: 53ff.), and in particular the thought of what is or what is not. This move neatly avoids the need to worry about possible insertions into an open formula "... is": Since names are closed expressions there is no need for an insertion. This solution is, however, unfeasible from the point of view of logical analysis. Names cannot figure as that-clauses and they cannot be denied either. "That Julius Caesar" is inadmissible in standard grammar. Given a contemporary understanding of propositional clauses and negation it is more plausible to regard ἔστω as a kind of variable, a placeholder for any predication. In the words of Samuel Scolnicov "Parmenideian being is the ontological correlate of the bare affirmation of a content." (2003: 18)

Names cannot be affirmed; some content has to be supplied to arrive at a proposition. And this is, obviously, the crux in Parmenides' *dictum*. Bare affirmation is just a gesture, devoid of any specifics. One may ask whether it is at all possible to understand affirmation quasi *per se*. But as we are looking at a language from an external point of view we may at least risk an attempt. The task is to figure out how (1) the relative clause, (2) negation and (3) ἔστω combine into a plausible pronouncement. If we regard ἔστω as indicative of bare affirmation it seems tempting to read (1a) ὅπως ἔστω as "that p" and (2a) ὡς οὐκ ἔστω as "that not p", which would amount to stating that positive assertions are acceptable, while their negations are excluded. Negative talk, not to put too fine a point on this, is thereby disallowed. This would, of course, violate propositional logic which regards "that not p" as true just in case that "p" is false. And it does not fit into Parme-

nides' pattern either, as he allows (1b), which clearly is “negative talk”. This propositional reading is further undermined by the fact that Parmenides includes what we have decided to be a negation operator *within* sentences, affirmed or denied. The issue, consequently, turns on the logical dependencies between affirmation and negation of simple, unanalyzed sentences *as well as* one possible feature of their internal structure, namely the absence or presence of a negation operator as part of the sentence construction. (For an account of negation in early Greek philosophy compare Horn (2001).)

The distinction between external and internal negation comes readily to mind, but let us be more careful. Comparing the enterprise of radical interpretation of *ontological* jargon with its more down to earth sibling proves useful here. Confronted with an utterance of “gavagai” the jungle linguist tries to parse the expression, based on the assumption that it is an affirmation of *some* content or other. The way the world is does – supposedly – enter into the information conveyed by the native’s phrase. A pattern has to be tentatively supposed to determine the meaning of the sentence under consideration. In other words: radical interpretation starts with a (context-dependent) hypothesis concerning presumed content. It has, in this sense, an inbuilt bias towards “positive talk”. (It is a derived move to try and initiate discourse by pointing to the lack of something.) But this is not how ontological considerations work. The whole point of attempting to gesture towards “being” is that all distinctions between ordinary content are suspended. Consequently, the following problem arises: What is negation going to be attached to? There is no predicate expression related to distinct content, only ἔστιν as indication of predicative form. Yet (1b) οὐκ ἔστιν μὴ εἶναι is a negated sentence, the content of which contains a negation. How should this phrase be read?

This point concerns the permissibility of transgressing the borders of object talk. μὴ εἶναι does not designate the lack of *something* or some *quality*, e.g. a ball not being red. The negation particle is, in this case, directly attached to *being*. All distinctions have

been abstracted away from the content of bare assertions which *still* are supposed to support possible negation. The scope of the negation particle is the remaining meta-variable. Now, if εἶναι is read as an elliptic expression of an object language, a characteristic conundrum arises. Trying to stay on the object level one gets “not being” in analogy to “not red”. And since there are, undoubtedly, things that lack red color, one is pushed to the conclusion that there are, similarly, things that lack being. But this amounts to claiming that *there are* things that *are not*.

Two indeterminacies make this into a confusing problem. A term which is best considered as belonging to a meta-language is featured in an object-language sentence and the meaning of its negation is not clearly fixed. One way to read μῆ εἶναι is as a denial of predicative form. (1b) would then amount to the claim that it is legitimate to reject “sentences” lacking predication. This is a meta-language approach to Parmenides’ *dictum*. But if we take “... is ...” as a shorthand for “... is red”, “... is square” etc. we are tempted to think of μῆ as term negation, attaching the negation-particle to the determinate predicative component. “not being” is thus perceived as indicating *something* not in possession of a certain quality and hence the puzzle, since the quality in question is not being (a thing).

The following terminological stipulations might be helpful to sort things out:

Sentences are *affirmed* or *denied*, regardless of their internal structure, which may be an *assignment* or *exclusion* of predicates or relations.

Propositional logic covers affirmation and denial. In a two-valued system one or the other is true (and false respectively). When it comes to internal structure two meanings of assignment can be distinguished. (1) a simple predicative move, i.e. the bare positing of any content (*assignment*<sub>1</sub>) and (2) assignment of a predicate (*assignment*<sub>2</sub>). A corresponding distinction holds for exclusion, which can be thought of as (1) the denial of the simple predicative move (*exclusion*<sub>1</sub>) and (2) as an exclusion based on a determinate predicate (*exclusion*<sub>2</sub>).

Given this terminology the Parmenideian tableaux can roughly be translated like this:

1. It is permissible to affirm an assignment of something to something, as well as to deny exclusion.
2. It is, on the other hand, forbidden to affirm exclusion or to deny assignment.

“assignment” and “exclusion” have been left unspecified here. They are meant to play a role similar to εἶναι and μὴ εἶναι in (1b) and (2b). The crucial issue, obviously, is how these expressions should be specified, given the distinctions outlined above. Here is one proposal:

1. It is permissible to affirm *assignment*<sub>1</sub> as well as to deny *exclusion*<sub>1</sub>.
2. It is, on the other hand, forbidden to affirm *exclusion*<sub>1</sub> or to deny *assignment*<sub>1</sub>

According to this metalanguage, reading Parmenides urges us to accept sentences built on the basis of simple predication and regards intra-sentence negation as a dissolution of the very sentence it is part of. A sentence’s components have to be glued together, they fall apart otherwise. And what about *assignment*<sub>2</sub> and *exclusion*<sub>2</sub>, i.e. a reading that is not restricted to a bare εἶναι-based ontology? Turning to Plato’s criticism of Parmenides provides a good starting point to discuss this issue.

## Plato on Parmenides, Davidson on Plato

One way to advance a charitable interpretation of the Parmenides *dictum* is the following one: the philosopher is simply stating the principle of τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκή (the interweaving of forms) spelled out in Plato’s *Sophistes*. Sentences have to assign something to something. Their predicative form is the necessary condition for any assertion to succeed. Any abolition of this form will lead to disintegration. It will not, in Platonic terms, result in a λογος.

But predication *of what*? This question touches upon the object language insertion for the implicit variable we have treated εἶναι as. Such insertions have to designate *determinate* content: things, properties and relations. They cannot themselves be shapeless placeholders. Negation acquires an additional twist here. The dismissal of the predicative form has to be distinguished from negation *employed* in predicate use. Yet, the lack of any indicator of determinate content in Parmenides' formula does not allow him to discuss negation applied to ordinary predicates like "red" or "square". All he offers is the auxiliary verb featured as stand-in for object-language predicate constructions.

Parmenides' formula does not provide a hook for negation applied to real life predicate expressions. Its only application is to εἶναι which *may* be read as a kind of substitute predicate, rather than an indication of the predicative form. Negating this expression ("not being") is then conceived as predicating the property of not being to something (which has to *be* in order to qualify for having properties). The obvious way to escape from the ensuing paradox is to disentangle the use of the auxiliary "being". The point of introducing *assignments*<sub>2</sub> and *exclusions*<sub>2</sub> in the previous section was precisely to be able to handle negation of terms signifying determinate concepts even though they are absent in Parmenides' elliptical formula, which lacks the expressive capabilities to deal with the semantic differences commonly associated with the use of predicates. Parmenides' peculiar ontological stance derives from the fact that his point of reference is the general formation of sentences. If one considers sentences containing discursive claims, two levels of abstraction have to be attended to. Some synthesis (often indicated by εἶναι) has to be presupposed. Denying εἶναι amounts to a breakdown of sentence communication. *And* one has to account for (the logic of) definite discourse i.e. affirmation and denial of the possession of qualities to things.

In his *Sophistes* Plato discusses, among other things, appearances, pictures, made-up stories and movement. All those phenomena can only be understood if a delicate arrangement between truth claims and negation is achieved. A moving object *does not*

stay at one particular location, it is *not yet* here and *not there* anymore (*Sophistes* 256a-d). Plato is approaching the issues via “forms” (εἶδοι), that combine to make a sentence (*Sophistes* 259e). We cannot go into the details of his treatment, but the crucial point is that his understanding of being and negation is richer than that of his predecessor. (For extensive discussions about the semantics of negation in Plato’s dialogue see Pelletier (1990), Pelletier (1983).) Parmenides’ μή ὄν, in Plato’s view, referred to the opposite (“ἐναντίον”) of being (*Sophistes* 257b), forcing upon us the stark contrast between assertible truth and the forbidden realm of not being. But if one takes into account term negation a wider perspective opens up. Negation does not just operate on opposites, but also serves as a marker of distinctions in a cognitive and/or ontological matrix. Something is red, not red, *or green*, which is another color (“ἕτερον”). *Differences* are introduced by Plato to refute “the great Parmenides” (*Sophistes* 237a). In calling something μή ὄν we are really considering it within a differential system. Plato spells this out quite clearly as a semantic maxim of his ontology:

ὁπόταν τὸ μή ὄν λέγωμεν, ὡς ἔοικεν, οὐκ ἐναντίον τι λέγομεν τοῦ ὄντος ἀλλ’ ἕτερον μόνον.

When we say not-being, we speak, think, not of something that is the opposite of being, but only of something different. (*Sophistes* 257b)

Parmenides put forward a framework shaped by two-valued logic, which he then supplemented with conclusions drawn from expressions oscillating between object- and metalanguage. In Plato we find a more congenial attempt at predicative analysis. It is precisely Plato’s rejection of Parmenides’ dualism that allows him to make sentences refer to *different* forms and to represent their interweaving. And this achievement is based upon the recognition that internal negation applies to real life predicates rather than to an expression representing any predicate at all.

We have worked our way from the Parmenideian pronouncement to Platon’s criticism. Donald Davidson refers to exactly these

considerations when talking about Platon having been possibly been “goaded by Parmenides” (2005: 80). In the light of the preceding discussion we can now put the problem of the unity of the proposition into a larger framework.

The decisive distinction between Parmenides’ and Plato’s accounts is the latter’s provision of actually *distinct* components to make a sentence. While Parmenides on his part employs sentence-like expressions, those constructions concern the *form* of sentences – albeit in the guise of an ordinary sentence. Against this Plato was faced with the question of how actually distinct sentence-components could hold together, while Parmenides, according to the present interpretation, was focussed on a sentence’s overall cohesive power. With an eye on the scenario of radical interpretation the difference in view can be put succinctly: There is no problem of the unity of a proposition if “gavagai” is taken as a whole. The underlying sounds, taken as assertion, do not by themselves force anyone to try an analysis by means of standard Indo-German grammar. The puzzle about the “interweaving of forms” arises from within a certain hermeneutical stance. A person observing a car crash might utter the word “awful” – no problematic unity is at stake in such cases. The problem arises if we turn to a more explicit reading of this exclamation, e.g. “This is awful!” Parmenides’ sentence, it is true, do not belong to such a naturalistic environment. It can, however, be regarded as a kind of meta-language equivalent of one-word sentences indicating *that* something is, rather than *what* is, to quote a famous Wittgenstein adage (2001, 5.552). For another interesting parallel between Parmenides and Wittgenstein, see Livingston (2011).

If this line of argument is granted as a possible account of the relationship between Parmenides’ puzzle and Plato’s considerations about sentence construction, some doubts concerning the Davidsonian enterprise to “solve” the problem of unity emerge. Davidson has vividly recalled the difficulty of accounting for the role of predication once this role is “frozen” into a symbol intended to designate this role. He is quite right in pointing out that this constellation has troubled philosophers up to Frege, Russell

and the early Wittgenstein. But one wonders whether his technical Tarskian procedure to deflect the challenge is the appropriate reaction to this conundrum. Think of a recipe: it consists of a list of ingredients and a number of instructions. Imagine someone coming up with the following complaint in trying to prepare a meal: "I have assembled all the necessary stuff – now, how do I add heat and time of cooking?" It would be a misdirected question. Heat and time cannot be added to the mix like salt and pepper. Knowing how to cook implies knowing what *to do* with given raw materials. This is, incidently, precisely the solution Wittgenstein proposed for his erstwhile problem. He begins his *Philosophical Investigation* by presenting one-word sentences of the builder ("block", "pillar", "slab", . . .), immediately followed by the shopping order "Go, fetch me three red apples". How does the addressee know how the components of this sentence fit together? – Well, this is how he has learned to proceed.

Wittgenstein's prominent switch from one-word sentences to more complicated verbal utterances deflates the problem of language and ontology by a pragmatic move. His advice is blunt: Questions come to an end. Some intermediary considerations can certainly be inserted between Plato's problem and its summary dismissal. A meal has been prepared and a prospective cook asks herself: "How was this done?". The explanation might contain a phrase like "add salt *and* stir". Or, to put it in more conventional philosophical terms: "gavagai" is uttered and a linguist asks herself: "What does this mean?". The composition of the sentence (or the meal) is something to be hypothetically worked out on part of the observer. This is the operative idea behind the theoretical device of radical interpretation. But if it is from the outside that a grammar is imposed upon linguistic phenomena the question of how the explanation works has to be distinguished from an account of the speakers' competence. The question turns on the attempts to understand their utterances and hence on the instruments of the interpretative language. How do we know about the unity of the sentences that we propose in order to translate a foreign idiom? The answer is that we have learned to deal with an ensemble of

linguistic givens in a certain way. “How can 2 and 2 *combine* to give 4?” – “It is a way of talking that we find helpful in dealing with aggregates.”

A Wittgensteinian resolution of the Platonic problem along those lines has convincingly been spelled out by Ernst Tugendhat (Tugendhat 1976: 181ff.). It seems to preclude the need to investigate the pre-history of this particular philosophical evergreen. The Parmenides-Plato dispute we were discussing can nevertheless contribute to an understanding of presupposition implicit in ordinary discourse. We do not just address each other with assertive claims; we allow these claims to be disputed within a network of differences which is built starting from negation operative between predicates. The logical depth grammar of feasible predicates contains a hidden negation, distinguishing them from alternatives. This is Plato’s advance on Parmenides, which triggers the problem of the unity of the proposition, which held so many philosophers in its grip. We may not be caught by its spell any more. But it is only fair to regard it as a historic advance in accounting for human communication.

## References

- Austin, S.: *Parmenides and the History of Dialectic: Three Essays*. Las Vegas, Nev: Parmenides Pub, 2007.
- Barnes, J.: Parmenides and the Eleatic One. In: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 61 1, 1979.
- Calogero, G.: Parmenides e la genesi della logica classica. In: *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, p. 143–185, 1936.
- *Studi sull’eleatismo*. Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1977.
- Davidson, D.: *Truth and Predication*. Harvard University Press, 2005.

- Heinrich, K.: *Parmenides und Jona. Vier Studien über das Verhältnis von Philosophie und Mythologie*. Basel/Frankfurt: Stroemfeld, 1982.
- Henn, M. J.: *Parmenides of Elea: a verse translation with interpretative essays and commentary to the text*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003.
- Horn, L. R.: *A natural history of negation*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2001.
- Hrachovec, H.: Ganze Sätze. Davidson über Prädikation. In: *Conceptus. Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 91, p. 11–31, 2008.
- Kahn, C.: Retrospect on the Verb "to Be" and the Concept of Being. In: Hintikka, S. K. . J. (Ed.), *The Logic of Being*, p. 1–28, Dordrecht, 1986.
- Livingston, P. M.: *The Politics of Logic Badiou, Wittgenstein, and the Consequences of Formalism*. Oxford: Routledge, 2011, URL [http://www.unm.edu/~pmliving/Livingston-Wittgenstein and Parmenides.doc](http://www.unm.edu/~pmliving/Livingston-Wittgenstein%20and%20Parmenides.doc).
- Marcinkowska-Rosól, M.: *Die Konzeption des "noein" bei Parmenides von Elea*. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2010.
- Mourelatos, A. P. D./ Vlastos, G.: *The Route of Parmenides*. Las Vegas: Parmenides Pub, rev. and expanded ed edition, 2008.
- Owen, G. E. L.: Eleatic Questions. In: *The Classical Quarterly (New Series)*, 10, p. 84–102, 1960.
- Pelletier, F. J.: Plato on not-being: some interpretations of the symploke eidon (259e) and their relation to parmenides' problem. In: *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 8 1, p. 35–66, 1983.
- *Parmenides, Plato, and the Semantics of Not-Being*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Scolnicov, S.: *Plato's Parmenides. Translated with introduction and commentary*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003.
- Tugendhat, E.: *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die sprachanalytische Philosophie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976.
- Das Sein und das Nichts. In: *Philosophische Aufsätze*, Suhrkamp, 1992.

Verdenius, W. J.: Der Logosbegriff bei Heraklit und Parmenides.

In: *Phronesis*, 11, 1966.

Wilkinson, L. A.: *Parmenides and To Eon: Reconsidering Mythos and Logos (Continuum Studies In Ancient Philosophy)*.

Continuum, 2009.

Wittgenstein, L.: *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung. Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001.

Institut für Philosophie

Universität Wien

Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Ring 1

1010 Wien

Austria

herbert.hrachovec@wu.ac.at

