

THE SCOPE OF THOUGHT IN PARMENIDES

Much has been written recently about the relation between thinking and what is thought in Parmenides.¹ Long has recently argued that the relation between the cognitive act and its object is a weak form of identity in which thinking and being are coextensively related.² Curd in her recent study of Parmenides argued for a weaker relation in which being constituted a necessary condition for thinking.³ In this paper, I want to argue that Parmenides offers a different account of the relation between thinking and what is thought. I shall argue that Parmenides puts forth a monistic thesis which entails the strict identification of the epistemic subject and object. I am not the first to posit the strict identity of thinking and being. Vlastos and, more recently, Sedley also attribute this view to Parmenides.⁴ However, the argument of this paper will be that the identity relation, *pace* Vlastos and Sedley, does not emerge until Parmenides' account of qualitative homogeneity in Fragment 8. As a result, we cannot attribute this position to Parmenides prior to Fragment 8.

My argument will proceed in two main stages. First (Section I), I shall argue that Fragments 1–7 do not establish the strong identity thesis. I shall do this by canvassing two possible interpretations of how it is that thinking relates to what can be thought in Fragments 1–7. These readings I shall refer to as 'realist' and 'idealist' respectively. Secondly (Section II), I shall turn to the Parmenidean account of what 'is' in Fragment 8 in order to show (Section III) how this does establish the strict identity between the thinker and that which is thought.

I. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE EPISTEMIC SUBJECT AND ITS OBJECT

In addition to the Proem which sets out the scope of the entire Poem, the subsequent seven fragments canvass all the possible routes of enquiry into the true nature of reality (*ἀληθείης εὐκυκλῆος ἀτρεμῆς ἦτορ*, B1.29), eliminating those that are not intelligible or thinkable. The upshot of this endeavour is the establishment of two points: there is some sort of reality, that which 'is', and it is intelligible. The task set before Parmenides, therefore, is to explore the routes that are open to thought, culminating with an account of both what is thinkable and how thinking relates to it.

Parmenides outlines two routes in the second fragment in the form of a disjunction. The disjuncts are that which 'is' and that which 'is not'. According to the goddess, these are the only two conceivable possibilities (B2.1–8). The disjunction is intended to be

¹ To cite just a few recent examples on this subject matter, see A. A. Long, 'Parmenides on thinking being', in J. Cleary (ed.), *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 12, (New York, 1996), 125–51; D. Sedley, 'Parmenides and Melissus', in A. A. Long (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, (Cambridge, 1999), 113–33; P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides* (Princeton, 1998), chs. 1 and 2.

I would like to thank Raphael Woolf, M. M. McCabe, Richard Sorabji, Christopher Gill, Gerard O'Daly, Stuart Leggatt, the anonymous referee, and the editor Professor Collard for their invaluable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

² Long (n. 1), 140–6. See n. 38 below.

³ Curd (n. 1), 89–90. See n. 34 below.

⁴ See nn. 15–17 below.

exhaustive. Moreover, as the two disjuncts are contradictories,⁵ they are mutually exclusive. One alone of the two disjuncts must hold (cf. B8.16–18). Of course, the choice of disjunct will have to be decided on metaphysical, not formal, grounds.

Having glossed the first disjunct as that which ‘is’, along with the impossibility for it not to be (B2.3),⁶ Parmenides turns his attention to eliminating the second disjunct, that which ‘is not’ (*οὐκ ἔστι*).⁷ He dismisses this disjunct on the grounds that you can neither recognize or know (*γνοίης*), nor show or point out (*φράσας*) what ‘is not’. It has no intelligible content about which to think and thus must be abandoned as unintelligible. There is nothing with which the thinker can have a relation. With the elimination of this disjunct, Parmenides has narrowed his options considerably. As one of the two disjuncts must hold, the disjunct, that which ‘is’, must, *a fortiori*, be retained.⁸

I want now to explore two possible ways in which thinking can be seen to relate to being, what I shall refer to as the ‘realist’ and ‘idealist’ readings. Essentially, these

⁵ Although the disjuncts do not need to be taken as contradictories (i.e. $\sim\Diamond\sim$ and $\Box\sim$ are not contradictories, \Box and $\sim\Box$ are), Parmenides, judging from B8.16–18, certainly took them in that manner. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield state the matter well, remarking that Parmenides’ characterization of the disjuncts in the B2 is meant to bring out their mutual incompatibility which is characteristic of contradictories. See G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1983), 246, n. 1. Also cf. D. Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea* (Toronto, 1984), 8; A. Finkelberg, ‘Parmenides’ foundation of the way of truth’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* VI (Oxford, 1988), 43–4.

⁶ Cf. J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London, 1982), 163–5 on the issue of whether Parmenides is confusing *necessitas consequentis* with *necessitas consequentiae*.

⁷ As for the debate about what the subject of *ἔστι* is, following G. E. L. Owen, ‘Eleatic questions’, in M. C. Nussbaum (ed.), *Logic, Science and Dialectic* (London, 1986), 9–16, I take it to be the task of the subsequent fragments, culminating with B8, to spell this point out. For example, by the time we get to B6, it is clear that *τὸ εἶναι* is the subject. For further comments on the difficulty surrounding the question of what the subject of *ἔστι* is, also see M. M. Mackenzie, ‘Parmenides’ dilemma’, *Phronesis* 27 (1982), 2 and relevant note and Sedley (n. 1), 114. Until the full nature of the subject is disclosed, to speak of ‘it’ as attending upon *ἀληθείη* is not to say too much, save that it enjoys some sort of relation to *ἀληθείη*. For a different line on what the subject of *ἔστι* is, cf. Finkelberg (n. 5), 44–7. As for the other well-debated issue, namely the status of *ἔστι* and whether it is best understood as predicative, existential, veridical, or a fusion thereof, this is of secondary importance to the present task. It is clear that the scope of the verb ‘to be’ should not be limited to either the existential use (the complete use) or the predicative use (the incomplete use) if one is to appreciate fully both Parmenides’ account of being as outlined in Fragment 8 and the path upon which misguided mortals who confuse and conflate being and not being are said to tread. For some recent discussions of how best to interpret the verb ‘to be’ in Parmenides, see Sedley (n. 1), 114–15; Curd (n. 1), chs. 1 and 2; and L. Brown, ‘The verb “to be” in Greek philosophy: some remarks’, in S. Everson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Thought* 3 (Cambridge, 1994), 216–20, 236. Also cf. M. Furth, ‘Elements of eleatic ontology’, in A. P. D. Mourelatos (ed.), *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York, 1974), 242–8; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (n. 5), 245ff.; G. Owen (n. 7), 104–8; D. Furley, ‘Notes on Parmenides’, *Phronesis* Suppl. Vol. 1 (1973), 13–14 and C. Kahn, ‘The thesis of Parmenides’, *Phronesis* Suppl. Vol. 1 (1973), 723–4.

⁸ It must be noted, however, that before Parmenides examines the nature of that which is, he posits the possibility of a third option in Fragments 6 and 7. This option is the avenue that mortals (*βροτοί*) follow, an avenue to which he alludes in the Proem. Parmenides presumably takes this step in order to rule out any other possible alternative, prior to examining that which ‘is’. It is clear that by the time we come to Fragment 8, he supposes that every option, save that which ‘is’, has been exhausted (8.1–2). This third option, according to Parmenides, consists in the equating and confusing of the contradictories, being and not being. In virtue of this sort of conflation of contradictories, the epistemology of mortals, that is their knowledge of the phenomenal world, is untenable. Given this option’s unintelligibility, Parmenides is left with only one alternative (by a process of elimination), that which ‘is’.

readings are ways to understand the relation between thinker and its content or object of thought. The difference between these two interpretations lies in the causal relation between the epistemic subject and its object. Either that which 'is' is the cause of thinking (on the realist reading) or thinking through its cognitive act constitutes that which 'is' (on the idealist reading). What these two readings share, however, is that they are both premised upon a meaningful distinction between thinker and object: in each case a strict identity between subject and object is ruled out.

According to the realist interpretation thinking requires an independent pre-existing referent. Without this object, thinking as a meaningful cognitive act would not be possible, as intelligible content would be lacking. The former is a *necessary condition* for the latter. The assumption to which the realist interpretation adheres is that there exists a mind-independent object (or objects). If the object is not already in place, that is actually exists independent of the mind prior to that mind thinking it, then the act of thinking—at least in any meaningful sense—is impossible.⁹ Thinking itself is incapable of generating its own intelligible content. Rather, some pre-existent object(s) must act upon it. This interpretation ensures two things: (i) objects enjoy a mind-independent existence, and (ii) they are constitutive of intellectual content. The object or objects is or are that in virtue of which thinking is possible.

The dramatic setting outlined in the Proem casts Parmenides in a passive role. The goddess is revealing the structure of reality to him (*ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ*, B1.29). Despite the fact that this is only the Proem, the imagery is well suited to a realist reading in that Parmenides is having something shown to him which, at least on the face of it, exists independently of his apprehending it. This notion of well-rounded truth or reality (*ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος*) reinforces this point.¹⁰ The language of the goddess implies that what Parmenides is about to see is the structure of the way things really are. There is no sense that Parmenides is conducting some kind of thought experiment. The scenario being presented is not something Parmenides' thought is constitutive of, but rather it is offered to him as an object of his thought. He has been brought before a goddess to be shown the structure of reality, both that which truly is and what is not.¹¹ It is no coincidence that the description of reality here, that is being well-rounded (*εὐκυκλέος*), sits very nicely with the spherical description of being that is set out in Fragment 8. It would seem therefore that, at least as far as the dramatic setting is concerned, the text is better served by the realist interpretation.

Fragment 2 introduces the framework of the route that will lead to the Parmenidean principle. The language employed in this fragment is that of routes of enquiry (*ὁδοί διζήσιος*). On either reading, the central issue is what makes a route. Is it a construct of the mind? Is it the intellectual act which makes it what it is, that is a route which leads

⁹ In this vein, Burnyeat remarks: 'Thought requires an object, distinct from itself, and that object, Parmenides argues, must actually exist' (M. Burnyeat, 'Idealism and Greek philosophy: what Descartes saw and Berkeley missed', *Philosophical Review* 91 [1982], 15–16). According to Burnyeat, the ancients, Parmenides included, never got beyond the realist position. He takes it to be a post-Cartesian phenomenon to think of the categories of thought as constituting or determining the nature of the world. For the ancients it is the other way around. Also cf. Burnyeat, 22–3 and 33.

¹⁰ Verdenius takes a similar view about what *ἀληθείη* is intended to connote. He takes the line that *ἀληθείη* is to be understood as the true nature of things and not some mental category or property. See W. J. Verdenius, 'Parmenides B2.3', *Mnemosyne* 15 (1962), 237.

¹¹ Vlastos correctly emphasizes the religious aspect of all this imagery. To paraphrase, Parmenides is presenting the reader with a mystical revelation in which he is attempting to bridge the gulf between mortal and divine. See G. Vlastos, 'Parmenides' theory of knowledge', *TAPA* 77 (1946), 74–5.

to something? Or is it the objects to which it leads that makes it what it is? The realist account emphasizes two points: (i) The terms employed by Parmenides in this fragment seem to imply that there exists an independent object(s) or referent(s), and (ii) the grounds for discarding the οὐκ ἔστι route.

Starting with (i), the term διζήσις (apparently coined by Parmenides from the verb διζήμαι) connotes the idea of a search or enquiry in which the existence of the object of that search is not in question.¹² That is, the term carries with it the sense that one is searching for a pre-existent object. So to judge by Parmenides' choice of terminology or coinage of earlier terminology, it would seem that the intellectual enquiry is not constitutive of that object. Such an account also fits nicely with Parmenides' description of the route of that which 'is' as the path of persuasion. Persuasion, according to him, attends upon (ὀπηθεῖ) truth or reality (ἀληθείη), a notion which implies that there is something already there to be attended upon.

As for the second point (that is, the manner in which the route of not being is discarded is telling), it could be argued that the acceptance of one route and the denial of the other is based upon a somewhat modified or primitive form of denotability.¹³ There is something in Parmenides' ontology, namely 'being', that the idea or thought picks out. There is some mind-independent referent out there to denote. In the case of not being, there is no referent which can be picked out, and, consequently, that route is inaccessible. A *necessary condition* for thinking, that is a coherent and intelligible object, is not satisfied.

Fragment 3 sheds some light on the nature of the relationship between thinking and being:

... τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι.

... the same thing is both for thinking of and for being. (trans. J. Barnes, 157)¹⁴

The fragment as translated simply claims that that which 'is' for thinking also 'is'. In other words, that which 'is' is a necessary condition for thinking. Thinking cannot think that which 'is not'. Such an endeavour, as we have seen, is vacuous and untenable. Some scholars, such as Vlastos and, more recently, Sedley, take this fragment to make a much stronger claim, namely that of identity. In the case of Vlastos we read: '... to think and to be are the same thing'.¹⁵ Sedley translates: 'For it is the same to think and to be'.¹⁶ Although I ultimately agree with the attribution of such an identity-thesis to Parmenides, and will argue for it below, I think that at this stage in the argument this interpretation is problematic. Assuming one accepts this fragment's position within the Poem, there is nothing in the argument prior to Fragment 8 that could justify such an inference.¹⁷ Fragment 2 certainly does not give

¹² See A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* (New Haven, 1970), 67. Mourelatos cites the example of the Homeric voyage motif as a place in which the ὁδὸς διζήσιος imagery is employed. In Heraclitus we find the phrase ἐδιζήσάμην ἐμεινωτόν (fr. 101) which does not conflict with the realist account, since the existence of that which is consulted or sought after, that is oneself, is not in question.

¹³ By 'modified form' I understand that the notion of multiple sense is left out. There is a one-on-one mapping. Cf. Furth (n. 7), 252.

¹⁴ All translations, unless stated otherwise, are taken from Barnes (n. 6). This translation, which does not posit the strict identity of thinking and being and treats ἐστίν in a modal manner, has been widely embraced in the Anglo-American tradition. See, for example, Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (n. 5); Mourelatos (n. 12), 75; and Owen (n. 7), 15.

¹⁵ Vlastos (n. 11), 68.

¹⁶ Sedley (n. 1), 120.

¹⁷ On the place of B3, cf. Finkelberg (n. 5), 55. Now, of course, if one does not accept the place

us that. The view that being, at least prior to Fragment 8, simply functions as a necessary condition for thinking (and by extension speaking) is reinforced by Fragment 6:¹⁸

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

What is for saying and thinking of must be; for it is for being,
but nothing is not: (trans. J. Barnes, 158)

There is another reason for taking the weaker of the two views. As Fragment 8 is the *locus* where one finally does have the complete disclosure of the nature of that which is, it perhaps makes sense to expect a complete account of the relationship between thinking and being to be set out then. Thus Fragment 3, if one reads it as simply stating a necessary condition for thinking, is neutral with respect to either the idealist or realist readings.

Fragment 4, however, could be taken as substantiating the realist reading:

λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόωι παρεόντα βεβαίως·
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὼν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντῃ πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὔτε συνιστάμενον.¹⁹

Regard alike firmly in your mind things absent, things present;
for you will not cut off what is from holding to what is,
neither scattering everywhere in every way through the world,
nor gathering together. (trans. J. Barnes, 213)

Here Parmenides speaks of the thinker not being able to sever being from being, that is unable to divide up being. According to the realist reading, this fragment substantiates the view that what thinking can and cannot think depends upon and is determined by the structure of that which 'is'. This claim asserts more than that one must think that which 'is'. It also indicates that thinking will have to mirror or accurately depict the structure of what is thought. On this reading πάντως in σκιδνάμενον πάντως πάντῃ will stipulate that qualitative or quantitative differentiation from that which 'is' is unthinkable. So the nature or structure of that which 'is' determines the structure of the intellectual act which thinks it.²⁰ If thinking were

of Fragment 3, then the arguments of Vlastos and Sedley carry much more force. See Sedley (n. 1), 120.

¹⁸ On speaking as an extension of thinking, see Barnes (n. 6), 158–9.

¹⁹ Curd reads this fragment as saying that there are no internal divisions within being but that it does not entail 'no external numerical divisions' (P. Curd, 'Parmenidean monism', *Phronesis* 36 [1991], 253). The problem I have with this view is that if there were a numerical plurality, say, of F and G, then there would be a sense in which being was 'cut off from itself' (οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὼν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι), at least at a generic level. That is to say, F and G would not be cut *qua* F and G but *qua* being they would be cut off from one another. However, I do agree with Curd's remark (n. 1), 254 that this obscure fragment does come before B8 and that it is offering us a preliminary hint about the unity that is to come there.

²⁰ In this vein Kahn (n. 7), 724 remarks: 'This general asymmetry reflects the extent to which such monism remains "realistic": knowing is founded in being; science and logic rest upon ontology; the mind does not impose its forms but receives them from the object it knows.'

to do otherwise, it would be introducing not being into the cognitive picture and, as a result, confusing and conflating being and not being.

The realist account, accepting the argument that mortals do not denote anything in their everyday mental activities but just entertain contradictions, conflating being with not being, would claim that Fragment 5 and some of the imagery in Fragment 6 take the form they do because there is only one denotable object, being. Thus it does not matter where the goddess begins her discourse. She will be forced to return to a discussion of that object (Fragment 5):

ξυνὸν δέ μοί ἐστιν,
ὀππόθεν ἄρξωμαι· τόθι γὰρ πάλιν ἵξομαι αὖθις.

It is indifferent to me
whence I begin; for I shall come back there again. (trans. J. Barnes, 177)

There is nothing else about which to have proper mental discourse. In the case of the circular imagery deployed when discussing the activity of mortals (the aimless wandering [ἦν δὲ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν πλάττονται, δίκρανοι, B6.4–5] and backwards-turning motion [πάντων δὲ παλίντροπὸς ἐστι κέλευθος, B6.9]), the proponent of the realist reading would take this to be the result of entertaining contradictions by confusing being and not being (B6.4–9).²¹ Because the misguided mortals only latch onto vacuous names, names that lack a proper referent, that is being, they do not satisfy a necessary condition for thinking. As a result, they are on an aimless, backwards-turning journey. Their beginning is the same as their end. The proponent of the realist reading would argue that only if there is a proper mind-independent object in place can thinking occur.²²

Unlike the realist account, the idealist reading does not rely upon a pre-existent mind-independent entity determining what can and what cannot be thought. Rather, the very act of thinking is itself generative of the intellectual content, generative of that which 'is'. On this reading, thinking by definition stipulates that there must be some intelligible content, that is that which 'is'.²³ Accordingly, given its nature, thinking brings about or is constitutive of being.

²¹ This is the view expressed by von Fritz about the nature of the intellect and its act of intellection: 'It is still the primary function of noos to be in direct touch with ultimate reality': Kurt von Fritz, 'Nous, noein and their derivatives in pre-Socratic philosophy', in A. P. D. Mourelatos (ed.), *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York, 1974), 52. For a different view cf. Barnes (n. 6), 611. Barnes argues *contra* von Fritz that this is wrong and νοῦς is from time to time erroneous. Also cf. J. Lesher, 'Parmenides' critique of thinking: the *poludêreis elenchos* of Fragment 7', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (Oxford, 1984), 1–30; and Curd (n. 19), 247–8 and id. (n. 1), 49.

²² Kahn (n. 7), 723 makes the following point which sits very well with the realist interpretation: 'It is worth noting, however, that in both Parmenides and in Aristotle the identity is characterised by a curious asymmetry: it is always νοῦς or νοεῖν which is identified with—or reduced to—its object, never conversely.'

²³ Mackenzie (n. 7), 2 takes this line of interpretation. She holds that Parmenides does not assume 'real objects' of thought *en route* to explaining τὸ εἶναι. The basis for such a claim is as follows: 'We think thought must have content otherwise it would be vacuous, and could not be said to occur at all. We think about something, and not about nothing, . . . So if the choice between ἐστὶ and οὐκ ἐστὶ can be reinterpreted as a choice between something and nothing, we must take ἐστὶ. What can be thought is, and nihilism is false. For whatever its status, *something* is happening, even if the event only occurs in my brain. Moreover anything other than something must be impossible. So differentiation is impossible and strong monism may be thought to follow.'

Beginning with the Proem, presumably the proponent of this interpretation would not be too worried about the setting since it is just that, a dramatic backdrop for the entire poem and not just for the Way of Truth. Parmenides does not properly begin to set out the route he will take to reach his principle until Fragment 2. In other words, it could be argued that nothing of philosophical importance hangs on the opening fragment.

As for Fragment 2, it is perfectly compatible with the idealist reading. All that fragment tells us is that thinking, in order not to be vacuous, must have some content and this content must have the status of a *something*. It must 'be'. Not being is not constitutive of intellectual content. Thus thinking itself, as just noted, is stipulative of that content. If it is to be meaningful or successful as an intellectual activity, it requires this content. As for whether the content is mind dependent or not, that is irrelevant. The crucial point is that the content of thinking 'is', regardless of whether it exists solely in the mind or not. Fragment 2 therefore is perfectly consistent with both readings.

Fragment 3 is compatible with the idealist reading, assuming one takes it to state simply that being is a necessary condition for thought.²⁴ Fragment 4, however, it was said, was particularly well-suited for the realist interpretation. Does it pose a problem for the idealist reading? Not really. All that Parmenides asserts here is that the structure or nature of being is such that it is neither cut off from the epistemic subject nor from itself. It is not scattered about (οὔτε σκιδνόμενον πάντῃ πάντως) because that would entail that being was severed from itself, which would at least allow for the possibility of not being entering into the picture or account of being. In other words, this fragment could be read as simply reminding us what was already known from Fragment 2, not being cannot enter our cognitive account, at least at the level of intellectual content. Otherwise, the Parmenidean principle would not satisfy the conditions of intelligibility. Thus the idealist would argue that Parmenides outlines the structure of that which 'is' as he does in Fragment 4 because thinking demands just such a structure.

Finally, Fragments 5–7 do not pose a problem for the idealist account. Again, it is simply a question of thinking's stipulatory demands. Vacuity and contradiction are inconsistent with meaningful intellectual activity. It does not matter where the goddess begins, because if she is going to give a proper account of thinking, she must speak of its content. And to do so, she must return to that which is thinkable or intelligible, namely that which 'is'. The contradictions of mortals will not suffice. If anything, the grounds on which Parmenides rejects the route opted for by mortals is better suited to the idealist reading than the realist reading. The problem is not with the hybrid objects they entertain but their contradictory claims and beliefs. Their route is rejected on epistemological and not ontological grounds.

Either reading, the realist or idealist, can therefore give a coherent account of Fragments 1–7. Both accounts allow for a meaningful relation between the thinking subject and its object or mental content. In the case of realism, that which 'is' establishes the possibility of thinking and in the case of idealism, thinking is constitutive of it. Either one is a suitable account because they both distinguish between the epistemic subject and its object and establish a coherent relation between the two as coextensive *relata*. What remains to be seen is how these relations fare once the nature of being, the proper object of thought, is fully set out.

²⁴ See pp. 210–11 above.

II. THE NATURE OF THE INTELLIGIBLE OBJECT

In Fragment 8 the goddess offers her fullest account of what this object, being, looks like. Here she spells out the structure of the unshakeable heart of well-rounded reality or truth (*ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμέης ἤτορ*, B1.29) and what this structure entails for thinking. The goddess presents us with a strong form of monism, examining it from two perspectives: that which 'is' is explored under the temporal aspect (lines 6–25)²⁵ and the spatial aspect (lines 26–33, 42–9). Lines 34–41 interrupt Parmenides' monistic account of being in order to explicate the relation thinking has to it. Thinking arises where it does in the argument, as I shall argue, because the monistic account of being requires that its relation to being be shown not to undermine the sort of monism that is on offer.

The first section of the discussion under the temporal aspect (6–21) focuses on generation and destruction.²⁶ Parmenides deploys two arguments against generation, which lead him to conclude that there was never a time in which or at which that which 'is' came into existence, since it always was what it is. And as its present state is that of being as opposed to, say, not being, it always has been in such a state: 'In this way it is necessary for it to be altogether or not' (*οὕτως ἢ πάμπαν πελέναι χρεῶν ἔστιν ἢ οὐχί*, B8.11). The essential point is that that which 'is' is constant in its state, whatever that state might happen to be. Given this condition of being, Parmenides also employs this argument to deny that being ever perishes:

οὐδέ ποτ' ἐκ μὴ ἔοντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ἰσχύς
γίγνεσθαι τι παρ' αὐτό· τοῦ εἵνεκεν οὔτε γενέσθαι
οὔτ' ὄλλυσθαι ἀνῆκε Δίκη χαλάσασα πέδησιν,
ἀλλ' ἔχει· ἡ δὲ κρίσις περὶ τούτων ἐν τῷιδ' ἔστιν·
ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν· (B8.12–16)

Not ever from what is will strength of trust allow
it to become something apart from itself.²⁷ For that reason neither to come
into being nor to perish has Justice allowed it, relaxing her chains;
but she holds it. And judgement about these things lies in this:
it is or it is not. (trans. J. Barnes, 178)

Being, therefore, is sempiternal; it is temporally homogeneous.²⁸ In the next argument (B8.22–5), Parmenides redirects his focus inwards.²⁹ It is no longer a matter of whether being 'is' but rather what it is like at each temporal instant:

οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ὁμοῖον.³⁰
οὐδέ τι τῇ μάλλον, τό κεν εἴργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι,

²⁵ Owen (n. 7), 18–21, I think wrongly, argues that lines 26–33 are also part of the temporal argument. He maintains that this passage restates two previous conclusions and argues for temporal invariance with the use of the 'πῆρας' imagery. I disagree with that reading for two reasons: much of the imagery has become spatial and there is no point in using this passage to establish temporal invariance, since lines 6–21 have established *inter alia* just that point.

²⁶ Cf. Barnes (n. 6), 179. Also see his 'Parmenides and the eleatic one', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 61 (1979), 12, and Sedley (n. 1), 118–19.

²⁷ Cf. Barnes (n. 7), 189 for the various construals of lines 12–13.

²⁸ Cf. Barnes (n. 26, 1979), 19.

²⁹ Cf. Owen (n. 7), 13 and 18–19.

³⁰ Ibid. 13. I follow Owen in taking *ὁμοῖον* adverbially and not entailing qualitative homogeneity. As Barnes (n. 7), 210 notes, if the argument were meant to imply qualitative homogeneity,

οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἑόντος.
τῶι ξυνεχές πᾶν ἐστίν· ἑὸν γὰρ ἑόντι πελάζει. (B8.22–5)

Nor is it divided, since it is all alike;
And neither more here (which would prevent it from holding together)
nor less, but it is all full of what is.
Hence it is continuous; for what is neighbours what is. (trans. J. Barnes, 178)

I interpret the first line of this passage to be referring to identity through time.³¹ The claim that being is undivided (οὐδέ διαιρετόν), along with temporal homogeneity, are steps towards establishing qualitative homogeneity. Temporal homogeneity ensured the constancy of, at least, certain non-relational properties, such as being. But now, given the temporal indivisibility, it follows that being will be unable to sustain different properties at different times, relational or non-relational, within its sempiternal existence. Whatever properties it has, it has them at all times. It can neither take on new ones nor lose others. As yet, the argument has shown it to be qualitatively constant.

On the basis of its being undivided through time, Parmenides infers that there is no temporal inequality within being (οὐδέ τι τῇ μάλλον or οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, B8.23–4) in which one part—using the term ‘part’ very loosely—is any different from another at any particular time. The entire whole is full of what is (πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἑόντος, B8.24), and, as such, does not lend itself to being broken down into temporal instants in which a discrepancy can be discerned between the parts *qua* more or less full. The quantitative properties of being—assuming there are any—do not lend themselves to being analysed into successive instants in which quantitative discrepancies can be discerned at specific times, say t_1 and t_2 . Like their qualitative counterparts, they are constant at each possible instant, assuming instants were discernible (which they are not). Consequently, that which ‘is’ is one continuous undivided temporal whole.³²

The two temporal arguments (6–21 and 22–5) demonstrate that (i) being always ‘is’, and (ii) within that sempiternal period it does not alter in any sense. Next Parmenides has two spatial arguments (lines 26–33 and 42–9). The first (26–33) addresses the qualitative aspect, in particular qualitative homogeneity which Parmenides alluded to at the outset of this Fragment (μουννογενές, B8.4) as one of the signs to be addressed:

οὔνεκεν οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐὸν θέμις εἶναι·
ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδευές· [μὴ]³³ ἐὸν δ' ἂν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο. (B8.32–3)

because it is not right for that what is to be incomplete;
for it is not lacking—otherwise it would want everything.

(trans. J. Barnes, 179)

Being is complete (οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον). If it were lacking (ἐπιδευές), Parmenides infers

then Parmenides would be introducing this feature without warrant, since he has not argued for it. For the view that it does imply qualitative homogeneity, see L. Tarán, *Parmenides* (Princeton, 1965), 107–8.

³¹ Cf. Barnes (n. 7), 210–12.

³² To use a well-known phrase, τὸ ἐὸν enjoys the state of the timeless present in which it might be tensed grammatically but not logically. See G. E. L. Owen, ‘Plato and Parmenides on the timeless present’, in M. C. Nussbaum (ed.), *Logic, Science and Dialectic* (London, 1986), 27–8.

³³ As with most commentators (including Diels–Kranz), I am leaving out the μὴ. See Tarán (n. 30), 119 and Gallop (n. 5), 68.

that it would lack (or want) everything (*ἂν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο*). I take this passage to be indicative of qualitative homogeneity for the following reason: whatever qualitative properties it has, they must not only be omnipresent but also impossible to differentiate. The weaker claim is omnipresence. If it were the case that one property were in one place and not in another place, that is if any of its qualities could be locally differentiated, being could be said not 'to be' or 'to lack' in some sense. For the property would be restricted to a particular part and, as a result, not exist or inhere in another part. But omnipresence alone only entails coextensivity of properties and not qualitative homogeneity. A plurality of properties and omnipresence are entirely compatible. However, I think the notion of 'not lacking' anything can also be shown to entail qualitative homogeneity for the following reason: different predicates which express different properties, such as being is 'x' and being is 'y', would entail that being is lacking inasmuch as being, by satisfying one predicate, would not be simultaneously satisfying another, at least in that particular context. And to the extent that one predicate is differentiated, that is excludes, another, being is 'not' the other. In other words, the notion of differentiation itself allows for a sense in which being can be said to lack and, as a result, not to be. Now given the force of Parmenides' claim at 8.33, if it were to be lacking at all, it would lack everything.³⁴ It would be not being. The monism that is emerging here has at its centre a strong or strict identity thesis; a thesis that, as we shall see below, will ultimately entail the strict identity of the thinker and what it thinks, so as to rule out their differentiation.

The final of the four arguments tells us that which 'is' extends or reaches out to the limits or boundaries (*πείρατα*) in such a way as to leave no place vacant from the centre to the limit. This is because being is complete (*τετελεσμένον*, B8.42–4). If it was not, it would be nothing (cf. B8.11 and 33). The image Parmenides employs is of a smooth, well-rounded sphere (B8.43), which is indicative of there being no gaps or empty places. Rather it is identical throughout, consisting of like bordering on like (B8.46–7, cf. B4.2–4). There is no internal quantitative differentiation or discrepancies. No part—using the term rather loosely—is bigger or smaller than any other part (B8.44–5), greater or less (B8.48). There is quantitative invariance throughout: 'Hence equal from all directions, it meets the limits alike' (*οἱ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἴσον, ὁμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει*, B8.49). As with the first quantitative account, units—in this instance spatial units such as size and place as opposed to temporal units—are inapplicable. They presuppose something which lends itself to division and differentiation.

³⁴ At this point I should address Curd's interesting interpretation ([n. 1], 95–6), which takes the view that Parmenides is a predicationist monist. What this means in the present context is that whatever 'is', can have only one predicate, say 'F', thereby guaranteeing internal unity and ruling out internal differences. To quote: 'Parmenides is committed to and argues for the internal unity of each thing that is (so there can be no internal differences in each thing that is) but he also allows for a numerical plurality of such things (thus allowing for external differences for the things that are).' The problem with this view is that it does allow for 'not being' to enter the picture inasmuch as one thing is 'F' and not 'G'. Curd herself admits there may be a problem 'lurking' here (95) for Parmenides but claims that he and his successors did not see it as one. I would argue that with this last argument (lines 26–33) Parmenides did see it as a problem and ruled it out. His principle cannot lack in any way whatsoever. As a result, not only internal difference must be ruled out but external difference as well. For even if 'x' were entirely 'F' and 'y' entirely 'G' and there was not any internal difference within each, there would be a difference between 'x' and 'y', a difference that could not be overlooked, since this would entail they not only both 'are' but in some sense, albeit relationally, 'are not'. Moreover, as I shall argue subsequently, Parmenides goes on to argue for the identity between being and thinking, as that distinction, if allowed to stand, would also constitute an instance of differentiation.

III. THE IDENTITY OF THINKING AND BEING

The arguments outlined thus far set out the nature of what is thinkable. According to the above monistic account, that which 'is' is simple, homogeneous, everlasting, and does not permit of division or differentiation. The nature or structure of what is thinkable, as outlined by Parmenides, is such that it excludes any form of differentiation, otherwise qualitative homogeneity as outlined in Fragment 8 would be undermined. Hence as soon as Parmenides completes his argument for qualitative homogeneity and before he turns to the final of his four arguments, he introduces the relation between thinking and that which is thought. The reason for his doing so at this juncture in the argument is to rule out the possibility of differentiation between thinking and what is thought. Accordingly, at B8.34 Parmenides posits the identification of thinking and being:

ταὐτὸν δ' ἔστι νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκεν ἔστι νόημα· (B8.34)

Thinking and that for the sake of which³⁵ thought is is the same.³⁶

The relation between thinking and being (that is, that for the sake of which) is one of identity. Such a thesis explains the use of 'the same' (ταὐτόν). The demands of such a strong claim were already in place given the preceding section which dealt with qualitative homogeneity. Within this Parmenidean principle there is no room for qualitative differentiation. In virtue of this strict identity-thesis, thinking will have all the same attributes as being. It too will be complete, self-identical, continuous, changeless, and eternal.³⁷

So how do both the realist and idealist interpretations stand in relation to the monism of Fragment 8? The essential point about both readings is that they allow for, albeit in different guises, coextensive *relata*: the epistemic subject and its intelligible object or mental content. The first question that arises is what does Fragment 8 entail for the epistemic subject and its intelligible object, for these coextensive *relata*? In short, the distinction between the thinker and the object is a distinction that cannot be maintained in light of the monism outlined in Fragment 8 because the account on offer there prohibits all forms of differentiation, be it quantitative, qualitative, relational, or non-relational. As a result, the distinction between the epistemic subject and the

³⁵ Following the rendering of von Fritz (n. 21), 45–7, who takes the view that the οὐνεκεν preserves the sense of οὐ ἔνεκα. G. Vlastos takes the same line: 'Review of J. Zafiropoulos *L'École éléate*', *Gnomon* 25 (1953), 168.

³⁶ The translation I adopt here is different from Barnes's translation (n. 6), 179. It is similar in sentiment to that of Kahn's translation of this difficult line ('Knowing and the goal [or aim or motive] of knowledge are the same', [n. 8], 721). We both take Parmenides to be identifying the cognitive act with the object, being. Another way to read this line, as some have done, would be to interpret Parmenides as reasserting the view that being is a necessary condition for thinking. So, for example, in Gallop (n. 5), 71 we read: 'The same thing is for thinking and [is] that there is thought.' I regard this reading as problematic because it allows for differentiation between the thinker and that which is thought, being. As a result, this reading does not do justice to Parmenides' claim that what 'is' is qualitatively homogeneous. For the latter interpretation, also see Curd (n. 1), 89–90.

³⁷ Sedley (n. 1, 120) notes that the sort of conflation which appears to be going on here in Parmenides was not unique to him in early Greek thought: 'The conflation is not altogether surprising in a context of early Greek philosophy. Anaximander, Anaximenes, and Heraclitus had all treated their primary existent, the stuff of the universe, as divine. And Parmenides' follower Melissus, as we will see, likewise speaks about his own One as if it is a living being.'

intelligible object, being (τὸ εἶν), collapses in such a way that the two sides are rendered indistinguishable from one another. The identity thesis in question is lethal to their existence *qua* 'subject' and 'object'. As coextensive *relata*, they did not enjoy all the same properties. The most obvious difference was that the epistemic subject thinks and the intelligible object is thought, at least in their respective capacities as 'subject' and 'object'. But the Parmenidean principle, when fully disclosed, prohibits one from distinguishing either the epistemic subject or the intelligible object, because the account on offer does not allow for the necessary differentiation which makes either notion, be it the epistemic subject or the object, intelligible. Thus both the subject and its object *qua* 'subject' and 'object' are annihilated in the face of such an identity thesis. The notion of coextensive *relata*, at least in this particular sense, has ceased to be tenable in the Parmenidean context.³⁸

The next question to arise is whether Parmenides actually intended to identify thinking with being. Given the reading of Fragment 8 that I have been arguing for, it would seem that there are very good grounds for interpreting him as doing so. However, in addition to Fragment 8 there are also some other noteworthy factors which seem to indicate that he did intend to identify thinking and being. As noted earlier, such a conflation would not be unique to Parmenides at that point in early Greek thought. Other Greek philosophers from this period did regard reality as having a cognitive life of its own.³⁹ In addition to the various views from Parmenides' own period of philosophy which seem to echo this conflation of thinking and being, the goddess makes a very revealing remark in the Proem. When informing Parmenides that he must learn everything (fr. 1.28–9), she refers to reality or being as the 'unshaken heart of truth (or reality)' (ἀληθείης ἐνκυκλέος ἀτρεμέης ἦτορ). The significance lies in the manner in which she expresses or describes this reality, that is 'unshaken heart'. The traditional use of the term 'heart' (ἦτορ), dating back to Homer, had a long history of being associated with the seat of one's cognitive activities.⁴⁰ Although the goddess is speaking figuratively, it is nonetheless still quite telling that she speaks of or alludes to the 'cognitive seat' or 'mind' of truth or reality.

Thus I conclude that Parmenides in Fragment 8 (but not before) identifies the

³⁸ Long (n. 1), 140–6, I think, wrongly attributes a weak identity-relation between thinking and being in which, although identical, they are coextensively related. He maintains that thinking and being do not connote the same thing or are different in semantic value, just as the other attributes such as being ungenerated and everlasting are different in semantic value. However, even allowing for these differences in connotation or semantic value, one nonetheless cannot avoid the problem that thinking cannot be treated like the other attributes in that it requires the differentiation outlined above; the sort of differentiation which Parmenides appears to rule out when he offers his complete account of being in Fragment 8. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, it would seem that Plato picked up on this point when setting out his account of mental faculties and their objects in *Republic* 5. That is, in the midst of a backdrop couched in allusions to Parmenides' Proem, Plato sets out an account of thinking and its objects which is based upon the sort of differentiation that Long talks about, namely as coextensive *relata*. But more to the point, it would seem that Plato is setting out his account in this manner in contrast to the Parmenidean account. See I. Crystal, 'Parmenidean allusions in *Republic* V', *Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1996), 351–63.

³⁹ See n. 37.

⁴⁰ Cf. A. H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Assen and Maastricht, 1986), 168, and Sedley (n. 1), 120, who translates the passage as 'the unshaken mind of well-rounded truth'. Long (n. 1), 142 in a similar vein states the matter as follows: 'The word ἦτορ is one of Homer's standard terms for naming the seat of life, emotion, and . . . *thought or mind* [Long's italics]. We have every reason to suppose that Parmenides, who models his language so directly on Homer, is using the word in just that way here.'

cognitive act with what it apprehends. Although both the realist and idealist readings are tenable with respect to Fragments 1–7, neither can be maintained once the evidence of Fragment 8 is taken into account. This raises a critical question about the relation between thought and its objects, a question that Parmenides' successors would vigorously debate.⁴¹

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⁴¹ Cf. Crystal (n. 38), 351–7 on how Plato tackles this problem.