# PARMENIDES' THREE WAYS AND THE FAILURE OF THE IONIAN INTERPRETATION

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THE middle part of Parmenides' great philosophical poem, the section known as the *Way of Truth* (*WT*),[1] opens with the divine declaration that only two paths of enquiry present themselves to the mind—the path of what is and the path of what is not. I regard these as Parmenides' 'canonical' paths and shall refer to them as Path I and Path II, respectively. Fragment 2 emphatically warns against pursuing Path II, and fragment 6 is no less direct in advancing Path I as a necessary path of enquiry. According to some, Parmenides is merely expressing his preferences in these early fragments of *WT*. Of course he is doing so, but not just this. Rather, fragments 2 and 3 contain a deduction whose aim is to exclude what is not as a fit target for investigation because such a thing is flatly impossible, and fragment 6 certifies Path I, again deductively, on the grounds that what it investigates is nothing less than what is necessary. Her opening declaration notwithstanding, in fragment 6 the goddess goes on to warn against a third path, the path of what



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[1] In using the label '*Way of Truth*' I follow popular usage. See A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* [*Route*], rev. and expanded edn (Las Vegas, 2008), 67, for reasons to favour the simpler epithet '*Truth*'.

is and is not. This too is excluded on the basis of a crisp, but tricky, Eleatic deduction.

This paper offers reconstructions of these three opening deductions. The first deduction, containing the argument against Path II, I call the Governing Deduction because it is central to Parmenides' strategy in the opening fragments and *WT* as a whole, and because it is essential to the remaining two arguments—the argument certifying Path I and the argument eliminating the mixed path. Two main challenges face these reconstructions. The first is to provide versions of Parmenides' arguments that are at once logically satisfactory and textually plausible. As reconstructed below, the arguments are valid at least at the level of surface logic, and they do scant violence to the text. Reconstruction also enables us to locate exactly where Parmenides' reasoning may run aground. So a second, and related, challenge is to isolate and provide solutions to a number of objections that threaten the three opening deductions. Some accuse him of egregious fallacies in reasoning and others contest a number of his substantive claims; and, of course, no serious reader of *WT* can dodge the worry that Parmenides' proscription against thought of what is not is itself thought of what is not and, thereby, self-defeating. In what follows I provide plausible solutions to these and other difficulties facing the argument of *WT*. While I do not anticipate universal agreement, I would hope that my discussion goes some distance towards meeting both challenges.[2]

Finally, I tackle a major obstacle to a key feature of my interpretation of *WT*, an obstacle I call the Ionian Interpretation. Although I here reserve comment on fragment 8 and the so-called 'signs' of what is, my version of the opening deductions is clearly consistent with an austere reading of these signs—that is, a reading on which the natural world of the Ionians is flatly rejected as a legitimate target for investigation. Indeed, this appears to be the express message of Parmenides' elimination in fragment 6 of the mixed path of what is and is not. The Ionian Interpretation enters precisely at

[2] In reconstructing Parmenides' arguments I make modest use of techniques of modern logic. By no means am I suggesting that he was in possession of first-order predicate logic with its quantifiers, bound variables, and so on. But if Parmenides' reasoning contains genuine deductions, as I believe, then it must be possible to speak of their logical form in well-understood terms. A deduction that cannot be formulated in an established logical idiom is no deduction at all. As deployed here, first-order logic is just such an idiom and nothing more. Accordingly, the reconstructions themselves import no anachronisms into the account of the three opening arguments of *WT*.

this point. Its proponents declare that Parmenides champions, and may actually contribute to, the tradition of Ionian natural philosophy. The centrepiece of their interpretation is a revisionist reading of fragment 6. So far from proscribing the mixed path, in their hands fragment 6 actually certifies this path as a legitimate target of investigation. In this way they claim to find within *WT* evidence that establishes Parmenides' credentials as a friend of Ionian natural philosophy. In the final, and longest, section of the paper I consider and reject two different versions of the Ionian Interpretation. The upshot of this critique is that neither in fragment 6 nor in *WT* does Parmenides welcome the project of his Ionian predecessors. Hence, prospects for an austere reading of *WT* remain very much alive.

## 1. Parmenides' canonical paths of enquiry

Fragment 2 finds the goddess promising to enlighten us on the 'only ways of enquiry that are to be thought of', namely, enquiry into what is (*ἡ ὅπως ἔστιν*) and enquiry into what is not (*ἡ ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν*). The announcement signals, first, that the argument is to proceed on the basis of reason and thought and, second, that it is to proceed from *a priori* truths. Both points are reinforced in fragment 7's warning to rely never on experience but only on reason's grasp of Parmenides' refutative proof (i.e. the Governing Deduction). The second point is reiterated in fragment 8's admonition that the decision about matters of being created and perishing, both of which are proscribed, is to be based on the truth 'is or is not'. So it appears that the goddess is promising a deductive argument that proceeds entirely from *a priori* premisses, prominently, the law of excluded middle (LEM).

What, then, is problematic about the goddess's promise? Well, we are led to expect an argument about two paths of enquiry, paths that are determined by their domains. The domains in turn are established by the disjuncts of an instance of a necessary truth—the law of excluded middle (LEM). Simply put, the proposal seems to be that because everything is or is not, when one enquires into something, one must enquire into what is or enquire into what is not. So if the latter enquiry can be eliminated, as Parmenides does in the

Governing Deduction, only one path remains—the path of what is. Somewhat more formally, from the Eleatic version of LEM,[3]

(1) $(x)(x \text{ is} \vee x \text{ is not})$,

it trivially follows that

(2) $(x)(x \text{ is an object of enquiry} \rightarrow x \text{ is} \vee x \text{ is not})$;

and from the Governing Deduction's conclusion that it is not possible to investigate any $x$ that is not, it appears to follow, non-trivially, that

(3) $(x)(x \text{ is an object of enquiry} \rightarrow x \text{ is})$.

So it appears that the Governing Deduction eliminates the putative enquiry into what is not (Path II), leaving Path I as the only viable path of enquiry.[4] This is the picture we are led to expect, but there is a surprise in store.

[3] In calling (1) the Eleatic version of LEM, I am accommodating those who would insist that (1) is only an *instance* of the logical principle, albeit a very general one. Such a person might take the principle itself to be formulated, in the formal mode, as '$(p)(p \vee \neg p)$', or, materially, as '$(x)(Fx \vee \neg Fx)$'. It is also worth noting that the exclusiveness of the two paths corresponding to fragment 2's 'is or is not' is guaranteed by the fact that what flanks 'or' are contradictory schemata, namely, '_is' and its negation, '_is not'. So, *pace* C. Kahn, 'The Thesis of Parmenides' ['Thesis'], *Review of Metaphysics*, 22 (1969), 700–24 at 708, we need not require that Parmenides' 'or' be read as the exclusive 'or' of Stoic and early medieval fame.

[4] J. A. Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* [*Parmenides*] (Oxford, 2009), 109, thinks that no argument is to be found in fragments 2 and 3, declaring that Parmenides' description of Paths I and II as *ways of enquiry* entails that the fragments 'are not to be understood as advancing any definite claims whatsoever'. This will prove surprising to most readers of the fragments. After all, Parmenides certainly appears to be issuing claims, when he says that there are two paths of enquiry, that what is not cannot be indicated, that one of the paths is not to be thought, and, in fragment 3, that what is and what is thought are the same. Further, in its own right, Palmer's declaration is not credible. I may reject a way of enquiry because its candidate objects are ontologically or epistemologically suspect or because they cannot be conceived of in ways required for the putative enquiry. But, surely, nothing prevents me from marshalling any number of claims to advance the cause of rejection. Were I, thus, to warn against hewing to 'the way of the senses' as the sole source of knowledge, my admonition would gain considerably from an argument or two. It would be taken as a joke were someone to insist that argumentation was ruled out on nomenclatural grounds.

Palmer insists also that it is 'misdirected' to look for a 'single chain of reasoning' in fragments 2, 3, and 6 (*Parmenides*, 108). He offers the 'fragmentary state of this portion' of *WT* as grounds for denying the presence of deductive structure in the fragments. But it is a matter of debate just how fragmentary these lines are; and, in any event, how can it be misdirected to show that the fragments, *as they stand*,

What is surprising is that the goddess does not characterize the paths of enquiry as described above. Rather, she asserts that Path I is the path of what is *and what cannot not be* (ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι) and that Path II is the path of what is not *and what cannot be* (ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι). So, rather than (1), Parmenides begins with

(1a) $(x)([x \text{ is} \wedge x \text{ cannot not be}] \vee [x \text{ is not} \wedge x \text{ cannot be}])$.

Unlike (1), (1a) is hardly a necessary truth. This is, perhaps, clearer from a slightly more perspicuous version of (1a)'s disjuncts:

(1a*) $(x)([x \text{ is} \wedge x \text{ necessarily is}] \vee [x \text{ is not} \wedge x \text{ necessarily is not}])$.[5]

The problem, of course, is that (1a*), and so (1a), appear to assert patent falsehoods. This is because there is a third logical possibility. Contrary to (1a*), there may be something that is but not necessarily is or something that is not but not necessarily is not. Thus, the existence of values for the bound '$x$' of

(1a!) $(\exists x)([x \text{ is} \wedge \neg x \text{ necessarily is}] \vee [x \text{ is not} \wedge \neg x \text{ necessarily is not}])$.

falsifies (1a*).[6] Such items would enjoy contingent ontological

support logical reconstruction of patterns of deductive reasoning—as we do below? Note, finally, Palmer's odd attempt to buttress his position by trumpeting the 'tight and rapid' style of argumentation in fragment 8, where he does find that Parmenides proves various deductive consequences or so-called signs. This is odd because the point Palmer is broadcasting would recommend, if anything, that we ought to be on the lookout for just such argumentation in the opening lines of *WT*. To counter this by claiming, as Palmer does, that the fragments in question are 'verses in the goddess's prelude' is to engage in little more than tendentious storytelling.

But there is a more chilling logical upshot for Palmer. Because fragments 2, 3, and 6. 1–2 do not contain 'any definite claims whatsoever', nothing that occurs there can figure in a proof. Yet when he turns to the Deductive Consequences or signs of what is, we find Palmer talking about 'a premise that has already been established: the necessity of maintaining that What Is is' (*Parmenides*, 142), and arguing that something 'cannot be the case given the necessity of What Is being' (150). More expansively, Palmer goes on to state that commentators' alleged mistakes can be traced to their failure to see that crucial to the arguments of the Deductive Consequences is the goddess's invocation to Parmenides 'to focus his thought on what is and cannot not be' (156). However, something can be crucial to an argument only if it is a premiss or an assumption of the argument. So, contrary to Palmer's 'no-claims-whatsoever' declaration, the invocation of fragment 2 will have to contain a definite claim after all. If so, his account fails to meet the minimal standard of consistency.

[5] Some might prefer a slightly different formulation: $(x)([x \text{ is} \wedge x \text{ is necessarily}] \vee [x \text{ is not} \wedge x \text{ is necessarily not}])$; but this makes no difference to my account.

[6] Although I later say more on the meaning of '. . . is . . .' in *WT*, I should caution

status and property possession. As such they include the ordinary run of objects, saliently those countenanced by the Ionian philosophers of nature. So because they add modal clauses neither (1a) nor (1a*) appears to assert a truth, let alone an *a priori* or necessary truth.

Now one attitude to take towards this predicament is simply to pin it on Parmenides. On this view, (1a*) is an immediate gloss on (1), and so Parmenides treats the starred formula as logically equivalent to (1). The 'modal equivalence' reading, as I shall call this, saddles the Eleatic with a logical blunder of daunting proportion. In fact, it burdens him twice—mistakenly equating modal and non-modal formulae and clumsily starting the argument with a premiss that is neither *a priori* nor true. Moreover, Parmenides does not merely begin *WT* with (1). On the contrary, the disjunction explicitly governs the arguments of the Deductive Consequences, and so the entire argument of *WT* is logically undercut by the modal equivalence reading.[7]

Surprisingly, most commentators adopt a policy of silence on the modality of the two paths, perhaps cautioned by its magnitude. One who does not is Mourelatos (in *Route*), and it will pay to look at his account. He begins by rightly insisting that the choice between Paths I and II is exclusive and so that their formulae are to be regarded as *contradictory*. So far, so good. However, he regards the modal language of each path as epexegetical, and this is not benign. Thus, 'cannot not be' (*καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι*) in Path I simply glosses the non-modal 'is', and in Path II 'cannot be' (*καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι*) glosses 'is not'. So it appears that Mourelatos embraces modal equivalence with its ruinous logical effects.

But is this fair? After all, Mourelatos explicitly rejects (1a*), and modal equivalence was proposed as a reading of (1a*). Still, the way

at this point that my use of quantificational idioms is neutral on this score. They occur simply as a function of reconstructing Parmenides' reasoning. Thus, in (1a!) use of the existential quantifier is silent on whether the 'is' in the open sentence '*x* is' is complete, incomplete, fused, or something else entirely. I urge below that this is best understood as a broad 'is'.

[7] Palmer's denial, alluded to in n. 4 above, that fragment 2 contains any definite claims is couched in linguistic terms, and, indeed, it is chiefly on nomenclatural grounds that he rejects the presence of arguments in the text. But this fails to reflect the true constraint he imposes on himself, for were he to find an argument in fragment 2, it would appear to be an argument embracing just this fallacy. In short, nomenclature notwithstanding, on pain of inconsistency Palmer *cannot* find Parmenides doing deductive reasoning in fragments 2 and 3.

in which he rejects (1a*) makes it clear that modal equivalence remains a threat. As Mourelatos reads *WT*, Parmenides' modal language is meant to add modal force *directly* to 'is', and by this he means that 'is' must be understood as 'really is'. Now this may evade the first problem raised above for modal equivalence, should Mourelatos flatly insist that Parmenides is not proceeding, illegitimately, from a non-modal to a modal formula. Rather, all along, the first formula enjoys modal force—the second, added formula merely alerts us to this fact.

The second worry does not yield so easily.[8] For rather than (1), Parmenides is made to launch *WT* with something like

(1m) $(x)(x$ really is$\vee x$ really is not).

According to Mourelatos, (1m) is still an instance of LEM. So the question naturally arises as to how (1m) differs from (1). It must, if only because it incorporates the modal force that (1a*) locates in separate formulae, and (1) and (1a*) are importantly different. One way to see what is problematic here is to ask how '*a* really is' differs from '*a* is'. The first might reassure us in the face of doubts about *a*, but this is nothing more than anti-sceptical salve and has no bearing on *a*'s way of being. Equally unhelpful is any rhetorical purchase had by the idiom. And, of course, '*a* really is' cannot differ from '*a* is' in the way that '*a* necessarily is' differs from '*a* is', for this just invites the ruinous result.

So far, then, the notion of *really being something* appears to have no logical punch beyond that of *being something*. None the less, Mourelatos finds in it a modal payoff, namely, 'a modality of necessity already built into the use of "is" featured in the two routes'.[9] What is more, the modal payoff is linked to a favoured interpretation of the 'is' in Paths I and II: 'the modality is appropriately felt as implicit in the *esti* insofar as the latter partakes in the "is" of identity'. Given Mourelatos's keen sensitivity to historical context, it is unlikely that Parmenides is here made to anticipate a Kripke-style notion of identity. Putting aside also the correctness of his construal of sentences constructed from the frame '_ is _', is there really a payoff here? I am sceptical. Indeed, Mourelatos himself provides

[8] Section 4 raises a third problem for modal equivalence, one that applies to Mourelatos, namely its inability to account for how the modal force of Paths I and II manages to eliminate the so-called third path, the path of what both is and is not.

[9] Mourelatos, *Route*, 72.

materials for worry. He rejects the left side of (1a*), in his idiom '$\phi_x \wedge \Box\phi_x$', and invents a notation placing the box over the propositional function. Likewise, in his version of the right side of (1a*), the box rides atop '$\neg\phi_x$' rather than occurring in a distinct formula of the form, '$\neg\phi_x \wedge \Box\neg\phi_x$', as it does in (1a*). The trouble with this is apparent. Whereas the conventional placement of the modal operators has well-understood logical properties, captured in any number of modal systems, the 'box-atop' or 'really' notation does not. Therefore, whatever modal payoff attends this notion of necessity, it has no propositional representation and so cannot support logical inferences of any kind. From this point of view, it is a distinction without a difference.

The situation is actually worse because it now follows, *pace* Mourelatos, that the two paths *cannot* be specified as contradictory paths. This is easily seen by reverting to (1m). More carefully, here is how Mourelatos's paths would look as contradictories:

(1m′) ($x$)($x$ really is $\vee \neg$[$x$ really is]).

However, according to box-atop notation, the right side of (1m) also enjoys enhanced modal force, asserting that $x$ (or an appropriate value) *really is not*. But this is not what the right side of (1m′) says. For the negation of *really being x* is weaker than the assertion that $x$ really is not, and so it cannnot entail the assertion. Rather, 'not ($x$ really is)' is true in case '$x$ really is not' (strong denial) *or* in case '$x$ is not' (weak denial). It would be implausible to insist that Parmenides does not recognize an 'is' that could figure in weak denials—after all, his formulations of both paths contain just such occurrences in their first, non-modal conjuncts.[10] So (1m) is not the same as (1m′), in particular it is not an instance of LEM. Therefore, *pace* Mourelatos, Parmenides after all begins *WT* with less than an unassailable logical truth.[11]

There is an alternative to the modal equivalence reading, one that

[10] Namely, *ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι* for Path I and *ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι* for Path II. Plus, at fr. 6. 4–9 he also rejects a third way, that of what both is and is not. The 'is' figuring here could not be modally enriched.

[11] P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought* [*Legacy*] (Princeton, 1998), 41, follows Mourelatos on the Eleatic 'is', although she calls her candidate 'an informative identity claim about the notion of a thing'. Surprisingly, she fails almost entirely to address the modal character of *WT*'s two paths. In this regard I noted only her comment on page 33 that 'there is no support' for the claim that 'what-is-not is introduced as impossible'. There is no help here for those worried about the logical problem at hand, especially the threat

in no way dulls *WT*'s logical lustre. On the modal extension reading, as I call this, Parmenides begins with (1) but does not think it

of modal fallacy. But, in any case, Curd's view is undermined by the same troubles that beset Mourelatos's more developed account.

Palmer (*Parmenides*) advances a new 'modal interpretation of Parmenides' ways of enquiry'. Its key tenets appear to be: (*a*) that the 'is' of Path I and the 'is not' of Path II are, straightaway, to be taken modally as, respectively, necessary being and necessary non-being; (*b*) that the modality is not 'a logical property' but 'a way of being'; (*c*) that fragment 6's mixed path of being and non-being concerns contingent being; (*d*) that Path I and Path II yield a kind of 'unwavering understanding' that is different from, and superior to, the sort of understanding had by denizens of the mixed path.

Claim (*c*) is certainly plausible—witness our account in sect. 4 below. However, for reasons elaborated in sect. 7, the account of the mixed path offered in (*d*) is not plausible. Tenet (*a*) is probably the distinctive feature of Palmer's 'modal-only' interpretation, as I shall call it. The interpretation shares much with Mourelatos's reading of the 'is' and 'is not' of the canonical paths. Like him, Palmer thinks that the non-modal part of each path is to be explicated by the modal addition. Here there is nothing new. What distinguishes the modal-only reading is Palmer's refusal to take Parmenides' 'necessary being' as a pointer to the 'nature of things' or to 'what things really are', where this is understood, for example by Curd, *Legacy*, and A. Nehamas, 'On Parmenides' Three Ways of Inquiry' ['Ways'], *Deucalion*, 33–4 (1981), 97–111, as calling for an account of the natures of items constituting the natural world (on a proper or 'rectified' theory of the natural world). Rather, Palmer thinks that Parmenides' necessary being beckons towards an account of 'modes of being' of the thing or things that are investigated on Path I, and that these modes are given in the Deductive Consequences of fragment 8, i.e. the so-called signs of what is. So, if I understand him aright, Path I pertains to items with a necessary mode of being, i.e. items that are ungenerated, imperishable, whole, perfect, etc. There may be one or many of these, perhaps, but in any case Palmer apparently requires that in *WT* Parmenides focuses on divine objects only as the items of Path I. If so, however, Parmenides' notion of modality is unduly constrained, for no non-divine objects can enjoy any form of necessary being. This excludes a rich and familiar class of things that are commonly thought to enjoy necessary being. Thus, although a horse is necessarily an animal, this is not a necessity captured by Palmer's Parmenides, despite the fact that the necessity in question would appear to be a mode of being. It may be tempting to accommodate such cases by insisting that horses are standard third-path items and, so, all along are not candidates for any Path I consideration. But this would be mere hand-waving, for the third-path facts that contrast with the unwavering understanding of Path I and Path II are facts that can alter, e.g. the fact that a horse is twelve hands high. But *that a horse is an animal* is not a wandering state of affairs, but a fixed necessity in the order of things. So Palmer exaggerates when he promotes the modal-only view on the grounds that it shows how Parmenides 'distinguished in a rigorous manner the modalities of necessary being, necessary non-being or impossibility, and contingent being'. A distinction omitting natural necessities of the above sort is not concocted in a 'rigorous manner'. Therefore, on Palmer's account the generality of Parmenides' modal theory is lost. And if the account fails on this score, it is not materially adequate and so fails as an account of modality. At best it carves out special Eleatic cases. Our interpretation, on the contrary, restores full generality to Parmenides' modal distinctions in specifying Paths I and II. It does so by linking them to Parmenides' deductive reasoning.

At this point Palmer might respond by charging that our interpretation is no bet-

just amounts to (1a), or its starred variant. Rather, the second conjunct in each of (1a)'s disjuncts is achieved by an *extended argument*. Thus, the basis for asserting that what is not *necessarily* is not is that the first leads to the second by an extended argument, and so for the assertion that what is *necessarily* is. In terms of (1a), we may say that '*x* is' entails '*x* cannot not be' and '*x* is not' entails '*x* cannot be'. The entailments are not immediate, what would be no less grievous a fallacy than that committed on the modal equivalence reading, but rather result from two arguments. The first entailment is argued in fragment 6, in what I shall call the Corollary to the Governing Deduction. The second is the conclusion of the Governing Deduction itself. So Parmenides need not be seen as beginning *WT* with a logical blunder. Not, at least, according to my interpretation of the Governing Deduction and the Corollary to the Governing Deduction.

ter off for reasons adumbrated in his tenet (*b*). According to (*b*), Eleatic necessity is necessary being, and this he contrasts with necessity as a 'logical notion'. It is not clear what he means by this. But because Palmer also complains that in *WT* truth is not a logical notion, perhaps we can use this to shed light on his notion of necessity. Presumably, to deny that truth is a logical notion is to deny that truth applies to entities that figure in patterns of reasoning where preservation of truth across certain sequences of sentences is crucial. These will be proposition-like items, and so Palmer may, by the same token, be denying that necessity operates chiefly on proposition-like items. So his brand of necessity is ill-suited for deductive reasoning. What is necessary is a being or the being of a thing, not a proposition or statement. Palmer regards this as critical to his modal-only reading. Unhappily, the support founders on a simple point, namely, that every instance of necessary being can be matched by an instance of propositional necessity. Thus, suppose, with Palmer, that Parmenides associates motionlessness with *τὸ ἐόν*. And suppose further, still with Palmer, that this concerns *being*, perhaps something like *motionless being*. Still, there will be a matching proposition-like entity, something like *there is* (*a*) *motionless being*, *motionless being is*, or even *that being is motionless*. Moreover, if the association of motionlessness with *τὸ ἐόν* (being) is advanced not as mere opinion but as a matter of *proof*, something Palmer appears to endorse, then Parmenides must be represented as deploying something with propositional force, something like *that being is motionless*. So there is no good reason to follow Palmer on tenet (*b*).

There is an additional oddity to absorb. On the modal-only reading the semantic value of the plain 'is' and 'is not' of Path I and Path II is determined entirely by the modal additions 'cannot not be' and 'cannot be', respectively. So they have no independent semantic force. Thus, Palmer's Parmenides ought to have begun by straightaway announcing that he will be talking in fragments 2 and 3 and fr. 6. 1–3 about necessary non-being and necessary being, period. But he does not; rather, he includes them as modal *additions*. Moreover, in fr. 6. 4–9 Parmenides shows himself to be fully capable of assigning independent semantic value to 'is' and 'is not' when he excludes the mixed path, for this is the path of contingent being and not being, and here we have 'is' without necessity and 'is not' without impossibility.

## 2. Path II and the Governing Deduction

The Governing Deduction is contained in two fragments: fragment 2, which opens *WT*, and fragment 3, which logically and metrically completes it.[12] Here, with slight redaction to the divine invocation, are the texts (after Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Philosophers*):

[Fr. 2] Come now, and I will tell you . . . the only ways of enquiry that are to be thought of. The one, that [it] is and cannot not be [*ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι*], is the path of persuasion (for it attends upon truth); the other, that [it] is not and cannot be [*ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι*], that I declare is an altogether indiscernible track: for you could not recognize what is not—for that cannot be done—nor could you indicate it. [Fr. 3] For the same thing is there both to be thought of and to be [*τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστιν τε καὶ εἶναι*].

Fragment 3 begins with an inferential *γάρ* ('for') and so gives a reason for one or more claims advanced in fragment 2. I shall take it as the first premiss of the Governing Deduction.

It is clear that fragment 3 asserts a close link between thought and being, but exactly how close is hardly clear. One possibility is to identify them:

(*a*) Thought (thinking)=being.

[12] H. Diels (ed., trans., comm.), *Parmenides: Lehrgedicht* [*Lehrgedicht*] (Berlin, 1897), 67, suggested that fragment 3 attaches directly to fragment 2 ('höchst wahrscheinlich direct an 4, 8 [=fragment 2 in Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* [*Fragmente*], 6th edn., ed. W. Kranz (Berlin, 1951)] anschliessend'). In this he was preceded by E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* [*Griechen*], pt. 1/1, 7th edn. (Leipzig, 1919; repr. Darmstadt, 1963), 687 n. 1 [=558 n. 1 in the 1892 edition], who simply printed fragment 5 (=B 3 DK) as the last half-line of fragment 4 (=B 2 DK). The same printing is evident even earlier in S. Karsten (ed.), *Parmenidis Eleatae carminis reliquiae* (Amsterdam, 1835). Subsequently, any number of scholars have pointed out that fragment 3 is an incomplete line that, metrically, is perfectly suited to complete the last, incomplete line of fragment 2. G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* [*Presocratic*] (Cambridge, 1957), replicate Zeller's printing, but in the revised second edition fragment 3 disappears into a footnote (Kirk, Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* [*Philosophers*], 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 1983), 246 n. 3). They attempt to justify demotion on the grounds that 'it is hard to see what contribution it adds to the reasoning' of fr. 2. 6–8. This is amply answered by our reconstruction of the Governing Deduction, which takes fragment 3 as the lead premiss in Parmenides' argument against Path II, the path of what is not.

This alternative, which is favoured by Kahn,[13] strikes me as very undesirable. It enjoys almost no initial plausibility and so saddles Parmenides with a dubious opening premiss.[14] It also makes the move from thinking something to that something's being vastly too easy, and leaves one wondering why Parmenides mounts an argument at all. Heeding conservative interpretative precepts, I shall favour the weakest premisses that get the job done. It is, thus, at least more plausible that Parmenides held that thought and being are equivalent. Here there are two options (omitting universal quantifiers):

(*b*) *x* is thought of ≡ *x* is,

and a modally slanted version,

(*b′*) *x* can be thought of ≡ *x* can be.

These equivalences are still quite strong. So, even more conservatively, I will simply insist on deciding which of their contained conditionals is more plausible.[15]

As the conditionals making up (*b*) and (*b′*), we have, first, the left-to-right direction, which takes us from thought to being:

(*c*) *x* is thought of → *x* is,

and

(*c′*) *x* can be thought of → *x* can be;

and, second, the right-to-left direction, from being to thought:

(*d*) *x* is → *x* is thought of,

and

[13] Kahn, 'Thesis', 721–4.

[14] D. Sedley, 'Parmenides and Melissus', in A. A. Long (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1999), 113–33 at 123, rates the premiss *WT*'s 'most outlandish metaphysical thesis'. Despite this, he believes that Parmenides asserts the identity of thinking and being. Here he is joined by Long, 'Parmenides on Thinking Being' ['Thinking'], *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 12 (1998), 125–51, who mounts an elaborate defence of the identity thesis. I examine the views of Long and Sedley in *Aspects of Eleatic Logic*: *A Reconstruction of Parmenides 'Way of Truth'* [*Aspects*] (forthcoming).

[15] I do not list all combinations. For example, I omit '*x* can be thought of → *x* is' because it is less plausible than (*c′*), below.

($d'$) $x$ can be → $x$ can be thought of.

Barnes attributes ($c$) and ($c'$) to Parmenides and takes them to be Berkeleian conditionals because they license the existence of anything that is, or can be, thought.[16] He complains: 'only Berkeley would dare to defend Parmenides here'. But it is not obvious that either ($c$) or ($c'$) is committed to an idealistic thesis because neither requires that what exists *be* an idea.[17] None the less, failing further argument, they do seem objectionable. Option ($c$) is objectionable because it licenses the existence of unicorns from the mere thought of them, surely sufficient grounds for rejection. Option ($c'$) does not face this problem because it mandates only that it be *possible* that contemplated unicorns exist, and this is a saner proposal. But ($c'$) encounters trouble on other fronts. Arguably, one can think of an Escher drawing even though the 'scene' depicted is impossible: stairs that ascend cannot end up below their point of ascension, but the drawing portrays just this. More importantly, in some sense one can think of *the set of all sets not members of themselves*, but such a set can hardly exist. For the set would be a member of itself if, and only if, it is not a member of itself.[18] Avoiding Russell's Paradox, as this may be called, has spawned important lines of work in logic, set theory, and the foundations of mathematics. For present purposes, the set in question provides a striking counter-example to ($c'$). So we are advised to retire it along with ($c$), especially if a more appealing option is available.

We are, then, left with ($d$) and ($d'$). As the logically weakest versions of fragment 3, they are its most plausible readings, and this fact gives them considerable appeal. Of course, the readings go hand in hand with our translation of *τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστιν τε καὶ εἶναι* as 'For the same thing is there both to be thought of and to be'. Alternatives ($d$) and ($d'$) might be called Zellerian readings in so far as the translation spawning them is a descendant of Zeller's 'denn dasselbe kann gedacht werden und sein'.[19] Of these, preference should be

[16] J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* [*Philosophers*], 2 vols. (London, 1979), i. 170–1.

[17] On the other hand, ($c$) and ($c'$) do appear to be variants of the Protagorean thesis that what appears to be the case is the case. The ghost of Berkeley would, in any event, be more likely to shadow ($d$) and ($d'$). Of course, Kahn's reading of fragment 3 as an identity invites visitation from Berkeley.

[18] Assuming, of course, that the law of excluded middle holds for the set (i.e. that the set is a member of itself or the set is not a member of itself).

[19] Zeller, *Griechen*, 687 n. 1.

given to (*d′*) because of its more general, and weaker, modal antecedent and because it will enable us to construct an argument for the modal extension reading of Path II, i.e. for the inferential move from '*x* is not' to '*x* cannot be'.[20]

So how is modal extension for Path II forthcoming? As a matter of logic, it turns out, because the requisite formula for modal extension is just the conclusion of the Governing Deduction. Because fragment 3, the fragment containing (*d′*), occurs as the final explanatory clause in the lines containing the Governing Deduction, I take it as the first premiss of that argument. Thus, we begin with

(4) (*x*)(*x* can be→*x* can be thought of).

The final line of fragment 2 suggests that there is one thing that cannot be done with respect to what is not, namely, one cannot recognize[21] or indicate it. So the second premiss is:

(5) (*x*)(*x* is not→*x* cannot be recognized or indicated).

It is hardly obvious that the pair of notions contained in (5)'s consequent are simply synonyms for thought. For by the latter Parmenides must mean the broad, general notion of thinking according to which it seems possible, at least pre-analytically, to think of virtually anything. Otherwise, his argument loses considerable interest and much of its force. Recognition and indication are, however, narrower notions. Because the argument targets thought, we need to add a premiss linking these to thought, namely,

(6) (*x*)(*x* can be thought of→*x* can be recognized or indicated).

Of course, (6) is equivalent to

(6a) (*x*)(*x* cannot be recognized or indicated→*x* cannot be thought of);

so, from (5) and (6) it follows that

(7) (*x*)(*x* is not→*x* cannot be thought of),

and from (7) and (4) we get, then,

[20] Not to mention the fact that, because it is formulated in the indicative voice, (*d*) is arguably false.

[21] With Barnes (*Philosophers*, 157) reading *γνοίης* at fr. 2. 7 as 'recognize' rather than 'know'.

(8) $(x)(x \text{ is not} \rightarrow x \text{ cannot be})$,

as the conclusion of the Governing Deduction. Moreover, with (8) we have established the modal extension reading for the right side of (1a). So while there is no direct move from the non-modal to the modal formula, there is a valid deductive sequence taking us from the one to the other.

By thus vindicating the modal extension reading for Path II, the Governing Deduction spares Parmenides a major logical embarrassment. However, even at the level of surface logic, there is much more to be said about the Governing Deduction. It will be appropriate to include in this section a comment on the notion of thought. Parmenides' argument has full force only if the notion of thought enjoys broad scope. When Parmenides says, as in (7), that what is not cannot be thought of, he is issuing a controversial and arresting claim.[22] Were he to have meant by thought, say, thought of an existing thing, the claim would lose interest. So how does he get this result? The answer is that Parmenides introduces a severe 'aboutness' constraint on thinking. This is accomplished in (6), which concerns thought in general but insists that such thought, and so any thought at all, must be of something that can be recognized or indicated. What is interesting about these notions is that they have a kind of demonstrative force—that which is recognized or indicated is recognized or indicated as *this* or *that* such and such. It is this demonstrative feature that introduces the strongly extensionalist component to thought. So we are left, at the very least, with a kind of hyper-extensionalist semantics, something akin to what Furth finds in Parmenides.[23]

One would, of course, be hard pressed to find present-day defenders of the extreme semantics of (6) and (7). But two points are worth bearing in mind. First, as the subsequent tradition makes

[22] Curd, *Legacy*, 29, declares that (7) is a controversial claim and therefore 'one should expect Parmenides to argue for it rather than merely assert it'. But he does not merely assert it; rather, he asserts it on the basis of (6). This, of course, is also controversial. However, because (6), in effect, shifts the burden of proof to those who would deny it and (7), Parmenides' controversial claims gain probative force, especially in the light of the failure of Plato and many others to provide an acceptable alternative semantics.

[23] M. Furth, 'Elements of Eleatic Ontology' ['Elements'], *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 6 (1968), 111–32, repr. in A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Presocratics: A Collection of Critical Essays* [*Collection*] (Garden City, NY, 1974), 241–70. See also J. F. Pelletier, *Parmenides, Plato, and the Semantics of Not-Being* (Chicago, 1990), for a somewhat more systematic account of Furth's Parmenidean semantics.

evident, the view is not so easily dislodged. Second, the semantical basis of the Governing Deduction is precisely what proved so vexing to Parmenides' immediate successors. The atomists marshal a response to certain *results* of Parmenides' argument, in particular what I call the Deductive Consequences, but they fail completely to engage its semantical basis. Consequently, they do not respond to the Governing Deduction at all. Plato, on the other hand, takes Parmenidean semantics seriously in developing his analysis in the *Sophist* of not-being and false belief. The Eleatic strategy—arguing for an ontological conclusion, (8), on the basis of a semantical thesis, (7)—is startlingly innovative; and Plato, in effect, concedes its brilliance in charging himself with the task of constructing an alternative semantics for negative statements.[24]

There is a final point concerning my dismissal above of the so-called Berkeleian conditionals, (*c*) and (*c*′), as starting-points for the Governing Deduction on the grounds that they are shamelessly permissive—after all, they license the existence of anything that is thought, or can be thought. However, a kindred conditional resurfaces in the body of the Governing Deduction because (7) is equivalent to

(7′) (*x*)(*x* can be thought of→*x* is),

and (7′) certainly appears to be every bit as 'Berkeleian' as (*c*) or (*c*′). Recall, however, that, against Barnes, I rated the tag 'Berkeleian' inappropriate because neither (*c*) nor (*c*′) requires that what exists (or is) is itself an idea.[25] The same applies to (7′), but this is cold comfort in so far as (7′) still appears to license the actual existence (or being) of anything that *can* be thought. This is unwanted. The key to avoiding such unseemliness is the realization that conditionals such as (7′) require interpretation in order to assess their force. Read permissively, (7′) is a wide-open inference ticket for existence—if you can think it, you've got it. Read restrictively, on the other hand, it constrains objects of possible thought—if it does not actually exist, you cannot think it. The restrictive reading is most congenial for our reconstruction of the Governing Deduction,

[24] This also explains why Melissus remains a lesser player in the tradition, despite recent attempts at upgrading (for example, Barnes, *Philosophers*, and Palmer, *Parmenides*). Simply put, his deductions are not philosophically gripping; those of Parmenides are, chiefly because they employ a potent semantic thesis.

[25] I am pleased to see that D. Gallop (ed., trans., comm.), *Parmenides of Elea: Fragments* [*Elea*] (Toronto, 1984), 32 n. 23, shares this reservation about Barnes.

and, as it turns out, the restrictive reading better accords with the balance of the argument of *WT*, especially the austere results of the Deductive Consequences in fragment 8. So I shall adopt it, and thus effectively eliminate (7′) as a threat to our reconstruction.

## 3. Path I and the Corollary to the Governing Deduction

By establishing (8), the Governing Deduction secures the modal extension reading of Path II as the path of what is not and what cannot be. Moreover, (8) rules out as impossible one of the two options that present themselves to the mind as candidates for enquiry, namely, that which is not. This is just the right disjunct in (2)'s consequent, and so we are left with the left disjunct as the only viable candidate. In short, (8) and (2) are designed to entail (3), which restricts enquiry to that which is or things that are. The modal extension for what is not is given as the right-hand disjunct of (1a). Path I, the left-hand disjunct of (1a), is formulated in parallel language—as the path of what is and what cannot not be. This exceeds the entailment in (3), which lacks modal force. But Parmenides is clearly committed to the modal addition for Path I. Can we, then, salvage Parmenides' logical credentials by establishing the modal extension reading for the left-hand side of (1a)? Or must this, at least, remain as a logical blunder? Here a good deal depends on how we read the opening lines of fragment 6, which contain the Corollary to the Governing Deduction. First, however, we need to look at a suggestion that will not work.

Now some might try to fashion an argument for modal extension for Path I by appealing to *WT*'s global strategy, in particular, to the fact that it begins from LEM—more exactly, a necessitated version of LEM. Informally, the idea is that if it is necessary that one of a pair of alternatives obtain and if one of the alternatives fails to obtain, then the remaining alternative must obtain *and* must be a necessary truth. I have found this informal idea to enjoy surprising intuitive appeal. And, of course, were it probatively sound, modal extension would follow as a matter of course. Unhappily, the idea is wrong-headed. More formally, it represents Parmenides as endorsing the following pattern of reasoning:

(9) $\Box(x)(x \text{ is} \vee x \text{ is not}) \wedge \neg(\exists x)(x \text{ is not}) \rightarrow \Box(x)(x \text{ is})$.

However, (9) is modally flawed. The general schema underlying (9), '$\Box(p \vee \neg p) \wedge \neg(\neg p) \rightarrow \Box p$', has obvious counter-examples. For example, let $p$ be the prosaic truth that Quine is fine. Even the most ardent devotees of desert landscapes will reject this as a necessary truth. So we must reject (9), which locates necessity in what is inferred. We may, however, adopt with confidence a corresponding principle that locates necessity in the inference, namely,

(9*) $\Box((x)(x \text{ is} \vee x \text{ is not}) \wedge \neg(\exists x)(x \text{ is not}) \rightarrow (x)(x \text{ is}))$,

which is a special case of the rule '$\Box((p \vee \neg p) \wedge \neg\neg p \rightarrow p)$'.[26] So, given (9*)'s antecedent conditions, it may be necessary *that* the consequent hold, but what holds, the consequent itself, need not be a necessary truth. It is simply the lean truth that (any) $x$ is. While this may restore validity, it does so at the risk of constraining Path I to the uninformative truism that if anything is, then it is. Parmenides surely meant more than this. Moreover, Path I and Path II are formulated in parallel language. Because the latter boasts the stronger idiom 'what cannot be', Path I also calls for something stronger. Clearly, this global strategy for modal extension fails.

So let us consider another attempt based more narrowly on the text containing the Corollary to the Governing Deduction, beginning with a look at the lines in question:

> What is there to be said and thought must needs be [*χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι*], for being is possible [*ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι*] whereas nothing [what is not] is not [possible] [*μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν*]. (fr. 6. 1–2)

In taking Parmenides to say that whatever can be said or thought 'must needs be', I take him, uncontroversially, to be talking about what is. So the lead clause asserts that what is must needs be. He thus at once revisits fragment 2's characterization of Path I as the path of what is and cannot not be and preserves the linguistic parallel with the characterization of what is not as what *cannot* be. Both points are lost if the line's modal force is weakened to necessity of inference—that is, if the line is read: 'it is necessary that what is (said or thought) is'.[27]

[26] More generally yet, it is a special case of the familiar principle: '$(p \vee q) \wedge \neg q \rightarrow p$, taking $p$ as '$x$ is' and $q$ as '$x$ is not'.

[27] As in J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 3rd edn. (London, 1920), 124: 'It needs must be that what can be spoken and thought *is* . . .'. Rather, I read the modal force of the line in agreement with Barnes, *Philosophers*, 158: 'What is for saying and for thinking of must be . . .'.

Unfortunately, it is not obvious how to extract anything stronger from fr. 6. 1–2. Indeed, on what I shall call the 'standard reading' of the fragment, either Parmenides does not attempt to argue for modal extension or he delivers a baldly fallacious argument. Omitting quantifiers, the standard reading begins, reasonably, by taking the explanatory *γάρ*-clause ('for being is possible . . .') to assert

(9a) ($x$ is$\rightarrow x$ can be)$\wedge$($x$ is not$\rightarrow x$ cannot be).

Then, (9a) somehow entails what is asserted in the lead clause; so it is supposed to yield[28]

(9b) $x$ is thought of$\rightarrow x$ must be.

Linguistically, the consequent of (9b) corresponds to the modal addition for Path I. So (9b) might be thought to serve the cause of modal extension. But this is difficult service. For consider two ways one might link (9a) and (9b), both taking (9a) as the entailing condition. According to the first, (9a) entails

(9c) $\Box$($x$ is thought of$\rightarrow x$ is);

according to the second, (9a) entails

(9d) ($x$ is thought of$\rightarrow\Box x$ is).

The second formula, (9d), could serve the cause of modal extension because its consequent says that what is, i.e. what is thought, *necessarily* is. Unfortunately, however, (9d) does not follow from (9a). Even supposing, correctly, that LEM, in the form of (1), is an underlying assumption of the argument, the inference depends on the schema $(p\vee q)\wedge\Diamond p\wedge\Box\neg q\rightarrow\Box p$, but this is patently invalid. On the other hand, by adding a simple assumption we *can* get (9c) from (9a). Begin with the fact that (9a) is equivalent to the intriguing thesis

(9a*) $x$ can be$\equiv x$ is.[29]

[28] Assuming, again, that what is thought of and what is are interchangeable in this context.

[29] (9a*) is intriguing in part because it echoes the sort of modal realism championed by David Lewis. If we are correct, however, even were Parmenides to include (9a*) in his bag of tricks (he may, at any rate, hold the right-to-left conditional as a logical effect of (8), or (8*) below), he would flee Lewis's ontological exuberance, preferring a deflationary reading of the equivalence.

Thus, from (9a) and the simple assumption

(9e) $\Box$($x$ is thought of$\rightarrow x$ can be),

we can infer (9c). But, of course, (9c) gives us necessity of inference, not necessity of what is inferred. So on the standard reading, fragment 6 contains no argument for the modal extension of Path I, at least no valid argument.[30]

So two strategies, one global and one based more narrowly on the opening two lines of fragment 6, fail to secure modal extension for Path I. None the less, Parmenides clearly is committed to the modal extension. Without a supporting argument, however, this amounts to embracing the modal equivalence reading of Path I and, therewith, revives the charge of logical incompetence. Fortunately, an argument free of these worries is available. The argument I shall propose possesses this virtue and also provides a novel solution to our problem.

Let me begin with remarks about the logical form of the argument, and then consider its textual warrant. Recall that the modal extension reading of the opening characterization of Path I, the left-hand side of (1a), promises not an immediate inference but an extended argument that takes us from '$x$ is' to '$x$ necessarily is'. Can we supply such an argument? Well, suppose that the inference fails: that is, suppose that

(10) $(x)$($x$ is$\rightarrow\Box x$ is)

is false. In that case, the antecedent of (10) would have to be true but its consequent false. That is, there would have to be something that is but is not necessary. This is just

(11) $(\exists x)$($x$ is$\wedge\neg\Box x$ is).

Proposition (11), in turn, is equivalent to

(12) $(\exists x)$($x$ is$\wedge\Diamond\neg x$ is),

or, in our more familiar, and informal, idiom,

(12*) $(\exists x)$($x$ is$\wedge\Diamond x$ is not).

[30] Apart from the wrong target, the standard reading has its own problems. In relying on (9e), it invites the same counter-examples that were brought against ($c'$) in sect. 2. Simply let $x$ be *the set of all sets not members of themselves*. I am currently thinking about it, and one thing I correctly think about it is just that it cannot be.

The quantifier in (12*) may be distributed across conjunction; hence, (12*) entails

(13) $(\exists x)\Diamond$($x$ is not).

So if (12*) is true, then so is (13). Proposition (13) asserts that there is something that possibly is not. It follows from (11), which is the negation of (10). So (13) must be true if the entailment registered in (10) is false. By the same token, however, if (13) is false, (10) is true, and the modal extension for Path I would be established.

Parmenides' attitude towards (13) is, I think, clear. The first line of fragment 6 above declares '*what is there to be said and thought* must needs be', and this is immediately linked to the strong proscription against thought about what is not. So somehow the Governing Deduction will be used to establish the modal extension for what is. How? First, because what is is possible nothing blocks our inferring that 'what is there to be said and thought' is something that *is*. Second, because what is not is not possible the modal extension is somehow mandated. But *exactly* how does this go?

First, a linguistic point. What Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (*Philosophers*) translate as 'nothing is not' (*μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν*), I take to assert that what is not is not possible, with Kahn ('Thesis') taking *οὐκ ἔστιν* as denial of possibility. Perhaps more controversially, I take 'nothing' as a synonym for 'what is not'. Here I follow Barnes, who adduces fragment 8 in support of the claim of synonymy.[31] There Parmenides denies that something can come from what is not (*οὐδ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος*), and this is glossed a few lines later as denying that something can begin from nothing (*τοῦ μηδενός*).[32] Finally, what Barnes does not mention, the passage reaffirms the maxim that decision in matters of coming to be must be made in terms of 'it is or it is not' (*ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν*). This is just the canonical idiom of the Governing Deduction, and so the textual warrant is present.

How, then, precisely, is the modal extension forthcoming? Well, the conclusion of the Governing Deduction, (8), asserts that what is not cannot be. We may take this to say that it is impossible that there is something that is not, which I shall write as

[31] Barnes, *Philosophers*, 166.

[32] J. H. M. M. Loenen, *Parmenides, Melissus, Gorgias*: *A Reinterpretation of Eleatic Philosophy* (Assen, 1959), 77–8, connects *μηδέν* with *τὸ μὴ ἐόν* in fragment 2. He argues that the expressions are synonymous and that because *τὸ μὴ ἐόν* cannot mean 'nothing' but only 'what is not', *μηδέν* can only mean 'what is not'. I report the argument without endorsement.

(8*) $\neg\Diamond(\exists x)(x \text{ is not})$.

We may regard (8*) as the main upshot of the Governing Deduction, and I shall often refer to it, along with (8), as the conclusion of that argument. For suppose someone asserts something countenancing what is not. By (8), the asserter is immediately committed to the impossibility of what is countenanced. This is just (8*).[33] The modal extension for Path I is, then, forthcoming by combining (8*) with (13). For given the entailment

(13a) $(\exists x)\Diamond(x \text{ is not}) \rightarrow \Diamond(\exists x)(x \text{ is not})$,

we may export (13)'s possibility sign and so get

(13b) $\Diamond(\exists x)(x \text{ is not})$.

Thus, (13) formally yields (13b). But (13) resulted from (11), the denial of the modal extension for what is, and therefore (13b) also results from (11). However, (8*), the conclusion of the Governing Deduction, directly contradicts (13b). Parmenides, of course, takes (8*) to be true. So, its negation, (13b), is false and, therefore, the supposition that led to (13b), namely (11), must be rejected. But (11) is just the negation of (10). Therefore, we must affirm (10), which is the modal extension for what is. Hence, the modal extension reading for Path I is deductively established as a Corollary of the Governing Deduction.

## 4. Modal extension and the third path

Thanks to modal extension, Parmenides can embrace what is as a subject of enquiry, and exclude what is not, without threat of modal fallacy. The deductions establishing these results are the chief deductive sequences of the opening sections of *WT*. Despite declaring that Path I and Path II comprise the only paths of enquiry that offer themselves to the mind, Parmenides follows the Corollary to the Governing Deduction with an attack on what appears to be a third path, namely, the path of what is *and* is not. With inessentials redacted, here again is the goddess:

[33] Of course, (8*) is forthcoming from (7) of the Governing Deduction because in prohibiting thought about what is not, (7) prohibits the very thing that (*8) declares impossible. So there is doubly no doubt of the Governing Deduction's commitment to (8*).

But then also ⟨I bar⟩[34] you from that [path] on which mortals wander knowing nothing . . . dazed and undiscriminating hordes, who believe that being and not being are the same and not the same; and the path taken by them all is backward-turning. (fr. 6. 4–9)

Notice that Parmenides does not promote this as a path of enquiry on a par with Path I and Path II. Those were paths that presented themselves *a priori* for consideration. Here the target appears to be the received beliefs of ordinary people—the 'undiscriminating hordes'. But ordinary people do not advertise themselves as holding that being and not being are the same and not the same. So the complaint, presumably, is that they are committed to this by various things they do own up to believing. Parmenides appears to be addressing just this in fragment 7,[35] where he scorns beliefs extracted from experience and the senses, and complains that such beliefs encourage the thought that what is not is.[36]

Well, what is the argument against this third path? Apart from verbal abuse, it is not clear that fr. 6. 4–9 contains much of an argument at all. In suggesting that 'backward-turning' means contradictory, Kirk, Raven, and Schofield may wish to give the passage probative punch.[37] And, indeed, if the third path immediately embraces a contradiction, there would be warrant for this. However, this line of reasoning appears to represent ordinary people as committed to an outright contradiction of the crudest sort. Indeed, twice committed: first, they identify *being* and *not being*, when they

[34] Diels filled the lacuna at fr. 6. 3 with *εἴργω*. This makes the goddess reject the so-called mixed path and raises the question of exactly how that path is to be rejected. Most commentators, including Gallop (*Elea*), follow Diels. On the other hand, N.-L. Cordero, 'Les deux chemins de Parménide dans les fragments 6 et 7' ['Chemins'], *Phronesis*, 24 (1979), 1–32, and Nehamas, 'Ways', supply a form of the verb *ἄρχειν* and thereby find the goddess affirming, rather than denying, the mixed path. On this reading, fragment 6 promises two paths of enquiry corresponding to the *Way of Truth* and the *Way of Opinion*. In sect. 7 I consider, and reject, a brace of arguments for the Cordero–Nehamas reading.

[35] With Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (*Philosophers*): 'For never shall this be forcibly maintained, that things that are not are, but you must hold back your thought from this way of enquiry, nor let habit, born of much experience, force you down this way, by making you use an aimless eye or an ear and a tongue full of meaningless sound: judge by reason the strife-encompassed refutation spoken by me.'

[36] It is, of course, tempting to make Heraclitus the target in fr. 6. 4–9, and a number of scholars have suggested as much. While I have no principled objection to this reading, it may endow Parmenides with a heightened gift for irony. For his Heraclitus would be mired in the very predicament that plagues the dazed and undiscriminating hordes—precisely the crowd Heraclitus scorns.

[37] *Philosophers*, 247–8.

take them to be the same; second, by none the less recognizing their difference, they take them to be not the same as well as the same. Now, I suppose, this might be thought sufficient to reject the third path. However, quite apart from its implausible characterization of ordinary people's doxastic proclivities, this delivers up a softball for Parmenides to bat. In any event, his target is more interesting.

I shall, then, suppose, plausibly, that ordinary people are committed, not to the bold proposition that being and not being *themselves* are the same, but rather to the proposition that the same *thing* can be and not be. Sometimes this might plunge them into contradiction, but usually not. Thus, for example, Ortcut may be pale and not pale, thanks to his sabbatical on the beach at Roquebrune. This is a saner, and so more difficult, proposition to discredit, but all the same it is the sort of thing Parmenides will not tolerate. So the target propositions of the third path need not be explicit contradictions. Rather, they typically conjoin a contingent proposition with its negation, and these can be parsed in ways that easily avoid contradiction. And because such propositions are typically available on the basis of perception and perceptual beliefs, unlike Paths I and II this third path does not arise from the mind's reflection on an *a priori* truth. Hence, the third path is canonically downgraded.

Let us, then, take the so-called third path to range over contingent being and not being, and, further, let us suppose that its 'is' and 'is not' are broadly construed to cover both complete and incomplete being.[38] As such we may represent the third path as embracing 'truths' of the form

(14a) $x$ is and is not.

The third path does not aspire to universality. So it yields to a formulation with particular quantifiers. Taking the frame '$x$ is' to indicate a contingent connection, there will be a third path so long as the existential closure of (14a) is true, i.e.

(14b) $(\exists x)(x \text{ is} \wedge x \text{ is not})$.

Because, here, being (something) or not being (something) is not a matter of necessity, the third path imposes the following constraint on anything that is the value of '$x$' in (14b):

[38] This is a point of convenience, not a requirement. The argument will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to contingent existence alone.

(14c) $(x)([x \text{ is} \wedge \Diamond x \text{ is not}] \wedge [x \text{ is not} \wedge \Diamond x \text{ is}])$.

That is, (14c) is to be read as holding for whatever lies on the third path. In (14c) we may take the contingent connection as '*x* is' or as '*x* is such and such' and, on the negative side, as '*x* is not' or as '*x* is not such and such'. So the third path considers things that are (or are such and such) but possibly are not (or are not such and such) and things that are not (or are not such and such) but possibly are (or are such and such).

Our question now is how, in a logically acceptable way, Parmenides rules out the third path understood as the path of contingent being. One of the few broadly held opinions about *WT* is that, however construed, the third way is ruled out by Parmenides' attack on Path II. And, indeed, fragment 7 suggests as much when it reaffirms the proscription against Path II and immediately warns against following the sights and sounds that infuse the third path rather than heeding the call of reason on display in the Governing Deduction. This is undoubtedly correct, but the question at hand is how exactly this works.

It turns out, or so I shall argue, that the third path can be eliminated only if we adopt the modal extension reading of (1a)/(1a*), i.e. the reading established by the Governing Deduction. Why this is so can be seen by revisiting Mourelatos's version of the modality of the two paths. Recall, he denies that the paths consist of pairs of formulae—the initial formula, '*x* is' for Path I and '*x* is not' for Path II, plus a modal conjunct for each, '*x* necessarily is' for the first path and '*x* necessarily is not' for the second. That is, he rejects our

(1a*) $(x)([x \text{ is} \wedge x \text{ necessarily is}] \vee [x \text{ is not} \wedge x \text{ necessarily is not}])$

in favour of

(1m) $(x)(x \text{ really is} \vee x \text{ really is not})$.

Because the phrases 'really is' and 'really is not' are intended to capture a single modal meaning, I shall abbreviate them, respectively, as '$\text{is}_r$' and '$\text{is}_r$ not'. So I write (1m) as

(1m*) $(x)(x \text{ is}_r \vee x \text{ is}_r \text{ not})$.

In (1m*) the subscripted phrases indicate that the modality in question is, in Mourelatos's phrase, an 'intrinsic feature' of 'is' or 'is

not'. According to Mourelatos, (1a*) is to be rejected because, unlike (1m*), it treats the modality as an addition.

There is no need to examine anew the reasons Mourelatos gives for adopting (1m*). For, if his story is correct, however motivated, the third path cannot be eliminated in a logically acceptable way. Now, in general terms, it is clear what is logically required, at least initially. First, as (14b) characterizes the third path, there is something that is not. But according to Path II, were there such a thing, then it would necessarily not be. So it is not possible for there to be something that is not, at least according to the conclusion of the Governing Deduction as presented in (8)/(8*). Therefore, the right conjunct of (14b) has a defeating entailment and must be rejected. Hence, there cannot be something that is not. *Ergo*, there cannot be something that is *and* is not. So the third path is gone. What could be easier?

The above story sets down a logical baseline of sorts. Unfortunately, it is a baseline that cannot be satisfied by Mourelatos's account. To see this it will help to introduce some additional modest regimentation. Let us begin by adding subscripts to keep uses of 'is' and 'is not' clear. In line with (14b) above, subscript 'c' will mark the contingent 'is' and 'is not' of the third path:

(14b′) $(\exists x)(x\ \text{is}_c \wedge x\ \text{is}_c\ \text{not})$.[39]

Mourelatos's version of Path II effectively merges the 'is not' and 'necessarily is not' of our (1a*), above. That is, his Path II is not the way of what is not *and* what necessarily is not, rather it is simply the way of what really is not—captured by subscripted '*r*' in (1m*). Presumably, for Mourelatos, the third path is to be eliminated by reflecting on the fact that *WT* bars investigation into what really is not. If so, Parmenides would be committed to the following thesis:

(1m**) $(x)(x\ \text{is}_r\ \text{not} \rightarrow x$ cannot be investigated),

Presumably, this somehow allows us to conclude,

(14b*) $(x)(x\ \text{is}_c \wedge x\ \text{is}_c\ \text{not} \rightarrow x$ cannot be investigated),

which excludes as the target of investigation anything that is the

[39] Again, I shall not worry about the fact that, as it stands, (14b′) is literally a contradiction. Because the 'is' in question is contingent, each side of (14b′) invites qualifications allowing the pair to hold jointly. I omit qualifiers here for ease of exposition.

value of the bound '*x*' in (14b′). In this way, the mixed path is ruled out.

Unfortunately, this course of reasoning is fatally flawed. The move from (1m**) to (14b*) depends on

(14b**) $(x)(x \text{ is}_c \text{ not} \rightarrow x \text{ is}_r \text{ not})$,

but (14b**) is false. By taking the plain 'is not' of Path II as, itself, from the start, modally laden, Mourelatos must deny that it has the same force as the 'is not' countenanced in the third way. In short, there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that something that $\text{is}_c$ not is therefore something that $\text{is}_r$ not. So this argument, which admittedly I am handing Mourelatos, fails to establish that there cannot be investigation of things that are not, in the contingent sense of the third way. Of course, Mourelatos might insist that (1m*), his version of *WT*'s governing dichotomy, leaves no room for third-way items. But this is not a logically pleasing move. For now Parmenides is made, again, to begin his fundamental deductive sequence with a patent falsehood (as we have pointed out in Section 1 above). More to our immediate concern, using (1m*) in this fashion simply begs the question against the viability of the third path. Surely, another interpretation is needed.

Crucially missing in Mourelatos's account is an effective strategy for dealing with contingent being and not being. Our modal extension reading achieves this in straightforward fashion. For now the 'is not' of the third way differs in no way from the 'is not' of Path II and entails 'necessarily is not' thanks to the Governing Deduction and its conclusion, (8)/(8*); likewise, the third way's 'is' differs in no way from the 'is' of Path I and entails 'necessarily is' thanks to the argument that establishes (10), the Corollary to the Governing Deduction. If, then, *x*'s *necessarily not being* follows from *x*'s *not being* by an independent argument, then the way is open for rejecting the third path without begging the question. For *now* we can go from the fact that *a*, a third-path item, is not to the fact that *a* cannot be. In fact, it turns out that, by itself, the conclusion of the Governing Deduction, namely (8), is sufficient to defeat *a*, or defeat its holding in some way or other.

More precisely, then, here is how to eliminate the third path. Start with our characterization of the third path as the path of contingent being and not being. We marked this above with

(14b′) $(\exists x)(x\ \text{is}_c \wedge x\ \text{is}_c\ \text{not})$.

But as (14c) makes clear, the subscript '*c*' is notational shorthand. Therefore, for the case of being$_c$ we have

(14d) $(x)(x\ \text{is}_c \rightarrow x\ \text{is} \wedge \Diamond x\ \text{is not})$,

and, similarly, not being$_c$ may be expanded as

(14e) $(x)(x\ \text{is}_c\ \text{not} \rightarrow x\ \text{is not} \wedge \Diamond x\ \text{is})$.

The consequent of (14e) is a conjunction, and as such it entails each conjunct separately; likewise for the consequent of (14d). So if *a* is$_c$ not *F*, then *a* is not *F*; and if *a* is$_c$ *F*, then it is possible that *a* is not *F*. Generalizing, this gives us

(14e*) $(x)(x\ \text{is}_c\ \text{not} \rightarrow x\ \text{is not})$,

and

(14d*) $(x)(x\ \text{is}_c \rightarrow \Diamond x\ \text{is not})$.

The consequent of each entailment is defeated by (8*), the conclusion of the Governing Deduction. As a modal formula, (8*) rules out the possibility broached in (14d*) as well as the plain negation in (14e*).[40] Therefore, on the strength of the Governing Deduction Parmenides is entitled to conclude not just that (14b′) is false but, more severely, that neither option stands. That is, he can enter

(14b″) $\neg(\exists x)(x\ \text{is}_c \vee x\ \text{is}_c\ \text{not})$

as the last line of his deduction. Plainly, (14b″) is more than enough to exclude investigation of the mixed path of fragment 6, for according to (14b″) there is nothing at all to investigate.[41] Thus, as before

[40] Indeed, the existential closure of the consequent of (14d*) amounts to the negation of (8*). For the existence of a value for the bound '*x*' of (14d*) yields a formula, $(\exists x)\Diamond(x\ \text{is not})$, that entails another that is the negation of (8*), namely $\Diamond(\exists x)(x\ \text{is not})$.

[41] According to the Corollary to the Governing Deduction, if something is, then it necessarily is. So the Corollary itself would exclude the possibility broached in the consequent of (14d*)—in short, there can be nothing that is and possibly is not. This in no way undercuts our claim that the Governing Deduction is essential to elimination of the mixed way. Indeed, because it was required to establish the Corollary to the Governing Deduction, the Governing Deduction itself is essential to eliminating the arm of the mixed way that promotes investigation of that which is$_c$. So its claim to global primacy holds.

with the Corollary to the Governing Deduction, so now modal extension serves the Eleatic cause by providing a means of eliminating the path of contingent being without begging the question or flouting logical scruples.[42]

[42] Compare now F. A. Lewis, 'Parmenides' Modal Fallacy' ['Fallacy'], *Phronesis*, 54 (2009), 1–8, who suggests that Parmenides 'eliminates' the third path thanks to 'an unacknowledged but illicit modal shift', namely, the shift from □(P→P) to the target entailment (P→□P). Asserted on its own, the target entailment would amount to modal equivalence. But Lewis supposes, rather, that Parmenides holds the target entailment on the basis of an inference. So he is not charging Parmenides with the blunt fallacy involved in modal equivalence. All the same, the inference in question is a modal fallacy of daunting proportion. It is, of course, unclear that Parmenides deployed this inference, but attributing the shift to Parmenides would offer an explanation of his openness to modal equivalence, or at least to the implication from non-modal to modal formulae. As Lewis ('Fallacy', 5) puts it: 'the fallacy explains Parmenides' confidence' in the modal additions for Path I and Path II. Therefore, as Lewis sees it, Parmenides' elimination of the mixed path and of the path of what is not (Path II) rests on a logical blunder, and likewise for his modal upgrading of the path of what is (Path I). Happily, once modal equivalence is rejected in favour of modal extension, we can replace Parmenides' allegedly fallacious arguments with a trio of valid deductions, for there is no longer an immediate inference from P to □P, or from ¬P to □¬P; nor is there any need to resort to Lewis's modal fallacy to shore up these inferences. The valid arguments are reconstructed in sects. 2, 3, and 4.

The above consideration notwithstanding, Lewis's rendition of Parmenides' argument against the mixed way enjoys a measure of elegance. He concludes that if P is true, then ¬P is impossible, and if ¬P is true, then P is impossible; so 'the choice he [Parmenides] offers—one or the other, *but not both*—is eminently reasonable' given the illicit modal shift mentioned above, namely, the shift from P (or ¬P) to its necessitated match, □P (or □¬P). Let us set aside the issue of validity, which I have claimed for my reconstruction of the argument against the mixed way. An issue remains, namely, what sort of investigation is actually ruled out on Lewis's version of the argument. With Lewis, I presume that the mixed path is a path of contingent items or states of affairs. I also take it that Parmenides wishes to exclude any investigation into such contingencies. Here also we appear to be in agreement: witness Lewis's remark, 'Parmenides' great poem works towards the austere metaphysics of the *Way of Truth* at its center . . .'. Unfortunately, the promise of austerity is defeated by the terms of his argument. For where P is contingent, Lewis's account allows investigation of P, so long as one does not also presume to investigate ¬P, what is now deemed impossible. Alternatively, but of course less inviting, one could investigate ¬P, so long as P is not also investigated. Lewis cannot block this option by appeal to the General Argument's proscription against investigation of what is not because he holds that elimination of the mixed path proceeds independently of the earlier argument. According to Lewis, then, we are left with 'one or the other, *but not both*'. However, this means that nothing blocks investigating myriad contingent matters of an affirmative cast, and this hardly squares with the promise of an austere metaphysics. Furthermore, it is an entirely apt characterization of those items populating the changing and developing world of nature, precisely the world of interest to the Ionian natural philosophers. Consequently, Lewis may inadvertently align himself with what in sect. 7 I label the 'Ionian Interpretation', namely, the view that Parmenides welcomes, and even continues, the tradition of the natural philosophers of Ionia.

## 5. A covert fallacy in the Governing Deduction?

As reconstructed in Section 2 above, the Governing Deduction is valid, at least as far as its surface logic is concerned. There are, however, two 'deeper' problems that must be addressed, the most illustrious of which is the problem of self-defeat, namely, whether the argument itself is unthinkable. The next section offers a solution to this problem. In this section I focus on a key premiss in the argument for (8), the conclusion of the Governing Deduction. The worry I have in mind is fundamental, despite the fact that it has not been addressed by Parmenides' commentators.

The penultimate move in the deduction, namely (7), requires that there can be no thought of what is not. Although some commentators take this as an unargued premiss, Parmenides in fact derives (7) from an assumption about thought, namely,

(6) $(x)$($x$ can be thought of$\rightarrow x$ can be recognized or indicated).

It is this premiss that imports hyper-extensionalist semantics into Parmenides' argument. Although some might challenge (6), I shall treat it as a substantive, albeit provocative, thesis about objects of thought. It may call for a response, but the response will be an alternative theory of thought rather than the unmasking of a fallacy. However, (6) yielded (7) with the help of

(5) $(x)$($x$ is not$\rightarrow x$ cannot be recognized or indicated),

and (5) is an assumption of more than a little interest. Stripped of modal trapping, (5) could represent a defensible position, especially if read as a constraint on what does not *exist*. For if *a* does not exist, how indeed is it to be recognized or indicated? This appears to treat recognition and indication as quasi-indexical notions. In Section 2 I argued that this is how Parmenides treats the pair of notions; thus, where *a* does not exist there is nothing to be indicated. So, absent modality, (5) may be regarded as unexceptionable, at least for present purposes.

But, of course, (5) contains modal language and this is a cause for concern. A simple question cuts to the heart of the issue: why should the fact that something *does* not exist entail that it *can*not be indicated? Less obvious than the fallacy usually found in the Go-

verning Deduction,[43] many will count this as a covert modal fallacy, but a fallacy none the less. We may sharpen the issue by supposing that (5) is false, for if (5) is an entailment, then the supposition that it is false should lead to a contradiction.[44] Therefore, if this supposition yields no such inconsistency, then (5) cannot be an entailment. Precisely this will be maintained by those who think (5) contains a covert modal fallacy.

The worry can be sharpened with some modest regimentation. Canonically streamlined, (5) can be represented as

(5a) $(x)(x \text{ is not} \rightarrow \neg\Diamond x \text{ is indicated})$.

So if (5) is false, it must be the case that

(5b) $(\exists x)(x \text{ is not} \wedge \Diamond x \text{ is indicated})$.

An advocate of modal fallacy will urge that there is no reason to take issue with (5b), not even a reason of Eleatic cast. Hence, (5a) cannot be an entailment. This point might be thought to emerge especially clearly when (5b) is framed in the idiom of possible worlds. Thus, let (5b) be parsed as

(5b*) $(\exists x)(\text{in } w_1, x \text{ is not} \wedge x \text{ is indicated in some } w)$.

In (5b*) $w_1$ is the actual world, the world in which something is not. So (5b*) says that there is something (that is not) in the actual world, and although it may not be indicated in that world, there is some world in which this thing exists and is indicated. In fairness, we must, I think, grant that whatever is not, i.e. whatever is not in the actual world, is not indicated in the actual world. So (5b*) is constrained by

(5c) $(\exists x)(\text{in } w_1, x \text{ is not} \wedge x \text{ is indicated in some } w \rightarrow w_1 \neq w)$.

In short, the world in which *a is* not cannot be the world in which *a* is indicated. But this does not prevent *a* from being indicated in some *other* world.

[43] This 'usual' fallacy is just the fallacy of modal equivalence. By replacing modal equivalence with modal extension, in sects. 2 and 3 above, we were able to spare Parmenides that logical embarrassment. Formula (5), on the other hand, calls for different therapy.

[44] Following W. V. O. Quine, *Methods of Logic* [*Methods*] (New York, 1966), 100: 'One schema implies another if and only if the one in conjunction with the other's negation is inconsistent.'

So the idea is that rejecting (5a) requires just that there is some world in which *a* is indicated, and so it cannot be the case that *a*, which is not, *cannot* be indicated. Therefore, (5b)/(5b*) is arguably true, and its negation, (5a), is arguably false. But (5a) is just a canonical version of (5). Therefore, (5) is no entailment, and so Parmenides appears to commit a modal fallacy in the Governing Deduction.

There is, however, room for Eleatic manœuvring. What lends an air of plausibility to the rejection of (5) is the presumption that to declare that '*a* is not in $w_1$' is to declare that '*a* does not *exist* in $w_1$' but does exist in some other *w* and is indicated in *that* world. That is, the rejection in question honours the intuition that one can indicate only something that exists, and so a world in which *a* is indicated must be a world in which *a* exists. But this world need not be the actual world, $w_1$. Thus, (5c) is to be construed as

(5c) $(\exists x)$(in $w_1$, $x$ is not$\wedge x$ exists in some $w \wedge x$ is indicated in $w \rightarrow w_1 \neq w$).

In (5c*), the 'is' in the frame '*x* is not' is read as an existential 'is'. Some might think this courts incoherence by declaring that there exists something such that it does not exist. Advocates of modal fallacy would, of course, regard this as unfriendly because (5c) is, in effect, a logical transformation of (5b), the negation of (5). But they may rightly reply that (5c*) says just that there exists something that does not exist in $w_1$, but does exist in some other world, and surely this is coherent. Still, for some the iteration of 'exists' may rankle. Although this might be cause for caution, I shall not press the point. For all along we have employed the quantifier chiefly as an artefact of reconstruction, reserving serious interpretation of 'is' for the open sentences of the dichotomy '*x* is or *x* is not'. It would be tendentious in the extreme to deny this to those now faulting (5). So does this, finally, defeat (5)?

Surprisingly, it does not. For one thing, all parties agree that nothing can be indicated unless it exists. So Eleatic defenders of (5) and their opponents agree to

(5d) $(x)(w)$($x$ is not in $w \rightarrow x$ is not indicated in $w$).

That is, any world in which something is indicated will have to be a world in which it is. So, instantiating with *a* and letting $w_1$ be the

actual world, in rejecting (5) advocates of modal fallacy are committed to

(5e) $a$ is not in $w_1 \wedge a$ is not indicated in $w_1 \wedge a$ is in $w_k$ $(\neq w_1) \wedge a$ is indicated in $w_k$.

More precisely, these opponents of Parmenides embrace an *existential* version of (5e):

(5f) $a$ does not exist in $w_1 \wedge a$ is not indicated in $w_1 \wedge a$ exists in $w_k$ $(\neq w_1) \wedge a$ is indicated in $w_k$.

So it appears after all that $a$ can be indicated even though it may not actually exist. Despite appearances, however, (5f) is inconclusive against (5) because an exclusively existential reading of '$x$ is not' is arguably out of place in the Eleatic scheme. In fact, our reconstruction of the Governing Deduction presumed that the 'is' figuring in Path I and Path II is a broad 'is' limited neither to 'exists' nor to the predicative 'is'. On this basis we were able to provide a consistent reading of the Governing Deduction, the Corollary to the Governing Deduction, and Parmenides' rejection of the so-called third path, the path of what is and is not.

Indeed, if the 'is' in question is this broad 'is', then (5e) is arguably false. To see why, suppose we call what corresponds to '_is not' in the antecedent the 'antecedent property' and what corresponds to '_is not indicated' in the consequent the 'consequent property'. If, then, (5) is false, it must be possible for the antecedent property to hold of a thing but not the consequent property. That is, there must be a world in which something has the antecedent property but does not have the consequent property. Let me illustrate the point with a clear case. Suppose that I maintain that if something is a creature with a heart, then it is necessarily a creature with a kidney. To upset this modal claim, one needs to argue that there is a world in which something is a creature with a heart but not a creature with a kidney. If there is no such world, then the modal claim holds. Or, to bring the clear case more in line with (5), suppose I maintain that if something is not a creature with a kidney, then necessarily it is not a creature with a heart. Defeating this requires holding that there is a world in which something is not a creature with a kidney but is a creature with a heart. When understood broadly, 'is not' behaves similarly—if something has the antecedent property *not being* in the actual world, then it must have it in the alternative world. What is at

issue is whether the thing *also* has the consequent property *not being indicated* in the alternative world. For those who detect a modal fallacy in (5), the answer must be negative.

The case, then, that is available to the advocates of modal fallacy is not (5f) but

(5g) $a$ is not in $w_1 \wedge a$ is not indicated in $w_1 \wedge a$ is not in $w_k$ $(\neq w_1) \wedge$ $a$ is indicated in $w_k$.

For (5g), but not (5f), satisfies predicate uniformity across possible worlds for the antecedent property, because the possibilities available to $a$ are just those available to an item that has the property *not being*. This is true because the broad 'is' cannot be limited to existential force, but also enjoys predicative force.[45] But (5g) obviously clashes with (5d), which precludes indicating $a$ in a world where $a$ is not. So the advocates of modal fallacy will have to choose. If they accept (5d), (5g) will have to be rejected, and their case against the Eleatic principle (5) collapses. If, on the other hand, they reject (5d), then they simply deny the Eleatic maxim that should $a$ not exist in a given world, then $a$ is not indicated in that world. By denying the maxim, they may indict Parmenides for saying something false but not for committing a modal fallacy. Furthermore, by simply denying (5d), the advocates of modal fallacy artlessly beg the question.

I conclude that there is an Eleatic manœuvre for blunting the charge that (5) embraces a modal fallacy. Of course, we need to be clear that a non-trivial presumption lies behind the manœuvre, as I have presented it. This is that *WT* employs a broad 'is' in executing the three deductions we have reconstructed. Although this is a non-trivial presumption, it is hardly out of court. It is, for instance, no more *outré* than Furth's ascription of a fused 'is' to Parmenides. Moreover, ascription of a broad 'is' is recommended by its utility in reconstructing an argument that spares Parmenides a number of logical mistakes, especially in the Governing Deduction, and that offers a satisfying strategy for eliminating the third path. All this has been detailed in Sections 2, 3, and 4 above.

[45] This, of course, puts *not being* on a par with *not having a kidney* as featured in the above paragraph. Even clearer is a case like *not being a singer* and *not being a soprano*. Here the parallel to (5) is the claim that if Ortcut is not a singer, then necessarily Ortcut is not a soprano. This seems correct, for there is no world such that in that world Ortcut is not a singer but is a soprano. Likewise for (5), read with the broad Eleatic 'is': there is no world in which something is not but is indicated.

Beyond this, one crucial feature of the broad 'is', namely its disjunctive force, enjoys ancient credentials. When Aristotle famously denies that *being* is a genus, he outlaws a single univocal reading for 'is' and allied predicates such as 'is something', 'is something that is', 'is a being', etc. The *Categories* presents ten irreducibly different kinds of things that are, and in doing so gives the cash value of his slogan 'being is said in many ways'. None the less, he speaks of the categories as the highest kinds of *being*. In the idiom of *Categories* 2, they are divisions of things that *are* (*τῶν ὄντων*). Here 'things that are' receives broad scope, covering anything that is a substance, or a quality, or a quantity, and so on. So the *Categories* endows *being* with a disjunctive force similar to what we have located in the Eleatic 'is'. Further, in *Metaphysics Δ* 7 Aristotle's dictionary entry begins by asserting that that which is (*τὸ ὄν*) may be said coincidentally or in its own right, where the latter captures the senses of being demarcated in the *Categories*. It proceeds to add that 'being' (*τὸ εἶναι*) and 'is' (*τὸ ἔστιν*) can also signify that something is true. And lastly, 'to be' (*τὸ εἶναι*) and 'that which is' (*τὸ ὄν*) may signify that something is potentially or is in complete actuality. These are all variations of *being*, and so again a broad 'is' spans all these uses. This fact about Greek philosophical usage enhances our claim that *WT* employs a broad 'is' in the specification of Path I and Path II.[46] So these paths need not be restricted to an existential 'is' and, therefore, the allegation that (5) commits a modal fallacy has considerable ground to make up. For that allegation was fuelled by the exclusively existential reading we abjure.[47]

[46] To be clear, I am not claiming that Aristotle's distinction of kinds of being in the *Categories* embraces an 'is' that spans existential and predicative being, but only that it gives ample evidence of a disjunctive 'is'. I maintain a like modesty about the material from *Metaphysics Δ* 7. *Posterior Analytics* 2. 2 talks of something's being this or that, or being *simpliciter* (*ἁπλῶς*). If the latter welcomes an existential 'is', then Aristotle may after all be distributing 'is' across existential and predicative uses.

[47] Worries about (5)'s modal health were pressed on me by my student Mr Erik Johnson. In particular, he has produced a thorough, and thoroughly pessimistic, appraisal of (5)'s modal ills, when '*x* is not' is read as '*x* does not exist'. Since I read the 'is' in question differently, I hope to avoid the astute criticisms Johnson brings against (5).

## 6. Self-defeat and the second-order defence of the Governing Deduction

Courtesy of the Governing Deduction, modal extension for Path I and Path II is on firm logical ground, and, therefore, (1a*) is also logically secure as the fundamental dichotomy of *WT*. But what of the Governing Deduction itself? Only the recreational reader will fail to notice that the argument is a logical danger to itself. After all, it concludes, in (8)/(8*), that what is not cannot be and does so by using, in (7), a claim that brooks paradox, namely, the claim that what is not cannot be thought of. Oddly, only a handful of commentators have taken the concern seriously. One who does is Owen,[48] and it will repay looking closely at what he says.

Owen comments that for Parmenides 'the nonexistent cannot be thought or spoken' and, further, that the Eleatic asserts that 'there is no such thing as what is not'.[49] Waiving Owen's gloss 'non*existent*',[50] the first of these corresponds to step (7) of the Governing Deduction and the second matches its conclusion, (8*). The trouble is that the sort of argument Parmenides undertakes in the Governing Deduction requires him to say 'what his own conclusion should disable him from doing'. So if Parmenides' arguments are deductions, then they are 'patently self-defeating'. Or, rather, they are self-defeating if they parade as 'horizontal deductions'. This leads Owen to deny, literally, that they are deductions of this kind. Owen's denial implies, as Barnes rightly complains,[51] that there is something called a non-horizontal deduction. However, nothing answers to this notion, and so we must take Owen to be advancing the bold claim that Parmenides all along is not offering deductions. Of course, such a drastic measure will not be needed if the threat of self-defeat can be removed.

The spectre of self-defeat must be taken seriously by anyone who regards Parmenides as a practitioner of deductive reasoning.[52] It

[48] G. E. L. Owen, 'Plato and Parmenides on the Timeless Present' ['Timeless'], *Monist*, 50 (1966), 317–40, repr. in Mourelatos, *Collection*, 271–92, and in Owen, *Logic, Science, and Dialectic: Collected Papers in Greek Philosophy* [*Logic*], ed. M. Nussbaum (London, 1986), 27–44. Curd, *Legacy*, on the other hand, scarcely mentions the problem.

[49] Owen, 'Timeless', 321–2.

[50] Mindful of the fact that we favour a broad 'is' while others favour an 'is' of predication or a fused 'is'.

[51] Barnes, *Philosophers*, 177.

[52] Curd, *Legacy*, thinks that the problem of self-defeat vanishes once existence is relinquished as the value of 'is'. Apparently, she thinks that the problem holds only

confronts us directly because the version of the Governing Deduction I have presented in (4)–(8) of Section 2 *is* a deduction. If Owen is right, the Governing Deduction itself invites self-refutation at two places. First, the conclusion, (8), mentions what is not and, second, a key step in the deduction, (7), proscribes thought about what is not. Therefore, not only does the conclusion violate the proscription it depends on, but also the proscription itself appears to refute itself, by requiring us to think about what cannot be thought about.

So, is the Governing Deduction self-defeating by violating its own proscription? The most grievous violation, of course, would be (7), since it appears to violate itself directly. Here again is the offending proposition:

(7) $(x)$($x$ is not $\rightarrow x$ cannot be thought of).

Now one might sanguinely insist that (7) is self-defeating only if it is thought, but that nothing about the Governing Deduction requires that it actually be thought. For all we know, the argument resides in divine logical space never to be touched by mortal minds. Indeed, some might urge that for just this reason Parmenides invokes the divine voice of the goddess. But, of course, this is too sanguine. The argument is not a divine soliloquy but is meant to persuade any reasoning soul, and so we may fairly assume that (7) is to be thought and spoken, and, thus, that it invites our concern about self-refutation.

Some might find it more promising to maintain that to think or say (7) is not to think or speak about what *is* not. For (7) does not assert that there *is* something that is the value of its bound '$x$', and so it is not forcing us to think about anything that *actually* is not. Rather, it asks us to think about what is the case, *if* there is something that is not, or, upgrading to counterfactual force, to think about what *would* be the case *were* there actually something that is not. A drawback of this gambit is that, from the start, we must suppose that 'what is not' ranges over items that are not actually so and so, or are not actually existing. Indeed, the gambit appears to proscribe

for putative thought about what does not *exist*. This cannot be correct. For, however we take the force of 'is', Parmenides proscribes thought about what *is* not in precisely this sense, whether it be 'exists', the predicative 'is', Furth's fused 'is', or our broad 'is'. Thus, the problem of self-defeat arises for one's 'is' of choice, whatever it may be.

thought about an actual thing that is, say, *not orange*, but to allow thought about an object that is *non-existent simpliciter*.[53] This is not a credible position to hand Parmenides. And, in any case, the range of thought should be sufficiently general to cover more than actual items, at least initially. So prudence counsels that we read (7) as licensing thought about what is not. In short, when I think or speak the proposition *if anything is not, then it cannot be thought of*, I appear to be thinking or speaking about what is not in some sense or other. How damaging is this?

The answer to this depends in part on what exactly Parmenides targets when he declares that what is not cannot be, i.e. (8)/(8*), and that what is not cannot be thought about, i.e. (7). Here it is useful to bear in mind the programme of his Ionian predecessors. Their commitment to explaining the natural world was a commitment to a world of particular objects, processes, and properties. By the same token, Parmenides can be seen as wrecking this programme by arguing that there simply are no such things. Now just this, I would argue, is one upshot of the 'signs' of what is, i.e. the Deductive Consequences of the Governing Deduction. Quite independently of this, however, it is entirely plausible to see Parmenides as directing his attack towards the natural world in all its particular detail and variety. Moreover, doing so suggests a plausible, even compelling, solution to the menace of self-defeat.

Let us begin by making explicit the predicament allegedly facing the Governing Deduction. Suppose, as verificationists once did, that someone maintains

(15) Only verifiable propositions are significant,

or, what is equivalent,

(15*) No unverifiable proposition is significant.

If we now ask whether (15) or (15*) is verifiable, the answer is surely negative. But then neither numbered proposition is significant. Hence, the verificationists' claim that only verifiable propositions are significant is itself not significant. This was sufficient to discourage all but the most hardened advocates of the verificationist criterion of meaning. More to the point, it is self-defeating to assert

[53] There being no possible case (to be proscribed by (7)) of an *actually* existing non-existent object.

(15) or (15*). Consider, now, parallels to (15) and (15*) for one of our worrisome Eleatic theses, namely, thesis (7). Thus, we have

(16) Only propositions about what is can be thought,

and its equivalent,

(16*) No proposition about what is not can be thought.

At first glance (16) and (16*) appear to be exact parallels to (15) and (15*); accordingly, they also appear to be self-defeating. Thus, (16*) is a proposition about what is not, but, as such, it appears to declare itself unthinkable. What could be more self-defeating?

In at least two respects, however, the parallels are inexact. First, unlike (15), which joins (15*) as a self-defeating proposition, (16), on its own, does not seem subject to the charge. Supposing it to be about what is gives no cause for worry about its thinkability. It is only when (16*) is brought into play that such worries surface. Still, it is surely an anomaly worth noting that a proposition is thinkable but not a proposition equivalent to it. This suggests that the parallel may not hold after all. A second difference confirms this. What (15) and (15*) aim for is a criterion according to which any proposition counts as allowable (i.e. as significant). It just happens that they themselves are disallowed by the criterion. And they are disallowed mainly because they are not about states of affairs that exhibit what might be called a verificationist base. Rather, they are general propositions *about such propositions*. Because both (15) and (15*) are what might be called 'higher order' propositions, one is no less objectionable than the other. This is why the situation with (16) is different. It concerns thought, but in this case there is no errant 'noetic base' that could be used to disallow it, along with (16*). Unlike (15) and (15*), there is no single thing about the form or content of (16) and (16*) that could be used logically to discredit the *pair*. So the question is whether this fact can be used to save (16*) from self-defeat. Such salvation would be welcome, if only because (16*) is equivalent to (16), which *is* allowed.

Now (16*) runs into trouble because, unlike (16), it purports to be about what is not. We need a uniform treatment of (16) and (16*) that acknowledges this fact about (16*), but allows it to manœuvre without self-defeat and to force the conclusion of the Governing Deduction. The fact that (16), which is acceptable to Parmenides, is equivalent to (16*) suggests that it, too, is acceptable. But how?

The key is to take seriously the possibility that (16) and (16*) are propositions about *other* propositions and that these *other* propositions are the target of Parmenides' proscription (another way the parallel fails with (15) and (15*), both of which are about *all* significant propositions and so must apply to themselves).

It will help to consider slightly regimented versions of (16) and (16*). Here it is natural to begin with

(16a) $p$ can be thought $\rightarrow$ $p$ is about what is,

and its equivalent

(16a*) $p$ is about what is not $\rightarrow$ $p$ cannot be thought.

The worry is that the universal closure of (16a*) appears to apply to itself. What is needed is a plausible constraint on both propositions that frees them from such self-application. Precisely this is forthcoming by restricting each to what I shall call first-order states of affairs. So let us replace (16a) and (16a*), respectively, with

(16b) $(p)(p$ can be thought $\wedge$ $p$ is about a first-order state of affairs $\rightarrow$ $p$ is about what is),

and

(16b*) $(p)(p$ is about what is not $\wedge$ $p$ is about a first-order state of affairs $\rightarrow$ $p$ cannot be thought).

Neither formulation suffers under universal closure, for neither (16b) nor (16b*) is itself about a first-order state of affairs. Rather, they are about propositions *about* such first-order items. They are what might be called second-order propositions. In particular, (16b*) is not subject to self-defeat. This is one advantage of the regimentation.

Because it is (16b*)'s equivalent, this advantage ought to extend to (16b) as well. And so it does. For (16b) is equivalent to

(17b) $(p)(\neg(p$ is about what is) $\rightarrow \neg(p$ can be thought) $\vee \neg(p$ is about a first-order state of affairs)),

which says that if it is not the case that $p$ is about what is, then either $p$ cannot be thought or $p$ is not about a first-order state of affairs. Taking the antecedent to mean that $p$ is about what is not, from (17b) we get

(17c) ($p$)($p$ is about what is not$\wedge p$ can be thought$\rightarrow p$ is not about a first-order state of affairs).

So far from excluding all thought about what is not, (17c) bars only such thoughts about first-order states of affairs. Other thoughts about what is not appear to be allowed, in particular, the thoughts expressed in second-order propositions. So (16b) and (16b*) are equally acceptable, and likewise for (16) and (16*) and their ilk. This is enough to save the Governing Deduction from self-defeat at the hands of the crucial premiss (7), for we are now free to read (7) as a second-order proposition that proscribes first-order propositions about what is not. As such, it does not apply to itself. I shall call this the second-order defence.

Let us now revisit Owen's characterization of Parmenides' argument. Not only is (7) 'patently self-defeating', but also Owen levels a kindred charge against Parmenides' claim that 'there is no such thing as what is not'. With this, Owen impugns (8), the conclusion of the Governing Deduction. But, as with (7), this charge also fails to stick because (8) can be given a matching second-order reading, namely,

(18) ($p$)($p$ is about a first-order state of affairs$\wedge p$ is about what is not$\rightarrow p$ cannot obtain),

or, eschewing talk of propositions, we can match (8) with a fully material version:

(18a) ($s$)($s$ is a first-order state of affairs$\wedge s$ is what is not$\rightarrow s$ cannot be).

It is clear that (18) does not express a first-order proposition and that (18a) does not express a first-order state of affairs. So, on either reading of the second-order defence, the conclusion of the Governing Deduction does not violate (7)'s proscription against thought about what is not, for this proscribes only first-order thoughts or first-order states of affairs.[54]

[54] Some might worry about the use of propositions in crafting the second-order defence, fearing anachronism of the worst sort. But this is a harmless convenience—after all, there must be an Eleatic analogue to our notion of a proposition. Otherwise, the Parmenidean theorist will be incapable of representing thoughts and so unable to mount any argument at all involving them.

## 7. The Ionian Interpretation

In *WT* Parmenides countenances two canonical paths, the path of what is and the path of what is not. Path I and Path II, as I mark these, are canonical in the sense that they are the arms of the disjunction that opens *WT*. This disjunction, formulated in Section 1 as (1), is an instance of LEM. So it is an *a priori* truth, a truth grasped by reason alone, and, therefore, its two alternatives are themselves presented to the mind unsullied by beliefs of a more mundane stamp. But I have also supposed that in fr. 6. 4–9 Parmenides warns against a third course, namely, the path of what both is and is not. So far from a blunt contradiction, Parmenides here targets the sort of contingency that is the purview of ordinary beliefs. Precisely because someone might plausibly believe, consistently, that something is and is not, in this contingent sense, Parmenides deems the case worthy of independent dismissal. The case might also appear to slip through the modal pincers of Path I and Path II. So in fr. 6. 4–9 the mixed path is singled out for a quick thumping. This gives an elegant picture of the logic deployed in the portion of *WT* that I have been scrutinizing.

Most commentators agree that fragment 6 discredits the path of what is and is not,[55] and this is plausibly taken to include the path of wandering mortals canvassed in the *Way of Opinion*. Recently, however, some have pressed a different reading of the crucial text in fragment 6. Capitalizing on the fact that the received text is incomplete, they have urged that Parmenides' goddess, so far from proscribing anything, directs us in fragment 6 to investigate two paths, namely, the path of being, on the one hand, and the mixed path of being and not being, on the other. The second is then identified with the cosmological and naturalistic discussion of the *Way of Opinion*. Thus, in *WT* itself Parmenides appears to welcome the natural world as a suitable subject for investigation, alongside the investigation of what is. On the Ionian Interpretation, as I call this

[55] So, for example, G. E. L. Owen, 'Eleatic Questions' ['Questions'], *Classical Quarterly*, NS 10 (1960), 84–102, repr. in R. E. Allen and D. J. Furley (eds.), *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London, 1975), ii. *The Eleatics and Pluralists*, 48–81, and in Owen, *Logic*, 3–26; Gallop, *Elea*; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *Philosophers*; Lewis, 'Fallacy'; and, earlier, K. Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie*, 2nd edn. (Frankfurt a.M., 1959).

reading of fragment 6, so far from resisting the historical tide, Parmenides rides it.

The Ionian Interpretation has emerged as something of a new orthodoxy. Cordero ('Chemins') and Nehamas ('Ways') have argued for the reading, and it has been adopted more recently by Curd (*Legacy*) and Palmer (*Parmenides*). In fact, this new revisionism comes in slightly different flavours. Some have identified the mixed path of fragment 6 with Path II, and thus have urged that in *WT* Parmenides countenances two paths only. Others, rejecting the identification, find three paths mentioned in *WT*. But they agree that fragment 6 certifies the mixed path as a legitimate domain for investigation. So both see Parmenides as advancing the Ionian project, albeit in somewhat different ways—two-path revisionists think *WT* itself *contributes* to the investigation of nature, whereas proponents of three-path revisionism hold, more cautiously, that *WT allows* such an investigation. I shall argue against both brands of revisionism, beginning with the earlier, two-path variety.[56]

### (*a*) *Two-path revisionism*

Since the new orthodoxy relies on an alternative reading of the first four lines of fragment 6, it will prove useful to have our preferred version of the fragment before us:

> [1] What is there to be said and thought must needs be [*χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι*], for being is possible [*ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι*] whereas nothing [what is not] is not [possible] [*μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν*]; that I ask you to consider, for this is the first path of enquiry ⟨I bar⟩ you from [*πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος ⟨εἴργω⟩*]. [4] But then also [I bar you] from that [path] on which mortals wander knowing nothing . . . dazed and undiscriminating hordes, who believe that being and not being are the same and not the same; and the path taken by them all is backward-turning. (fr. 6. 1–9)

In the received manuscript of Simplicius, line 3 of fragment 6 ends prematurely at διζήσιος ('enquiry'). Diels completed the line with εἴργω ('I bar'). So Parmenides appears to proscribe two paths, the path of what is not (adverted to in fr. 6. 2) and the path of what is and is not (the bailiwick of mortals sketched in fr. 6. 4–9). Such is the majority view of the passage, which I have followed above.

[56] Earlier I suggested that Lewis ('Fallacy') may invite characterization as an Ionian Interpreter. But, as indicated in n. 42, this appears to be a case of inadvertent openness. So I shall not pursue it further.

Nehamas, perhaps the most astute of the *nouveaux révisionnistes*, completes line 3 of fragment 6 with ἄρξω ('I will begin') and thus makes the goddess say 'for, first, I will begin for you from this way of enquiry and then again from that on which mortals, knowing nothing, wander aimlessly . . .'. So far from proscribing two paths, now fragment 6 *pre*scribes two paths of enquiry, enquiry into what is, i.e. Path I, and enquiry into the ways of mortals, i.e. the mixed path of what both is and is not—the path sketched in the *Way of Opinion*. Cordero ('Chemins') independently proposed much the same reading of fragment 6, and it has been enthusiastically embraced by Curd (*Legacy*) and others who see Parmenides as a fellow traveller in the naturalistic cause. Nehamas's striking suggestion is not floated *ab initio*; rather, it is offered in the wake of a list of objections lodged against the majority view. With Diels's rendering allegedly disabled, the road is cleared for Nehamas's revisionist reading. However, if, as I shall argue, the objections in question can be overcome, the motivation for the Ionian reading is lost.[57]

I begin on a textual note. Several scholars have worried about the target of the demonstrative pronoun ταύτης ('this') in line 3. Tarán, for instance, grants that the pronoun points back to the claim that nothing cannot be (μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν), but he insists that this claim must belong to Path I, the path of what is.[58] Therefore, Diel's ⟨εἴργω⟩ must also target Path I. So Parmenides is made to recommend that the reader hold back from the path of what is.[59] On its face, this suggestion threatens to render *WT* incoherent. Tarán, therefore, suggests that Parmenides is recommending only a 'temporary abandonment of the first way [Path I]'. So he is supposedly alerting the reader to a shift in narrative tone rather than making a logical point. Stokes, and especially Nehamas, raise telling objections to Tarán's suggestion.[60] However, both adopt his position on the reference of ταύτης ('this') and, indeed, Nehamas uses this to argue that there is no third way in *WT*.

[57] Additionally, see Mourelatos, *Route*, xxxiii–xxxiv, for reasons to reject ἄρξω and its cognates.

[58] L. Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* [*Parmenides*] (Princeton, 1965).

[59] This is, perhaps, the chief ground that N.-L. Cordero, *By Being, It Is: The Thesis of Parmenides* [*Being*] (Las Vegas, 2004), 112, offers for rejecting Diels's emendation.

[60] M. C. Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* [*Many*] (Cambridge, Mass., 1971); Nehamas, 'Ways'.

How? Well, according to Nehamas, so far from proscribing a third path, fragment 6 proposes to 'follow (demonstrate) two methods of inquiry into nature', namely, the way of truth and the way of opinion. Apart from importing a weighty and controversial assumption about the function of the *Way of Opinion* in *WT*, the view's lynchpin, that fragment 6 does not exclude either Path II or the mixed path, rests squarely on the claim that *ταύτης* ('this') in 6. 3 must refer to Path I. Armed with this claim, Nehamas institutes his non-standard reading of the text.

The place to begin, then, is with the alleged claim about the reference of *ταύτης* ('this'). With a nod to Stokes, Nehamas confidently reports:

> 'Nothing cannot be', far from being a statement of a wrong road, belongs essentially to the way of being, which was originally introduced in Fr. 2, 3 by such a double construction: *ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι* [it is and it is not possible that it is not]. If, then, *ταύτης* ['this'] refers backward, it can only refer to the way of being.[61]

Two claims merit investigation here: first, the claim that 'nothing cannot be' reprises the idiom that opens *WT*, in particular the modal formulation of Path I; second, the claim that in referring back to the clause 'nothing cannot be' *ταύτης* ('this') refers to Path I. These are not equivalent because one could deny the first claim and still insist on the second. But, as we shall see, neither claim withstands scrutiny.

According to Nehamas, 'nothing cannot be' simply restates fragment 2's 'it is and it is not possible that it is not'. Here 'nothing' and 'what is not' are construed as equivalents, and in Section 3 I have signalled my agreement with this.[62] So 'nothing cannot be' may be glossed as 'what is not cannot be', and this, in turn, may be formulated as

(19) $(x)(x \text{ is not} \rightarrow x \text{ cannot be})$,

or, equivalently,

(19a) $(x)(x \text{ is not} \rightarrow x \text{ necessarily is not})$.

[61] Nehamas, 'Ways', 98; cf. Stokes, *Many*, 113.

[62] Recall here that 'nothing' does not occur in the formulation of Path I. For what it is worth, Tarán (*Parmenides*, 85) holds them equivalent in fragment 8, when he translates *μὴ ἐόντος* at 8. 7 and *μηδενός* at 8. 10 as 'non-Being'. So also Barnes, *Philosophers*, 166.

Reflecting its modal force, we formulated Path I as

(20) $(x)(x \text{ is} \wedge x$ cannot not be),

or, alternatively,

(20a) $(x)(x \text{ is} \wedge x$ necessarily is).[63]

For ease of exposition, we may drop the universal quantifiers and add some logical symbols. For fragment 6's claim that 'nothing cannot be' we get

(19*) $x$ is not$\rightarrow\Box x$ is not,

and for Path 1 we may write

(20*) $x$ is$\rightarrow\Box x$ is.

Talk of something's being such that it is not possible for it not to be just amounts to saying that it must be, i.e. that it necessarily is. So Path I is captured by (20*), and this, of course, is just modal extension for the path of what is. Because he thinks that the claim in fragment 6 reprises the double construction of Path I, Nehamas must hold that (19*) and (20*) are at least equivalent. This is not entirely obvious. After all, I may hold that whatever exists necessarily exists, but still hold no attitude at all about things that do not exist. So it appears that I can hold (20*) without holding (19*). But, of course, what I happen to hold may not be the same as what I am committed to holding. So let us consider the matter more closely.

Because the mistake with Nehamas's manœuvre is formal, it will be useful to begin with the general schema underlying the implication from (19*) to (20*). The question, then, is whether

(21) $(p\rightarrow\Box p)\rightarrow(\neg p\rightarrow\Box\neg p)$

holds, that is, whether (21) represents a genuine entailment. This is the standard Nehamas must meet.[64] Now if (21) is a logical truth, then its negation should be inconsistent. That is, affirmation of the antecedent of (21) conjoined with denial of its consequent should

[63] These are just the left-hand disjuncts in sect. 1's (1a) and (1a*).

[64] In fact, he must meet a stricter standard, namely, the biconditional corresponding to (21). But, of course, his view will fail to meet this standard, if it does not satisfy (21).

yield a contradiction.[65] We may represent this conjunction as follows:

(21a) $(p \rightarrow \Box p) \wedge \neg(\neg p \rightarrow \Box \neg p)$.

So if (21a) yields a contradiction, then (21) represents a logical entailment. This can be determined by transforming each conjunct of (21a) into an equivalent formula that eliminates the arrow. This gives us

(21b) $\neg(p \wedge \neg \Box p) \wedge \neg[\neg(\neg p \wedge \neg \Box \neg p)]$.

The left side of (21b) denies one can have $p$ and the negation of necessarily $p$. This corresponds to '$p$ entails necessarily $p$', and so matches the antecedent of (21). The bracketed portion of (21b)'s right side denies that one can have 'not $p$ and not necessarily not $p$'. So it matches the consequence of (21). Our question now is whether negating the bracketed formula leads to a contradiction, that is, whether (21b) yields a contradiction.

First, we eliminate the double negation on the right side of (21b). This gives us

(21c) $\neg(p \wedge \neg \Box p) \wedge (\neg p \wedge \neg \Box \neg p)$.

We may then use De Morgan to replace the left side with an equivalent disjunction,

(21d) $(\neg p \vee \Box p) \wedge (\neg p \wedge \neg \Box \neg p)$.

The left side of (21d) corresponds to the antecedent of the would-be entailment, (21). Because the antecedent is now a disjunction, each disjunct-component must be considered in assaying whether a contradiction arises from maintaining both the left and the right side of (21d). So $\neg p$ as well as $\Box p$ must be incompatible with the full conjunction, $\neg p \wedge \neg \Box \neg p$. Now one of these disjunct-components, namely $\Box p$, is incompatible with the full conjunction on the right because it is incompatible with one of its conjunct-components, namely, $\neg p$. After all, $\Box p$ entails $p$. However, the other disjunct-component on the left, namely, $\neg p$, is consistent with both conjunct-components on the right. It is obviously consistent with the first component, $\neg p$; but it is also consistent with $\neg \Box \neg p$ (for, while it may be false that

[65] Again, with Quine (*Methods*, 100): 'One schema implies another if and only if the one in conjunction with the other's negation is inconsistent.'

the cat is on the mat, it is not necessarily false). Therefore, one can consistently affirm the left side of (21d) and also the right side. But the right side is just the negation of the consequent of the would-be entailment, (21). Therefore, one can consistently affirm the antecedent of (21) and the negation of its consequent. Hence, the first does not entail the second. In short, (21) fails the test for being an entailment.

These results may now be applied to Nehamas's claim that μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ('nothing cannot be') in fragment 6 simply restates Path I's double construction, ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι ('it is and it is not possible that it is not')—respectively, (19*) and (20*) above. Because in (21) we may simply replace '*p*' with '*x* is', it is clear that (20*) does not entail (19*). Therefore, when Parmenides remarks in fragment 6 that 'nothing cannot be' (μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν), *pace* Nehamas he cannot be restating the double construction of Path I. For this requires, minimally, that fragment 6's remark be equivalent to the modal formula for Path I, namely, (20*). Hence, the entailment between (20*) and (19*) is a necessary condition for the alleged restating. But, as we have just seen, this condition is not met. Therefore, the first of the two claims introduced three paragraphs back must be rejected because it rests on a formal mistake. In short, 'nothing cannot be' cannot reprise the modal formulation for Path I that opens *WT*.[66]

What, then, about the second of the above claims, namely, that in referring back to the clause 'nothing cannot be', ταύτης ('this') in line 3 of fragment 6 refers to the way of being, that is, to Path I? This does not require that 'nothing cannot be' is a restatement of the double construction used to introduce Path I. But it does require that the slogan 'belongs essentially to the way of being'[67] expresses a necessary connection to Path I. Here Nehamas appears to follow Tarán, who reasoned that 'to represent the first mistaken way, [μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν] would have to assert "non-Being exists" while it

[66] Palmer, *Parmenides*, 113. commits the same mistake when he reports: 'It seems, furthermore, that the phrase μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν that follows at fr. 6. 2a is a variation upon fr. 2. 3b . . . That is to say, again, that fr. 6. 2a's μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν replicates the sense of fr. 2. 3b's οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι.' So far from being 'some variation' on the modal addition in Path I, the locution at fr. 6. 2a is rather the conclusion of the argument against pursuing Path II. It is perhaps unsurprising that Palmer misses this given his admitted lack of interest in the logic of Parmenides' argument. In any case, the missed point effectively undermines Palmer's reading of fragment 6 as simply requiring that we say and think what is.

[67] Nehamas, 'Ways', 98.

means "non-Being exists not"'.[68] Tarán's idea may be that because 'what is not cannot be' (to revert to our idiom) is *true*, it must belong to the way associated with truth, namely Path I, and cannot be associated with Path II, the way associated with falsehood. Despite a distant ring of plausibility, this is, in fact, a curious line of reasoning. First, whatever it might mean to say that something belongs to a path of enquiry, it is surely out of place to deploy the notion in this context. Even in the case of Path I, it would be odd to insist that the formal specification of the path is itself something one might encounter in traversing the path and uncovering its truths. The formal stipulation of a domain fixes what falls within the domain, but the stipulation itself does not belong to the domain, at least not typically. And the double construction Nehamas mentions, *ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι* ('it is and it is not possible that it is not'), is just such a formal stipulation. Likewise, Path II's double construction formally specifies a domain, and so in no case would the construction itself be a member of the domain (should there be any). Furthermore, unlike *ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι* ('it is and it is not possible that it is not'), the modal formulation for Path I, Path II's modal idiom, *ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι* ('it is not and it is necessary that it is not'), is precisely what is expressed by *μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν* ('nothing cannot be') in fragment 6. So if *ταύτης* refers to the latter, as Tarán and Nehamas grant, then it must refer to Path II rather than Path I—Tarán's and Nehamas's worries notwithstanding.

In fact, however, there is no cause for worry. For, so far from restating Path I, the phrase *μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν* ('nothing cannot be') asserts the *conclusion* of the Governing Deduction—at least on the most plausible rendering of the phrase, namely, 'what is not cannot be'. In our reconstruction of the Governing Deduction in Section 2 this conclusion was entered as (8)/(8*), albeit in slightly more regimented dress. So the phrase clearly adverts to Path II, the path of what is not. However, it is not itself something one would locate *within* the path proper.[69] For it is part of an argument *about* the class

[68] Tarán, *Parmenides*, 59.

[69] This also addresses S. Austin's worry (*Parmenides*: *Being, Bounds, and Logic* (New Haven, 1986), 26–7) that the very specification of Path I, the path of what-is, contains the proscribed idiom *οὐκ ἔστι*. This forces him to contend that when it occurs in an assertoric context, *οὐκ ἔστι* is impermissible; but when it occurs in a modal context, as in the specification of Path I, the idiom is permissible. He says: 'to say that Parmenides does not make this distinction is to say that the second half of . . .

of items falling into the path. Indeed, it is an argument that is crucial to establishing Path I, the path of what is, as the single viable path of enquiry. So while *ταύτης* ('this') must refer to *μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν* ('nothing cannot be'), the latter does not stand for Path I.[70]

With these corrective points in place, we can give a natural sense to Parmenides' pronouncement in fragment 6. In effect, he says 'because I have argued that "what is not cannot be", first of all, then, stay away from this path, the path of what is not . . .'. This saves the received text of Simplicius as completed by Diels, gives a natural reading for *ταύτης* ('this'), and makes fragment 6 part and parcel of the deductive structure that shapes *WT*. In particular, there is no reason to bar fragment 6 from proscribing two wrong ways: for fragment 6 now contains an absolute proscription against Path II in 6. 1–3 as well as a warning against the mixed path favoured by mortals in 6. 4–9. What more could one want?

Well, there are a few outstanding issues. One concerns the use of fragment 7 to confirm the claim that fragment 6 proscribes two paths:

> For this shall never prevail, that things that are not are; but hold back your thought from this path of enquiry, nor let habit, born of much experience, force you down this path with aimless eye and hollow ear and tongue. But judge by reason the much-disputed refutation uttered by me. (fr. 7)

Nehamas advances several complaints against Mourelatos's appeal to this fragment. In the present context, the most worrisome is that fragment 7 does not warn against two wrong paths but only two ways of approaching the same path. He admonishes:

> If B7 [i.e. fragment 7] contrasts two wrong ways, it implies that reason takes the first (not being), while habit takes the second (both being and not being). Yet why should Parmenides think this? This peculiar correlation, which is absent elsewhere in the poem, does not fit with the grammar of the text.[71]

[Path I's specification] is already on the negative route from the very beginning, since *ouk esti* occurs there too'. On our account no such distinction is needed; nor, then, *pace* Austin, is the alleged distinction needed to sustain a distinction between the two routes.

[70] Nehamas agrees only to the extent that this is the way we must read the received text of Simplicius as completed by Diels. As we have seen, his final position is that the text must be read differently, namely, so as to *prescribe* two ways, the path of what is (truth) and the path of what appears (belief). But this widely variant reading is motivated by the problem we have just set aside.

[71] Nehamas, 'Ways', 101.

Of course, for most interpreters the correlation is evident in fragment 6, so it is hardly absent from the poem. Therefore, Nehamas's claim to the contrary presumes that his reading of fragment 6 is beyond reproach. But, as we have just seen, it is not. So the first complaint is a non-starter.[72]

According to the second complaint, grammatical considerations suggest that the juxtaposition of reason and habit warns 'against two ways of falling into a wrong path, rather than against two wrong paths'. Suppose Nehamas is correct on the point of grammar. Does it follow that two wrong paths cannot be targeted by Parmenides? Hardly, for anyone who adopts a cognitive attitude towards what is and is not automatically adopts a cognitive attitude towards what is not. Indeed, this was required in Section 4 as a condition on successfully rejecting the mixed path. So one way of engaging Path II, the path of what is not, is to follow the mixed path favoured by habit and ordinary people. Of course, because Path II is the path of what is not *and cannot be*, habit does this at its peril. Parmenides may be intimating just this in fragment 7's closing admonition to let reason's assessment of his 'much-disputed refutation' (the Governing Deduction) be the deciding factor. As it turns out, very little turns on whether the mixed path of fragment 6 is a fully accredited path on a par with Paths I and II. Indeed, all along we have regarded the latter as the canonical paths of *WT* and have extended a reduced status to the so-called mixed path. In any case, for present purposes the important point is that, however it is characterized, the mixed way is excluded in fragment 6 along with Path II. Therefore, because Nehamas's reading of fragment 7 embraces dual proscription, if only for 'ways of falling into a wrong path', his reading turns out to confirm the received interpretation of fragment 6. Both texts bar enquiry into what is and is not, as well as enquiry into what is not.

An additional point calls for comment. According to Nehamas, the goddess 'states unequivocally that there are only (*μοῦναι*) two ways of enquiry. By itself this creates an intolerable inconsistency for those who find three ways in B6 [=fragment 6].'[73] What the god-

[72] In any event, if fragment 6 contrasts two ways, what it implies is just that the first way (not-being) offers itself to the mind, not that reason *investigates* not being, or items falling along the path of not being (contrary to what might be implied by Nehamas's language, 'reason takes the first'). And, as emphasized above, the path of not being offers itself to the mind simply because it is part of a logical truth that offers itself to the mind, namely, an Eleatic version of LEM, i.e. (1) in sect. 1 above.

[73] Nehamas, 'Ways', 102.

dess in fact says in fragment 2 is that there are only two ways of enquiry that are to be *thought*. On our view this is just to say that there are two paths that present themselves to the mind *a priori*, namely, as the two arms of a disjunction that is an *a priori* truth, '*x* is or *x* is not'. The contended third path, on the other hand, does not present itself to the *mind* but arises from the perceptually laden beliefs of ordinary mortals. This at once removes the 'intolerable inconsistency' and explains why the third, mixed path is accorded a lesser status.

A penultimate issue concerns the strategy of argumentation in fragment 6. Nehamas claims that to find the fragment proscribing any path of enquiry reverses the proper logical relations between its claims. His idea is that lines 1–2 of fragment 6 license thought about what is and that lines 3 ff. supply a reason for this. But, on the received view, the reason is just that two other paths are excluded—the path of what is not (Path II) and the path of what is and is not. And this, insists Nehamas, puts the logical cart before the horse. Rather, he avers, the wrong ways are to be excluded on the basis of the right way. So Path I should be considered '*in order to* exclude the wrong paths'.[74] Since the received reading of fragment 6 reverses this order of explanation, it should be jettisoned. In assaying this challenge to the received view, we can set aside whether his claim instantiates a truism about explanations generally. What cannot be sidestepped, however, is Parmenides' procedure in the deductions we have canvassed. And here it is clear that Nehamas has got the story backwards. As detailed at length in Sections 2–4, Parmenides gives pride of logical place to the Governing Deduction and its conclusion that what is not cannot be. Indeed, in Section 3 we saw that this conclusion was essential to establishing the Corollary to the Governing Deduction, namely, that what is necessarily is. Its status as an explanatory rule of thumb aside, *WT* does not proceed by rejecting the two wrong paths on the basis of the correct path. Hence, the claim provides no reason to replace the standard reading of fragment 6.

What, finally, of the claim that on the Ionian Interpretation of fragment 6 *WT* itself includes substantive investigation of nature? Nehamas concludes that when Parmenides recommends investigating the domain of the *Way of Opinion*, he is recommending an investigation into *appearances* and that this is not what he has in

[74] Ibid. 101.

mind when he proscribes talk of what is not. His focus, rather, is on the presumption that how things appear is how they are. Therefore, he is not declaring 'the end of cosmology', but rather showing 'that philosophy was necessary to put physics upon the secure path of science'. One might think of this as providing firm theoretical foundations for the more empirically oriented investigations of his Ionian predecessors. Curd adopts the Ionian reading of fragment 6 with only a slight difference in emphasis.[75] For her the *Way of Opinion* entertains and rejects 'as candidates for theoretically basic entities opposites of a particular sort', namely, those sketched in the final section of the poem. But, she claims, Parmenides' 'model in the *Way of Opinion* would yield a rationally grounded cosmology if the basic entities of such a theory met the criteria of B8 for what-is'. This reflects Curd's broad contention that the attributes introduced in fragment 8 as Deductive Consequences or signs of what is delineate certain properties of 'metaphysically basic' entities, namely, properties that spell out 'the criteria for what-is, that is, for being the nature of something, where such a nature is what a thing really is'. So on Curd's view the attributes ascribed in the Deductive Consequences provide secure theoretical foundations for cosmology. Whatever the fortunes of this idea,[76] it clearly aims to place Parmenides 'firmly in the tradition of physical enquiry in Presocratic thought'. So both Nehamas and Curd locate Parmenides in the on-going Ionian tradition of explaining the world in fundamental, naturalistic categories. Regardless of the ultimate judgement on this style of interpretation, it cannot profit from an appeal to the revisionist reading of fragment 6, at least not in the light of our rejection of this reading as promoted by Nehamas (and, implicitly, Cordero). In this respect, the Ionian reading stands without argument; in particular, fragment 6 cannot be relied on as

[75] Curd, *Legacy*, 5–6.

[76] One sample worry about it is this. The idea grants that the *Way of Opinion* rejects a loose system of cosmological beliefs but asks us to believe that its real target is a rectified system populated by theoretically improved entities—all without the slightest indication from Parmenides that such is his intention. How the *Way of Opinion* fits in the overall scheme of Parmenides' poem continues to challenge commentators. My own view is close to that of A. A. Long, 'The Principles of Parmenides' Cosmology', *Phronesis*, 8 (1963), 90–107, who finds the cosmology of the *Way of Opinion* totally false: 'By giving the best possible account of them [appearances], he has a criterion against which any conception of reality based on the senses may be measured and found wanting' (106).

internal evidence for Parmenides' hospitality towards the naturalistic tradition.[77]

(*b*) *Three-path revisionism*

Palmer has recently promulgated a somewhat different version of the Ionian Interpretation of fragment 6. He accepts the Nehamas reading of fr. 6. 1–5; indeed, his translation is a virtual double of Nehamas's rendering.[78] He also agrees that in fragment 6 the goddess certifies two paths for investigation—Path I, the path of what is, and the mixed path of mortals, the path of being and non-being. None the less, he denies that this commits Parmenides to a two-path reading. For, unlike Nehamas, who identifies the mixed path with Path II, Palmer regards it as a distinct path and so takes the goddess to be legitimizing, independently, the domain of things that are and are not as a proper target for investigation. This, in turn, Palmer identifies with the domain of the *Way of Opinion*. So, at any rate, according to his reading of her promise at fr. 8. 50–2 to close the true and trustworthy account of *WT* and to begin instruction in the ways of mortals: 'With these words, the goddess fulfills . . . the promise of fr. 6. 3–5a to recommence with the way of mortals once she has finished with the first way of enquiry' (finished, namely, with Path I and the Deductive Consequences).[79] Therefore, *WT* itself mandates, as a proper object of investigation, the world of the *Way of Opinion*, and this is just the world of interest to the Ionian natural philosophers. So Palmer pursues a variant of the Ionian Interpretation.[80]

[77] Curd (*Legacy*) acknowledges the important work of Mourelatos (*Route*), who attempts to place Parmenides in the Ionian tradition, without, however, adopting the Ionian reading of fragment 6. Mourelatos is rather keener to deny that Parmenides is a monist regarding the cardinality of things that exist. This, in turn, is a cardinal feature of Curd's interpretation. In her idiom, Parmenides is not a 'numerical monist' but a 'predicational monist'. Although I remain unpersuaded, this is not the place to press these differences with Curd. For what is wrong with the view see Wedin, *Aspects*.

[78] Fr. 6. 3–5: 'For ⟨I shall begin⟩ for you from this first way of enquiry, then yet again from that along which mortals who know nothing wander two-headed . . .' (Palmer, *Parmenides*, 367); 'For, first, I will begin for you from this way of enquiry, and then again from that on which mortals, knowing nothing, wander aimlessly . . .' (Nehamas, 'Ways', 105).

[79] Palmer, *Parmenides*, 159–60.

[80] Again, in a nutshell, Nehamas and Curd hold that *WT* itself contributes to the investigation of nature by delineating criteria for a proper object of such an investigation, whereas Palmer thinks that *WT* allows but does not contribute to such an investigation (which is undertaken in the *Way of Opinion*). So both find, in different

Before looking at Palmer's account of the mixed third way of fragment 6, some preliminary misgivings deserve a hearing. Nehamas makes much of the fact that fragment 2 announces that there are only two routes of enquiry that present themselves to the mind. This explains, at least partly, his willingness to identify the mixed path, Path II, and the *Way of Opinion*. He says: 'Our interpretation implies that the content of the *Doxa*, the way of mortals, the way of not being [Path II], and the way which combines being and not being [Path III] are all the same.'[81] Palmer objects that the formulation of Path II is '*prima facie*' different from that of the mixed path in fragment 6, not to mention from fragment 7's allied claim that 'what is not is' shall never be established.[82] Whatever its eventual standing, this is a curious line of attack because what Palmer takes as an objection is just a featured consequence of Nehamas's interpretation. I doubt that many friends of the two-path reading will be fazed by this attempt to turn the tables. For Nehamas claims that the triple identity in question is *implied* by his interpretation. So rather than simply disagreeing with the identification, one needs independent grounds for rejecting the interpretation that entails it. Above we have provided precisely such grounds. There may be better grounds, but Palmer, in any case, shows no interest in such a project. Failing some such grounds, however, there is little reason to follow Nehamas on the translation of fr. 6. 1–5. In effect, then, Palmer simply helps himself to a reading that suits his interests. But, as we have just seen, there are no principled reasons to adopt the reading.

Quite apart from the above misgiving, Palmer notes, but does not address, the chief worry that fuelled Nehamas's reading, namely, how there can be any third path given that fragment 2 identifies only two paths that present themselves to the mind. So far as I can

ways, that Parmenides certifies the natural world as a suitable target for legitimate enquiry; hence, both fall under the rubric 'Ionian Interpretation'.

[81] Nehamas, 'Ways', 106.

[82] It is worth noting that Palmer helps himself to the very linguistic largesse he decries in Nehamas's argument. For he routinely overlooks differences in formulation when it suits his interests. He thus takes *ἐόν* as necessary being, not only in fragment 6 but throughout the Deductive Consequences. Most notably in the first Deductive Consequence (that what is is uncreated and imperishable) he glosses 'is and is not' at fr. 8. 16 as 'is necessarily and is necessarily not', i.e. necessary being and necessary non-being. Plus, as we shall see, when Palmer does offer an argument for reading *ἐόν* as necessary being, it is a bad argument (at least in the case of fr. 6. 1).

determine, Palmer may attempt to address this worry when he asserts that the cognitive state had by third-path trekkers is different in kind from that acquired by denizens of either of the two canonical paths, Path I and Path II.[83] Even so, are there not still three permissible paths, and is this not an inconsistency of considerable size? Palmer might hope to restore consistency to Parmenides' account by insisting that when, in fragment 2, he speaks of 'ways of enquiry for understanding' he has in mind something different from the understanding that attends the mixed path, and that the latter does not qualify as a 'way of enquiry'. Less nuanced readers will worry that this simply begs the question.[84] So we need to look in some detail at what Palmer says.

As an Ionian Interpreter, Palmer obviously does not think that Parmenides aims to eliminate the mixed path. Nevertheless, he rightly recognizes Parmenides' negative opinion of this way of wandering mortals 'who know nothing'. So he must explain this negative assessment without compromising the third way's position as a proper target of investigation. In particular, the beliefs of mortals must be coherent, even if accorded a reduced status, because they are part and parcel of the *Way of Opinion* and this is legitimate territory for investigating. How this works, he avers, can be made clear thanks to his modal-only interpretation of Paths I and II. According to this, the two canonical paths, as I call them, are not simply the paths of that which is and of that which is not, respectively; rather, they are, directly, the paths of what necessarily is and of what necessarily is not. So, right from the start,

[83] See Palmer, *Parmenides*, 114.

[84] For the record, compare this with our distinction between the canonical paths, Path I and Path II, which are presented *a priori* as disjuncts of a necessary truth, LEM, and the mixed path that arises on the basis of perception and perceptually laden beliefs and so does not arise *a priori*. This at once preserves the elevated status of the opening two paths and permits introduction of the third path in a logically distinct way. There is an additional point worth noting. Because the mixed path conjoins what is and what is not, Parmenides may have thought of it in terms of its components, and here the count of paths stops at two. On this way of thinking, the so-called mixed way introduces no new paths of investigation. This causes no worries for our reading because we take the 'is' and 'is not' of the canonical paths to instantiate a broad 'is'. Such a manœuvre is unavailable on Palmer's modal-only reading because it takes these expressions to signify, straightaway, necessary being and necessary non-being. Here he appears to follow Owen ('Questions', n. 33=n. 34 of the reprint in *Logic*), who admonishes that the mixed path cannot simply be a conflation of the canonical paths (for Owen's point holds only if the modal additions to these paths are read as modal equivalences).

Path I is constrained to necessary being and Path II to necessary non-being, to adopt Palmer's idiom.[85] These, in turn, he declares 'stable modes of being'. As such, both yield understanding that is 'unwavering', and this Palmer takes to be the central theme of *WT*. In this respect, then, both canonical paths are superior to the mixed path of what is and is not, for truths about such a (contingent) item may change as the item changes. In short, in *WT* Parmenides is 'seeking understanding that does not wander',[86] and it is precisely on this score that the understanding of the wandering mortals of fragment 6 is to be faulted.

What are we to make of the above reasoning? According to Palmer,[87] Parmenides endorses something like

(22) *x* follows path III→*x* does not have understanding that does not wander.

In fact, Palmer extracts (22) from a pair of theses, both of which rely on a claim about the proper reading of *τό* in line 8 of fragment 6.[88] Some have read the *τό* as an article fronting an articular infinitive (i.e. 'the'), and this might encourage the view that what our candidate agent, *x*, believes is that being and not being are the same and not the same. Against this, Palmer takes *τό* demonstratively (i.e. as 'it') and translates, 'it is and is not the same and not the same'. So he needs to supply a reference for 'it'. His choice is *ἐόν* (*being*) in the first line of fragment 6, and this, he insists, must be his modally enhanced being of Path I. Consequently, mortals are held to believe not just that *τὸ ἐόν* (that which is or *being*) is and is not the same and not the same; rather they must believe that *necessary being* is and is not the same and not the same.

Simplified, the theses from which (22) is extracted are

(23) *x* follows path III→*x* **bel** *τὸ ἐόν* is and is not

and

(24) *x* **bel** *τὸ ἐόν* is and is not→*x* does not have understanding that does not wander.

It is clear enough that (23) and (24) entail (22). However, this is unhelpful because what we really want to know is the exact shape of the

[85] *Parmenides*, 100.
[86] Ibid. 114.
[87] Here I return to Palmer's tenet (*d*), introduced above in n. 11.
[88] *οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταὐτὸν* [*τωὐτὸν* Palmer] *νενόμισται*.

belief alluded to in the antecedent of (24). What, in short, do mere mortals believe? Here an immediate difficulty confronts Palmer because on his view mortals must be accorded coherent beliefs. Yet, as he himself complains, 'How can mortals suppose that *τὸ ἐόν* or what is and cannot not be, "is and is not the same and not the same" (fr. 6. 8–9a) when . . . they have failed altogether to recognize that anything might be in the way specified in fr 2. 3 [i.e. with the modal addition]?' In short, on Palmer's own reasoning mortals instantiate the left side of (23) but they cannot be credibly supposed to instantiate the right side. How, then, can Palmer explain, consistently, what mortals believe?

He asserts, firstly, that to say that mortals have no apprehension of *τὸ ἐόν* (i.e. Palmer's necessary being) 'is as much as to say' that they do not follow Path I. So he would at least be committed to the following biconditional, or something like it:

(25) *x* has no conception of *Y* & *Y* is the target of Path I ≡ *x* does not follow Path I.

Of course, it is hardly clear that (25) is true as a stand-alone thesis. A less vigilant Eleatic might be in possession of a perfectly acceptable conception of the target object of Path I but simply choose not to follow that path, perhaps preferring a life of leisure on Crete. But it would be perverse to insist on this point, for we may assume that Parmenides is speaking to an audience committed to a serious investigation of things and the nature of things.

Secondly, on the basis of the above assertion about mortals' lack of comprehension, Palmer produces an explanation of their error:

> Their error, then, consists in supposing that a proper object of understanding may be subject to the variableness of [being bound up in their conception of][89] it as being and not being the same and not the same.[90]

Some readers will worry that this clashes with Palmer's view that Parmenides approves the mixed third path for investigation, by suggesting that a proper object of investigation, a contingent item, is, after all, not a proper object of understanding. Should Palmer reply that by 'understanding' he means 'unwavering understand-

[89] I enclose Palmer's words in brackets because it seems unnecessary that mortals have, in addition to their supposition about the objects they can investigate, a further supposition about their conception of such objects.

[90] Palmer, *Parmenides*, 116.

ing', then we are still owed an independent account of what understanding means in the phrase 'unwavering understanding'.

Waiving the above worries, it is still doubtful that Palmer's explanation makes much headway. For on his characterization, misled mortals satisfy the following schema:

(26) *x* **bel** (*Y* is and is not & *Y* is a proper object of understanding).

However, Palmer has already made much of the fact that the *τό* at fr. 6. 8 can only refer back to *ἐόν* in fr. 6. 1. So in (26) *Y* must be *τὸ ἐόν* (*being*). But everyone, Palmer included, counts *τὸ ἐόν* or *being* as a proper object for Eleatic enquiry, and understanding. Indeed, as the target of Path I, it is the proper object of understanding *par excellence*. Therefore, the mistake must be that mortals believe that *τὸ ἐόν* is and is not. But this is precisely what Palmer claimed mortals could not coherently be supposed to believe. So Palmer's explanation appears to undercut itself.

The situation is actually more complicated, and, accordingly, it will be useful to introduce some simple, but sharper, formulations. Palmer does not distinguish between *de re* and *de dicto* modes of believing, and this insensitivity is reflected in our formulation, (23). Suppose, then, we distinguish between a *de dicto* version of mortals' doxastic performances and a *de re* version. As above, let *Y* be the item that is and is not. Then, on the *de dicto* gloss, a mortal would believe that *Y* is and is not and that it is *τὸ ἐόν*, i.e. *necessary being*. We may represent this as

(23a) *x* follows path III→*x* **bel** (*Y* is and is not & *Y*=*τὸ ἐόν*).

On the *de re* version *Y* is, as a matter of independent fact, *τὸ ἐόν*, and *x* believes that *Y* is and is not. This we may represent as

(23b) *x* follows path III→ *Y*= *τὸ ἐόν* & *x* **bel** (*Y* is and is not).

Of these, it is clearly the *de dicto* belief tagged in (23a) that would be incoherent. For (23a) requires that mortals have a firm belief about *τὸ ἐόν* as such. But surely to have a firm belief about something is to have a conception of it. But, according to Palmer our misled mortal, *x*, has no conception at all of *τὸ ἐόν* as *necessary being*. So (23a) cannot capture what mortals believe.

Perhaps, then, the *de re* version, (23b), captures the structure of mortal beliefs. For (23b) does not require mortals to have a belief

about *τὸ ἐόν* as such: that is, they need not report themselves as having a belief about this august object. Rather, regardless of what they might claim, the object of their belief turns out to be identical to *τὸ ἐόν*. Now it might appear that Palmer can profit from this distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* modes of belief. He must reject the *de dicto* reading because it makes mortals' beliefs incoherent. The *de re* reading does not have this consequence and squares with his insistence that the item that is and is not (the *τό* of fr. 6. 1) turns out to be none other than his modally enhanced *ἐόν*. Unhappily, this is a promissory note that cannot be cashed.

Let us see why. Palmer closes his discussion of the third path by rejecting the claim that path III is to be faulted because 'nothing *exists* along this way'. On the contrary, myriad items populate the path and enjoy the requisite being and not being, namely, items whose 'being is merely contingent'.[91] These, then, are the targets of mortals' wandering thoughts and beliefs. Modestly regimented, we can represent their doxastic condition as

(27) $x$ **bel** $Y$ is and is not ≡ $Y$ is contingent,

and the path they tread as

(27a) $x$ follows path III ≡ $Y$ is contingent,

where $Y$ is a specimen item along the mixed way. The upshot of this, presumably, is that the thoughts of wandering mortals are not stable and steadfast in contrast to the thoughts of those traversing Path I and Path II. This, however, gives Palmer's modally enhanced *being* (*ἐόν*) a slight role at best, for it serves merely as a contrasting case and has no evident probative value. In particular, we still have not identified a coherent belief to assign to the wandering minds of misled mortals.

What more is needed might be thought to emerge from applying the *de dicto–de re* distinction to beliefs about the contingent items of (27) and (27a). This gives us, respectively:

(28) $x$ follows path III → $x$ **bel** ($Y$ is and is not & $Y$ is contingent),

[91] Suitably understood, this agrees with our account, not to mention that of Owen ('Questions', n. 33 = n. 34 of the reprint in *Logic*). However, the point is not that such items enjoy contingent *existence*, though they might. Rather, path III is the way of contingent truth including, typically, changing truths about one and the same thing.

and

(28a) *x* follows path III→ *Y* is contingent & *x* **bel** (*Y* is and is not).

Whereas (23a) rendered mortals' beliefs incoherent, at least by Palmer's lights, the *de dicto* reading (28) does not. Mortals believe that things are and are not and that the thing so characterized is a contingent item. Nowhere is it required that they grasp that alleged Eleatic ultimate, *necessary being* (τὸ ἐόν). So it appears that denizens of the mixed third path have beliefs that are coherent and so are suitable for proper investigation.

This, however, raises another issue. According to Palmer, a major advantage of his enhanced modal reading of Paths I and II is its ability to explain the mixed third way. In particular, it is supposed to explain Parmenides' negative assessment of the cognitive states of wandering mortals. In a word, it is held to be essential to an adequate interpretation of the *de dicto* frame, (28). Unfortunately, it is not. Read *de dicto*, mortals' wandering minds are characterized as believing that things are and are not and that they are contingent. Notice, however, that one can hold such a belief independently of any given ontological setup. Mortals may believe that the objects of their beliefs are contingent items, but the ontological landscape may be otherwise. I may believe that the cat is on the mat, but what is on the mat may not be a cat but rather a bat or a ball or nothing at all. This is simply a feature of *de dicto* belief. So (28) is consistent with *Y*'s being a necessary item *or* a contingent item. Therefore, the coherence of mortals' beliefs does not require that necessary beings are the items that are and are not. So Palmer is not entitled to claim that his modally enhanced ἐόν (*being*) explains the nature of mortal belief. *Pace* Palmer, a non-modal ἐόν, one that allows contingency, will do just as nicely as the modally enhanced ἐόν. Best, of course, would be our broad 'is', which captures either of these modes of being.

In fact, the situation is actually worse. For Palmer asserts, on the one hand, that the third-way item(s) that 'is and is not' is a necessary being(s) and, on the other hand, that it is a contingent being(s). Therefore, third-way items are not just one *or* the other; rather they are *both*. But, presumably, there is nothing that is both necessary *and* contingent in this way. Moreover, the incompatibility of the claims in question cannot be explained away by appeal to doxastic

context. Rather, each of the incompatible claims is advanced by Palmer as a plain truth about the ontological make-up of the items populating the third way. Consequently, his account visits a clumsy inconsistency on Parmenides' reasoning in fragment 6, and thus can hardly supply a satisfactory explanation of the mixed way.

In effect, Palmer is committed to holding *both* of the *de re* formulations, (23b) and (28a). To repair the damage, one might simply jettison one of these. If he sacrifices (28a), Palmer gives up all hope of securing the third way as a suitable target for enquiry, not to mention the Ionian Interpretation. So this seems unacceptable. Suppose, then, Palmer were to give up (23b). In this case, he can no longer hold onto the claim that *τό* in fr. 6. 8 refers to (a) necessary being. This, in turn, requires either that the *τό* does not refer to *ἐόν* in fr. 6. 1 or that *ἐόν* there does not signal necessary being. Both options undercut his fundamental claim that the modal-only reading of Paths I and II underlies the argument of *WT*. But, if what is and is not in fragment 6 cannot be Palmer's enhanced necessary being, then why should we expect Parmenides to have it in mind at fr. 8. 16 when he instructs that decisions in matters of argument are to be made in terms of 'is or is not'? Finally, we thus lose any principled basis for upgrading the initial, syntactically non-modal, 'is' and 'is not' of Paths I and II. They do not count, by themselves, as necessary being or necessary non-being. Formulae mentioning them may entail additional modal formulae, as in our modal extension interpretation, but this route is not open to Palmer, who dismisses the presence of deductive reasoning in the early fragments of *WT*.

A final point bears emphasizing. The above worries aside, Palmer's diagnosis of the ills of the third path reduces to the formula that the path yields an apprehension that is wavering because, presumably, what one grasps along this path may swing from truth to falsity or falsity to truth. By contrast, what lies along Path I or Path II is not amenable to such switching of truth-values, and so both paths yield understanding that is unwavering. As a characterization of Path I this may be unexceptionable, but why would anyone expect Path II to serve up the same sort of unwavering understanding? Palmer's thought, apparently, is that Path II's objects are impossible objects. Hence, one could not have an understanding of them that swung from falsity to truth because here there can be no truth about them in the first place. There is something bizarre about this proposal. For one thing, the parallel

requires that the putative Path II traveller has understanding or comprehension in the same sense as his Path I counterpart. This is hardly credible. For he has nothing to report, indicate, or focus on. It is rather like praising a comatose patient for making no mistakes in solving partial differential equations. A mathematical prodigy, perhaps, but surely not a comatose patient!

There must be a happier account of Parmenides' decision to feature Path II at the head of *WT*. On our reconstruction this is to be found in the Governing Deduction and the pivotal role played by its conclusion in the balance of *WT*. Unfortunately, as a matter of policy Palmer shuns all such deductive strategies. Even so, were Palmer correct, we might have expected Parmenides to indicate that the third path of investigation yields a cognitive condition different in kind from the unwavering understanding of Path I and Path II, but a cognitive condition none the less. However, Parmenides says not just that they have 'distracted minds' or 'wandering understanding',[92] but also that they 'know nothing' (*εἰδότες οὐδέν*). This is hardly an apt characterization of a cognitive state associated with any legitimate investigation. I conclude that Palmer's three-path version of the Ionian Interpretation must be rejected in its own right, quite apart from its dependence on the discredited revisionist reading of fragment 6.

## 8. Concluding remark

No Presocratic thinker enjoys Parmenides' command of rational argument, and none exhibits the range of deductive power displayed in *WT*. It contains, I have suggested, the first great philosophical argument. Accordingly, Parmenides' substantive claims are to be read in the light of his arguments, and the device of choice for doing this is logical reconstruction. There is, of course, more than one constraint on historical interpretation, but logical reconstruction is arguably the most fundamental. In the case of Parmenides, it is indispensable. This paper offers reconstructions of the three opening deductions in *WT*, deductions that underlie all that follows in Parmenides' poem. Among other things, the reconstructions help pinpoint where Parmenides' arguments encounter difficulties, and at the same time they suggest textually responsible solutions. Further-

[92] Gallop, *Elea*, 61, and Palmer, *Parmenides*, 367, respectively.

more, thanks to reconstruction, we are able to articulate the logical form of Parmenides' three ways, and this in turn points to a diagnosis of the errors of the revisionist reading of fragment 6 and the shortcomings of Ionian Interpretations generally. Consequently, the path remains open, current fashion notwithstanding, for an austere reading of Parmenides' great poem—a reading that enjoys the allegiance of Plato and Aristotle, not to mention a cadre of more recent voices.[93]

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