The greatest challenge in Parmenides-research is to refrain from prejudices or speculative assumptions. It comes as no surprise that many of the scholars who devoted books or articles to the remnants of Parmenides’ poem were young when writing them. K. Reinhardt, for example, was thirty when he published his influential book. Many an academic dissertation has been written on Parmenides. In juvenile ardour one believes to have found the golden key that opens the Parmenidean Gates. Parmenides himself can be supposed to have been rather young when he embarked upon his daring and mysterious philosophy, which perhaps explains the affinity young scholars feel for the philosopher. However, the risk of interrupting him in his thinking by our prejudices is great and almost unavoidable. Where to start?

There is this concatenation of problems. Even if even one could fathom what Being was for Parmenides, then how is the relation of this Being to what is the not-being? Is not-being the so-called Doxa, Parmenides’ description of the world around us? What is the value of the “Doxa”, is it a faithful description of this world? Or is it, as not-being, but a detector of lies, a model of error, a scale by means of which one is able to determine immediately the basic error of every system which may explain our world? Are we thus to live in a hallucinatory world, an illusion, a fata morgana, a dream of a shadow? That is the haunting problem of existence and non-existence.

Was Being really the same as existence for Parmenides? It is interesting to observe that many Anglo-Saxon and French scholars are tempted to equate Being to existence, without much ado. However, there are other possibilities. Such another possibility is the idea that “is” (ἐστιν) in Parmenides is somehow the copula. This explanation is launched by G. Calogero. In Calogero’s view, the copula is still connected with an existential notion but Calogero’s standpoint did not gain much support until A. Mourelatos appeared, who vigorously pleaded in favour of this view and in later publications did not shrink from making “is” the pure copula and Parmenides a “linguist” instead of an ontologist.

Ch. Kahn’s approach has had and still has much influence. In his first articles on Being Kahn introduced a basic significance of ἢνἀι which he called the veridical: “it is the case”, “it is true”, “it is so”. This notion seems to abound in Parmenides’ poem. In this period Kahn considered the veridical signification the essence of Being in general, which view he later abandoned in favour of the copula as being the basic feature of ἐστιν. In his book on the verb...
“Be” in Greek he recognized six modes of existence in Greek, derived from the copula. In this book Kahn did not occupy himself with Parmenides. Later Kahn, when addressing the problem of Being again in Parmenides, still believed the veridical meaning to be the essence of Parmenides’ concept of Being. Ever since its appearance this veridical concept of Being has been widespread in the vast literature on Parmenides.

The choice of the signification one ascribes to Parmenides’ “to be” is not only basic for the interpretation of Being but it is also crucial for the interpretation of not-being, i.e. the Doxa, and has far-reaching consequences for the status of all branches of knowledge Parmenides presents in his poem. If one prefers “existence” for Being, then “what is not” is generally assumed to be “non-existent”, which has its immediate bearing on the status of the Doxa and correspondingly on the status of our world, which will be degraded to illusion. Would it not be better to refrain from hasty hypotheses and to start from the main features which Parmenides’ own description of Being introduces? The readers of this book will observe that this is the method I have followed. Being seems to be immobile, showing a form, similar to that of a ball and is full of ... Being. Neither the veridical concept nor the existential explanation of Being are an appropriate starting-point for our understanding of the essence of Parmenidean Being, as they do not recognize that the properties just mentioned are the core of Parmenides' Being. As soon as I recognized that existence is not the focus of Parmenides' interest, I was able to keep the Doxa free from the idea of non-existence. For what is not in the absolute sense - and the Doxa is not in the absolute sense - may nevertheless exist if existence is not the basic meaning of is. It is amazing to discover that unlike for Plato, who connected Being and Doxa by means of the participation of the particulars of our world in the Ideas, absolute Being for Parmenides seems to have nothing to do with our world.

Ever since K. Reinhardt’s interference there has been the much disputed and controversial question of logic. Was Parmenides an adherent of the logica utens without having the logica docens (which does not appear before Aristotle) as J. Mansfeld, himself an advocate of Parmenides as a user of logical means and forms, strikingly formulated the problem? Lately serious objections have been launched against the idea that Parmenides’ poem is logically structured. Nevertheless I am strongly in favour of the recognition of the logical form of Parmenides’ thought. The part of the poem which is called “the Truth” cannot be understood without recognition of its logical structure. Moreover, if, as Parmenides asserts, Being and thinking are really the same (fr.3) whatever that is supposed to mean, then thinking cannot be applied by any epistemology to our world, as long as this world and Being are separated by an unbridgeable gap. Then Parmenides’ view on science is not fundamentally different from Plato’s, who ultimately makes science only approachable by non-logical thinking, that is, by myth and mythical description.

Crucial will also be the discussion of the ways of inquiry Parmenides offers. Their detailed examination and delineation will appear to be of vital importance for the understanding of both Being and the Doxa. Anticipating my results, I would like to present as my view that the Doxa is not at all a way of inquiry, but that it must be seen as an optimalized description of Parmenides' view on this world. It embeds many theorems of predecessors to give an accomplished, overall and insuperable picture of this world, which is radically separated from "the world" of Being.

In Part I of this book the problems which arise from the identification of Being and thinking are examined. In Part II it is the issue of the relation of logic and Being that comes to the fore. In Part III I attempt to catalogue and assess the scholarly explanations given of the Doxa so far in order to clarify the problems and arrive at a view of my own. Many publications in this field are lacking in confrontation with other already existing opinions. In presenting my own views I confront the views of other scholars. Therefore, a panoramic survey of my results may facilitate the reading of this book. This is the reason why I added Part IV to provide a summary of my views and conclusions.

I have learned much from my predecessors in the thorny and tricky field of Parmenidean studies, more than I ever will be able to give in return. There is perhaps one advantage of my approach that may excuse another book on Parmenides, which is my attempt to inform the reader as much as possible of all the solutions given not only to the general problems, but also to the minor ones, and to examine them in order to make the reader's own choice easier if he does not have specific views about Parmenides' doctrines or to rethink them if he does.

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P. A. Meijer
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