It is commonly maintained that Melissus was the major forerunner of atomism. This has been argued on a number of grounds, one of these being that Leucippus reacted to a Melissean rather than a Parmenidean refutation of locomotion. In the following short paper I shall challenge this view and point out that not only is one other argument for Melissus’ influence on atomism insecure, but that Theophrastus, our most important witness, unequivocally states that Leucippus opposed a pre-Melissean eleaticism.

Discussion is preceded by quotation of the two relevant texts.

**Parmenides DK.28.B.8.**

26. αὐτὰρ ἀχύρητον μεγάλων ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν ἔστιν ἀναρχὸν ἀπαύστον, ἐπεὶ γένεσις καὶ ἔλεθρος τῆς μᾶλ’ ἐπάληθησαν, ἀπώσε δὲ πιστεὶς ἀληθῆς ταύτῶν τ’ ἐν ταύτῳ τε μένον καθ’ ἑαυτό τε κεῖται

30. χοῦτως ἐμπεδὸν αὕθι μένει· κρατερὴ γὰρ Ἀνάγκη πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖς ἔχει, τὸ μὲν ἀμφίς ἔχει, οὐκεκαίνος οὐχ ἀπελεύθητον τὸ ἐδώθεις εἰναι

33. ἦστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιθεοῦς· μὴ ἐδών δ’ ἄν παντὸς ἔδειτο

*a. scanned ἐπιθεοῦς. ἐπιθεοῦς of some manuscripts is also possible.*
*b. μὴ appears in all manuscripts at both Simplicius Phys. 30.10 and 40.6.*

It has generally been expelled.

**Melissus DK.30.B.7.7.**

οὐδὲ κενεὼν ἔστιν ὁδὸν· τὸ γὰρ κενεὼν οὐδὲν ἔστιν· οὐκ ἂν ἄν ἐγὼ τὸ γε

μηδέν. οὐδὲ κινεῖται· ὑποχωρήσαι γάρ ὁδὸν ἔχει οὐδαμῇ, ἀλλὰ πλέον ἔστιν. ἐλ μὲν γὰρ κενεὼν ἦν, ὑπεχώρει ἄν εἰς τὸ κενοῦ κενοὺ δὲ μὴ ἐκντός οὖν ἔχει δική ὑπεχωρήσῃ.
In a fairly recent article G. S. Kirk and Michael C. Stokes jointly maintained\(^1\) that Parmenides rejected local motion on ontological grounds alone. The main support for this view was derived from fragment 8 lines 26-30. The co-authors took it that lines 29 and 30 guaranteed that "\(\delta x\nu \nu\tau \nu\) in line 26 covered locomotion as well as 'starting and stopping'. In their view, the invalidity of both species of motion is deduced from Parmenides' previously argued\(^2\) interdiction of coming-to-be and passing-away. Motion is a kind of change, and all change involves these illegitimate concepts.

For Kirk (although not for Stokes)\(^3\) an important consequence of this is that Parmenides did not employ the physical argument against motion based upon the impossibility of void; this argument was added by Melissus (fragment 7.7). In Kirk's view this affords further support for the fairly common view\(^4\) that Melissus was the true precursor of the atomic theory of Leucippus. Leucippus, he argues, reacted to an argument against motion put forward not by Parmenides but by Melissus.

I believe that the interpretation placed upon the Parmenidean lines, and therefore the deduction about Melissus and atomism which is based on it are false. Lines 26-33 do not, surely, contain an omnibus ontological disproof of two varieties of motion, followed by an argument concerned only with the limitedness of \(\tau o \varepsilon \delta \nu\), as Kirk would presumably maintain, but two arguments each concerned with a different type of motion. Lines 26-28 reject alteration, or passing from one quality to another, which certainly does fall within genesis and phthora, while lines 29-33 constitute an entirely separate disproof of locomotion. This is confirmed by fragment 8 lines 36-41, which sum up the results of


\(^{2}\) DK.28.B.8. 5ff.

\(^{3}\) Kirk and Stokes, op. cit., p. 4 note 4.


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