

## PARMENIDES' METHODOLOGICAL CRITICISM AND THE PROBLEM OF *PHRONESIS*

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The following article is an attempt at indicating the influence Parmenides' thought had on later Greek philosophy (especially that of Aristotle) from the perspective of the meaning of "phronesis". Beginning with an analysis of passages from Heraclitus connected with this category, the semantic context of the understanding of *phronesis* in Parmenides' thought is presented. What is key in these considerations is Parmenides' distinction between two ways of inquiry, which is given the name of methodological criticism in this article. On the basis of this distinction, it is possible to explain why *phronesis* belongs to the way of opinions, as well as to justify Parmenides' influence on the thought of Aristotle, culminating in the latter's distinction between *episteme* and *phronesis*.

**Keywords:** Phronesis – Knowledge – Criticism – Methodology – Parmenides of Elea

The present-day renaissance of interest in the concept of φρόνησις is, to a large degree, a result of the tendency to demonstrate, and sometimes even justify, the practical aspect of philosophy. Of course, this practical aspect has been a part of philosophy since its beginnings; nevertheless, the reflection undertaken in this context on Greek thought is motivated by an attempt at a broader and deeper understanding of the sense of what is today called practical wisdom, or prudence. In reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, a distinction is made (today as well) between ἐπιστήμη (theoretical know-why), τέχνη (technical know-how), and φρόνησις (practical wisdom). To be more precise, Aristotle lists five *hexeis*: τέχνη, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, σοφία, νοῦς.<sup>1</sup> To explain what φρόνησις is, Aristotle provides us with a characteristic trait of those, who possess this "practical wisdom" (τοὺς φρονίμους). This trait is the ability to accurately reflect on what is good and beneficial for them, not only in terms of certain aspects or spheres, but in reference to their way of life in general.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we can say that φρόνησις is a "true characteristic that is bound up with action, accompanied by reason, and concerned with things good and bad for a human

<sup>1</sup> Arist., *Nikom.*, 1139b16-17. In *Anal. Post.* (89b7-8), we find six of them: διάνοια, νοῦς, ἐπιστήμη, τέχνη, φρόνησις, σοφία.

<sup>2</sup> „δοκεῖ δὴ φρονίμου εἶναι τὸ δύνασθαι καλῶς βουλευσασθαι περὶ τὰ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα, οὐ κατὰ μέρος, οἷον ποῖα πρὸς ὑγίειαν, πρὸς ἰσχύν, ἀλλὰ ποῖα πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως.” Arist., *Nikom.*, 1140a25-28.

being” (ἔξιν ἀληθῆ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικῆν περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά).<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Aristotle clearly notes that φρόνησις cannot be identified with either ἐπιστήμη or τέχνη (οὐκ ἂν εἴη ἡ φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη οὐδὲ τέχνη).<sup>4</sup> It cannot be identified with ἐπιστήμη because our actions can be realized in other ways, while ἐπιστήμη concerns such things that cannot be otherwise (as they are necessary and immutable). It cannot be identified with τέχνη, on the other hand, because acting and creating are two different things. Aristotle’s distinction between φρόνησις and theoretical knowledge can also be seen as a return to the pre-Platonic understanding of φρόνησις, which encompassed both wisdom and the art of practical action, or prudence. Plato, in his descriptions of φρόνησις, accented above all its theoretical dimension connected with the cognition of ideas, especially with grasping the Good.<sup>5</sup> However, it must be noted that in searching for the model of the good life, Plato preferred the so-called “joint life” (ὁ βίος συναμφοτέρως), a mixture of “Ἡδονῆς [...] καὶ νοῦ καὶ φρονήσεως.”<sup>6</sup> There can be no doubt that it was precisely Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* that contributed most to φρόνησις being associated with prudence, though traces of such an understanding were already visible in earlier traditions, including the pre-Platonic. In searching for the earliest philosophical sources of such an understanding of φρόνησις, scholars rightly indicate the role of Heraclitus. However, I am convinced that Parmenides’ contribution is marginalized here, especially in the case of his connecting φρόνησις with sense perception, which in turn manifests itself as a cognitive tool on the mortal way of opinions. The fact that φρόνησις was placed within the framework of the way of opinions necessarily leads to reflection on not only its status and relationship to the so-called way of truth, but also on the meaning of the distinction between the two ways of inquiry. In my opinion, this last issue is of fundamental importance to all of post-Parmenidean philosophy, and aids in the understanding of both Plato’s model of the good life and Aristotle’s understanding of φρόνησις, which greatly influenced later philosophical traditions.

Since the beginnings of its use, the word φρόνησις has had a broad range of meanings, among other: diaphragm, pride, purpose, heart, mind, will, intention, disposition, thought, statement, judgement, understanding, sense, prudence, practical wisdom, knowledge, decisions, awareness, a certain state of mind.

It is worth noting here that Aristotle clearly distinguishes φρόνησις from ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη. The justification for the distinction between the first two categories is especially interesting. As it turns out, φρόνησις, in contrast to ἐπιστήμη, refers to such things (actions) that can be in other ways,<sup>7</sup> which means that there is no necessity or immutability connected with them. If we know something, that means that whatever it is we know

<sup>3</sup> Arist., *Nikom.*, 1140b4-6. Bartlett and Collins’s (2011) translation.

<sup>4</sup> Arist., *Nikom.*, 1140b1-2.

<sup>5</sup> “Πῶς γὰρ οὐχί, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, εἰ ὀνειδίζοντές γε ὅτι οὐκ ἴσμεν τὸ ἀγαθὸν λέγουσι πάλιν ὡς εἰδόσιν; φρόνησιν γὰρ αὐτὸ φασιν εἶναι ἀγαθοῦ, ὡς αὐὶ συνιέντων ἡμῶν ὅτι λέγουσιν, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φθέγγονται ὄνομα.” Plato, *Republic*, 505c.

<sup>6</sup> Plato, *Philebus*, 22a.

<sup>7</sup> Arist. *Nikom.*, 1140b2-3.

cannot be otherwise. The impossibility of “being otherwise” is the criterion for being an object of ἐπιστήμη. The objects that φρόνησις refers to do not fulfill this criterion; “the sphere of what is changeable,” i.e. objects of perception, can be otherwise, thus ἐπιστήμη cannot refer to them. As Aristotle notes, the objects of ἐπιστήμη must be necessary, and thus eternal. For, everything existing of absolute necessity is eternal; and what is eternal does not come into existence or perish.<sup>8</sup> From this, it follows that the criterion of distinguishing ἐπιστήμη from φρόνησις boils down to the dissimilarity of their respective objects. The object of ἐπιστήμη is eternal, unchanging, and necessary, whereas the object of φρόνησις is temporary, changing, and not necessary. In *Anal. Post.*, Aristotle expresses this distinction when he refers to the difference between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα.<sup>9</sup> This view is concurrent with what Plato establishes for example near the end of Book V of his *Republic*.<sup>10</sup> It is doubtless that the distinction between these two manners of cognition on the basis of their objects is part of the legacy of Parmenides. In light of these references it becomes clear, first of all, why φρόνησις belongs to the way of the opinions in Parmenides’ poem, and – secondly – why Aristotle decisively distinguishes φρόνησις from ἐπιστήμη. Parmenides’ greatest contribution to the further development of philosophy was not – in my opinion – his alleged monistic ontology, but rather his methodological criticism and proposed methodologies for both “ways” of inquiry, whose distinction is based on the distinction between their respective objects of investigation.

Before we begin discussing the category of φρόνησις in Parmenides, it is necessary to determine how this term was used in the extant fragments of Heraclitus. This will enable us to find those uses, which would indicate a similarity of thought between the two philosophers.<sup>11</sup> In fragment D-K B112<sup>12</sup> Heraclitus describes σωφρονεῖν as the greatest *arete* (ἀρετή μεγίστη); wisdom (σοφία), on the other hand, is described as saying-and-acting the truth, as perceiving things in accordance with their nature. The structure of this statement is based on the triad: σωφρονεῖν – λέγειν – ποιεῖν. From this we can deduce that prudent thinking is in essence connected with speech and practical action. This passage itself does not yet specify what sort of thinking Heraclitus has in mind, of course. In light of other fragments, we can say that the recognition of the true nature of things is

<sup>8</sup> See Arist., *Nikom.*, 1139b22-24.

<sup>9</sup> See Arist., *Anal. Post.*, 88b30 – 89a10.

<sup>10</sup> See Plato, *Rep.*, 478a-b.

<sup>11</sup> There is no room here for a detailed comparative analysis of the views of Heraclitus and Parmenides. In short, some scholars see them as standing in opposition to one another, especially in light of fr. B6 of Parmenides. Worth noting, among others, are Diels 1879, 68; Patin 1899, 489-660; Gomperz, 1903, Burnet, 1960: 63-64. Other scholars, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the similarities between them. See e.g. Zeller 1892, 738-739; Reinhardt 1916, 202; Riezler 1934, 15; Mourelatos 1970, 179-180 and 240; Prier 1976, 95.

<sup>12</sup> „σωφρονεῖν ἀρετή μεγίστη, καὶ σοφία ἀληθῆα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας.“ D-K 22B112. Except where noted to the contrary, the Greek text of the passages is taken from *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Griechisch und Deutsch von H. Diels, herausgeg. von W. Kranz, Bd. 1 – 3, Zürich 1985, hereafter cited as D-K.

linked with speaking the truth about reality (*Logos*), and this, in turn, results in proper action for the good of the *polis*. These conclusions are complemented by fragments D-K B113 and B114. In the former fragment, Heraclitus writes that “thinking is common to all.”<sup>13</sup>

First of all, I do not see any evidence of panpsychism here,<sup>14</sup> especially in light of the later philosophical tradition; secondly, it is unclear whether the word *πᾶσι* refers to all things or to all people. We cannot exclude the possibility that this ambiguity is intentional on the part of Heraclitus, as we can find a similar stylistic formula in fr. D-K B114,<sup>15</sup> in which the meaning of what is common is specified. What we are dealing with here is a play on words (*ζῆν νόωι – ζῆν ὧι*), while it is simultaneously indicated that wise speech should be based on what is common to all. For, all human laws, including the laws of thought, speech, and action, stem from the one divine law, the law of *Logos*. This *Logos* is common to all things as the internal law of their dynamics; thus, it follows that all people are potentially able to recognize this order within themselves. This aspect is emphasized in fragment D-K B116, in which Heraclitus writes that “all men have a share in self-knowledge and sound thinking.”<sup>16</sup> There can be no doubt that this passage is a reference to the words of oracle at Delphi;<sup>17</sup> at the same time, it must be noted that in this fragment, as well as in those previously mentioned, Heraclitus goes much further, explaining, on the one hand, why it is possible to know oneself, and on the other, what effects such self-knowledge brings. Since *Logos* (the one divine law) is in everything, every human being can come to know it by coming to know himself, thus allowing him to prudently think, speak, and act. Fragment D-K B17 can be counted in the same group of uses of the verb *φρονεῖν* and its derivatives as the fragments analyzed above.<sup>18</sup> Everyone has the ability to come to know himself and find *Logos* within him; however, many people will not think (*οὐ φρονέουσι*) things the way they are, nor will they recognize them on the basis of their prior experience (*οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν*), but will instead only create opinions about these things (*ἑωυτοῖσι δὲ δοκέουσι*). In this passage, *φρονεῖν* and *γινώσκειν* are contrasted with *δοκεῖν*. Many people do not comprehend things as they are, i.e. at their source, in accordance with the truth, that is, with *Logos*. They are unable to recognize these things when they call to mind the knowledge they have previously attained. Instead, they refer to their individual experience and the opinions it is built on, which obscure the universal and common *Logos*.

It is clear that the group of fragments cited above treats *φρόνησις* as something posi-

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<sup>13</sup> “ζῆνόν ἐστι πᾶσι τὸ φρονεῖν.” D-K 22B113.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Kahn 1979, 119.

<sup>15</sup> “ζῆν νόωι λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρῆ τῶι ζῆν ὧι πάντων, ὅκωσπερ νόμωι πόλις, καὶ πολὺ ἰσχυροτέρως. τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἐνὸς τοῦ θείου· κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ὀκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται.” D-K 22B114.

<sup>16</sup> “ἀνθρώποισι πᾶσι μέτεστι γινώσκειν ἑωυτοῦς καὶ σωφρονεῖν.” D-K 22B116. Graham’s translation.

<sup>17</sup> Kahn sees a reference to Delphi not only in fr. B116, but also in fr. B112. Kahn 1979, 121.

<sup>18</sup> “οὐ γὰρ φρονέουσι τοιαῦτα πολλοί, ὀκόσοι ἐγκυρεῦσιν, οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν, ἑωυτοῖσι δὲ δοκέουσι.” D-K 22B17.

tive – as the faculty able to accurately discern Logos, the essence of things that is common to all. Moreover, prudent thought (φρόνησις) thus understood stands in opposition to the doxical view of the world characteristic of those unable to recognize *Logos*. However, we can find a statement in Heraclitus that fits to a large degree with how Parmenides understood φρόνησις. It appears in fragment D-K B2:

„τοῦ λόγου δ' ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζῶουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.”  
“Though the Logos is common, the many live as if they had a private understanding.”

Of course, due to the fact that the words φρόνησις and ξυνός appear in this passage, we can refer it to fr. B113 and B114. Though *Logos* is common, many live as if they had ἰδίαν φρόνησιν. The use of φρόνησις in this sense corresponds to the act of δοκεῖν in fr. B17. This “private wisdom” is, then, an individual subjective view that lacks the ability to recognize the common *Logos*. We cannot exclude the possibility that Heraclitus initially ties φρόνησις with sense experience, which is our natural and primary manner of contact with reality and, as such, plays an essential role. The problem appears only when this sort of view takes on the role of our final cognitive authority, preventing us from cognizing the true internal nature of all things. In other words, our “private wisdom” thus understood consists in the cognition of reality without insight into its true nature, i.e. into its immanent *Logos*. In fr. B2, several oppositions appear: one Logos – many [people], “commonness” – “privateness”; from this follows the opposition: universal prudent thought (σωφρονεῖν – B112, B116, τὸ φρονεῖν - B113) – particular (private) wisdom (ἴδια φρόνησις - B2).<sup>19</sup> These oppositions can also be expressed with reference to Heraclitus’ opposition of the sleeping and waking. In the context of fragment D-K B2 cited above, it is worth citing fr. D-K B89: “The waking have one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own.”<sup>20</sup> The waking are those able to “hear” the voice of Logos, and thus to recognize what is common and constitutes the essence of things; the sleeping, on the other hand, are those, who stop on the surface, without insight into the true nature of things. In Parmenides, the distinction between the waking and the sleeping takes on the form of the epistemological distinction between τὸ νοεῖν and τὸ φρονεῖν, which manifest themselves on the two ways of inquiry: the so-called way of truth and the way of opinions. Before we discuss the status of φρόνησις from the perspective of Parmenides’ fundamental distinction, it is worth taking a closer look at this category in the doxographical source fragments.

In the extant fragments considered authentic, the word φρονεῖν (“φρονέει,” D-K B16.3) appears just once. Fragment B16<sup>21</sup> in its entirety concerns cognition based on

<sup>19</sup> See Narecki 1999, 67.

<sup>20</sup> „ὁ Ἥ. φησι τοῖς ἐγγηγορόσιν ἓνα καὶ κοινὸν κόσμον εἶναι, τῶν δὲ κοιμωμένων ἕκαστον εἰς ἴδιον ἀποστρέφουσαι.” D-K 22B89. See also D-K 22B1, 22B73.

<sup>21</sup> „ὡς γὰρ ἕκαστος ἔχει κρᾶσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων,  
τὸς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρίσταται· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ  
ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν  
καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα.” D-K 28B16.

sense perception and belongs – in the opinion of most scholars<sup>22</sup> – to the way of opinions. From the point of view of the subject of this article, Theophrastus relays an important bit of information when he writes in his commentary on fr. B16 that Parmenides “τὸ γὰρ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ὡς ταῦτὸ λέγει. (considers perception and *phronein* to be the same).”<sup>23</sup> From this it follows that the Parmenidean φρόνησις is a kind of perception or – given a certain interpretation – a kind of thought that is based exclusively on sense experience. This belonging of φρόνησις to the way of opinions is of key importance to understanding both the ideas of Parmenides and their influence on the later philosophical tradition. In short, fr. B16.1-2 states that the thought of most people is similar to the confusion of “much-wandering limbs.” Thought is understood as a combination (κρᾶσις) of two forms (D-K B8.53): fire and night (D-K B8.55-59), light and darkness (D-K B9). Theophrastus, in his commentary on this passage, interprets κρᾶσις as συμμετρία, meaning that we should speak – as Fränkel notes<sup>24</sup> – of the commensurability of what is perceived, to the objects perceived. Doxical thinking<sup>25</sup> thus understood is founded on perception, and resembles the confusion of the two forms in the limbs. Significantly, Parmenides describes these limbs using the word πολύπλαγκτος,<sup>26</sup> which ties in to πλακτὸς νόος (D-K B6.6), once again emphasizing the fact that they belong to the way of opinions.

We can accept that in fr. B16, Parmenides wishes to demonstrate that what we think with and the nature of man’s limbs (in the sense of their confusion) are the same as the structure of the objects that our thinking refers to. Generally speaking, Parmenides attempts – to the best of his ability – to reconstruct the scheme of cognition present on the way of truth, in the realm of opinions. Thus, the way of opinions can be seen as a reflection of the structure of the way of truth, but in regards to perception and things perceived.<sup>27</sup> This

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<sup>22</sup> According to certain authors (Hershbell 1970, 1-23 and Loenen 1959, 58-60), this fragment belongs to the first part, i.e. to the description of the way of truth. The former writes: “But there are important reasons for concluding that B16 has philosophical significance, and that it does not belong to the Way of Opinion, but to the Way of Truth.” (Hershbell 1970, 3). Hershbell, following Loenen (Loenen 1959, 58), believes that fr. B16 should be placed directly after fr. B3: “... τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι.” See also: Bollack 1957, 56-71. In my opinion, there are no convincing arguments for adding B16 to the way of truth, despite the fact that – as Hershbell rightly emphasizes – the testimony of Theophrastus, which links this fragment to the way of opinions, is not very strong. The deciding factors in this case are the words and phrases used by Parmenides, which situate this fragment within the framework of the doxical reality. It is also difficult to agree with Hershbell because of the fact that he treats the way of opinions as the absolutely false testimony of mortals, while – in his view – fr. B16 contains a positive contribution to cognition. The way of opinions – as will be discussed further in this article – is not a false way; moreover, the opposition truth – falsehood does not appear in Parmenides – rather, he makes use of the opposition truth - opinion (what is seeming, belief).

<sup>23</sup> Theophr., *de sen.*, 3 (D-K 28A46.8-9).

<sup>24</sup> Fränkel 1960, 175. See also: Laks 1990, 1-18.

<sup>25</sup> I use the phrase “doxical thinking” after P.A. Meijer, who writes: “φρονεῖν appears to be his term for doxical thinking, which turns out to be entirely bound to the doxical elements.” Meijer 1997, 66-67.

<sup>26</sup> „κρᾶσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων [...]” D-K 28B16.1.

<sup>27</sup> This explains why the description of the way of truth precedes that of the way of opinions, among other things.

similarity is visible even in the linguistic structure used. Both fr. B3 and B16 contain the same phrase: „τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ [...] ἐστὶν [...]” (B3), „τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ ἐστὶν [...]” (B16). The general cognitive structure is the same both on the way of truth and on the way of opinions. In both cases we can speak of an inextricable congruence between what we think about and the structure of thought itself. The essential differences result from the dissimilarity of their respective objects. On the way of truth, this object is indivisible being, which corresponds to νοεῖν; on the way of opinions, these objects are complex things (as mixtures of light and darkness), which correspond to the confusion of much-wandering limbs, or φρονεῖν.<sup>28</sup> When it comes to doxical thinking, identified with the nature of limbs or confusion of limbs, this thinking is the same as what one thinks about; it itself is (as perception or one of its forms) a mixture of light and night, which are also elements of what is perceived, and which Parmenides calls either τὰ δοκοῦντα (D-K B1.31), or things that came into existence, are, and, flourishing, reach their end (B19.1-2). The proportions of this mixture may differ from mortal to mortal – for “each and all men” (καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί),<sup>29</sup> in the language of Parmenides – and depending on time. The mixture’s mutability, stemming from its conformity to a mutable reality, results in the lack of true credibility (πίστις ἀληθείας)<sup>30</sup> that Parmenides mentions when he characterizes the way of opinions in the prologue. As was mentioned, Parmenides attempts to liken his exposition of opinion to truth so that, as he writes, no one will be deceived by any other mortal opinion (D-K B8.61). In reference to τὰ δοκοῦντα, people are condemned to guesswork and probable knowledge (an element taken from Xenophanes) because things are mutable; thus, it follows that knowledge about them cannot be immutable. Certain (true) knowledge is possible only in reference to that, which truly is, i.e. to immutable being (an anti-Xenophanesian element). The Parmenidean φρονεῖν from fr. B16 corresponds to πλακτὸς νόος from fr. B6. It is thus a subjective, relative form of thinking based on perception, which is incapable of cognizing the immutable essence of things because of its instability, which results from the current mixture of light and darkness in the limbs (the senses). Mortals are thus condemned to such a view of the sensual world, which permanently eludes true cognition (νοεῖν).<sup>31</sup>

It seems, however, that the Parmenidean φρόνησις is linked above all with a certain way of investigation; this way of investigation, on the other hand, is linked with its object of reference. The key issue when interpreting the views of the thinker from Elea is understanding the significance of his distinction between the two ways of inquiry. Parmenides’

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<sup>28</sup> Meijer is correct in writing: “The correspondence cannot be a caprice of fortune, but must be a deliberate act of the author. In fr. 16, too, one may speak about identity, viz. between human perception and what exist in the ‘Doxa’. [...] The mind has the capacity to have a relationship with the world in as much as it consists of the same elements which compose the ‘Doxa’. As Being and thinking are identical, so perception and Doxa are the same.” (Meijer 1997, 58).

<sup>29</sup> D-K 28B16.4.

<sup>30</sup> D-K 28B1.30.

<sup>31</sup> The above comments concerning the interpretation of fr. B16 are a short recapitulation of my analyses in: (Kubok 2004, 243-259).

proposal is not only original for his time, but undoubtedly constitutes his greatest contribution to the entire philosophical tradition. There can be no doubt that the philosophical breakthrough brought about by the views of Parmenides is connected with this methodological proposal. Moreover, this proposal consists in the suggestion of two different methodologies depending on their objects of reference. Research on Parmenides' philosophical legacy frequently oscillates between a preference for one or the other way of inquiry. For a long time, Parmenides was viewed only as a metaphysician, even as the initiator of metaphysical reflection, while his views on opinion were omitted or, at best, marginalized. Other scholars tended towards ontological or formal (linguistic) ontological interpretations. On the other hand, in recent decades, suggestions to interpret all of Parmenides' views from the perspective of his physics (broadly-speaking) have appeared. In my opinion, neither of these extreme interpretations (I am omitting the rather common attempts at reading Parmenides from the perspective of the later philosophical tradition, e.g. Kant, Hegel, Heidegger) recognize the importance of his methodological proposal. In my research on philosophical criticism and the critical approach in Greek thought,<sup>32</sup> I distinguish separative criticism, which consists in the ability to distinguish, separate, and designate the proper boundaries. In Parmenides' thought, for the first time, we see a new form of separative criticism, namely, methodological criticism. It consists in the ability to distinguish between the ways of inquiry and determine their objects, status, and justification.

In the *Proemium*, we find the description of a youth's journey to visit the goddess, who states that the youth should come to know all:

„ἤμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος<sup>33</sup> ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ  
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθείης.”<sup>34</sup>

It is worth emphasizing that the first thing the goddess reveals is the distinction between the two ways of inquiry. The remainder of her talk, based on this fundamental distinction, is in its entirety dedicated to describing each of these ways. It follows that the beginning of philosophical reflection was the goddess' methodological criticism, which consists in making a source distinction between the two ways of inquiry, hence this distinction itself is of a divine character. Not taking this distinction into account is characteristic of mortals, to whom it seems that the only and final way of inquiry is their way of opinions.<sup>35</sup> Parmenides' name for these mortals is significant, as he calls them ἄκριτα

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<sup>32</sup> Criticism refers back to the verb κρίνω (to separate, distinguish, judge, evaluate, explain, investigate, among others) and to the adjective κριτικός (critical, able to distinguish, deciding, among others). In attempting to discern the types of philosophical criticism, I distinguish the latter from literary criticism. See Kubok 2015, 9-31. An interesting attempt at reading the ideas of Parmenides from the perspective of certain forms of literary criticism can be found in: (Mourelatos 1970, 222-263).

<sup>33</sup> This is how it appears in Simplicius, *In de caelo*, VII, 557, 26. In Sextus (*Math.* VII, 111): εὐπειθέος, whereas in Proclus (*Tim.*, I, 345): εὐφειγγέος.

<sup>34</sup> D-K 28B1.29-30.

<sup>35</sup> Opinions may be called opinions only from the perspective of the way of truth; to the opining themselves, their views seem to be truth.



φῦλα (the indiscriminating mass or crowd, D-K B6.7). In short, we can say that:

1) The distinction between the way of truth and way of opinions is in itself an expression of the way of truth, or more precisely – the foundation of the goddess' further narration. Here, we are dealing with separative criticism in the form of methodological criticism.

2) Mortals, not respecting this distinction and thus considering their beliefs and opinions as final knowledge, are described as ἄκριτα φῦλα, meaning that they are methodologically indiscriminate.

3) This is why the goddess addresses εἰδῶτα φῶτα (D-K B1.3), or knowing man,<sup>36</sup> who has the ability to think critically, i.e. to discriminate; he is, thus, methodologically critical. However, he is also anti-dogmatically critical, since the goddess asks him to judge by reason (or by discourse) the much contested argument she has given (D-K B7.5-6).

The source opposition that the goddess indicates is expressed through the juxtaposition of εἰδῶτα φῶτα and ἄκριτα φῦλα. From the perspective of the terminology used here, this opposition boils down to an opposition between methodological criticism and methodological indiscriminateness. The result of this indiscriminateness is the wandering “two-headedness” expressed on the way of opinions through the concept of the two distinct forms that things are made of. Thus, for mortals, the consequence of a lack of methodological criticism is the acceptance of separative criticism on the doxical level, based on ἔθος πολύπειρον (D-K B7.3); this doxical separative criticism posits the distinction of two forms and the conferring them of signs, to each one separately (χωρίς, D-K B8.56). In fragment B8.53-56, Parmenides writes that mortals accepted two forms in order to name their beliefs (γνώμας), and distinguished one form from the other (ἐκρίναντο). It is worth noting that Parmenides, in his description of mortals, uses derivatives of the word κρίνω, which is justified by the interpretation accepted in this article that attempts to link these uses with given forms of philosophical criticism. Thus, describing mortals with the phrase ἄκριτα points to a fundamental methodological indiscriminateness expressed in the lack of perception of the source distinction between the two ways of inquiry and their respective objects of cognition. What follows is the narrowing of the entire cognitive sphere to doxical thinking, the object of which is solely τὰ δοκοῦντα (D-K B1.31). On the other hand, the statement that mortals ἐκρίναντο two forms signifies that mortals accept separative criticism, but only on the doxical level – i.e., they treat each thing as comprised of separate forms. In other words, mortals, being unable to perceive the source methodological criticism, and thus unaware of the existence of the way of truth, accept criticism only within the framework of the way of opinions, the only way they know. This source methodological criticism is most strongly expressed in fragment B8.15-16, in which the words κρίσις and κέκριται appear, significantly enough, in the context of the goddess Δίκη.<sup>37</sup> Parmenides states that a fundamental decision (κρίσις, B8.15), as a particular kind of

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<sup>36</sup> “a man of understanding” (Coxon 1986, 44); “the man who knows” (Taran 1965, 8).

<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting here that in Parmenides' poem, many key terms have forensic connotations (eg. σήματα, κρίσις, δίκη, πίστις, ἔλεγχος). For more on this subject, see Bryan 2012, 80-93.

judgment, is, in essence, distinction: ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν (is *or* is not, B8.16). Moreover, this distinction was made in accordance with necessity, as evidenced by the phrase „κέκριται δ' οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη [...]”. Meanwhile, mortals, being unable to make this source distinction, accept both ἔστιν and οὐκ ἔστιν in their description of the doxical world, which Parmenides calls the “two-headed” view (δίκρανοι, B6.5). A lack of awareness of the existence (on the way of truth) of the source disjunction is *or* is not necessarily leads to the doxical conjunction is *and* is not. Parmenides presents this two-headedness as an expression of the amphilogy of mortals.<sup>38</sup> Aside from this, a lack of discernment of the fundamental κρίσις leads mortals to a conception of κρᾶσις (D-K B16.1), or more precisely, as was already mentioned, to a κρᾶσις μελέων πολυπλάγκτων expressing doxical thinking, or φρόνησις.

A suggestive illustration of the above comments can be found in fragment D-K B6. In it, Parmenides mentions βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδέν (mortals who know nothing, B6.4), which stands in significant contrast to εἰδόμενα φῶτα (D-K B1.3). These mortals, viewed as ἄκριτα φύλα (B6.7), are described as δίκρανοι (double-headed, two-headed, B6.5), meaning that they use two distinct forms to describe τὰ δοκοῦντα. Aside from this, Parmenides uses words connected with broadly-understood wandering in his characterization of mortals in this passage. Thus, two-headed mortals wander (πλάττονται, B6.5), while helplessness (ἀμηχανίη, B6.5) guides their wandering thought (πλακτὸν νόον, B6.6). This wandering results from the fact that mortals accept to be and not to be (τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι, B6.8) as the same thing, and not the same thing simultaneously (ταῦτόν [...] καὶ ταῦτόν, B6.8-9). In other words, they presume the unity of these forms when describing the world (B8.54), while simultaneously distinguishing between them.

There is no room here to discuss the way of truth in detail, especially when it comes to taking a stance regarding the various interpretational difficulties that appear in the poem. Thus, we must make do with a few general comments concerning the problem of the status of doxa.<sup>39</sup> Parmenides’ way of truth is contrasted, on the one hand, with the opinions of mortals, which lack true certainty (οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής, D-K B1.30), and on the other, with things that come into existence, change, and perish (D-K B19), and in reference to which no true certainty can be had. Thus, the way of opinions explains how things that are opined had to be acceptable (δοκίμως, D-K B1.32), though at the same time, this way is deceptive (ἀπατηλόν, D-K B8, 52), as it is unable to recognize the true essence of things (τὸ εἶναι, ἀλήθεια). In fr. D-K B 8.60-61 the goddess states that she is preaching a plausible (fitting, appropriate)<sup>40</sup> order of the world, so that other mortal views do not deceive anyone. The Parmenidean view of opinion should thus be treated as an assumptive

<sup>38</sup> “Mortals practice amphilogy innocently, and thereby fall into error; the goddess practices amphilogy with full knowledge, and thereby reveals the truth.” (Mourelatos 1974, 317).

<sup>39</sup> A more detailed analysis of this issue can be found in (Kubok 2004, 193-283).

<sup>40</sup> J. Bryan (2012, 58-113) lists and analyzes four groups of possible translations of the word εὐκώς: 1) similar, 2) fitting, appropriate, 3) specious, 4) plausible. He adds: “I see no reason to rule against any of these possibilities and, in fact, it seems perfectly conceivable that Parmenides is adducing aspects of each” (Bryan 2012, 109).

and probable (possible) description of τὰ δοκοῦντα, which cannot be fully true, since it refers to a mutable reality (to that, which simultaneously *is* and *is not*). Therefore, this way of opinion cannot be rejected as false, since mortals are condemned to opinion when they attempt to describe and explain the phenomenal mutability of things. In contrast, the way of truth concentrates only on coming to know what has not come into existence, is immutable, eternal, and complete.<sup>41</sup>

Parmenides' methodological criticism as a form of separative criticism is achieved in his distinction of two ways of inquiry. Each of them is constituted by the object to which it refers. Thus, it is no surprise that the Parmenidean φρόνησις appears on the way of opinions, rather than on the way of truth. For the latter is the theoretical cognition of the essence of things and constitutes a preconception of what later comes to be known as ἐπιστήμη; φρόνησις, on the other hand, is linked with the world of doxa, transient and mutable, in which mortals act on a daily basis. In other words, the Parmenidean way of truth, and in its footsteps ἐπιστήμη as Aristotle understands it, refer to what is permanent and immutable (to that, which cannot be otherwise), whereas the way of opinions (and, thus, φρόνησις the way it is understood by both Parmenides, and, later, Aristotle) concerns a mutable reality (that can be otherwise) and is linked with practical action based on experience.

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<sup>41</sup> See: signs of truth in fr. B8.

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