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Title: Unity in Crisis: Protometaphysical and Postmetaphysical Decisions

Year: 2013

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Backman, J. (2013). Unity in Crisis: Protometaphysical and Postmetaphysical Decisions. In A. Magun (Ed.), *Politics of the One: Concepts of the One and the Many in Contemporary Thought* (pp. 87-112). Bloomsbury Academic. *Political Theory and Contemporary Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501301643.ch-007>

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This is an accepted manuscript of a book chapter published in *Politics of the One: Concepts of the One and the Many in Contemporary Thought*, ed. Artemy Magun (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), pp. 87–112, available at Bloomsbury via <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501301643.ch-007>.

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Unity in Crisis: Protometaphysical and Postmetaphysical Decisions

The metaphysics of unity: its end and its onset

The notion of an *end of metaphysics* dominated twentieth-century philosophy. The roots of the theme trace back to Hume's skeptical attack on the metaphysics of substance and Kant's subsequent critical attempt to redeem the metaphysical mode of knowledge—the synthetic *a priori*—in the form of a de-absolutized transcendental philosophy. The sense of an imminent end of metaphysical modes of thought—the demise of traditional “cosmological values” such as aim, unity, and being/truth—becomes explicit in Nietzsche's declaration that “any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking . . . the categories ‘aim,’ ‘unity,’ ‘being’ which we used to insert some value into the world—we *pull out* again.”¹

In the wake of Nietzsche, both Carnap and Heidegger—logical positivism as well as hermeneutics and deconstruction, “analytic” as well as “continental” philosophy—declared the end of metaphysics. For Carnap, this signified the acknowledgment of the meaninglessness of metaphysical (non-empirical and non-analytic) statements and the subsequent integration of philosophy into empirical science as a technique of logical analysis.² For Heidegger, the end of metaphysics meant the Hegelian completion and Nietzschean inversion of Platonic-Aristotelian ontological foundationalism (“ontotheology”). The outcome of the demise of metaphysics demise is the ultramodern age of fulfilled techno-scientific nihilism in which beings are determined by a technical framework or “setup” (*Gestell*) as an inherently meaningless and homogeneous “standing reserve” (*Bestand*) of material resources, and the human being accordingly becomes a “human resource,” an “employee” of an impersonal and subjectless “ordering” or “disposing” (*Angestellte des Bestellens*).³

The thesis of an end of metaphysics involved the diagnosis of a *beginning* of metaphysics, which both Nietzsche and the later Heidegger locate in Plato. Heidegger, however, extends Nietzsche’s genealogy of Platonism to what can be characterized as the *protometaphysical* approach of the pre-Platonic thinkers. It is here that Heidegger discovers what he designates as the “first beginning” (*der erste Anfang*)—in a determinate, idiosyncratic sense of the word *Anfang*, distinguished from a beginning (*Beginn*) in the sense of a chronological start—of metaphysical thinking.

With regard to Nietzsche's description of Platonism as a "disease"⁴ and to the Heideggerian idiom of "getting over" (*Verwindung*) metaphysics,⁵ it is perhaps appropriate to translate *Anfang* as "onset," in a sense analogous to an "onset of illness." In his 1942–3 lecture course *Parmenides*, Heidegger notes:

With regard to this early thinking in the Occident, among the Greeks, we distinguish between *beginning* [*Beginn*] and *onset* [*Anfang*]. "Beginning" refers to the coming forth of this thinking at a definite "time." . . . The "onset" is what, in this early thinking, is to be thought and what is thought. . . . The onset is not something dependent on the favor of these thinkers, something with which they deal in such and such a way. On the contrary, . . . [t]he thinkers are the ones who are *set upon* [*An-gefangenen*] by the *on-set* [*An-fang*], overtaken by it and gathered upon it.⁶

The onset of philosophy, for Heidegger, is neither a starting point left behind in the later development of philosophy nor the inaugural act of beginning to philosophize, but rather the *motive* and the *task* faced by the first philosophers. An onset is literally what "sets on" or "sets about" (*fängt an*), in the sense of addressing or capturing one's attention. It is not an accomplishment of the early philosophers, but rather the initial philosophical issue that preoccupies them, a fundamental experience that

“sets upon” thinkers and addresses them at the beginning of philosophy, thereby “bringing about” their thinking. *Anfang* can thus be understood as a rendering of the Greek *archē*. The Greek verb *archō*, *archein* means “to begin” and “to initiate” as well as “to govern,” “to preside over,” and “to rule.” *Archē*, *Anfang*, is the onset or outset that is precisely *not* left behind in the ensuing development, but rather governs and directs the unfolding of whatever issues from it. For Aristotle, the *archē*, the guiding principle of a thing, is also its *peras*, its limit, as well as its *telos*, its end and conclusion.⁷ Likewise, what Heidegger means by the *Anfang* of philosophy is a guiding “mission” or leading “quest” of Western metaphysics, a principle that delimits and defines, governs and directs, and thereby *unifies* the metaphysical tradition, marking the boundary within which it takes place. The onset delineates and determines, so to speak, the *scene* upon which the different episodes of Western philosophy are enacted: while the respective settings of the different epochs vary, the scene as such remains the same. In this sense, the Heideggerian *Anfang* is in many ways parallel to Badiou’s event, the singular temporal rupture that institutes the possibility of a new “fidelity,” of a new process of delimiting a new truth in terms of the historical event.⁸

In this sense, the onset of philosophy is also a crisis, a *krisis* in the literal Greek sense of the word: a de-cision or dis-tinction (*Ent-scheidung*), a de-limitation or dis-crimination of the proper domain of Western thought.

By “onset” we understand the original decisions [*Entscheidungen*] that sustain in advance what is essential in Western history. . . . The recollection of the onset of our history is the awakening of knowing about the decision that, even now, and in the future, determines Western humanity.⁹

These initial decisions—the protometaphysical crisis—are situated by Heidegger in the work of three pre-Platonic thinkers: Anaximander of Miletus, Heraclitus of Ephesus, and Parmenides of Elea.

Anaximander, Parmenides and Heraclitus are *the* thinkers of the onset [*die anfänglichen Denker*]. They are this, however, not because they inaugurate Western thought and initiate it. Already before them there “are” thinkers. They are thinkers of the onset because they think the onset. The onset is what is thought in their thinking.¹⁰

What makes precisely these three protometaphysical philosophers *the* thinkers of the first onset? In Heidegger’s reading, they are all, first and foremost, thinkers of an ultimate *unity*. The “necessity,” “need,” or “usage” (*Brauch, to chreōn*) that, in the single preserved Anaximander fragment, governs the emergence and disappearance of beings¹¹; the “fate” or “apportioning” (*Moirā*) that preserves the self-identity and self-sufficiency of being in Parmenides¹²; the discursive articulation (*logos*) that constitutes

the fundamental belonging-together of opposites and differences in Heraclitus¹³—all these are, for Heidegger, names for a fundamental *unity of being as presence*.

[T]he essence of being [*Seins*] is determined as the essence of the unifying One: *Hen*. . . . the *Logos* which Heraclitus thinks as the basic feature of presencing [*Anwesens*], the *Moirai* which Parmenides thinks as the basic feature of presencing, the *Chreōn* which Anaximander thinks as what abides [*das Wesende*] in presencing, all name the selfsame [*das Selbe*]. Each thinker thinks, in his own way, the unity of the unifying One, the *Hen*, in the concealed richness of the selfsame.¹⁴

Of the three, Parmenides was in many ways the most important for Heidegger. After completing his influential conversation with Aristotle in the early 1930s, it was first and foremost to Parmenides that Heidegger turned and kept returning until his last seminar in 1973.¹⁵ In regarding Parmenides as a paradigmatic beginner of metaphysics, Heidegger follows the guidance of Aristotle and Hegel. In *De caelo*, Aristotle indicates that in addition to the philosophical beginning usually attributed to Thales of Miletus, there was also another beginning, namely, the thesis of Parmenides and his Eleatic disciples that being is one, ungenerated, and immutable. For Aristotle, this is the first, albeit inarticulate and confused,

step towards discovering the proper realm of what he himself calls first philosophy and what later becomes known as metaphysics: the nonphysical, nonmaterial, and suprasensible sphere of pure intelligibility that necessarily unifies and grounds all intelligible reality.¹⁶ Hegel echoes Aristotle in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

[The Eleatics] arrive at this pure, abstract thought that being belongs only to the One. This is a tremendous advance. With the Eleatic school, thought, properly speaking, begins to be free for the first time on its own account.¹⁷

Thought is identical with its being, for there is nothing beside being, this great affirmation. . . . Since in this an advance into the region of the ideal is observable, Parmenides began philosophy proper. . . . This beginning [*Anfang*] is certainly still dim and indefinite, and we cannot say much of what it involves; but to take up this position certainly is to develop philosophy proper, which has not hitherto existed.¹⁸

As we will see, the beginning of Western metaphysics is characterized by a powerful discourse of *unity*, on the one hand, and by a profound *crisis*, on the other—a crisis in the literal sense of a sharp *distinction*, *disjunction*, or *decision*. Both of these features are expressed in the Poem of Parmenides, a central textual site of the first onset of the metaphysical

tradition. A reconsideration and reenactment of this original crisis lies at the heart of the later Heidegger's philosophical endeavor and his thesis of the end of metaphysics. By contrasting Parmenides' *protometaphysical* situation with the Heideggerian postmetaphysical situation, it is possible to trace a genealogy of sorts of certain themes operative in this end. Moreover, it thereby becomes possible to see an analogy between the initial crisis of Parmenides and the ongoing "postmodern" philosophical crisis: both are essentially crises of *unity*.

The protometaphysical crisis: Parmenides' decision

Parmenides of Elea, of whom we know next to nothing as a person, lived and worked in the Greek colonies of Southern Italy around 500 BCE. His hexametric poem, known by the name *Peri physeōs* ("On Nature"), is one of the earliest extensive, consistent, and sustained philosophical texts of which parts have come down to us.¹⁹ No version of the entire poem has been preserved, but several of its passages—apparently many of the most important ones—have been transmitted by later authors in the form of quotations.

Parmenides' Poem as we know it does not really constitute a systematic theoretical account. It is perhaps best characterized as a phenomenological *indication* of an initial philosophical experience of being as such (*to eon*) as the absolute foundation of all thinking, apart from particular and determinate present things—as pure intelligibility, as

accessibility to awareness or, to use Heidegger's term, as active presencing, abiding in presence (*Anwesen*). To be more precise, the Poem shows how in every possible intentional awareness of anything, intelligibility itself is co-intended. The distinctive feature of Parmenidean "phenomenology" is this exclusive concentration on phenomenality as such, apart from any particular phenomena. Speaking literally, instead of *phainomena*, that which shows itself, Parmenides focuses on their *phainesthai*, their self-showing in the widest possible sense. The topic of his Poem is *alētheia*, "truth," but to translate this word with the etymologizing Heideggerian "unconcealment" (*Unverborgenheit*) involves an un-Parmenidean reference to a prior concealment. For Parmenides, as Ernst Heitsch notes, truth as *alētheia* rather means phenomenal and intuitive *evidence* as the ultimate level of manifestness in beings—the source of all their "acceptability" and "convincing" power as accessible beings.²⁰

Parmenides' Poem begins with a metaphorical "transcendental reduction."²¹ The introduction or Proem of the text (fragment B 1) is a semi-mythical narrative in which the narrator-thinker leaves behind the "trodden path of mortals" in a chariot drawn by divine horses and enters the domain of an anonymous goddess, "beyond the gate of the roads of Night and Day," i.e., beyond the binary oppositions that constitute the relative, articulated reality of ordinary experience.²² Far from being angered by this transgression, the goddess welcomes him and proceeds to indicate to him

the absolute truth about all things, exposing the thinker's task in the following manner:

It is necessary that you learn all things,
the unwavering heart of fully convincing Evidence [*Alētheia*],
as well as the acceptances [*doxaī*] of mortals, in which there is no
evident conviction [*pistis alēthēs*].
Even so, you will come to understand this: how the things that are
accepted [*ta dokounta*]
had to be there acceptably [*dokimōs einaī*], throughout, all of them
precisely as beings [*panta per onta*].²³

To continue borrowing Husserlian terminology, the "path of mortals" can be understood as designating the "natural attitude" in which finite human beings normally live their ordinary practical lives, dealing with particular, individual things in particular practical situations. The attainment of a purely "philosophical attitude," i.e., of a concentration on pure presence as such apart from its particular determinations and instances, requires an initial break with everyday and common sense perceptions, an *epochē*, as well as a transition to a "transcendental" (in the sense of "absolutely universal") point of view. However, contrary to a reading favored by such classical commentators as Nietzsche, Eduard Zeller, and John Burnet, such a break clearly does *not* mean that the

everyday views (*doxaî*) of the mortals should simply be abandoned or eliminated as false or illusive opinions or semblances.²⁴ The goddess rather emphasizes that they are to be reconsidered and reinterpreted in terms of an *absolute* viewpoint. The word *doxa*, related to the verb *dechomai*, "to accept" or "to receive," literally means "acceptance," i.e., the way in which something offers itself and seems to be, as well as the way in which it is accepted or "taken" to be.²⁵ The *doxai* are that which, in the "natural attitude," is accepted as "being"; they constitute the relative "mortal" reality or realities. The goddess's exhortation to the thinker is that this accepted constitution must be understood in terms of an insight into the absolutely universal aspect of reality, into being-there in the sense of presence, accessibility, or acceptability—into the "there is" or givenness inherent in, and presupposed by, every acceptance of some particular thing as "being there." This is the basic premise of the "phenomenological" reading of Parmenides, introduced in modern times by scholars like Karl Reinhardt and Hans Schwabl.²⁶

However, certain essential differences between Parmenidean "phenomenology" and modern phenomenological approaches should not be overlooked. Like Husserl, Parmenides sets out from the intentional nature of awareness, but whereas modern transcendental phenomenology makes the reflective move from constituted objects toward the (inter)subjective structures of their constitution as correlates of an intentional, intending consciousness, Parmenides' Poem puts the weight on the "intendability" of

things, their givenness as intelligible to the primarily receptive human awareness. In Kant's doctrine of transcendental apperception, every possible awareness of an object is potentially accompanied by a reflective awareness of the "I think," i.e., of a *subject* of awareness; the unifying element in all individual acts of awareness is the transcendental I or self, the subject of the act.²⁷ Parmenides' Poem, by contrast, shows that every possible awareness of a determinate being is potentially accompanied by an awareness of the very *accessibility* of beings to awareness. It is intelligibility as such that is "transcendental" in the sense of transcending all particular determinations or instances of presence.

What is distinctive of mortal reality is that it consists of particular things that both *are* and *are not*, in the existential as well as the predicative senses of "to be." Firstly, depending on the situation, determinate things either are *there* or not. For example, right here and at this moment, there *is* a cup in my hand, but there *is no* coffee in the cup. Moreover, all the things that are or are not there have a merely relative self-identity. The cup in my hand *is* itself, i.e., is identical with itself, but it *is not* coffee, it is other than coffee. In the "natural attitude" of the mortals, human beings therefore live in what Parmenides' goddess calls, literally, an "uncritical" (*akrita*) state, more precisely, in a "lack of crisis," a "lack of decision." There is a constant internal tension between relative being-there and relative not-being-there, relative identity and relative non-identity. This makes the mortals

an undecided [*akrita*] tribe,
for whom being-there and not-being-there are established as the
same
and not-same. For all of them, their path is internally tensional
[*palintropos*].²⁸

How is this indecision, this tension between being-there and not-being-there, i.e., between presence and absence, to be resolved? Here lies Parmenides' fundamental discovery. For the pure and simple apprehending of intelligibility as such that inherently belongs to all specific acts of awareness—perceiving, imagining, remembering, or anticipating something—*there is only presence* in the widest possible sense. "There is no coffee in my cup" means that coffee is not present here and now for my senses. However, in order for me to be able to meaningfully express this absence of coffee and to attribute not-being-there to coffee, I must be talking *about* coffee. In other words, I must *refer to* coffee, *mean* coffee, *intend* coffee. Coffee must, in some sense, be "there" for me, present to my awareness, although not in its full or "bodily" presence but in a deficient, only partially fulfilled or empty mode. Yet even the mere symbolic intending of coffee, mere talk about "coffee" with a minimum of intuitive content, remains a mode of the *presence* of coffee. Everything that can be meaningfully intended is intendable or rather *intelligible*, and in this sense it is present and accessible to thinking (*noos*), which, for Parmenides,

means simply intentional awareness in the widest possible sense, intending or “meaning” anything in any way.²⁹ It is essential to see that nothing can be intended *as* completely unintelligible. Even self-contradicting notions like “round square” are simply impossible combinations of elements (such as roundness and squareness) that are perfectly intelligible in themselves. While the embodied and situated senses encounter things as *relatively* present or absent, as given to the senses or not given, *noos* in the sense of meaningful intending encounters only *pure and absolute* presence. This is the main outcome of fragment B 4:

Behold, all alike, absent things [*apeonta*] as firmly present [*pareonta*]
to awareness [*noos*];
for awareness will not cut off the “is there” [*to eon*] from its
consistency with the “is there,”
neither as being distributed everywhere and in every way along a
universal order [*kosmos*]
nor as being combined.³⁰

When we enter the absolute realm of thinking, the internally differing and tensional path of the mortals—the way of “there is and there is not”—thus breaks apart, resulting in a fundamental crisis, a need for decision. From the perspective of situated sensory perceiving, relative presence and relative absence intertwine inseparably and presuppose one another.

However, since intelligibility as presence-to-thinking is a simple and absolute form of presence, a thinking inquiry will not tolerate internal tension or context-specificity. It rather requires the thinker to choose one of two *absolute* alternatives: either the absolute “there is” (absolute presence, absolute intelligibility) or the absolute “there is not” (absolute non-presence, absolute non-intelligibility). These are the famous “two ways” of Parmenides.

Very well, I will tell you—and do you listen to the account and take good heed—

which ways of inquiry are precisely the only ones that can be grasped by awareness [*noēsai*].

Firstly: how *there is* [*estin*] and how there is no lack of being-there [*mē einai*]

this is the path of Conviction [*Peithō*], for it follows Evidence [*Alētheia*].

Secondly: how, in any event, *there is not* [*ouk estin ge*] and how it is necessary that a lack of being-there is there—

this I explicate to you as being a path entirely devoid of conviction [*panapeithea*].

For you will not come to know that which in any event lacks “is there” [*to ge mē eon*]

—for it is not accessible [*ephikton*]

—nor will you explicate it.³¹

Awareness as such is *simply* reception or acceptance of intelligible presence, and being-there is *simply* the givenness and disclosure of intelligible presence to awareness. Therefore, awareness and being-there coincide. They are “one and the same” in that they are two aspects—receptivity and givenness—of intelligibility as a unified whole. This is what Parmenides’ famous and much-disputed fragment B 3, which has been preserved without context, seems to state:

For being-aware and being-there are one and the same [*to gar auto noein estin te kai einaí*].³²

Inversely, the opposite or outside of being-there—not-being-there, nothingness, non-presence, non-accessibility—coincides with the opposite or outside of awareness. Awareness is defined by being exclusively bound to presence and excluded from non-presence.

It is necessary to articulate this and to grasp this [*to legein, to noein te*]: that the “is there” is there [*eon emmenai*]. For there is being-there [*esti gar einaí*],
and there is no Nothing [*mēden*].³³

It is obvious that no active “decision,” in the sense of a free choice between two options, is involved here. The outcome of the Parmenidean decision has always already been decided; the point is to acknowledge it. Thinking is powerless to do anything other than choose absolute presence and absolutely exclude absolute non-presence. Thinking, i.e., the intentional awareness of reality as meaningful and intelligible, and its rational articulation, can have no dealings with absolute unintelligibility. The way of “there is not” is a purely negative possibility, the negation of “there is.” The only function of this absolute “there is not” is to define the domain of thinking, to demarcate the absolute boundary of thought, precisely by being excluded by thinking. This, precisely, is Parmenides’ crisis.

The decision [*krisis*] regarding these matters is this:
either *there is* [*estin*] or *there is not* [*ouk estin*]. Now, it has already been decided [*kekrita*], as is necessary,
that the other is to be left alone as unintelligible [*anoēton*] and nameless—for it is not there as an evident way—and that the other is to prevail and to be there as genuine.³⁴

The crisis between “there is” and “there is not,” between presence and unpresence, has always already been resolved. It is a movement of exclusion that must be completed in order to leave behind the path of

mortals, the way of "there *both* is *and* is not," and to embark on the way of thinking, that is, the way of "there is," the way of absolute presence.

For at no time will you impose this: that things lacking "is there" [*mē eonta*] are there;

no, do divert your awareness [*noēma*] from this way of inquiry. . . .

Rather, decide, through discursive articulation [*krinai logō*], the controversial refutation [*elenchon*]

that I have articulated. Only one account of a way still

remains: how *There is* [*hōs estin*].³⁵

From here, Parmenides' Poem goes on to unfold absolute presence through a series of signs or indications (*sēmata*). This happens in the long fragment B 8, in which the most important section of the first part of the Poem, known as "Truth" or "Evidence" (*Alētheia*), has apparently been entirely preserved. The indications are "signposts" on the way of "there is." They do not constitute a deductive or hierarchical system, but rather point out different perspectives upon a presence that has now been absolutely cut off from anything other than presence. Presence as such is absolutely identical with itself and absolutely devoid of any internal or external differentiation. Presence is not opposed to or differentiated from any other. Presence or being is not even *different from* non-presence or non-being, since a difference between them would already imply a relationship.

Moreover, presence has no internal distinctions. It is absolutely simple and one-dimensional; the temporal and spatial differences between context-specific situated beings do not apply to being as such. Presence is finished, self-sufficient, self-contained, self-coincident, homogeneous, one-dimensional, and unique. In a Heideggerian reading, all of these indications are gathered together by the indication of being-there as constant *temporal* presence that as such is never specific to a particular point of time, but rather constitutes the very now-ness of every singular now:

At no particular time [*pot'*] *there was* [*ēn*] or *there will be* [*estai*], since *there is now* [*nyn estin*], all at once, unitarily-uniquely [*hen*], constantly [*syneches*].³⁶

This is the only time that the word *hen*, “one,” appears in the Parmenides fragments.³⁷ Nevertheless, unity has always been perceived as the key theme of Parmenides’ Poem. Both Plato and Aristotle considered Parmenides’ fundamental doctrine to be precisely the thesis that being (*to on*) is one (*hen*). In his late dialogue named after the Eleatic master, Plato has Parmenides visit Athens with his associate Zeno and reluctantly teach the art of dialectic—i.e., the discursive method of accessing the ultimate unity of discursive meaning—to the Athenians. In spite of his young age, the Socrates of the *Parmenides* is well aware of Parmenides’ fundamental doctrine: “I understand, Parmenides. . . . In your poetry you maintain that

the All [*to pan*] is one [*hen*], providing tokens of this appropriately and well.”³⁸ And indeed, Parmenides’ masterful dialectical “exercise” in the dialogue is entirely about unity and being. It seems that the question that puzzles Plato in the *Parmenides*, as also in the *Sophist*, is precisely how Parmenides’ teaching concerning the unity of being should be understood. Aristotle echoes Plato: “Deeming that that which lacks being [*to mē on*] is nothing besides being [*to on*], he [sc. Parmenides] believes that, by necessity, there is only the one [*hen*] being and nothing other.”³⁹

In the Poem, the indications of the absolute unity of pure presence are followed by a return to the *doxai*, the mortal “acceptances.” The second main part of the Poem, known as *Doxai*, apparently consisted of an extensive cosmological study of physical reality, of which only a few brief fragments remain. However, from the existing material we can infer that Parmenides’ goddess shows here how the discursive structure of ordinary human awareness takes apart the unity of presence by naming, conceptualizing, and thereby distinguishing (*krinein*) beings from one another, organizing reality into binary oppositions such as light-dark, warm-cold, and male-female. *Doxai* is introduced at the end of fragment B 8 in the following way:

With this, I cease the convincing articulation [*logos*] and awareness
[*noēma*] that I addressed to you

regarding evidence [*alētheia*]. From here, come to understand mortal acceptances [*doxaī*], hearing the universal order [*kosmos*], prone to deception, that emerges from my words.

For they [sc. the mortals] established two notions [*gnōmaī*] to name shapes [*morphaī*]; of these, one cannot be [sc. established without the other]—in this, they are led into error.

They differentiated [*krinein*] the structure into opposites and posited indications [*sēmata*] apart from one another.⁴⁰

By now, however, the thinker has learned that, in spite of appearances, none of these differentiations involves a reference to any absolute difference between “there is” and “there is not.” All oppositional and disjunctive predicates according to which a thing is A but is not B are ultimately just determinate modifications of the pure and simple *there is*. For example, from the mortal perspective, there is darkness and there is light, and darkness is not light: but the negative fact that darkness *is not there* as light can be translated into the positive fact that darkness *is there* as not-light.

But now that all things are named "light" and "night"
and these names, according to their respective capacities [*dynameis*],
are given to one thing after another,
everything is at once full of light and invisible night,
equal to one another, for there is nothing [*mēden*] that belongs to
neither side.⁴¹

With the Poem of Parmenides, the initial crisis of Western thought has been resolved through the protometaphysical de-cision, i.e., the separation of presence from all references to any other-than-presence, and through the indication of the absolutely universal character of pure presence as the proper realm of philosophical thought. The metaphysical project properly introduced by Plato and Aristotle subsequently transforms this protometaphysical onset into the full-fledged metaphysics of presence, into what Heidegger calls the "ontotheology" of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Aristotle's study of being *qua* being starts by acknowledging the "transcendental" character of being. Being—like unity—is "transcendental" in the Scholastic sense of "absolutely universal": it transcends all categories of things but cannot itself be a category, kind, or genus, since Aristotle's theory of definition denies the plausibility of a genus that would comprehend *everything*.⁴² In different contexts, "to be" has different senses that are irreducible to any simple overarching notion.⁴³ There is no common denominator, no principle or structure common to all instances of

“to be.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, everything that is said “to be” does share the structural feature of belonging to a hierarchy of being-more and being-less: to be something potentially is to be that thing *less* than to be it actually⁴⁵; to be an attribute of a determinate entity is an *inferior* sense of being in comparison to being that entity itself, and so on. Ultimately, all beings refer to the *top* of this hierarchy of being, to a “standard” sense of “to be”—*ousia*, “Entity,” the being-ness of determinate, particular, and actual entities (as opposed to attributes of entities, or merely potential entities and attributes)⁴⁶ and in the final instance, to a *supreme* entity, which for Aristotle is God (*theos*) as absolutely self-sufficient self-awareness.⁴⁷ Ontology, the study of being *qua* being, thereby assumes the form of *theology*, the study of a supreme being, of an absolute entity that would maximally fulfill the criteria of absolute presence (simplicity, uniqueness, self-sufficiency, permanence, supratemporality, etc.) and thus function as a standard for all inferior entities. The unity of being is no longer guaranteed simply by pure presence as such, but by the supreme *instance* of presence.

The postmetaphysical crisis: Heidegger's decision

After Parmenides, the initial crisis of presence and non-presence recedes as a crisis. Leibniz's question: “Why is there something rather than nothing?”⁴⁸—in other words, “Why is there intelligible presence rather than not?”—is only a faint reverberation. Parmenides' crisis is left behind, but its outcome continues to serve as an outset of Western metaphysics. In a

Heideggerian formulation, the “basic question” (*Grundfrage*) of metaphysics—“Why are there beings at all, rather than nothing?”—is supplanted by Aristotle’s ontological “leading question” (*Leitfrage*)—“what is being *qua* being, what is the beingness of any being whatsoever?”—which subsequently becomes the ontotheological question, “What is the supreme instance of beingness that provides an ideal model for all beings?”⁴⁹

Ontotheology, Heidegger claims, provides the basic framework of Western metaphysics up to Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, with whom the metaphysical tradition becomes complete in the sense of being completely developed and exhausted; Marx’s “overturning” of Hegelian idealism and Nietzsche’s “overturning” of Platonism are simply the final metaphysical moves before exhaustion.⁵⁰ Nietzsche’s notions of the will to power and of the eternal recurrence of the same are the last unused conceptual resources available for thinking the relationship between the human being and being within the scope of metaphysics.⁵¹ This exhaustion of metaphysics is parallel to the rise of the positive techno-science, which renounces the metaphysical quest for absolute foundations and concentrates on producing causally explanatory theories with maximal predictive power from which technological applications ensue. Francis Bacon’s maxim, “knowledge is power,” captures what Heidegger calls the “cybernetic,” i.e., inherently technical and manipulative, character of modern scientific inquiry.⁵²

In his work of the 1930s, Heidegger accordingly comes to envision an *other beginning*, made possible and topical by the end of metaphysics—an “other onset” of thinking (*der andere Anfang*) which, he maintains, contemporary Western thought is currently entering.

With Nietzsche’s metaphysics, philosophy is completed. That means: it has traversed the sphere of prefigured possibilities. . . . But with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in transition [*Übergang*] to another onset.⁵³

Unlike Badiou’s purely contingent event, which constitutes a rupture with what precedes it⁵⁴, this new onset, which demands a new philosophical “fidelity,” retains a certain continuity with the first one: it is “other” precisely to the Parmenidean onset, in the sense of decisively transgressing its boundaries, yet essentially related to it. It therefore becomes accessible only by way of a thorough reexamination of the first onset and of the metaphysical tradition that emerged from it.

We need to reflect here on the onset of Western thinking and on what occurred in it and did not occur in it, because we stand at the end—at the end of this onset. That is, we are standing before the *decision* [*Entscheidung*] *between the end . . . and the other onset* [*dem anderen Anfang*].⁵⁵

The required postmetaphysical reflection on the first onset of Western thinking is characterized by Heidegger as a *decision (Entscheidung)*—i.e., as a *crisis*, a *critical* reconsideration and “retrieval” (*Wiederholung*) of the first onset that would make its limitations visible and thus allow a discrimination and delimitation of a mode of thinking that would go beyond those limitations. This also illuminates the methodological character of his thesis of the end of metaphysics. It is not a prophetic declaration that there can and will be no more metaphysics in the future. Rather, it is a specific way of drawing the limits of the heritage of the first onset *from* the perspective of the contemporary situation—a *historical* decision.

Might not the future still be open to metaphysical possibilities of which we suspect nothing? Surely, we do not stand “above” history. . . . The statement concerning the end of metaphysics is, of course, a historical decision [*Entscheidung*].⁵⁶

This postmetaphysical decision, this crisis between the Parmenidean onset and its other, is a theme that ceaselessly occupies Heidegger in his work of the 1930s, particularly his esoteric “second *magnum opus*,” *Contributions to Philosophy*, written in 1936–8 but unpublished until 1989. In the first part of *Contributions*, Heidegger names several decisions (*Entscheidungen*) that philosophy has to face in its contemporary situation:

whether the human being is to be considered as a subject (as in modern, post-Cartesian metaphysics) or as *Da-sein* (as in Heidegger); whether truth is to be understood as correctness and certainty (as in modern, post-Cartesian metaphysics) or as un-concealment, relative disclosure (as in Heidegger); and so on.⁵⁷ What is ultimately at stake in these decisions is the basic decision between metaphysical (Cartesian, Kantian, Hegelian, Nietzschean) modernity and a post-metaphysical post-modernity, in the literal sense of what comes after the modern epoch but is other than modernity.

Why must decisions be made at all? If so, then they are necessities that belong to our epoch. . . . What is decision here? Its essence is determined by the essence of the transition [*Übergang*] from modernity into what is other than modernity. . . . Do the “decisions” come about because there must be another onset?⁵⁸

In the other onset, the initial crisis that was settled by Parmenides is reopened, but not in order to simply reverse Parmenides’ decision, not just to decide for non-presence rather than presence, for the nothing rather than the something. What is essential is to *rethink* and *re-experience* this crisis as such, to decide *for a crisis* instead of the uncritical indifference and universal equivalence that, in Heidegger’s analysis, characterizes the

ultramodern nihilistic perception of reality as inherently homogeneous and meaningless.

What is originally at stake in the decision is: either decision or non-decision. But decision means coming face to face with the either-or. Thus it means that a *decision has already been made*.⁵⁹

The one and only decision is the decision between . . . *indecision* and *readiness for decision*.⁶⁰

In the contemporary situation, reexperiencing Parmenides' initial crisis would, of course, be an essentially different experience. It would be an essentially *retrospective reconsideration*, informed by a narrative of the history of metaphysics in which Parmenides is only the primordial outset: "[R]eturning into the first onset is . . . precisely distancing from it, taking up that distant position which is necessary in order to experience what set on in and as that onset."⁶¹ As Heidegger puts it in one of his last seminars, the point is not to "return to Parmenides" but simply to "turn towards Parmenides" from out of the contemporary situation.⁶² What would be essential in such a retrospective reconsideration would be the discovery that the entire Western tradition relies, to a certain extent, on an initial decision and exclusion of non-presence. It has therefore always implicitly

dependent on, in the sense of being defined and delimited by, non-presence.

Only because be-ing [*Seyn*, i.e., the postmetaphysically reconsidered and “expanded” being] abides in terms of the “not” [*nichthaff*] does it have non-being [*Nichtsein*] as its other. . . . But whence comes the utmost confinement [sc. in the first onset] to the One and the Other and thus to the Either-Or [sc. either being or non-being]? . . . [T]his seemingly most general and emptiest distinction [*Unterscheidung*] is the most unique and fullest decision [*Entscheidung*].⁶³

This discovery, which results from the reawakening of the initial crisis of presence in the contemporary situation, is what Heidegger basically means by the other onset of post-metaphysical thinking. In the other onset, the traditional metaphysical indifference to the nothing and the reduction of reality to absolute presence is transformed into the experience that meaningful presence as such *is based on* its differing from non-presence, un-intelligibility, and un-accessibility: “[B]e-ing [*Seyn*] abides [*west*] thoroughly irradiated [*durchstrahlt*] by the nothing [*Nichts*].”⁶⁴

The postmetaphysical experience of the fundamentally relative, differential, and self-transcending structure of meaningful presence, of its dependency on and correlation with its other, from which it is constantly differentiated—this is the “crisis” that is to replace the reliance on the

fundamental absoluteness, unity, and self-referentiality of presence. One way of describing this experience is as an experience of the radical *contextuality* and *heterogeneity* of presence, of the fact that any humanly accessible intelligibility is only the focal point of a singular meaningful experience, a focal point of attention that is irreducibly determined and constituted by a transcending context or horizon of meaning that is not itself immediately present or accessible as such but remains in the background, in the margin.⁶⁵ This context-specificity is what Heidegger's work basically attempts to convey in ever-changing forms, starting with the fundamental ontological project of *Being and Time* which tried to articulate, by way of the temporality of *Dasein's* understanding of being, how the meaningful temporal present (*Gegenwart*) is contextually constituted or "temporalized" in terms of the relative non-presence of the temporal dimensions of open future possibilities (the forth-coming, *Zukunft*) and factual situatedness (having-been-ness, *Gewesenheit*).⁶⁶ Heidegger failed, however, to complete the intended ultimate move from this temporal contextuality of *Dasein's* understanding of being (*Dasein's* timeliness, *Zeitlichkeit*) to the correlative temporal contextuality of being itself (its temporality, *Temporalität*), i.e., the sense of being (*Sinn von Sein*).⁶⁷ The conceptual impasse and consequent failure of this approach led Heidegger to undertake a new, deepened reading of the metaphysical tradition in the early 1930s.

In the most developed version of his approach, Heidegger addressed the contextualizing interaction between the foreground of presence and the background of non-presence as an event, as “taking-place” (*Ereignis*). Whereas metaphysics thinks of presence as an absolutely self-contained and self-sufficient *state*, an *event* entails a difference between the open place or scene in which meaningfulness takes place—the *Da*, the “there,” of *Da-sein* as “being-the-there”—and the latent background context from out of which it “takes place,” that is, in terms of which it is constituted. This background is articulated in Heidegger’s 1949 Bremen lecture “The Thing” with the help of the figure of the fourfold (*Geviert*) of four dimensions, named “earth,” “sky,” (“world”), “mortals,” and “divinities,” which can be tentatively interpreted as standing for the meaning-dimensions of materiality, articulated appearing and visibility, the finite and historically situated human community, and the supreme aims or “values” of such communities.⁶⁸ In this articulation, a spatiotemporally situated thing is meaningful as a focal point of a nexus of references to this four-dimensional context. The context is not static or stable but a dynamic process of contextualization, a “mirror-play” (*Spiegel-Spiel*) of reciprocal references in which the four meaning-dimensions constantly interact and are indirectly present as reflections, traces, or references in their focal intersection, i.e., in the contextualized thing.⁶⁹ Since a thing is thus constantly being *recontextualized*, it follows that it must be understood, in each instant of its presence, as a strictly speaking *singular* instance of

presence: "Each thing arrests the fourfold into a simplicity of the world that, in each instance, is there for a while [*je Weiliges*]. . . . Only what is compliantly conjoined [*gering*] from [the fourfold] world becomes a thing *once*."⁷⁰ Being (be-ing, *Seyn*) is no longer thought as something instantiated *in* singular instances, but as this instantiation and singularization *as such*. This instantaneity or *singularity* (*Einzigkeit, Einmaligkeit*) of being is what both the temporal approach of *Being and Time* and the later Heidegger's fourfold approach seek to convey. Among the postmetaphysical decisions listed in *Contributions*, we find the following:

[W]hether beings [*das Seiende*] take being [*Sein*] as what is "most common" to them [sc. as in the metaphysical tradition since Parmenides] and thus hand being over to ontology and bury it, *or* whether be-ing [*Seyn*] in its uniqueness [*Einzigkeit*] comes to word and thoroughly attunes beings as singular [*Einmaliges*; sc. as in the other onset].⁷¹

The Parmenidean experience of being as pure accessibility and intelligible presence, as the absolute evidence (*alētheia*) that is de-cided, absolved from any background or context, grounded the unity of being in its *universality*: intelligibility as such is precisely what is common to all instances of intelligible presence and, as such, it is absolutely homogeneous and undifferentiated. By virtue of this "indifference," being is

also absolutely inarticulate, indeterminate, and indefinable. But what happens to *this* unity when being is rethought postmetaphysically as the radical contextualization of beings and as their differentiation from a context, as the generation of an intelligibility that is, in each instance, radically singular and heterogeneous? This is extensively elaborated by Heidegger in a key passage of the final part of *Contributions*:

That Greek interpretation of *on hē on* [sc. being *qua* being] as *hen* [one], that heretofore unclear priority which the One and unity have everywhere in the thinking of being. . . . Seen more profoundly, that unity is merely the foreground—seen from the vantage point of gathering re-presentation [*sammelnden Vor-stellens*] (*legen*)—of presencing [*Anwesen*] as such, precisely the foreground in which a being has already gathered itself in its “what” and “that.” Presence can be conceived of as gathering [*Sammlung*] and thus as unity—and with the priority of *logos* must be so conceived. But by itself, unity itself is not an originary and essential determination of the being of beings. However, the thinkers of the onset necessarily come upon this unity, because . . . it is important that presencing be maintained as what is first and nearest to being’s emergence; hence *hen*. . . .

In terms of the other onset, that unshaken and never inquired determination of being (unity) can and must nevertheless become questionable; and then unity points back to “time”. . . . But then it

becomes clear that with the priority of presence (the present [*Gegenwart*]) wherein unity is grounded, something has been decided, *that in this most self-evident [priority] the strangest decision [Entscheidung] lies hidden*, that this decisive character belongs to the abidance [*Wesung*] of be-ing and indicates the uniqueness, in each instance, and the most originary historicity of be-ing itself.⁷²

As Aristotle already clearly realized, the unity of being is not the most fundamental thesis of Parmenides; it is based on a more fundamental thesis, "the strangest decision," namely, that being is and that non-being is not.⁷³ As a retrospective experience of this initial crisis or decision, the Heideggerian *other* onset addresses presence as irreducibly contextual and relative, as embedded and situated in a nexus of background dimensions in terms of which the foreground of presence becomes *singularly* meaningful as a *heterogeneous* unity, as a "onfold of four."⁷⁴

The first, protometaphysical onset of philosophy says: "There is presence and there is no non-presence. The crisis of presence is therefore always already resolved and the unity of being is safeguarded as the pure homogeneity of presence, de-cided from its other." Against this, the other, postmetaphysical onset would say: "There is presence only in terms of relative non-presence; the unity of presence is always situated, context-specific, singular, and utterly heterogeneous. The crisis of presence, its differentiation from non-presence, cannot be overcome, since it is

constitutive of presence. Thinking is rather compelled to dwell in this crisis."

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Notes

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- ² Rudolf Carnap, "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache," *Erkenntnis* 2 (1) (1931): 237–8; "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language," trans. Arthur Pap, in A. J. Ayer (ed.), *Logical Positivism* (Free Press, 1959), 77.
- ³ Martin Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik" [1936–46], in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 9th edn (Neske, 2000), 76–8 [hereafter, VA]; "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 93–4; "Das Gestell" [1949], in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 79: *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, Petra Jaeger (ed.) (Klostermann, 1994), 24–32 [hereafter, GA 79]; "Die Frage nach der Technik" [1953], in VA, 24; "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (Garland, 1977), 20.
- ⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft" [1886], in *Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 2, Karl Schlechta (ed.) (Hanser, 1955), 566; *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Penguin, 1973), 14.
- ⁵ Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik," in VA, 68–75; "Overcoming Metaphysics," 85–91; "Zur Seinsfrage" [1955], in *Wegmarken*, 3rd edn (Klostermann, 1996), 416–25 [hereafter, WM]; "On the Question of Being," trans. William McNeill, in *Pathmarks*, William McNeill (ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 314–21.
- ⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 54: *Parmenides* [1942–43], Manfred S. Frings (ed.) 2nd edn (Klostermann, 1992), 9–11 [hereafter, GA 54]; *Parmenides*, trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Indiana University Press, 1992), 7–8. (Translation modified.)
- ⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vols 1–2, David Ross (ed.) (Clarendon Press, 1924), Δ.17.1022a4–5, 10–12; Θ.8.1050a7–9.
- ⁸ Cf. Alain Badiou, *L'être et l'évènement* (Seuil, 1988), 193–475; *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (Continuum, 2005), 173–435. On the Badiouian notion of the event, cf. Keti Chukhrov, "Genesis of the Event in Deleuze: From the Multiple to the General," and Boyan Manchev, "The One: Composition or Event? For a Politics of the Becoming," Chapters 4 and 10 respectively in this volume.
- ⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 51: *Grundbegriffe* [1941], Petra Jaeger (ed.), 2nd edn (Klostermann, 1991), 15, 21; *Basic Concepts*, trans. Gary E. Aylesworth (Indiana University Press, 1993), 13, 17. (Translation modified.)
- ¹⁰ Heidegger, GA 54, 10; *Parmenides*, 7. (Translation modified.)
- ¹¹ Anaximander 12 B 1, in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker: Griechisch und deutsch*, vol. 1 [1903], 6th edn (Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1951) [hereafter, DK].
- ¹² Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.36–8.
- ¹³ Heraclitus, DK 22 B 50.
- ¹⁴ Heidegger, "Der Spruch des Anaximander" [1946], in *Holzwege*, 8th edn (Klostermann, 2003), 369, 371 [hereafter, HW]; "Anaximander's Saying," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 278, 280. (Translation modified.) Cf. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* [1935/53], 6th edn (Niemeyer, 1998), 104 [hereafter, EM]; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (Yale University Press, 2000), 145.
- ¹⁵ Heidegger's key texts on Parmenides include *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 22: *Die Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie* [1926], Franz-Karl Blust (ed.) (Klostermann, 1993), 62–70; *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Indiana University Press, 2008),

52–8; *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 35: *Der Anfang der abendländischen Philosophie: Auslegung des Anaximander und Parmenides* [1932], Peter Trawny (ed.) (Klostermann, 2011); EM; *Introduction to Metaphysics*; GA 54; *Parmenides; Was heisst Denken?* [1951–2], 5th edn (Niemeyer, 1997) [hereafter, WHD]; *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (Harper & Row, 1968); “Maira (Parmenides VIII, 34–41)” [1952], in VA, 223–48; “Maira (Parmenides VIII, 34–41),” in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (Harper & Row, 1984), 79–101; “Der Satz der Identität” [1957], in *Identität und Differenz*, 12th edn (Klett-Cotta, 2002), 9–30; “The Principle of Identity,” in *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 23–41; “Seminar in Zähringen 1973,” in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 15: *Seminare*, Curd Ochwadt (ed.) 2nd edn (Klostermann, 2005), 372–407 [hereafter, GA 15]; “Seminar in Zähringen 1973,” in *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Indiana University Press, 2003), 64–84.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *De caelo*, Paul Moraux (ed.) (Les Belles Lettres, 1965), III.1.298b12–24. Cf. *Metaphysics* A.3.983b20–21.

¹⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vol. 7: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 2: *Griechische Philosophie, 1: Thales bis Kyniker* [1825–6], Pierre Garniron and Walter Jaeschke (eds) (Meiner, 1989), 52–4; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–6*, vol. 2: *Greek Philosophy*, trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford University Press, 2006), 57–8. (Translation modified.)

¹⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke*, vol. 14: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, Karl Ludwig Michelet (ed.) (Duncker und Humblot, 1833), 296–7; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1: *Greek Philosophy to Plato*, trans. E. S. Haldane (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 253, 254. (Translation modified.)

¹⁹ The tradition that regards Heraclitus as earlier than Parmenides is without a solid basis. It is based on the entirely unreliable and conventional biographical dates indicated by Diogenes Laertius (*Vitae philosophorum*, vol. 1–2, H. S. Long (ed.) [Oxford University Press, 1964], IX.1.23) and Plato (*Parmenides*, in *Platonis opera*, vol. 2, John Burnet (ed.) [Oxford University Press, 1901], 127b1–c5). Since neither Heraclitus nor Parmenides makes an identifiable reference to the other in their preserved fragments, it is probable that they were roughly contemporaries and unaware of one another.

²⁰ Ernst Heitsch, *Parmenides: Die Fragmente* (Artemis & Winkler, 1974), 90–8.

²¹ Cf. Donald B. Kuspit, “Parmenidean Tendencies in the Epoché,” *Review of Metaphysics* 18 (4) (1965): 747: “Not merely is there a parallel between Husserl’s epoché and Parmenides’ journey, but Parmenides’ journey clarifies the character of the attitude of epoché. Each shows what happens to the original philosopher on his way to radical reality in strict science.” It should also be noted that the skeptical tradition of the Middle Platonic Academy regarded Parmenides as one of the early representatives of the skeptical methods of suspending judgment (*epochē*) and refraining from acceptance (*akatalēpsia*); see Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem*, in *Plutarchi moralia*, vol. 6.2, 2nd edn, Max Pohlenz and Rolf Westman (eds) (Teubner, 1959), 1121F3–A5.

²² Parmenides, DK 28 B 1.1–21.

²³ Parmenides, DK 28 B 1.28–32. Even though the reading *panta per onta*, “all of them precisely as beings,” is attested in most manuscripts, it was rejected as impossible by most modern interpreters in favor of the variant *panta perōnta*, “pervading all things”; cf. Leonardo Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* (Princeton University Press, 1965), 214n32. *Panta per onta* was preferred by Jean Zafiropoulo (*L’École éleate: Parménide-Zénon-Mélistos* [Les Belles Lettres, 1950], 295–7), who was followed by G. E. L. Owen (“Eleatic Questions,” *Classical Quarterly* 10 (1) [1960]: 84–9), W. K. C. Guthrie (*A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 2: *The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], 9), Alexander Mourelatos (*The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Image, and Argument in the Fragments* [Yale University Press, 1970], 214–6), and Rémi Brague (“La vraisemblance du

faux (Parménide, fr. I, 31–32),” in *Études sur Parménide*, vol. 2: *Problèmes d’interprétation*, Pierre Aubenque (ed.) [Vrin, 1987], 44–68).

²⁴ Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, “Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen” [1872/3], in *Werke in drei Bänden*, vol. 3, Karl Schlechta (ed.) (Hanser, 1955), 381–95; *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Regnery, 1998), 69–90; Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, vol. 1.1: *Allgemeine Einleitung, Vorsokratische Philosophie* [1844], W. Nestle (ed.) 6th edn (Reisland, 1919), 724–5; *A History of Greek Philosophy from the Earliest Period to the Time of Socrates*, vol. 1, trans. Sarah Frances Alleyne (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1881), 605–7; John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* [1892], 4th edn (Adam & Charles Black, 1946), 182–7.

²⁵ On the *doxai* as “acceptances,” see Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, 194–221; A. H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Van Gorcum, 1986), 170. Cf. Heraclitus, DK 22 B 28: “Indeed, acceptances [*dokeonta*] are what even the most reliable [*dokimōtatos*] man knows and maintains.”

²⁶ Karl Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* [1916], 4th edn (Klostermann, 1985), 18–88; “The Relation between the Two Parts of Parmenides’ Poem,” trans. Matthew R. Cosgrove and Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Alexander P. D. Mourelatos (ed.) (Anchor Press, 1974), 293–317; Hans Schwabl, “Sein und Doxa bei Parmenides,” *Wiener Studien* 66 (1953): 57. Heidegger (*Sein und Zeit* [1927], 18th edn [Niemeyer, 2001], 223n1; *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh [State University of New York Press, 2010], 214n39) credits Reinhardt with having been the first one to grasp the correlation between *Alētheia* and *Doxai* in Parmenides’ poem.

²⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* [1781/7], Jens Timmermann (ed.) (Meiner, 1998); *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998), B 131–2, B 134–5, B 134n1.

²⁸ Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.7–9.

²⁹ Cf. Willem Jacob Verdenius, *Parmenides: Some Comments on His Poem* (J. B. Wolters’ Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1942), 10: “[T]he original meaning of *noos* does not imply any distinction between thinking and perception, and Parmenides does not make such a distinction here either. He uses the word in a wide and neutral sense which is best rendered by ‘knowing.’”

³⁰ Parmenides, DK 28 B 4.1–4.

³¹ Parmenides, DK 28 B 2.1–8. Reading, with Proclus, *ouk estin ge*, “how, in any event, there is not,” and *ephikton*, “accessible,” instead of Simplicius’s *ouk estin te* and *anyston*, “feasible.” I interpret, with Hermann Fränkel (“Parmenidesstudien,” in *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen aus dem Jahre 1930: Philologisch-Historische Klasse* [Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1930], 188n3), Tarán (*Parmenides*, 33–6), Mitchell Miller (“Parmenides and the Disclosure of Being,” *Apeiron* 13 (1) [1978]: 22), Pierre Aubenque (“Syntaxe et sémantique de l’être dans le Poème de Parménide,” in *Études sur Parménide*, vol. 2, 110), and others, Parmenides’ unspecified use of *estin* as subjectless and absolute: “(There) is.”

³² Parmenides, DK 28 B 3.

³³ Parmenides, DK 28 B 6.1–2. Néstor-Luis Cordero (“Les deux chemins de Parménide dans les fragments 6 et 7,” *Phronesis* 24 [1979]: 24n1; “L’histoire du texte de Parménide,” in *Études sur Parménide*, vol. 2, 19–20) has shown that Diels’s and Kranz’s version *to legein te noein te*, “[it is necessary] to articulate and to grasp,” is mistaken; in fact, the manuscripts have *to legein, to noein te*, “to articulate *this* and to grasp *this*.”

³⁴ Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.15–8.

³⁵ Parmenides, DK 28 B 7.1–2, 4–6, 8.1–2.

³⁶ Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.5–6. Cf. Heidegger’s comment in GA 22, 67–8; *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, 56: “The now . . . is always constant in every now. Being is *constant presence*. The now is the same in every now. Being is, in what is, constantly without opposition or difference.”

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- ³⁷ The feminine form *mia* can be found in B 8.54.
- ³⁸ Plato, *Parmenides* 128a4, a5–b1.
- ³⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.5.986b28–30.
- ⁴⁰ Parmenides, DK 28 B 8.50–6. This passage is quite ambiguous, but I follow the reading of Simon Karsten (*Philosophorum Graecorum veterum operum reliquiae*, vol. 1.2: *Parmenidis Eleatae carminis reliquiae* [Müller, 1835], 41, 113–4), Uvo Hölscher (*Anfängliches Fragen: Studien zur frühen griechischen Philosophie* [Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968], 103–7), Klaus Held (*Heraklit, Parmenides und der Anfang von Philosophie und Wissenschaft: Eine phänomenologische Besinnung* [de Gruyter, 1980], 552–3), and Coxon (*The Fragments of Parmenides*, 219–21), according to which the discursively articulated mortal perspective is irremediably twofold and referential: “light” cannot be conceived without “night” and vice versa.
- ⁴¹ Parmenides, DK 28 B 9.1–4.
- ⁴² Aristotle, *Metaphysics* B.3.998b22–7.
- ⁴³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Γ.2.1003a33–b19, Δ.10.1018a35–6, E.2.1026a33–b2, K.3.1060b32–3, N.2.1089a7–10.
- ⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Λ.4.1070a31–5.1071b2.
- ⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Θ.8.1049b4–1051a33.
- ⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Γ.2.1003b6–10, Z.1.1028a13–b6; Λ.1.1069a19–21. I borrow the translation of *ousia* as Entity from Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian “Metaphysics”: A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought* [1951], 2nd edn (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), 137–54.
- ⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* E.1.1026a19–32; Λ.6.1071b3–7.1073a13, 9.1074b15–1075a10.
- ⁴⁸ G. W. Leibniz, “Principes de la nature et de la grâce fondés en raison” [1714], in *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, vol. 6, Carl Immanuel Gerhardt (ed.) (Olm, 1960), 602; “Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason,” in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Hackett, 1989), 210.
- ⁴⁹ On the distinction between the leading question (*Leitfrage*) of metaphysics and the “basic” or “fundamental question” (*Grundfrage*), see, e.g., Heidegger, EM, 1–39; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 1–54; *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [1936–8], Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (ed.) (Klostermann, 1989), 73–7, 171, 232–5 [hereafter, GA 65]; *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 51–4, 120, 164–6; “Die Wille zur Macht als Kunst” [1936–7], in *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, 6th edn (Neske, 1998), 64–6 [hereafter, N I]; “The Will to Power as Art,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 1: *The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 67–9.
- ⁵⁰ Heidegger, “Die Wille zur Macht als Kunst,” in N I, 202–13; “The Will to Power as Art,” 200–11; “Brief über den ‘Humanismus’” [1946], in WM, 335–6; “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in *Pathmarks*, 256; “Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens” [1964], in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 4th edn (Niemeyer, 2000), 63 [hereafter, ZSD]; “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” in *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 57.
- ⁵¹ Heidegger, “Die Wille zur Macht als Kunst,” in N I, 1–4; “The Will to Power as Art,” 3–6; “Überwindung der Metaphysik,” in VA, 72, 77–86; “Overcoming Metaphysics,” 89, 93–102; “Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen” [1937], in N I, 415–23; “The Eternal Recurrence of the Same,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 2: *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. David Farrell Krell (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 198–208; “Der Wille zur Macht als Erkenntnis” [1939], in N I, 425–32, 585–94; “The Will to Power as Knowledge,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 3: *The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, and Frank A. Capuzzi (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 3–9, 150–8; “Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen und der Wille zur Macht” [1939], in *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, 6th edn (Neske, 1998), 1–22 [hereafter, N II]; “The Eternal Recurrence of the Same and the Will to Power,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 3, 159–83; “Der europäische Nihilismus” [1940], in N II, 177–229; “European Nihilism,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 4: *Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi and David Farrell Krell

- (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 147–96; “Nietzsches Metaphysik” [1941–2], in N II, 231–300; “Nietzsche’s Metaphysics,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 3, 185–251; “Nietzsches Wort ‘Gott ist Tot’” [1943], in HW, 209–67; “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is Dead,’” in *Off the Beaten Track*, 157–99; “Die seinsgeschichtliche Bestimmung des Nihilismus” [1944–6], in N II, 361; “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being,” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 4, 197–250; WHD, 35–47, 77; *What Is Called Thinking?*, 90–110; “Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?” [1953], in VA, 109–19; “Who Is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?” in *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, 222–30.
- ⁵² Heidegger, “Das Ende der Philosophie,” in ZSD, 64–5; “The End of Philosophy,” 58.
- ⁵³ Heidegger, “Überwindung der Metaphysik,” in VA, 79; “Overcoming Metaphysics,” 95–6. (Translation modified.)
- ⁵⁴ Alain Badiou, *Second manifeste pour la philosophie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2010), 78; *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. Louise Burchill (Polity, 2011), 81.
- ⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 45: *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik”* [1937–8], Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (ed.) (Klostermann, 1984), 45; *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Indiana University Press, 1994), 108. (Translation modified.)
- ⁵⁶ Heidegger, “Der europäische Nihilismus,” in N II, 179–80; “European Nihilism,” 149.
- ⁵⁷ Heidegger, GA 65, 90–1; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 62–3.
- ⁵⁸ Heidegger, GA 65, 92; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 63–4. (Translation modified.)
- ⁵⁹ Heidegger, GA 65, 102; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 70. (Translation modified.)
- ⁶⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 69: *Die Geschichte des Seyns* [1938–40], Peter Trawny (ed.) (Klostermann, 1998), 61. (My translation.)
- ⁶¹ Heidegger, GA 65, 185; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 130. (Translation modified.)
- ⁶² Heidegger, GA 15, 394; *Four Seminars*, 77.
- ⁶³ Heidegger, GA 65, 267–8; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 188–9.
- ⁶⁴ Heidegger, GA 65, 483; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 340.
- ⁶⁵ On the *elemental* as such a background context of beings, cf. Susanna Lindberg, “Elemental Nature as the Ultimate Common Ground of the World Community,” Chapter 11 in this volume.
- ⁶⁶ Heidegger, SZ, 323–31; *Being and Time*, 309–16.
- ⁶⁷ Heidegger, SZ, 19; *Being and Time*, 18.
- ⁶⁸ Heidegger, “Das Ding” [1949], in GA 79, 11–2, 17–21; “Das Ding” [1950], in VA, 164–6, 170–5; “The Thing,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Harper & Row, 1975), 172–4, 177–82. On the fourfold, see also “Die Sprache” [1950], in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 13th edn (Klett-Cotta, 2003), 9–33 [hereafter, US]; “Language,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 187–210; “Bauen Wohnen Denken” [1951], in VA, 139–56; “Building Dwelling Thinking,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 143–51; “Das Wesen der Sprache” [1957–8], in US, 157–216; “The Nature of Language,” in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (Harper & Row, 1982), 57–110; “Hölderlins Erde und Himmel” [1959], in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 6th edn (Klostermann, 1996), 152–68; “Hölderlin’s Earth and Heaven,” in *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Humanity Books, 2000), 175–208. For an early version of the fourfold, see Heidegger, GA 65, 310; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 218.
- ⁶⁹ Heidegger, “Das Ding,” in GA 79, 18–21; “Die Gefahr” [1949], in GA 79, 46–8; “Die Kehre” [1949], in GA 79, 74; “The Turning,” in *The Question Concerning Technology*, 45; “Das Ding,” in VA, 172–3; “The Thing,” 178–9.
- ⁷⁰ Heidegger, “Das Ding,” in GA 79, 20, 21; “Das Ding,” in VA, 173, 175; “The Thing,” 181, 182. On the uniqueness and singularity of being, cf. Jean-Luc Nancy’s essay “More than One,” Chapter 1 in this volume.
- ⁷¹ Heidegger, GA 65, 90–1; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 63. (Translation modified.)
- ⁷² Heidegger, GA 65, 459–60; *Contributions to Philosophy*, 323–4.
- ⁷³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A.5.986b28–30.
- ⁷⁴ Heidegger, “Das Ding,” in GA 79, 17–21; “Das Ding,” in VA, 172–3; “The Thing,” 177–8.