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THE ONTOLOGY OF PARMENIDES ACCORDING TO PLATO'S
PARMENIDES

Abstract. For Proclus, the subject of Parmenides' hypothesis is the One and the verb *to be* has an existential meaning. Modern commentators acknowledge the existential function of the verb, but propose different subjects. I try to explain why I give a predicative function to the verb *to be*, giving *the world* as its subject, *one* being the predicate.

Keywords: Parmenides, Plato, Proclus, *to be* existential or predicative, *the world* as its subject, *one* as its predicate.

1. Introduction

In 1994, I published a French translation of Plato's *Parmenides* that was quite different from all other modern interpretations.¹ I argued that Parmenides' character in the *Parmenides* was a fair representation of the historical Parmenides, for whom *being* in the *Poem* is the world,² that is the universe, when grasped either by reason or by the senses. I would like to show here the plausibility of this interpretation.

2. The second part of the *Parmenides*

Parmenides, already an old man, and Zeno, who is much younger, come to Athens for the Great Panathenaea. Socrates, who is young at the time, hears Zeno read his treatise. Zeno tries to show that, if being were not one but many, contradictions would appear. When he has finished, Socrates puts forward the hypothesis of the intelligible forms as a solution: the contradictory character-

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¹ See Platon, *Parménide*.

² See L. Brisson, *Is the world one?*

istics of sensible beings can be easily explained by their participation in the intelligible forms.

Parmenides takes the floor to help Zeno, who defends his master's hypothesis: being is one. He makes a series of objections against the doctrine of participation. A sensible being cannot contain an intelligible form as a whole or as a part. Moreover, participation triggers an indefinite regress. These objections cannot be met by making an intelligible form a thought and it is impossible to separate intelligible forms from sensible beings. Because he maintains that intelligible forms are necessary for thought and discourse, Parmenides offers to give Socrates training in dialectics in order to learn how to successfully defend his thesis.

According to his strategy, only one hypothesis is involved: that of Zeno, which is also that of Parmenides:

If you like, said Parmenides, take as an example this hypothesis that Zeno entertained: if there are many things, what must the consequences be both for these many things themselves in relation to themselves and in relation to the one, and for the one in relation to itself and in relation to the many things? And in turn, on the hypothesis, that there are not many things, you must again examine what the consequences will be both for the one and for the many in relation to themselves and in relation to each other.¹

Because this hypothesis is taken not only as an affirmation but also as a negation with regard to what is one and to other things, this results in eight series of deductions, divided into two sets, which form the two sub-sections making up the second part of the *Parmenides*. For the sake of clarity and to avoid any ambiguity, I will refer to eight *series of deductions* rather than to eight *hypotheses*, as is usual. Hence this table:

A) Parmenides's hypothesis is affirmed. And from this affirmed hypothesis, positive and negative consequences are drawn for the one and for other things.

1) Positive consequences:

- for the one: II a) 142b–155e, b) 155e–157b;
- and for other things: III 157b–159b.

2) Negative consequences:

- for the one: I 137c–142a;
- and for other things: IV 159b–160b.

B) Parmenides's hypothesis is negated. And from this negated hypothesis, positive and negative consequences are drawn for the one and for other things.

1) Positive consequences:

- for the one: V 160b–163b;
- and for other things: VII 164b–165e.

2) Negative consequences:

- for the one: VI 163b–164b;

¹ Plato, *Parmenides* 136a–b, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan.

– and for other things: VIII 165e–166c.

Thus, we have eight series of deductions involving four pairs, each of which has a positive and a negative branch. If we accept this distribution, the passage 160b4–160d3 will not be part of any series of deductions, but a summary of what has just been deduced in the series.

3. Ambiguities in Plato's *Parmenides*

The second part of the *Parmenides* contains eight series of deductions.¹ But what is it about? What do the following sentences mean: [...] *is it all right with you if I begin with myself and my own hypothesis? Shall I hypothesize about the one itself* [περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος] *and consider what the consequences must be, "if it is one" or "if it is not one"* [εἴτε ἓν ἔστιν εἴτε μὴ ἓν]?² For the moment, let us set aside περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος and focus on the question: is ἔστιν existential or predicative?

If ἔστιν has an existential function, this means that τὸ ἓν is the subject. If it is predicative, it means that the subject is implied in *it*; thus, ἓν is a mere attribute, and the subject can be τὸ ὄν or τὸ πᾶν, as in 128a8–b1.

3.1. The predicative use of ἔστιν

When Socrates addresses Parmenides, he declares:

You [= Parmenides] say in your poem that the universe is one [σὺ μὲν γὰρ ἓν τοῖς ποιήμασιν ἓν φησὶ εἶναι τὸ πᾶν], *and you give splendid and excellent proofs for that* [καὶ τούτων τεκμήρια παρέχῃ καλῶς τε καὶ εὖ]; *he [= Zeno], for his part, says that it is not many* [ὁ δὲ δὲ αὖ οὐ πολλά φησὶν εἶναι] *and gives a vast array of very grand proofs of his own. So, with one of you [= Parmenides] saying "one"* [τὸ οὖν τὸν μὲν ἓν φάναι] *and the other [= Zeno] "not many"* [τὸν δὲ μὴ πολλά], *and with each of you speaking in a way that suggests that you've said nothing the same although you mean practically the same thing – what you appear to have said over the heads of the rest of us.*³

In this passage, τὸ πᾶν is equivalent to τὸ ὄν, since, in a pre-Platonic context, there is no other domain of reality than the sensible, the totality of which is the universe.

3.1.1. τὸ πᾶν as the universe

In conversation with Socrates, Parmenides is very clear on this point:

The manner (of training) is just what you [= Socrates] heard from Zeno, he [= Parmenides] said. Except I was

¹ For different divisions of the second part, see Proclus, *Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. LXXX–LXXXIX.

² Plato, *Parmenides* 137b1–4, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan.

³ Plato, *Parmenides* 128a8–b6, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan.

*also impressed by something you had to say to him; you didn't allow him to remain among visible things and observe their wandering between opposites. You asked him to observe it instead among those things that one might above all grasp by means of reason and might think to be forms.*¹

In this passage, Parmenides refers to what Socrates had said before: [...] *but I would, as I say, be much more impressed if someone were able to display this same difficulty, which you and Parmenides went through in the case of visible things, also similarly entwined in multifarious ways in the forms themselves – in things that are grasped by reasoning.*² If Zeno's argumentation in his book had not dealt with particulars perceived by the senses, there would be no reason for Socrates to bring up the hypothesis of the existence of the Forms as a solution to the paradox concerning similarity and dissimilarity among sensible particulars.³ From this point of view, τὰ ὄντα (beings), which Zeno shows not to be many.⁴ can only be sensible particulars. However, by attacking the hypothesis εἰ πολλά ἐστὶ τὰ ὄντα,⁵ Zeno wishes to show that the hypothesis defended by Parmenides εἰ ἓν ἐστὶν is the only one possible.

It follows that in Parmenides' hypothesis (εἰ ἓν ἐστὶν) ἐστὶν is predicative. Why? First of all, ἓν is not determined by the article τὸ, which means it is not a subject, but an attribute. Furthermore τὸ ὄν is symmetrical to τὰ ὄντα. In this passage, τὸ πᾶν is equivalent to τὸ ὄν, since, as said before, in a pre-Platonic context, there is no other domain of reality than the sensible, the totality of which is the universe. In other words, Parmenides and Zeno were living in an universe they perceived either by their senses or by their intellect. In their everyday life, Parmenides and Zeno were dealing with a plural environment with people, houses, boats, food, etc. perceived by their senses; but when they try to use their intellect this multiplicity appears as a totality. Hence, the same object appears to be one for the intellect and many for the senses.

What is more, Aristotle criticizes Parmenides and Melissos at the beginning of *Physics* (I 2), which proves that, for Aristotle, our most ancient witness, Parmenides' *Poem* was about the universe.

3.1.2. Objections

In a very interesting paper, Denis O'Brien⁶ criticized this equivalence between τὸ ὄν and τὸ πᾶν. He has two arguments. First, one does not find τὸ

¹ Plato, *Parmenides* 135d–e, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan.

² Plato, *Parmenides* 129e–130a, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan.

³ See Plato, *Parmenides* 128e–130a.

⁴ See Plato, *Parmenides* 127d.

⁵ Plato, *Parmenides* 127e1–2.

⁶ See D. O'Brien, *Le Parménide historique et le Parménide de Platon*. Denis O'Brien believes that it is *about the one itself* (περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς αὐτοῦ), without saying what *the one itself* means. See L. Brisson, *Réponse à Denis O'Brien*.

$\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ in Parmenides' *Poem* or in the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*. And in 137b3–4 it is clear that $\tau\acute{o}$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu$ is the subject of $\tilde{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota$.

3.1.2.1. The second part of Plato's *Parmenides*

As I tried to show in my translation, the eight deductions in the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* deal with the sensible world, that is the universe, as is obvious from the structure of the second series of deductions, which is the most detailed. Each of the sections deals with a couple of categories in the sensible world:

one/many
 whole/parts
 limited/unlimited
 number
 figure: straight/circular
 located in something else/in itself
 contact/not in contact
 at rest/in movement
 identity/difference
 similar/dissimilar
 equal/inequal
 in space: in contact/not in contact
 in time: same age/different age
 existence
 knowledge, language

Even if the formula $\tau\acute{o}$ $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ doesn't appear in the second part of the *Parmenides*, this second part has the world or the universe as its object.

This reading supposes that the hypothesis $\tilde{\epsilon}\iota$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ means *if the universe is one* and that the subject of $\tilde{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\nu$ is $\tau\acute{o}$ $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ (the universe), which is equivalent to being ($\tau\acute{o}$ $\tilde{\omicron}\nu$) and not to the one ($\tilde{\epsilon}\nu$), which therefore must be considered as its attribute. This reading is also supported by a solid point of grammar: attributes lack the definite article in ancient Greek. And it does not conflict with the expression $\tau\acute{o}$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu$, frequently reappearing in the second half of the *Parmenides* to mean *that thing we are talking about which is one*. Here is the list of the occurrences:

$\tau\acute{o}$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu$: 137c5, 8, d1, 3, 7, e5; 138b4, 6, c2, 5; 139a3, 8, b2, d6, e1, 5; 140a2, 4, 6, b5, e2; 141a4, 5, e4, 9, 10, 12; 142a7, c6, 9 d2, 3, e7 (bis); 143a2, 5 (bis), 6, b2, 4, c7, e2; 144c7, e2, 3, 6, 9; 145a2, b1, 4, c2, 3, 5, 6, 7; 146a1, 3, 6, b5, c1, 7, d1, 3, e6; 147b5, 6, e4; 148d5, 7, 8, e1, 3, 7, 10; 149d5, 7, 8, e1, 3, 7, 10; 150d1, 2, 5; 151a2, 9, b1, 4, 6, d5, e3; 152d7, e3, 8; 153b1 (bis), 8, c2, d2, 8, e5, 6; 154a1, c3, 7, d5, e4; 155b6, c3, 4, 8, d3, e2, 4, 5; 156a7, b3, d1, e3; 157b4, 9; 158a5, c1; 159b6, c4, 6; 160b2, 5, e1, 5; 161a2, 3, c9, e5; 162a2, c3, d4, 5, 6, c2; 163a2, 6, b2, 4.

$\tau\acute{o}\tilde{\upsilon}$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$: 137b3; 139d2; 142b7, d1, 4, e1, 2; 143b5; 144d7, e1; 145c6; 146d3, e6; 147a3, 7, 8, b2, e3; 148a1; 149c5, d4, e1, 2; 150c6; 151a3, 8, b2, 5;

153a1, 5, b6, c4, d4, 6; 154a2, 6, b7, e7; 155b1, 8, c3; 157b8, 9, c1, 2, 3, e5; 158a1, 4, 6, b1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, c4, d 3, 4, 7; 159a8, b4, 5, 7, 8, d1, 7; e1, 6; 160b1, e5; 161a7, b7; 162d7; 165b4, c3, 5 e3.

τῷ ἐνί: 136a6, 8; 139e3; 140e5; 142b8; 143b7; 144e1; 146e4; 147b3, e8; 149a2; 150a1, 4, 6, b1; 151a9, b4; 152e1; 158a5; 159e2; 160e7; 161b1, 6, c1, d3; 162b4, 6; 163d5.

In these cases, τὸ translated as the definite article in English, is, in ancient Greek, deriving from a demonstrative adjective, as it is in Homer.

3.1.2.2. Parmenides' *Poem*

Moreover, this interpretation is in accordance with Parmenides' *Poem*, even if it is true that the formula τὸ πᾶν, that is πᾶν with the article τὸ, is missing in Parmenides' *Poem*.

3.1.2.2.1. ὄν and πᾶν

Notwithstanding this absence, in the most important fragment on ἐόν, which is the object of the first way of enquiry, one reads:

πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος.
 τῷ ξυνεχὲς πᾶν ἐστιν· ἐὸν γὰρ ἐόντι πελάζει.
 [It is all <of it> full of being
 Therefore it is, all <of it>, continuous, for being keeps
 close to being.]¹

It is impossible not to identify ὄν and πᾶν, because πᾶν and ὄν are interchangeable.

Similarly, according to the opinions of the mortals, sensible particulars are all composed of light and darkness:

πᾶν πλέον ἐστιν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου
 [All is full alike of light and of night invisible.]²

In other words, this verse is referring to the universe perceived by the senses, in which all the objects are a mixture of light and darkness.

3.1.2.2.2. ἔν

The object Parmenides is talking about in the *Poem* is ὄν or πᾶν. The word ἔν without article appears only once:

οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἐστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν,
 ἔν, συνεχές· τίνα γὰρ γένναν διζήσεται αὐτοῦ
 [It was not at one time only, nor will it be at one time
 only, since it is now, all of it, together,
 one, continuous. For what origin will you look for it
 now?]³

¹ Parmenides, fr. DK28B8, 24–25, tr. D. O'Brien.

² Parmenides, fr. DK28B9, 3, tr. D. O'Brien.

³ Parmenides, fr. DK28B8, 5–6, tr. D. O'Brien.

The subject is ἐόν, and ἔν, in this context, means ὁμοῦ πᾶν, συνεχές in time and also in space.

The universe grasped by the intellect is one and the plurality of things perceived by the senses as enclosed within it are but apparent. This amounts to saying that Parmenides and Zeno are talking about the same thing, that is, the universe which is being, but considered according to two viewpoints. If the universe is considered by the intellect, one must admit that it has no birth, that it does not change and therefore that it will not perish. Consequently, it can only be one, not only from a numerical viewpoint, but also from a structural one: it must be a whole without parts. On the contrary, what is considered by the senses, things contained by the universe, are born, never cease changing, and perish; as parts of the totality constituted by the universe, they are, moreover, multiple. In this context, it is easy to understand why τὰ ὄντα, i.e. the sensible particulars contained by the universe, are called τὰ ἄλλα, since, from this point of view, they are other than the being constituted by the universe, which is one (ἔν).

3.2. The existential use of ἐστίν

Since Proclus' *Commentary*, the existential use of ἐστίν has been systematically preferred.

3.2.1. The daunting heritage of Proclus' commentary

In the 5th century CE, Proclus wrote a very important commentary from the beginning of the dialogue up to 142a; it is a masterpiece celebrated through the ages. At the beginning of the second part of the dialogue, Proclus quotes *Parm.* 137b1–5:

Well then, at what point shall we start? What shall we hypothesize first? I know: since we have in fact decided to play this strenuous game [ἢ βούλεσθε, ἐπειδήπερ δοκεῖ πραγματειώδη παιδιὰν παίζειν], is it all right with you if I begin with myself and my own hypothesis [ἀπ' ἑμαυτοῦ ἄρξωμαι καὶ τῆς ἑμαυτοῦ ὑποθέσεως]? Shall I hypothesize about the one itself [περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς [αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος]] and consider what the consequences must be, if it is one or if it is not one [εἴτε ἔν ἐστίν εἴτε μὴ ἔν, τί χρὴ συμβαίνειν]?¹

One immediately notices that Proclus does not quote the highly important words αὐτοῦ and ὑποθέμενος. The most recent editors of book V athetize these words found in the manuscript A (*Parisinus graecus* 1810) copied by Pachymeros (13th c.), who introduced these words from the Plato's manuscript D (*Marcianus graecus* Z. 186, 11th c.). These words appear in the Latin translation by Moer-

¹ Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* V 1032, 7–11, tr. G. R. Morrow & J. Dillon.

beke (*de ipso uno supponens*), but not in the archetype (Σ) of the *Commentary*.¹ How to explain this omission?

3.2.1.1. The neoplatonic One

Proclus wants to make clear that the One in Plato's *Parmenides* is not the One itself, that is, the intelligible One, but the One beyond being, cause of everything else:

The actual method of Parmenides takes up one hypothesis and builds the whole argument on that, not an hypothesis which would appear to be one among a multitude of others^[2], but one which comprehends all other hypotheses and is one prior to the many; for it reveals the total range of being and the whole order of things both intelligible and sensible, and furthermore their henads, and the single ineffable henad which is the source of all of them. For the One is the cause of all things and from it he will generate all things as he proceeds.³

In other words, we will find in the series of deductions the structure a description not only of the One itself, but of all the realities deriving from the One, outlined in his *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* I, 641, 1–14. That is why Proclus omitted αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος.

3.2.1.2. Parmenides' hypothesis: *the one which is*

That said, Proclus has to explain why Parmenides' *Poem* is about being and not the One beyond being as in the *Republic*:

But perhaps someone might raise this very question, how Parmenides, who dealt with the one which is [περὶ τὸ ἓν ὄν διατρέβων]^[4], can have called the One "his own hypothesis" [ἑαυτοῦ κέκληκεν ὑπόθεσιν τὸ ἓν], and say that he will take his start from this beginning proper to himself. Before this some authorities^[5] have indeed declared that, whereas Parmenides did in fact concern himself entirely with being, Plato, when he discovered that the One was superior to being and

¹ See C. Luna, *Le texte du Parménide de Platon ...*.

² This distinction between the One before multiplicity and in multiplicity can be found in Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* I 711, 26–30 & Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, prop. 24.

³ Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* V 1032, 13–22, tr. G. R. Morrow & J. Dillon.

⁴ As in Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* I, 620, 18–1921–22; 636, 3–4; 638, 18–19; 639, 9–11; 710, 32–33; 719, 32–33; II 721, 31–722, 24. And in Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* I 9, pp. 35.3–4 & I 10, p. 45, 1–2.

⁵ Plotinus, see below.

to all existence, by way of correcting Parmenides, presents him as taking his start from the One.¹

Parmenides is being Platonic, then, in calling his hypothesis one which postulates the One [Resp. VI 509b9]. For what Plato has added to Parmenides' doctrine, they say, he has attributed to Parmenides himself. Those who maintain this would say that there is no need to be surprised if Parmenides does not seem to say anything in his poetry about the One itself (it is after all ineffable), inasmuch as he is defending his own poetry which traces the generation of all existent things from being; but in his unwritten discourses to Zeno he gave some indications on that subject, inasmuch as that is possible in words. He is justified, then, in calling his own hypothesis the exposition of the One.²

Because he believes that Parmenides was speaking under divine inspiration, Proclus refuses to distinguish between a Parmenides before Plato and Parmenides in Plato. If in his *Poem* Parmenides doesn't speak about the existence of the One, this is because it is ineffable; but in conversation with Zeno, he gave some indications about It. This clever trick does not solve the problem raised by Plotinus.

In *Enn.* V 1 [10] Plotinus makes a distinction between Parmenides before Plato and Parmenides in Plato. Before Plato, Parmenides identifies Being and Intellect—[...] *he identified Being and Intellect and that it was not among things perceived by the senses that he placed Being [...]*³—while as he is depicted in Plato, he is more accurate: *But Parmenides in Plato speaks more accurately, and distinguishes from each other the first One [Parm. 137c4], which is more properly called One, and the second which he calls One–Many [Parm. 144e5], and the third, One and Many (Parm. 155e5). In this way he too agrees with the doctrine of the three natures.*⁴ These are the objects of the three Plotinus' hypostases: the One beyond Being, the Intellect–Intelligible, that is, Being, and Soul.

4. Modern Interpretations

After Proclus, interpreters maintain the existential meaning of ἐστίν, the question being: what is the subject of the verb? In that context, the subject is

¹ Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* V 1032, 23–32, tr. G. R. Morrow & J. Dillon.

² Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* V 1033, 6–18, tr. G. R. Morrow & J. Dillon.

³ Plotinus, *Enneads* V 1 [10]. 8, 15–23, tr. A. H. Armstrong.

⁴ Plotinus, *Enneads* V 1 [10], 8, 23–27, tr. A. H. Armstrong.

logically τὸ ἕν. But what does τὸ ἕν mean? Here is a short list of the answers,¹ with very few examples of those who proposed these answers.

4.1. Unwritten doctrines

As a matter of fact, Proclus wanted to claim that the first principle in the neoplatonic system, the One, was the subject of an existential ἔστιν in each series of deductions dealing with its effects: series I describes the One beyond being, and series II, the One which is, that is the Intelligible. Proclus was followed by Damascius, who gave a commentary on the whole second part, but it is impossible to support such an interpretation if one is not a neoplatonist. The only way to remain in the interpretative trend is to refer to the ἄγραφα δόγματα, as did Wyller and Migliori.²

4.2. An exercise in dialectics

Many interpreters see the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* as a dialectical exercise without any philosophical aim. The couple *one and many* is the focus of the second part without any connection with the first part.³

4.3. The one which is

Based on the existential use of ἔστιν and on a metaphysical reading of περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος, this is now the common interpretation.⁴ The second part may be linked to Parmenides' *Poem* and, in a way, it is an attempt to solve the problems raised in the first part. Moreover, it is a prelude to the *Sophist*. The one (τὸ ἕν) characterizes each intelligible form, as a unity separate from other intelligible forms and from sensible particulars. And the others, the many, characterize the plurality of sensible things. The main problem is that the categories of the intelligible forms are the same as the categories of the sensible particulars.

The solution proposed by Francesco Fronterotta⁵ is similar but much more ambitious, because it takes into account the question of participation, which is at the basis of each Parmenides' objections in the first part of the dialogue (Parmenides' hypothesis). If the One is in itself and for itself, apart, in relation with itself, then it is not in the many and there is no participation. But if the One is in the others, not apart, in relation with them, it is in the many and the participation is generalised (Zeno's hypothesis). But both, Parmenides and Zeno, remain in the realm of visible things. Why, then, in the second part of the dialogue, would Parmenides have become a Platonist? That is the question. It is more probable that Parmenides helps Socrates giving him a demonstration of a dialectical exercise inspired by his own hypothesis, while remaining within

¹ See F. Fronterotta, *Guida alla lettura del Parmenide di Platone*.

² See M. Migliori, *Dialettica e verità* & E. A. Wyller, *Platons Parmenides ...*.

³ See H. F. Cherniss, *Parmenides and the Parmenides of Plato*.

⁴ See F. M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*.

⁵ See F. Fronterotta, *Methexis et chorismos*.

sensible being. Socrates could use the dialectical exercise to defend the existence of the intelligible. How can one argue *pro* and *contra* the existence of intelligible forms using couples of sensible characteristics?

4.4. A logico-analytical interpretation

The seminal article in this field is by Gilbert Ryle.¹ The second part of the *Parmenides* deals with the problem of predication and can be seen as a forerunner of the theory of linguistic types by Bernard Russell. Many neo-kantian commentators have claimed that it was the concept of one. Many commentators have followed this trend and have developed a logico-mathematical interpretation.²

5. Conclusion

The second part of the *Parmenides* remains an enigma. Since the *Commentary* by Proclus the ἔστιν of the hypothesis which is examined in eight series of deductions has been considered as existential. Its subject is different according to the interpreters: the ἔν beyond being for the neoplatonists, the ἔν opposed to the dyad (δύαδ) for the supporters of the esoteric doctrines, the unity of the intelligible forms or the form One for the majority of scholars, or the concept *one*. Some believe that it is a mere dialectical exercise without any philosophical background. All these interpretations turn out to be a dead end. That is why we propose to understand that in the second part of the *Parmenides*, the hypothesis is Parmenides' one, either affirmed or denied: εἴτε τὸ πᾶν ἔν ἐστιν εἴτε μὴ ἔν.

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¹ See G. Ryle, *Plato's Parmenides*.

² See F. von Kutschera, *Platons Parmenides* & S. Rickless, *Plato's Forms in Transition*.

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