

A POEM ABOUT PARMENIDES' POEM

Sarah Adams

Parmenides claimed 'All is one' –
the Earth, the moon, the stars, the sun.
But, this phrase is far too crude
to show us what he did conclude:
that this world we do extol
is homogeneous and whole,
And never will it cease or perish,
this universe which we do cherish.
For what is now, at once, together
shall remain unchanged forever.
Timeless, uniform, unchanging;
no parts has it for re-arranging.
Divisionless and all alike;
no less in one place which might
prevent from binding it as one,
this – which to being did not come.
For, so says the doctrine stated,
this whole it is un-generated.
No need had prompted it to grow;
no birth it had;
nor the future will it know.
So it exists completely or not at all,
and nothing to it will befall.

But surely this view so controversial
is unlikely to become commercial!
On the contrary dear reader,
let me make to you much clearer,
why such a view our man proposed,
when appearances it so opposed.

Now, 'nothing' can't be by us thought:
such activity is fraught.

What-is-not cannot be known,
this way of inquiry was shown
to be a dead-end –
that-which-is can't not be;
being is of *necessity!*

This you will soon comprehend,
just listen carefully my friend,
and from seemings do deter
and from reason do not err.

'The way of truth' we'll call this path,
which our Presocratic took to task.
It's but the one way of inquiry
that shows us how things are precisely.
We must only say 'it *is*, it *is*'
when the nature of the world we quiz.

But this way of his was painless not;
frequently was this fellow mocked.
(Life is not easy to lead
when obscure views are paid due heed.)

His daily tasks were done in vain;
no progress did this wise man gain.
And troublesome was conversation,
greeted with hostile intimation.

For example let's consider
when Parmenides went to dinner.

A conversation with his wife
(which commonly was met with strife):

'Are you changed for tea, my dear?

We're late already – get in gear!

The sage replied in some confusion:

'Darling, change is mere illusion!'

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