

Esse: Novum Tractatus

Christopher Ketcham*

Faculty Member, University of Houston-Downtown, Management, Marketing, and Business Administration

*Corresponding Author: Christopher Ketcham, Faculty Member, University of Houston-Downtown, Management, Marketing, and Business Administration, Email: chrisketcham@msn.com

ABSTRACT

In the spirit of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, this study is a consideration of some of the philosophical implications of Parmenides' being which he said: is and cannot not be, is complete, undifferentiated, and endures.

Introduction, Materials and Methods, and Conclusion: This is a treatise whose method is comprised of a series of questions and answers, and sub-questions and answers about Parmenides' notion of being in the numbered paragraph style that Wittgenstein used in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The conclusion is that there is no conclusion because the discourse on being that is and cannot not be, is complete, undifferentiated, and endures is like the thing in itself, something that we will never completely know, understand, or fully explain.

Keywords: Being; Heidegger; Parmenides; Wittgenstein

Note: capitalized Being is the existent, the Being; lower case being is the state of the existent, the being of being

INTRODUCTION

Is there a 'before being?' From Parmenides there is only being, and being cannot not be.¹ There cannot therefore be a before being.

- being as established by Parmenides is complete.² Therefore there is nothing more to add to or subtract from being.

¹There are multiple versions of Parmenides Proem from many historical writers. This paper consulted Leonard Taran's text for both the Greek and the English translations [1. p. 82-4]. "Parmenides started from the assumption that there is existence and that non-[b] Being is impossible. [1. p. 191]small b in brackets used to denote Parmenides being as differentiated from Heidegger's Dasein's Being]" Others with a similar translation include: [2.][3.][4.]. This premise is foundational to this paper's discussion of being. However, instead of Taran's convention of capitalizing being in context of the being that is and cannot not be, lower case b will be used. The Heideggerian 'Being' expressed as Dasein is capitalized because for Being there is an impossibility of being – death.

²Thanassas is correct to suggest that once we have read Heidegger, we cannot read Parmenides the same way again [3. p. 2]. Heidegger's project was to return to pre-Socratic thinking to begin the explication of being with Parmenides.

- being is. Analogically: the universe is. We can speculate upon the before the singularity (of the universe). Our physics, math, and other sciences fail us in the before singularity. As with the sciences of the universe, the science of metaphysics fails us in before being.³
- Is there space or time for being?⁴ Parmenides did not consider space or time.⁵ Of what need are the externalities of space and time to being if being is and cannot not be?

³"In Parmenides Fragment VIII the Goddess wrestles with this very problem of before being and does not divulge an answer other than to reaffirm that being is; is in every direction complete to its horizon. [1. p. 86]"

⁴Heidegger asserted the same about being's temporality. For being, time is presence. "being is not a thing, thus nothing temporal, and yet it is determined by time as presence... being and time determine each other reciprocally, but in such a manner that neither can the former—being—be addressed as some-thing temporal nor can the latter—time—be addressed as a being. [5. p. 3]"

⁵Parmenides did not connect time to process. He denied process. He did not consider space in his argument [1. p. 194-5].

- Can there be difference if being is and being cannot not be? Parmenides thought not.⁶ being in time would require process. For Parmenides being is. being does not change.⁷ Change requires process. If being does not change; there is no process. Therefore, process must not be for being; there must be something other than being if time exists for process to be.
- Is being a regulative ideal? For being to be a regulative ideal or a Kantian regulative principle like the principle of reason, being would need to be associated with process.⁸ It has been established that being is not process. Therefore, being is not a regulative ideal. being, as such, ascribes no process for any entity to become or experience.⁹ There is no 'process of being' because being is not process.
- Is being thinking? being possesses entities that cannot think. being is not thinking.
- Parmenides did not deny duration.¹⁰ being endures; it just does not change. Difference exists for that which can change, but not being: being endures. Does duration imply time? An analogy: gravity is. Gravity can affect time (and space); time cannot affect gravity. Gravity is; gravity endures. As a necessity of nature being is like gravity—being endures; it cannot not be. Time has no meaning for being.
- Like gravity is being a force? Like gravity, being is a necessity of nature. being possesses all entities. The act of possession is not an occupation but an association with the entity—an articulation but not a coupling.
- If being is a necessity; why not physics? Physics deals with measurable phenomenon.

⁶[1. p. 175]. In Plato's *The Parmenides*, Socrates suggests and receives confirmation that both Zeno and Parmenides have expressed their case (Parmenides in a positive argument affirming unity; Zeno in the negative: denying plurality) for being as complete and indivisible and that being is not the many [6. p. 54-5].

⁷[1. p. 181]

⁸The concept of God was also for Kant a regulative ideal. God is not process in the strictest sense, but if God is and has always been and God created the universe, God used process of some sort for the task as the Book of Genesis suggests. If God is and is before being; being cannot be because being is.

⁹Michele Grier explained regulative ideals as, "devices for guiding and grounding our empirical investigations and the project of knowledge acquisition. [7.]"

¹⁰[1. p. 181]

being has not yet been measured if it can ever be measured. being, because it is not descriptive and not yet measurable, deserves its own science (philosophy and metaphysics) if and only if it needs to be better defined and explicated. From this questioning of being there may be discovered other questions about being.

Is being a fact? being is. It is a fact for every entity.

- Is being an object? being is complete. It is in its entirety. It cannot not be. It cannot not become less than what is the being in itself of being. "The object is simple" and, "the fixed, the existent and the object are one."¹¹ If the object is complete and is and cannot not be then being could be considered to be an object in the universe. It is not clear that this is the case other than to accept being and the universe as co-determinates and there must be a totality for the universe. The fact that being is, even when an entity is not, constitutes a fact but this does not say that being is an object.
- If there is a fixed form of the world because there are objects, must being then be an object?¹² being is a necessity of nature. Without being, the question is whether there would be objects in the first place? The universe and being are codetermined. Objects are the manifestation of the universe. being is part of each entity. What this does not say is whether being is an object.
- being cannot be differentiated. "For if a thing is not distinguished by anything, I cannot distinguish it—for otherwise it would be distinguished."¹³
- Does being have substance? If being could be an object, being has no substance or, "...what exists independently of what is the case."¹⁴ being is only what is the case.

¹¹ Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* proposition 2 made the argument for the atomic simplicity of objects, the whole of atomic facts is reality and the total reality is the world. [8. p. 5-11, *Tractatus* proposition 2]. He also made the case for the existence or non-existence of atomic facts. The existence of being cannot not be for Parmenides so it is not possible for being to have substance and if being cannot also have non-existent atomic facts, then the case is not made that being could be an object. Factually being is.

¹²[8. p. 8, *Tractatus* 2.026]

¹³[8. p. 8, *Tractatus*, 2.02331]

¹⁴[8. p. 8, *Tractatus*, 2.024]

- If being exists necessarily, how can being not have substance? being exists in every possible world. However, being does not have substance in and of itself.
- Is being matter? being cannot be matter because matter would mean that being can be differentiated. This matter may be different from that matter even if it is identically constructed, but it differs simply because it is separate from the other.
- Is being an entity?¹⁵ Heidegger says not.¹⁶ If there is question of whether being is an object and if it is the case being is not an entity and has no substance, its definition as a thing with thingness that could be known as such is questionable.
- To make the case being is an object produces these paradoxes:
 - being cannot be differentiated, and;
 - being has no substance; being is not matter, and;
 - There is not concurrence in the understanding of what are objects and what are entities.
 - The case for being as object is not made but has not been definitively not made.
 - If being is not an object or an entity is being the being of an entity? being is for all entities but the case has not been made that being is an object; it has been established that being is not entity.¹⁷ If an object can 'not be' then being is when an object is not. If this is true, then being is not an object.
- Can being be understood phenomenologically? If being is an object being can be investigated phenomenologically. If being is not an

¹⁵The problem with entity and object is their definition. According to Colin Johnson, Wittgenstein drew his thinking about objects through Frege, "Where Fregean objects constitute only one of a variety of logical types of entity of reference, the other types being constituted by Fregean functions of differing kinds, the Tractatus introduces the word 'object' as synonymous with 'entity' and 'thing' (Tractatus 2.01). [9. p. 145]" Heidegger insisted that being is not an entity. If being is not an entity, then being cannot be an object. For Heidegger, entities are associated with Dasein's being in the world. Those entities closest to Dasein are present at hand whether Dasein takes notice of them or are 'they entities' or things [10. p. 168, H 130]. Heidegger said that for the subject of Being, "The person is not a Thing, not a substance, not an object. [10. p. 73, H 47, Emphasis in original]"

¹⁶[10. p. 23, H 4]

¹⁷[10. p. 29, H 9]

object, then only the experience of being can be investigated phenomenologically. All objects are complete but not the same. being is complete and undifferentiated. This is where being and objects diverge. Therefore, we can now say that being is not an object.

- If being is not an entity, not an object; is being an indeterminate? being is and is complete. being is what is the case.
- Is being a thought experiment if being is not determinate and is not indeterminate? being is and cannot not be. Thought experiments can both be and not be.
- Is being a priori? being does not require experience to be. Therefore, being is not a priori nor is it posteriori; being is.

If being is and cannot not be is being absolute That being is and cannot not be is the case according to Parmenides. Is there an absolute proof of being? There are, can be, and likely will be posited more alternatives to Parmenides' theory of being. If there can be other theories of being, then there is as of yet no absolute theory of being or proof that being is. What being requires is a science for its understanding and explication. What being has as its sciences are philosophy and metaphysics.

Is there Being separate from being? Being (Dasein) is until it is impossible to be and that impossibility as Heidegger tells us is called death.¹⁸ If being is, and Being can be an impossibility, then Being is not being.

- If being is not differentiated from being, is Being differentiated from Being? Therein lies a divergence between being and Being, because a Being can be differentiated from another Being. Beings can become but being always already is complete and undifferentiated and therefore unchanging.
- Is Dasein the only Being? Dasein is the Being that inquires about its being.¹⁹ All entities have been attached by being. Therefore, if only the Being of Dasein has been explored to any great extent, there is much more to the being associated with entities that has not yet been considered. Nor does this make the being of other entities less important; just not yet considered.

Is being individual? If a person dies is being lost? There is no being of being. Only being.

¹⁸[10. p. 294, H 50]

¹⁹[10. p. 27, H 7]

being is; there cannot not be being. being is not possessed it possesses Being. If an entity could possess being, then being could be differentiated. being is complete and undifferentiated. If an entity could possess being, then it is possible that some being could be lost if the entity no longer is: being cannot not be.²⁰

- Complete being is being in itself.
- Does complete being have a beginning and an end? The end of being is that being is. The beginning of being is that being is. Being is without ends.
- How can being possess Being? The excluded middle is the intersection of being with being for Dasein. It is this intersection which Heidegger explored as presencing and appropriation, emergence, essentiality and concealing/unconcealing.²¹ It is now understood that Being is not being. As a result of this separation and because the sciences for each are different, Being does not possess being. being can possess Being but because Being can be impossible, Being is distinguishable from being. being is not distinguishable from being in Dasein or any other entity.
- If Being and being are distinguishable, is it the case that there is a Cartesian duality? being is: with or without a body—with or without a mind. There is as a result no mind-body duality created by distinguishing Being and being.

Can being have a soul? being can possess Being but both are distinguishable from the other. If there is a soul, then Being can possess a soul. being cannot have a soul because being is undifferentiated and souls are differentiated.

- Is the soul being? The question must first be asked, ‘what is the soul?’ If the soul is inseparable from being, then being is soul. Yet philosophy does not usually ascribe soul for all entities—only to Being and perhaps only to Dasein. If this is the case, then the soul is not being. For many, the soul can be differentiated: good, bad, original sin; being is undifferentiated. If the soul can be differentiated, the soul is not being.

²⁰Tautology? “...that for Parmenides the expression by which he refers to [b]Being and non-[b]Being are synonymous and that for him there is no tautology in saying: ‘since there is Being, or since Being exists, and nothing; or non-[b]Being exists not, it is necessary to say and think [b]Being.’ [1. p. 59, small b in brackets added to denote this paper’s convention for being]”

²¹Presencing and appropriation [5.]. Concealing, unconcealing, emergence, and essentiality [11.].

- Is there an eternal soul? If there is a God, then some theologians suggest that there is an eternal soul. It has not been established that there is a God. If God is not; God is not being. being is. If God is not being, then there can be not God. If the eternal soul requires God, and there could be not God, then there is not an eternal soul that is in the sense that being is. The eternal soul would then have to be a Platonic atemporal eternal. An atemporal eternal is not the being that Parmenides defined as is and cannot not be.²² being endures outside of time. In that context, being is outside of time but is not a temporal because that would require time for being to be. Being is with or without time.
- Is there a unity of necessities of nature that is God? being enables becoming. Without being, entities could not become. being is only one necessity of nature. Necessities are such that if one is missing, the universe is not this universe. There may be many other necessities and their combinations that produce other variations of cosmos. What these variants are (could be) and how they are manifest is not understood. If there is not being; there is not universe that is experienced by entities because entities can become only if there is being. There is a unification of necessities that is universe but there is not one necessity that is more necessary than another.
- If being is not God, is being perfect? If being were perfect, being would be all becomings (possible or not) of all entities. Being in itself is pure potentiality for becoming. Yet being does not become. being facilitates becoming. The ‘perfection’ of being is that it is and cannot be; is complete, undifferentiated, and endures. being is only the pure potentiality for becoming. While being pure potentiality for becoming, being facilitates becoming through the will. If there is will then the perfection of being is in its possibilities for all possibilities for becoming (even impossible possibilities and false becomings) and that being is in itself complete. Nor is being the ultimate good, nor the ultimate evil; however, being can facilitate both and the excluded middle: a theoretical neither.

Is being history; historical? being is; being is complete; being endures. History does not endure for it is a product of time, temporality, and hermeneutics.

²²[1. p. 178]

- If space has no meaning for being, then does being exist nowhere? Like gravity, being exists everywhere. If being is everywhere then it is nowhere in particular. Therefore, space as a place where to be is not something that is relevant to being.
- If being is not historical, is being unconcealment?²³ The being that is complete and endures is always there in and for entities. As such being may be an issue for Dasein and may or may not be an issue for any other entity. being as always being is never fully revealed, at least not unless or until metaphysics can completely unconceal being, which is likely is an impossibility.
- Is being hermeneutical? being is complete. being is undifferentiated. being is. These attributes are not constitutive of a hermeneutic understanding of something where the forces of the present and speculation about the future contribute to the understanding of the past. being is only hermeneutical in that being has been thought about for millennia and that neither contributes nor detracts from the idea of being as complete in itself.
- Is being eternal recurrence? A condition of being is that it is and cannot not be. It is for all entities and when entities become, being is with the entity and facilitates the becoming. While being does not change, the entity becomes with its becoming. The fact that being always occurs when an entity occurs is a kind of recurrence of the same. However, being does not change. The entity can change over time from its use of the facilitative powers of being. Thus, while there is undifferentiated being, its manifestation in an entity can be different from one entity to the other as each becomes over time.
- Is being the will to power? Being is pure potentiality—a potentiality for will for entities. Will, of course, is contingent upon the entity and its capabilities and faculties. With the unlimited potentiality of being (up to being in itself), it is the entity that is forestalled the use of the full spectrum of the will to power because of entity limitations; not the limitations of being. As a necessity of nature, being is what the entity draws from to facilitate its will to power. Will to power

²³Heidegger explained that Parmenides' second fragment suggested, "The path to being, which at the same time is the path into concealment. The path is unavoidable. [12. p. 117, H84]"

may be as simple as a diamond's resistance to entropy, or that which the human becomes in spite of terrible odds.

How is it that being is? If being is not, then there is the void. If the void is, then there is not being—and Being (Dasein) is impossible to be. In the void there is no before being because there cannot be being in the void. being is. The void is not.

- If the void is not; is there nothing? The void is the absence of anything; including being. Nothing is not the void. The absence of something in space is nothing; not void. being is when an entity isn't. Therefore, being is not the void.
- If Dasein dies; Dasein is not. Does this mean that Dasein is nothing upon death? Dasein simply is not upon death.

Are there constraints on being? being is and cannot not be, is complete, undifferentiated and endures. There are no other constraints on being.

Is being linguistic? being can facilitate language. Beings have language but language is not necessary for being. being is. Language not always is; not always was. There is a before language; therefore, language is not required for being to be.

- Is being intelligence? Entities are; entities have being. Beings can be intelligent or not; being is undifferentiated so being is not intelligence.

Must being be known to be? being is. The being that knows it has being is Dasein.²⁴ Dasein has not always been. being exists even when life does not. If there is no other entity that knows it has being, then being does not need to be known for being to be.

What is being to the senses; must we sense being to be? Some entities have senses, and some do not. All entities have being. Being able to sense being is not necessary for being to be for any entity.

Is being beings? Beings are entities. Entities can be or not be. Entities can be nothing in a place where they were just a moment before. being is; being cannot not be. being is not beings because being is undifferentiated and complete.

²⁴"Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very being, that being is an *issue* for it. [10. p. 32, H 12]"

Esse: Novum Tractatus

Is there a quantum level for being? If being is and cannot not be, is complete, endures, and is undifferentiated, then there would need to be parts for being to have both cosmic and quantum levels and corresponding theories. There is no separate quantum or cosmic level for being.

- Is there entropy for being? being is and cannot not be, is complete, and endures. Time is not an issue for being. This suggests that being is, and there is not entropy for being.

Have all the questions about being been asked? To have asked all of the questions about being is to know being in itself, and to know being in itself is to be being. A Being (entity) who becomes being in itself would have to be being. Entities and Beings can be or not be. being is and cannot not be. Whether or not good and clear questions about being have been asked is subject to question. Nor has it been ascertained whether the questions already asked of being are vague or can produce cases that make the question in and of itself an incomplete question.

- Can being be analyzed using Kant's categories as adapted from Aristotle? Parmenides provides a rudimentary categorical explication of being with complete and enduring (the category of quantity: unity); is and cannot not be (the category of quality: reality and modality: impossibility of not being); being is with every entity (the category of relation).
- Are all the questions for being answered? If as Kant said, we cannot know 'the thing in itself' then we will never know the entirety of being and will never be done with being.

As Winston Churchill said after the Allied victory at El Alamein in 1942, "Now this is not

the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." The discourse on being begins here.

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