

A. H. Coxon: *The Fragments of Parmenides*. A Critical Text with Introduction and Translation, the Ancient *Testimonia* and a Commentary. Revised and Expanded Edition edited with new Translations by **Richard McKirahan** and a new Preface by **Malcolm Schofield**. Las Vegas/Zurich/Athens: Parmenides Publishing 2009. XIV, 461 S. 52,50 £.

When Van Gorcum first published Allan Coxon's critical edition of Parmenides as a 'Phronesis' supplementary volume in 1986, its unique contribution to the understanding of the most profound and challenging of the Presocratic philosophers was quickly acknowledged.¹ The edition's principal merits were seen to be its presentation of the text of the fragments based upon fresh inspection of the major manuscripts of the ancient authors whose quotations preserved them, its thorough case for approaching Parmenides' poetic idiom as deeply rooted in the epic tradition, its rich cataloguing of both Parmenides' echoings of earlier authors and later authors' echoing of him, and its inclusion of a much fuller collection of testimonia than found in Diels and Kranz. Coxon's edition was also unique in presenting the results of over half a century's engagement with its subject in a personal manner generally unaffected by scholarly trends. Coxon's first article on Parmenides was published in 1934.² In 1968 he published some remarks regarding his examination of the Simplician manuscripts and a note reporting his finding that ὄσση in fr. 1. 3 lacks manuscript authority.³ His retirement in 1980 from his Readership at Edinburgh University enabled him to complete the work that led to the first publication of his edition.

Coxon's ruminations on Parmenides did not cease in 1986, however. Some of his subsequent reflections made their way into a set of notes in two personal copies of his edition that he made in anticipation of a revised and corrected edition. His death in 2001, at the age of 91, prevented him from producing this edition himself. Fortunately, Richard McKirahan worked with Coxon's widow and with Parmenides Publishing to produce this fine new edition of what remains nearly a quarter century on the indispensable edition of Parmenides.⁴ McKirahan has incorporated Coxon's corrections, changes, and additions, along with the page of addenda and corrigenda that accompanied the first edition. Also usefully included are McKirahan's translations of all the testimonia (which now include the mention of περὶ τῶν Παρμενίδου α' in Diogenes Laertius's catalogue of Xenocrates' works) and likewise of all the previously untranslated Greek in the introduction, the commentary, and the appendices on certain of Zeno and Melissus's arguments. There is also now a long English-Greek glossary and a very useful Greek-English index. The publication of this revised and expanded edition

¹ Reviews of the first edition include H. Schwabl, *WSt*, 100 (1987): 326; M. R. Wright, *ClRev*, 38 (1988): 274-7; M. Miller, *Review of Metaphysics*, 41 (1987-8): 610-12; I. Bodnár, *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis...*, Sectio philosophica et sociologica, 22-3 (1990): 231-4; K. Miura, *Journal of Classical Studies*, 36 (1988): 125-9; M. Matthen, *Philosophical Review*, 100 (1991): 153-7; R. Renehan, *Ancient Philosophy*, 12 (1992): 395-409.

² The philosophy of Parmenides, *ClQu*, 28 (1934): 134-44.

³ The manuscript tradition of Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* I-IV, *ClQu*, 18 (1968): 70-5. The text of Parmenides fr. 1. 3, *ClQu*, 18 (1968): 69.

⁴ Also posthumously published has been Coxon's short article on fr. 3 DK, Parmenides on thinking and being, *Mnemosyne*, 56 (2003): 210-12.

offers occasion to celebrate once again the work's principal merits while acknowledging frankly its flaws and limitations.

One of the paradoxes of Coxon's work is that both its strengths and its weaknesses stem from its almost studied indifference to important work on Parmenides since roughly 1960. There is one reference in the commentary to G. E. L. Owen, endorsing his ἡδὲ τέλειον as the best emendation of the end of fr. 8. 4 (though printing ἡδ' ἰάτελειστον in the main text), single references to minor points in the editions of Leonardo Tarán and Uvo Hölscher, a passing reference to a point made in an appendix of Alexander Mourelatos's influential 1970 monograph, and no references to any later work. Coxon's engagement with the scholarship on his subject must have been less superficial than his sparse references to the work of others first make it appear. Even on the most charitable view, however, it cannot be regarded as running particularly deep. One result is that one will want to turn elsewhere for interpretations of the philosophical dimensions of Parmenides' poem: Coxon's own account of Parmenides' investigation of the nature of being seems rather perfunctory. The importance of Coxon's edition does not lie, however, in its overall interpretation but in its many illuminating points of detail and, especially, in its proposals regarding the establishment of the text.

The lack of overt engagement with Mourelatos is perhaps most surprising given how his study presaged Coxon's own case for understanding Parmenides against the background of Homeric epic. Coxon went further than Mourelatos, however, in advocating as an editorial principle the restoration of epic and Ionic forms even in places where the manuscripts present only tragic and Attic forms in order to credit Parmenides with consistency in his dialect. Although the resulting improvements to the text were rightly regarded as one of the chief merits of Coxon's edition, several of these improvements were anticipated by David Sider who had, a year before its publication, likewise argued for editing Parmenides according to the same standards employed in editing his epic models.¹ Together their work in this regard yields the following improvements to the text of Diels and Kranz: ἐς for εἰς codd. at fr. 1. 10, ἀθανάτησι συνήορος for ἀθανάτοισι συνάορος codd. at fr. 1. 24, τῆς for ταῖς codd. at frs. 1. 30 and 12. 2, δοκεῦντα for δοκοῦντα codd. at fr. 1. 31, αὐτίς for αὐθίς codd. at fr. 5. 2, πλάζονται for πλάττονται at fr. 6. 5, as well as πλαγκτόν for πλακτόν and φορεῦναι for φοροῦναι at fr. 6. 6, τῶντόν for ταῦτόν codd. at frs. 6. 8, 6. 9, 8. 29, and 8. 34, τῶντῶ for ταῦτῶ codd. at fr. 8. 29, μῶνος for μόνος at fr. 8. 1, ἐάσω for ἐάσσω codd. at fr. 8. 7, ἐπλάγχθησαν for ἐπλάχθησαν at fr. 8. 28, αἰθερίην for αἰθερίαν codd. at fr. 10. 1, καθαρῆς for καθαρᾶς codd. at fr. 10. 2, and κρήσιν for κρᾶσιν codd. at fr. 16. 1. Of these restorations, the only one not accepted by Coxon is μῶνος for μόνος at fr. 8. 1, despite the secure attestation of the epic μῶνος at fr. 2. 2 (cf. μουνογενές at fr. 8. 4), because he takes the part verse of fr. 8. 1 as completing that of fr. 7. 6. His own principles regarding the restoration of epic forms should have led him to recognize that the Attic μόνος could not have been written by Parmenides. So Sider, who calls attention to the fact that the epic

¹ Textual notes on Parmenides' poem, *Hermes*, 113 (1985): 362–6.

μοῦνος is in fact preserved in roughly half of the manuscripts in the three places where Simplicius quotes fr. 8. 1.¹

Coxon's edition was also welcomed upon its initial publication for having been based upon fresh inspection of the most important manuscripts of the principal sources. In his preface Coxon identified these as including the most important manuscripts of Simplicius's *Physics* commentary, Sextus Empiricus's *Adversus Mathematicos* VII, and Proclus's commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*. Two years earlier, another new edition of the text of the fragments based upon consultation of a more extensive range of manuscripts had been published by Nestor-Luis Cordero.² Unlike Coxon's admirably spare apparatus, Cordero's was filled with reports of the variations he had found regardless of whether they could be regarded as yielding or suggesting feasible variants. Anyone who wishes to regard Coxon's as the definitive edition of the text, as it was pronounced by some early reviewers, will be disheartened by the not infrequent discrepancies between his and Cordero's reporting of the manuscripts. Although some of these discrepancies can be explained by one or the other's decision not to report a variant deemed insignificant, or even by genuine difficulty in making out the copyist's hand, others cannot be so easily accounted for. In addition, soon after the initial publication of Coxon's edition, Denis O'Brien, in a complementary note to his own 1987 edition, detailed a number of errors in Coxon's reporting of the manuscripts.³ If one cannot be altogether confident about the information presented in his apparatus, it nevertheless remains an improvement on those in earlier editions.

Coxon's inspection of the manuscripts has also led to improvements in the text beyond the restoration of epic forms, even if these improvements do not always correspond to his own changes. In fr. 1. 1 and 25 the manuscripts of Sextus read ταί LE, θ' αἱ N, and τε ζ. Coxon appears to be the only recent editor to appreciate that the postpositive connective is required in the latter instance. His proposal, however, to retain ἄγε τῶν codd. in the first verse of fr. 2⁴ (with comma after ἄγε) instead of Karsten's ἄγ' ἐγὼν is less felicitous. Coxon's defense of ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος at fr. 8. 12 is sound. Less compelling is his case for εὔπειθέος at fr. 1. 29. He follows but does not cite Hölscher in accepting the reading ἐπιδέεζ rather than ἐπιδευέζ at fr. 8. 33. Although doing so once again violates his principle of preferring epic forms where attested, he had previously argued that the deletion of μὴ in the succeeding clause is indefensible on palaeographic and exegetical grounds.⁵ Unfortunately, he disregards Tarán's plausible suggestion as to how μὴ entered the text,⁶ and Parmenides' argument in fact makes better sense without it. Coxon's implausible emendation οὐδὲ χρόνος at fr. 8. 36, first proposed in

¹ Sider 1985: 365–6.

² As part of his 'Les Deux Chemins de Parménide' (Paris: J. Vrin, and Brussels: Éditions Ousia, 1984).

³ 'Études sur Parménide', gen. ed. P. Aubenque, vol. 1: Le Poème de Parménide (Paris: J. Vrin): 106–18.

⁴ Although Coxon's numbering of the fragments differs here and there from that in Diels and Kranz (e.g., fr. 2 DK is fr. 3 C, fr. 3 DK is fr. 4 C, etc.), the familiar numbering of Diels and Kranz is followed here.

⁵ Coxon 1968: 72–3.

⁶ Tarán 1965: 115.

his 1934 article, has been decisively criticized by Renehan.¹ In fr. 12. 4, the revised edition continues to print πάντη rather than Mullach's conjecture, πάντη, which Coxon speaks approvingly of in his commentary.

Coxon's 1968 note revealing that πάντ' ἄστη in fr. 1. 3 is merely due to a *falsa lectio* of παντ' ἄτη at S.E. *M. cod. Fl. Laur. (N)* 85, 19 resulted in one tortuous defense of the ms. reading² and a spate of new conjectures and revivals of older emendations. Coxon himself revived Heyne's πάντ' ἄ<v>τη<v> and translated the resulting phrase in his first edition as «through every stage straight onwards». His argument, based on Hom. *Il.* 8. 399–400, that ἄνην can have the requisite sense was decisively refuted by Renehan in his review.³ The new edition gives the slightly altered translation, «through every stage to meet her face to face». It is unclear whether this alteration is motivated by Renehan's criticisms since there is no reference to his review and since the relevant portion of Coxon's commentary is essentially unchanged. In any case, not only Renehan but Alexander Mourelatos and James Lesher⁴ as well have defended πάντ' ἄ<σ>τη as a straightforward supplement to the reading in N. The topographical details of the poem make it easily understandable why this should be what Parmenides wrote.

The more important discovery, stemming from Leonardo Tarán's research on the textual tradition of Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, that τὸ νοεῖν is the unanimous manuscript reading at fr. 6. 1, although recorded in Coxon's apparatus, fails to receive due consideration. While Tarán did not publish his results until the year after Coxon's first edition,⁵ Nestor-Luis Cordero had reported as early as 1979 his discovery that τε νοεῖν was merely a conjecture by Karsten that had been printed in Diels's 1897 edition of Simplicius's commentary and had then entered 'Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker' with no indication in the apparatus of the unanimous reading of the manuscripts.⁶ Tarán was correct in concluding that there is no reason to emend the text here and that constricts (such as Diels's and Coxon's) that understand τό earlier in the verse as the epic pronoun are rendered impossible or highly unlikely on textual grounds. Unfortunately, there is no sign in this revised edition that Coxon's further reflections extended to an appreciation of the importance of Tarán's work on Simplicius for establishing the text of Parmenides. In similar fashion, no reference is made to the important alternatives for supplementing the lacuna at the end of fr. 6. 3 advanced by Cordero and Alexander Nehamas, recognizing the problems with Diels's supplement <εἶργω> based upon the presumed analogy with εἶργε νόημα at fr. 7. 2. Although working independently, their conclusions proved

¹ Renehan 1992: 399–400.

² H. Tarrant, *Parmenides B1. 3: Text, context, and interpretation*, *Antichthon*, 10 (1976): 1–10.

³ Renehan 1992: 401.

⁴ J. Lesher, *The significance of κατὰ πάντ' ἄ<σ>τη in Parmenides fr. 1. 3*, *Ancient Philosophy*, 14: 1–20. A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1970): 22 nn. 31–2.

⁵ L. Tarán, *The text of Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, in I. Hadot (ed.), *Simplicius: Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa survie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987): 253–4.

⁶ N.-L. Cordero, *Les deux chemins de Parménide dans les fragments 6 et 7*, *Phronesis*, 24 (1979): 1 and 24¹. Cordero would subsequently accept this unanimous manuscript reading in his edition; see Cordero 1984: 110¹.

strikingly similar, with Cordero proposing <ᾠρξει> and consequently preferring the minority reading τ' rather than σ' earlier in the verse, and Nehamas proposing <ᾠρξω> and understanding σ' as an elision of σοι.¹ These proposals are central to the two-path readings of Parmenides that have gained some prominence in recent years and thus merit due mention and consideration.

The most substantial revisions by Coxon represented in this new edition are to be found in his commentary on fr. 8. 34–41. He now translates fr. 8. 35–6a as «for not without Being, when predications have been asserted of it, will you find the cause so as to conceive of it» rather than «for not without Being, when one thing has been said of another, will you find conceiving» as in the first edition. This is no improvement and is hardly made acceptable by the tortured grammatical construal proposed in the new paragraphs on these two lines in the commentary. Coxon's continued struggles to make sense of this passage might have been alleviated had he taken account of the most important advance in Parmenidean textual criticism in recent years, namely, Theodor Ebert's convincing demonstration that the block of text comprising fr. 8. 34–41 at some point in the transmission suffered transposition from its original position following fr. 8. 52.² Recognizing the transposition and restoring these verses to their proper position resolves numerous minor difficulties, allows Parmenides' demonstration of the attributes of τὸ εἶν to proceed uninterruptedly in accordance with its initial program in fr. 8. 3–4, and makes plain once more the function of fr. 8. 34–41 as part of the transition from this demonstration to the goddess's cosmology. No responsible editor can ignore Ebert's proposal. One would like to know what Coxon made of it.

If Coxon's text of the Parmenidean fragments cannot be regarded as definitive, his edition has nevertheless contributed more to a better understanding of the text than virtually any other work in the last half century. Now that most of his proposed alterations have been digested by the scholarly community, the continuing utility of his edition resides primarily in the wealth of comparanda and testimonia it provides. All students of Presocratic philosophy should be grateful that Richard McKirahan and Parmenides Publishing have done such a fine job in making once again available this seminal resource and in updating it with some of the continued musings of one of Parmenides' most singular devotees.

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Simon Hornblower: *A Commentary on Thucydides. Volume III. Books 5.25–8.109.* Oxford: Oxford UP 2008. XIX, 1107 S. 1 Abb. 170 £.

Siebzehn Jahre nach dem Erscheinen des 1. Bandes (*A Commentary on Thucydides. Volume I: Books 1–3, Oxford 1991; Band 2: A Commentary on Thucydi-*

¹ Cordero 1979: 21–4, and 1984: 168–75 (esp. 174). Nehamas, *On Parmenides' three ways of inquiry*, *Deucalion*, 33/4 (1981): 104–5.

² *Wo beginnt der Weg der Doxa? Eine Textumstellung im Fragment 8 des Parmenides*, *Phronesis*, 34 (1989): 121–38.