

Presocratics

Parmenides

# Introduction

- Issues among Presocratics studied so far:  
**change vs. permanence.**

# Introduction

- Milesians looked for a permanent reality underlying change.
- They thought that change was real, but could be understood only in terms of something permanent.
- Heraclitus found change itself to be the only thing that was permanent. The search for a permanent material substratum is illusory.

# Eleatics

- The Eleatics (the philosophers from Elea – near Naples, Italy) defended the unity and stability of the universe.
- Their leader was Parmenides.

# Parmenides Introduction

- Parmenides was a native of Elea, a Greek city in southern Italy. Born about 515-510 BCE.
- Main work: a poem (*The Way of Truth* or *On Nature*) is in two main parts. 154 lines of this poem have survived, almost all of this is from the first part. (Probably 90% of the first part has survived.)

# Introduction

- The two parts of the poem correspond to what Parmenides called “the two ways.”
- The Way of Truth and The Way of Subjectivity

# Introduction

- Parmenides represents a turning point in the history of western philosophy: he denies the reality of change and views it's the notion of change as something incoherent.

# Parmenides

- ARGUMENT not OBSERVATION
  - Note that Parmenides does not makes this claim on the basis of observation as the *phusikoi* would have. Instead, it's the conclusion of a **strictly deductive argument.**

# Deductive Argument

- An argument is a statement(s) offered in support of some other statement.
- Deductively valid: The conclusion must follow from the premise. 100%
- Given the premises (i.e., *supposing* the premises to be true), there is no way for the conclusion to be false.

# Deductive Argument

- Welfare Queen

1. All Black women are “welfare queens”.
2. Prof. Pam is a Black woman.
3. Therefore, ...

# Deductive Argument

- Welfare Queen

Prof. Pam is a Welfare Queen.

# Parmenides

- The Conclusion Parmenides reaches:
- Parmenides holds that there is no coming into existence, or ceasing to exist.
- Everything that exists is **permanent, ungenerated, indestructible, and unchanging.**

# Parmenides

- Some scholars believe Parmenides even goes so far as to deny *plurality*. Here Parmenides would be denying that there is more than one thing and would be maintaining that only one thing exists.