

Parmenides

The Argument

# The argument

1. If something is inquired into, i.e., thought about, then either: (a) it exists, or (b) it does not exist.
2. Alternative (1b) is impossible (“completely unlearnable”).
3. [Here’s the argument in support of premise (2).]  
For it is impossible to think about (“know”) or speak about what does not exist.  
[So far, (3) constitutes a rejection of (1b)]

# The argument

4. For the things that can be thought about are the same as the things that can exist .
5. Anything that can exist and can be thought about must exist; for it *can* exist, and nothing (i.e., what does not exist) cannot exist.
6. Therefore, only (1a), the first alternative, is possible: if something can be thought about, then it actually exists.

# Parmenides

Four Key Conclusions

# Parmenides

- From his main thesis, that **it is impossible to think or talk about what does not exist**, Parmenides arrives at the following four conclusions:

# Parmenides

- There is no coming into existence or ceasing to exist.
- There is no alteration or change.
- There is no movement.
- There is no plurality.

# Parmenides

*1. There is no coming into existence or ceasing to exist.*

- Suppose you say that something,  $x$ , comes into existence. That means that you are committed to saying that there was a time when  $x$  did not exist. So you are committed to talking about what does not exist. But, yo! Given what's already been argued you can't do that.

# Parmenides

*1. There is no coming into existence or ceasing to exist.*

- Thus it makes no sense to say that anything comes into existence. (This line of reasoning works for making the argument for the impossibility of ceasing to exist.)

# Parmenides

*1. There is no coming into existence or ceasing to exist.*

- Because there can be no coming **into** existence or going **out of** existence, there could be no temporal differences, i.e., differences between past, present, and future. (See frag. 8)
- *Nor was it ever nor will it be, since it is now, all together, one, continuous. ... it must either fully be or not.*