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Much Ado About 'Nothing': μηδέν and τὸ μὴ εἶν in Parmenides

K.R. Sanders

I

It is, to my knowledge, a universally accepted assumption among temporary commentators that μηδέν, 'nothing', and τὸ μὴ εἶν, 'not', function as synonyms in Parmenides' poem.¹ In this paper I argue primarily on the central role this supposed semantic equivalence plays in arguments supporting an emendation in line 12 of fragment 1. Despite this scholarly unanimity regarding the synonymy

1 Cf. Karl Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt 1959), 39-42; Leonardo Tarán, *Parmenides: Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* [Parmenides] (Princeton 1971), 119; Montgomery Furth, 'Elements of Eleatic Ontology', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6 (1968), 119; A.P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* [Route of Parmenides], 100-2; G.E.L. Owen, 'Plato on Not-Being', in Gregory Vlastos, *Collection of Critical Essays I, Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Garden City 1973), 225-6; Michael C. Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Washington 1991), 131; David Furley, 'Notes on Parmenides' ['Notes'], in E.N. Lee, A.F. Long, and R.M. Rorty, eds., *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy* (Ithaca 1973), 12-14; Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* [Presocratic] (London 1982), 166; David Gallop, *Parmenides of Elea* [Parmenides] (Toronto 1984), 23-8; Scott Austin, *Parmenides: Being, Beauty, and Truth* [Parmenides] (New Haven 1986), 97; A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* [Parmenides] (Assen 1986), 198-200; Richard J. Ketchum, 'Parmenides on Truth and Reality' ['Parmenides'], *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 20 (1990), 171-3 and 174-5; McKirahan, Jr., *Philosophy Before Socrates* (Indianapolis 1994), 167; and Gregory Vlastos, *The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought* (Cambridge 1998), 76-7.

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