



Department of Philosophy

presents

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YMCA 401



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Mysticism and Metaphysics in Parmenides

Parmenides of Elea (5th c. B.C.E.) is one of the founders of Western science and philosophy. His contributions to the development of metaphysical reasoning and natural science are pivotal. One of the most debated issues of interpreting his philosophy, however, is raised by the fact that he presents his tenets in the form of divine revelation from a goddess. In most interpretations the significance of this motif is explained away as a rhetorical or didactic device external to the philosophy. Others argue, however, that the motif is to be taken “literally”, that is to say, we must assume that Parmenides had some such experience and concluded that human knowledge is impossible without supernatural aid. This presentation addresses the issue of the compatibility of the motif of revelation with Parmenides’ argumentative rigour and argues that a genuine revelatory experience lying behind his poem is not a rhetorical device serving as an introduction into his philosophy, but constitutes the experiential ground on which his metaphysical and cosmological tenets rest. However, this does not diminish the pivotal role of Parmenides as one of the founders of Western science and philosophy, on the contrary, attests to the economy, consistency and cogency of his thought.

