

Articles

On the Alleged Incorporeality of What Is in Melissus

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ὅτι γὰρ ἀσώματον εἶναι βούλεται τὸ ὄν, ἐδήλωσεν εἰπὼν· 'εἰ μὲν οὖν εἴη, δεῖ αὐτὸ ἐν εἶναι· ἐν δ' ἐὸν δεῖ αὐτὸ σῶμα μὴ ἔχειν. εἰ δὲ ἔχοι πάχος, ἔχοι ἂν μέρη, καὶ οὐκέτι ἐν εἴη'
(Melissus DK 30B9)

...for that he intends what is to be incorporeal, he made clear when he said: 'Therefore if it is, it must be one; and being one, it must not have body. But if it had thickness, it would have parts and would no longer be one.'

This fragment presents a notorious problem in that its indication that Melissus conceived of what is as incorporeal appears to conflict with his claims that what is is unlimited in extension (τὸ μέγεθος ἄπειρον, DK 30B3) and that it is full (πλέων) and without any admixture of void (DK 30B7.7-10). How can an infinitely extended, solid mass be incorporeal? A variety of ways to resolve this *prima facie* inconsistency within Melissus's thought have been proposed. A systematic survey of the interpretative options on offer will show that, despite the high degree of scholarly ingenuity brought to bear on the problem, a convincing resolution has yet to be found.¹ I shall then propose a solution to this long-standing crux that satisfies the conditions upon a successful interpretation that will emerge in the course of the survey.

Previous proposals fall into two main classes, depending on whether the contradiction between DK 30B9 and fragments 30B3 and 30B7.7-10 is judged to be real and insuperable, or whether the appearance of contradiction is maintained to be merely superficial. Some who suppose the contradiction insuperable resort to questioning the status of DK 30B9 as a genuine fragment of Melissus.² In support of this option, it is sometimes pointed out that neither the paraphrase of Melissus's argument in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia* nor that reproduced by Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (*in Ph.* 103.13-104.15) gives any hint of Melissus having conceived of what is as incorporeal and, furthermore, that Aristotle himself clearly supposes Melissan Being to be corporeal when he asserts that Melissus had a notion of what is one 'in respect of matter' (κατὰ τὴν ὕλην, *Meta.* i 5.986b20; cf. Alex.Aphr. *in Metaph.* 43.7-9). While these points should be kept in mind, the difficulty with

¹ For exhaustive reportage of proposals prior to 1970, see Reale 1970, ch. 7.

² So Chiapelli 1889, 411-413; Tannery 1891, repr. in Tannery 1930, 406-410, as Appendix III; Albertelli 1939, 242.

the proposal to reject DK 30B9 outright is that it requires one to explain how Simplicius came to be so confused as to introduce the problematic text as something Melissus himself actually said. One might want to claim that Simplicius is similarly confused about the status of the anonymous paraphrase of Melissus's deduction he presents in his commentary on the *Physics*. However, nothing in Simplicius's introduction of the paraphrase indicates that he takes it to be something Melissus actually said. Simplicius's words of introduction there are perfectly consistent with his having taken the paraphrase to be what it in fact is, namely, a later representation of Melissus's principal chain of reasoning.³ By contrast, Simplicius's introduction of DK 30B9 with the phrase, ἐδήλωσεν εἰπὼν (*in Ph.* 110.1), indicates much more clearly that what follows is something Melissus actually said and is in keeping with the ways in which he introduces other verbatim quotations from Melissus's treatise.⁴ It is preferable, therefore, to accept what follows ἐδήλωσεν εἰπὼν as a genuine bit of Melissus and to avoid unnecessarily accusing Simplicius of confusion.

Thus among those who accept that DK 30B9 contradicts Melissus's assertions elsewhere regarding the nature of what is, the more widely endorsed option has been to accept the fragment's authenticity while denying that its subject is in fact Melissus's One Being. This fragment, so the suggestion goes, must have originally featured in a dialectical context where Melissus, as his fellow Eleatic Zeno had done, targeted for criticism each of the individual ones of some pluralist hypothesis.⁵ The main problem with this suggestion is that it makes Melissus blind to the force of his own argument, since it must be admitted that he failed to notice that his criticism of the pluralist ones could equally well be directed against his own One Being. It also stretches the bounds of plausibility to imagine that Simplicius, who had access to a copy of Melissus's treatise, would have mistakenly taken the words he quotes from it in this instance to refer to Melissus's One Being if, as advocates of this option sometimes suggest, it actually featured in the polemical portion of that treatise represented for us by DK 30B8. One

³ Simp. *in Ph.* 103.13-15: Νῦν δὲ τὸν Μελίσσου λόγον ἴδωμεν, πρὸς ὃν πρότερον ὑπαντᾷ. τοῖς γὰρ τῶν φυσικῶν ἀξιωμασι χρησόμενος ὁ Μέλισσος περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς ἄρχεται τοῦ συγγράμματος οὕτως. Pace Reale's claim that ἄρχεται τοῦ συγγράμματος οὕτως indicates that the first sentence of the paraphrase is a new fragment of Melissus (see Reale 1970, 34-45, 368-369), this introductory phrase is not the equivalent of γράφει δὲ οὕτως at *in Ph.* 162.24 introducing DK 30B1; Simplicius is here merely indicating that Melissus's chain of deductions began with the axiomatic principle that no thing either comes to be from or perishes into nothing (a point which, note, does not pick out the actual first sentence of the paraphrase or anything else in what immediately follows except what already corresponds to DK 30B1).

⁴ Cf. φησὶ at *in Ph.* 29.22 and λέγει δὲ ταῦτα οὕτως ὁ Μέλισσος at *in Ph.* 109.19-20, introducing DK 30B2; σαφὲς πεποίηκεν εἰπὼν at *in Ph.* 109.31, introducing DK 30B3; εἰπὼν at *in Ph.* 110.3, introducing DK 30B4; λέγει δὲ Μέλισσος at *in Cael.* 557.16, introducing DK 30B6.

⁵ So, essentially, Bäumer 1890, 59n6; Zeller 1923, 770-771 n2; Burnet 1930, 327, where the particular target is identified as the ultimate units of the Pythagoreans; Ross 1924, 153 *ad Arist. Metaph.* 986b20; Nestle 1931, 531; Booth 1958; Barnes 1982, 227-228. M. Schofield at KRS, 401, inclines towards this option in his revision of Raven's previous entry on Melissus, though he also expresses a certain sympathy for the option of rejecting the fragment's authenticity altogether.

would prefer a solution to the problem that does not make Melissus out to be so imperceptive or Simplicius so inept.

The second class of proposals comprises the variety of attempts to show that Melissus's claims regarding the nature of what is in DK 30B3, 30B7.7-10, and 30B9 can, despite their superficial air of contradiction, be seen to be mutually consistent if only they are properly understood. The forerunner of proposals of this type is Simplicius's own suggestion (*in Ph.* 109.32ff.) that the phrase, τὸ μέγεθος ἄπειρον (DK 30B3), should be understood as indicating the infinite greatness of what is's existence rather than its unlimited extension, given that the latter understanding would, according to Simplicius, conflict not only with Melissus's declaration that what is is incorporeal but also with his conception of it as indivisible (cf. DK 30B10). A modern analogue of Simplicius's proposal that μέγεθος meant for Melissus something other than spatial extension may be found in the suggestion of Vlastos 1953, 34-35 that the term should be understood as indicating temporal, rather than spatial, extension or continuity (cf. van Loenen 1959, 155n55, 156-158, and 175). As Furley 1967, 60 has properly pointed out, however, this interpretation is 'very difficult to maintain without further evidence that "μέγεθος" can have this sense' (see also KR 300n2; Booth 1958, 63-64; Guthrie 1965, 110n2; Reale 1970, 197-198).

Another means of attempting to demonstrate the ultimate consistency of Melissus's claims has been to suggest that, *pace* Simplicius, Melissus had not yet attained to the concept of fully incorporeal, non-spatial existence and that DK 30B9 should be understood as moving towards such a conception rather than as a full-blown articulation of it. The suggestion, essentially, is that the corporeal/incorporeal distinction is a false dichotomy and that Melissus's conception of what is lies somewhere in between, as no longer simply corporeal nor yet fully incorporeal but at a stage along the gradual transition from one conception to the other. The main inspiration for this line of interpretation is an influential study, Gomperz 1932, which sought to challenge the *communis opinio* that Plato was the first Greek thinker to employ the term ἄσώματος and undeniably to possess the concept of incorporeal existence, Melissus being one of those prior to Plato to whom Gomperz wanted to attribute a developing concept of incorporeality. He claimed that whereas σῶμα initially signified a corpse or lifeless body and soon thereafter also came to be used of the body of a living creature, in the latter part of the fifth century it came to be transferred by extension to lifeless objects as well, provided they possessed the properties of perceptibility and containment within definite spatial boundaries or limits. According to Gomperz, then, Melissus's claim that what is has no σῶμα is to be understood as a denial that what is has body in this latter sense, the operative notion of incorporeality for him supposedly being 'Feinstofflichkeit' rather than the complete lack of a physical form or nature.

More recently, however, Renehan 1980, especially 119-125 has reasserted the *communis opinio* Gomperz sought to overthrow by demonstrating that his claims to have found evidence for the use of ἄσώματος in the fifth and even sixth cen-

tury B.C. do not withstand scrutiny and that his view that *σῶμα* could have the requisite sense at the time Melissus was writing is equally doubtful.⁶ Even Guthrie 1965, 111n2, generally sympathetic to Gomperz, admits that there is no unmistakable evidence for *σῶμα* having been used of lifeless objects in the fifth century. Renehan's study leads him to conclude that "[i]n the fifth century *σῶμα* still meant primarily what it had always meant, namely the body of an organic being, living or dead. By the fourth century *σῶμα* appears to have been capable of much the same transferred meanings as the English word "body".⁷ I believe that this is correct, so that when Melissus said that what is has no *σῶμα*, he meant that it does not have a body of the type possessed by a person or animal, not that it has no bodily or physical nature whatsoever. It does seem that in the mid-fifth century the concept of *σῶμα* had not attained the degree of abstraction sufficient for Melissus's statement to amount to an assertion of the incorporeality of what is. But we do not actually have to go so far as to assert categorically that *σῶμα* was not or could not have been used in the more general or abstract sense at the time Melissus was writing. For a host of obvious reasons, we should be wary of overconfidence in our ability to isolate the precise moment of such semantic shifts as the one at issue. Fortunately, however, in the present instance we need only point out that the more particular sense of *σῶμα* was definitely available to Melissus and that, as will soon become apparent, understanding *σῶμα* in DK 30B9 in this sense makes possible an intelligible and consistent interpretation of the text. Melissus would thus seem to have been intent on rejecting any anthropomorphic conception of what is (so Sedley 1998, 295 and Sedley 1999, 129-130). This fits well with the denial in DK 30B7.4-6 that what is suffers pain or distress; it also places Melissus in a recognizably Eleatic tradition going back to Xenophanes, who had declared his one god to be unlike mortals in body or *δέμῳ*, a near synonym of *σῶμα* (DK 21B23.2).

The more problematic claim in DK 30B9 is that what is has no *πάχος*. If the term is being used here in its ordinary sense of 'thickness', the resulting claim would appear impossible to reconcile with Melissus's assertion in DK 30B3 that what is is unlimited in extension (taking *μέγεθος* in its natural sense). What has no thickness can hardly be extended in three dimensions. Gomperz therefore suggested that Melissus could have employed *πάχος* in the sense of 'density' or 'compactness' ('Dichte' rather than 'Dicke'), that is, in a sense more closely

⁶ Renehan ably discusses the three highly dubious sources on which Gomperz based his claim regarding the early use of *ἀσώματος* (Anaximenes DK 13B3 = Olymp. Alch. [4th c. A.D.?] *De arte sacra* 25, p. 83.7ff. Berthelot, already classified 'Gefälschtes' by Diels and Kranz; Philolaus DK 44B22 = Claud. Mam. [5th c. A.D.] *De statu animae* 2.7, p. 129.12ff. Engelbrecht, already classified as 'Unechtes' by Diels and Kranz; and 'Orpheus' DK 1B13 = Dam. *Pr.* 123 bis, fr. 54 Kern, though the attribution of this text to the Orphic theology of Hieronymus/Hellankos indicates a later date, in the 3rd or 2nd c. B.C.).

⁷ Renehan 1980, 118, rightly intending to contradict not only Gomperz's claim that the term *σῶμα* had by Melissus's day acquired the requisite degree of abstraction but also the common assertion that *σῶμα* in Homer always means 'corpse' or 'dead body', on which point cf. West 1978, *ad* Hes. *Op.* 540, and Renehan 1979.

related to the cognate verb *πήγνυμι*.⁸ If this were in fact what Melissus meant, however, he had a perfectly good word available for denoting this concept, namely *πυκνόν*, which he himself employs elsewhere (DK 30B7.8); and Gomperz in fact fails to produce any contemporary passages where *πάχος* is employed in the desired sense.⁹ Melissus's contemporary, Zeno, in fact employs *πάχος* as a virtual synonym of *μέγεθος* (DK 29B1), a fact which only reinforces the extreme difficulty of attempting to reconcile Melissus's claim in DK 30B9 that what is has no *πάχος* with the claim in DK 30B3 that it is unlimited in *μέγεθος*. Nonetheless, variations on this line of interpretation continued to be advanced. According to one version, once advocated by Furley, what is in Melissus is both unlimited in *μέγεθος* or spatial extension and has no *σῶμα*, where this is to be understood in the sense of 'solidity', and no *πάχος*, where this is to be understood in the sense of 'bulk'.¹⁰ Apart from the worries one might well have about whether *σῶμα* can legitimately be understood in the desired sense, it is natural to wonder *what* exactly it is that is spatially extended and yet has no bulk or solidity. There does seem to be a possible candidate, namely *space itself*; and Furley has, in fact, more recently developed an interpretation of DK 30B9 somewhat along this line, suggesting that what is on Melissus's conception 'is something close to the mysterious third being in Plato's *Timaeus*—the *ὑποδοχή*, the Receiver, the base for the things that come into being and pass away'.¹¹ But developing an interpretation in this direction purchases consistency between DK 30B3 and 30B9 at the cost of neglecting the natural sense of Melissus's claims in DK 30B7.7-10 that what is is *πλέων* or 'full' and with no admixture of void. Furley is forced into suggesting that for Melissus 'the fullness of reality was not

⁸ Gomperz 1932, 159. His own inspiration was his father's suggestion that Melissus would not have identified occupancy of space ('Raumerfüllung') with corporeality ('Körperlichkeit'). So Gomperz 1911, 154; cf. Gilbert 1911, 193n2.

⁹ Guthrie 1965, 112, in advocating the Gomperz-family interpretation, optimistically suggests that '[p]achos, which one might translate "palpable density," evidently suggested to Melissus both the composite and the sensible, and so was ruled out as an attribute of the one Being. Being is "full," and infinitely extended in space, but the notion of density or rarity cannot be applied to it: "there cannot be dense and rare" (fr. 7.8); Guthrie too, however, fails to adduce any relevant parallels for the supposed use of *πάχος* in this sense.

¹⁰ Furley 1967, 61. As antecedents of his position, Furley cites Raven in KR, 303, and Owen 1960, 101. A similar position is endorsed and developed by Curd 1993, 16-19. Along somewhat different lines, Reale 1970, 223-224, suggests that *πάχος* should be understood in its usual sense of 'spessore', or 'thickness', and accordingly advocates understanding DK 30B9 as Melissus's denial of all dimensionality to what is; as a result, Reale tortures the sense of DK 30B3 to make it consistent with this notion: 'Melisso parla di *μέγεθος* solo in connessione con *ἄπειρον* (*μέγεθος ἄπειρον*), e l'*ἄπειρον* annulla tutte le "dimensioni"'. This claim, however, seems patently false.

¹¹ Furley 1989, 120. Furley intends this to be a distinct option from identifying Melissus's Being with either empty physical space or geometrical space. An explicit identification of Melissus's Being with space is, however, argued for by Merrill 1998, 409-416. Cf. Raven in KR, 304, where empty space is suggested as the only imaginable candidate for what can simultaneously be infinite in extent and yet possess neither body nor bulk, though it remains somewhat unclear whether Raven means to attribute this identification to Melissus.

hardness but likeness'.¹² This is a move that smacks of desperation. It in fact seems that all attempts on offer purporting to show that Melissus's claims in DK 30B3, 30B7.7-10, and 30B9 can be consistently interpreted resort to twisting the sense of one or more of the key terms in these fragments or fostering on them an otherwise anachronistic interpretation. One would prefer a solution that has Melissus employing his terms according to the natural understanding of his day.

There is a readily available and relatively straightforward solution to this long-standing problem that satisfies the conditions upon a successful interpretation determined by the foregoing review of the interpretative options on offer. It is necessary, however, to look beyond Diels and Kranz to the sources in Simplicius for what entered their edition as 30B9. The 'fragment' printed in their collection is actually a pastiche of two passages:

(a) Simp. *in Ph.* 87.5-7: ἀδιαίρετον γὰρ ὄν τὸ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐν ὄν οὔτε πεπερασμένον οὔτε ἄπειρον ὡς σῶμα ἔσται· καὶ γὰρ καὶ ὁ Παρμενίδης τὰ σώματα ἐν τοῖς δοξαστοῖς τίθησι, καὶ ὁ Μέλισσος ἐν ἑόν, φησί, δεῖ αὐτὸ σῶμα μὴ ἔχειν. εἰ δὲ ἔχοι πάχος, ἔχοι ἂν μῦρια καὶ οὐκέτι ἐν εἴη.

(b) Simp. *in Ph.* 109.34-110.2: ὅτι γὰρ ἀσώματον εἶναι βούλεται τὸ ὄν, ἐδήλωσεν εἰπὼν εἰ μὲν οὖν¹³ εἴη, δεῖ αὐτὸ ἐν εἶναι· ἐν δὲ ὄν δεῖ αὐτὸ σῶμα μὴ ἔχειν.

The critical question is how much of this can properly be ascribed to Melissus.¹⁴ The portions of the two passages underlined correspond almost verbatim and should be regarded as authentic, although there is some initial uncertainty as to whether Melissus originally wrote ἐν ἑόν or ἐν δ' ἑόν. The decision on this point depends in part on whether the preceding clause in (b) should be regarded as quotation or paraphrase. Its similarity to the first clause in DK 30B6—εἰ γὰρ (ἄπειρον)¹⁵ εἴη, ἐν εἴη ἄν—might suggest the latter. But οὖν clearly signals a conclusion, and Melissus is in fact fond of articulating his unfolding argument via a form of ring composition wherein he first states a *demonstrandum*, presents his argument for the announced thesis, and then restates the *demonstrandum* in the form of an established conclusion before proceeding to his next point. It thus seems safe to accept the clause in question as genuine Melissus, as εἰπὼν before it already suggests one should do, and consequently ἐν δ' ἑόν rather than ἐν ἑόν at the beginning of the next clause.

The final sentence in (a), however, is less secure. This is the truly problematic

¹² Furley 1989, 120. Similarly, Curd 1993, 18-19, apparently unaware of Furley's suggestion; Merrill 1998, 411-412.

¹³ οὖν EF: ὄν aD. ὄν is a natural corruption of οὖν, the *lectio difficilior*, and Melissus himself would have written ἑόν or, more likely, τὸ ἑόν rather than ὄν.

¹⁴ Although Reale 1970 prints the two reports from Simplicius separately, at no point does Reale properly consider the problems with respect to the extent of the quotation in these reports but instead appears simply to rely upon Diels and Kranz's reconstruction of the fragment.

¹⁵ <ἄπειρον> is Burnet's plausible supplement based on the corresponding portion of the anonymous paraphrase in Simplicius.

portion of DK 30B9, given the apparent impossibility of interpreting this claim consistently with the claims in DK 30B3 (that what is is unlimited in μέγεθος) and 30B7.7-10 (that what is is full and with no admixture of void) without doing violence to the natural sense of at least one of these claims. By contrast, Melissus's assertion that what is does not have a σῶμα *can* be interpreted consistently with these claims if it is understood as a rejection of any anthropo- or zoomorphic conception of what is, which is the interpretation that results from understanding the key term σῶμα in the sense in which Melissus would most likely have employed it. Simplicius, however, anachronistically though not surprisingly, understood δεῖ αὐτὸ σῶμα μὴ ἔχειν to mean that what is has no bodily or material existence whatsoever, i.e., that it is properly incorporeal or ἀσώματον; this anachronism in turn led him to a similarly anachronistic and distortive interpretation of Melissus's claim that what is is unlimited in μέγεθος.

The pastiche of the two passages printed in Diels and Kranz's edition as DK 30B9 obscures the important fact that the final sentence of (a) does not occur in (b). There are a number of problems with this sentence, in addition to those already indicated, that call into question its status as genuinely Melissan. First, accepting it as authentic requires that σῶμα and πάχος be treated as virtual synonyms; and although this equivalence would have been natural enough for Simplicius or for anyone else for whom σῶμα had come to denote the abstract concept of body in general rather than the more particular concept of *a* human or animal body, it would not have been so at the time Melissus was writing. Second, M. Schofield is correct to point out that the sentence in question would neatly supply an argument required for the first limb of Zeno's antinomy to the effect that if there are many things, they must be both so small as to have no magnitude and so large as to be unlimited in magnitude.¹⁶ Simplicius, our source for the antinomy, does not record Zeno's actual proof in the first limb but merely indicates that he inferred that each of the many, being the same as itself and one, has no magnitude (*in Ph.* 139.18-19). The argument would apparently have run: each of the many must be the same as itself and one, but if any of the many were to have magnitude or thickness, they would have parts and would no longer be one; therefore, none of the many can have magnitude or thickness. The problematic sentence under inspection looks suspiciously like the second step in this argument.

A passage from the portion of the *MXG* devoted to Gorgias appears to confirm the suggestion that the sentence derives from Zeno. In the first major section of his treatise, 'On Nature or On What Is Not', Gorgias mounted a broad-ranging attack on earlier attempts to isolate some set of entities that are fundamental to the being of all other entities. Based on a classification of the possibilities—according to which these purportedly fundamental entities must be either many or one, either generated or ungenerated, and (apparently) either movable or unmovable—he presented arguments intended to reduce to absurdity each suc-

¹⁶ Schofield in KRS, 268 and 401n1; cf. Booth 1958, 62.

cessive possibility. Unfortunately, the section of the *MXG* reporting Gorgias's arguments against what is being either one or many is quite corrupt. The following translation follows T. Buchheim's reconstruction: 'Furthermore, if something is, it is, he says, either one or many. But if neither one nor many, nothing would be. And one [it could not be] because [what is truly one] would be incorporeal [insofar as it has no magnitude; this he establishes] via the argument of Zeno. But if there is [not] one, [then there is nothing. For without there being one,] neither [is there] many. But if it is neither [one] nor many, it is nothing' (*MXG* 979b36-980a2). It is striking that Gorgias draws upon *Zeno* for the inference that what is truly one would be incorporeal, and that he does so apparently on the basis of the same principle represented by the problematic end of (a). It is all the more striking given that the *MXG* shows Gorgias to have been thoroughly familiar with Melissus, both adapting his arguments and reflecting the specifically Melissan rather than Parmenidean conception of what is when arguing against the possibility that it is ungenerated. One can hardly understand why Gorgias had to go to Zeno for the inference from the singularity of what is to its incorporeality if this inference did in fact figure in Melissus.

Finally, attention to the context of the quotation from Melissus in (a) suggests that Simplicius is employing the Zenonian premise by way of explicating the genuinely Melissan claim that what is has no body in order to secure the equivalence of unity and incorporeality consistent with his view that Melissus's One Being was not a physical principle or entity but instead 'what really is' (τὸ ὄντως ὄν), namely, the intelligible first principle from which all else proceeds (cf., e.g., *in Ph.* 29.5-7, 38.11-13). In so doing, however, Simplicius attributes to Melissus a line of thought to which other evidence suggests he did not in fact subscribe. In the passage with which we are concerned, Simplicius is making the particular point that the Eleatics' One Being, since it is indivisible, is neither limited nor unlimited in the sense in which these terms apply to body (*in Ph.* 87.4-5). According to Simplicius, as we have seen, Melissus's declaration that what (really) is is unlimited should not be understood as an indication of its infinite physical extension but instead of the inexhaustibility of its substance and the infinity of its power (*in Ph.* 29.19-21). To support his reading according to which Melissus's One Being is not unlimited in a physical sense, Simplicius cites his assertion that, being one, what is must not have a σῶμα or body. Then, by way of explication, he supplies the middle term that he already sees as the link between unity and incorporeality, namely, indivisibility. True unity requires indivisibility, but every body is divisible; therefore, no body can be truly one.

It is true that Melissus, like Parmenides, denied that what is is divisible. But DK 30B10—εἰ γὰρ διήρηται τὸ ἐόν, κινεῖται· κινούμενον δὲ οὐκ ἂν εἴη—indicates that he did so not on the grounds that what is truly one can have no parts, as Simplicius suggests he should have done, but instead on the grounds that division is a type of change, which has already been ruled out in DK 30B7.1-2 on the grounds that any change involves a differentiation in the state of what is over time and as such is incompatible with the requirement that it be one and all alike

(DK 30B7.1-2). It is significant in this context that the *MXG* author, in raising the objection against Melissus that an unlimited body could not in fact be one as he claims, appeals explicitly to Zeno for the point that such an entity would have many parts, while at the same time recognizing that for Melissus himself internal differentiation or dissimilarity was all that needed to be denied in maintaining the unity of what is (*MXG* 2.976a21-28).

There is every good reason, therefore, to suppose that Simplicius's quotation in (a) extends only through ...μὴ ἔχειν. The following sentence should not be regarded as either quotation or paraphrase of anything Melissus himself wrote. DK 30B9 should thus be amended to read:

ὅτι γὰρ ἀσώματον εἶναι βούλεται τὸ ὄν, ἐδήλωσεν εἰπὼν· 'εἰ μὲν οὖν εἴη, δεῖ αὐτὸ ἐν εἶναι· ἐν δ' ἐὼν δεῖ αὐτὸ σῶμα μὴ ἔχειν.' εἰ δὲ ἔχοι πάχος, ἔχοι ἂν μόρια, καὶ οὐκέτι ἐν εἴη.
...for that he intends what is to be incorporeal, he made clear when he said: 'Therefore if it is, it must be one; and being one, it must not have a body.' But if it had thickness, it would have parts and would no longer be one.

This fragment would have a natural place in Melissus's treatise somewhere after DK 30B6 and before 30B7.

The convenience and authority of Diels and Kranz's collection sometimes make it seem unnecessary to return to the sources from which its reports of the fragmentary remains of Presocratic philosophy derive. This is particularly unfortunate in the present case, for the problem of the alleged incorporeality of what is in Melissus is largely the product of their error in gauging the extent of Simplicius's quotation of Melissus at *in Physica* 87.5-7. There is therefore no good reason to believe that Melissus conceived of what is as incorporeal, and we can accept at face value his declarations elsewhere to the effect that it is an infinitely extended, solid mass.¹⁷

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