The Aporetic Tradition in Ancient Philosophy

Edited by George Karamanolis and Vasilis Politis
Ancient philosophers from an otherwise diverse range of traditions were connected by their shared use of *aporia* – translated as ‘puzzlement rooted in conflicts of reasons’ – as a core tool in philosophical enquiry. The essays in this volume provide the first comprehensive study of aporetic methodology among numerous major figures and influential schools, including the Presocratics, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Academic sceptics, Pyrrhonian sceptics, Plotinus and Damascius. They explore the differences and similarities in these philosophers’ approaches to the source, structure and aim of *aporia*; their views on its function and value; and ideas about the proper means of generating such a state among thinkers who were often otherwise opposed in their overall philosophical orientation. Discussing issues of method, dialectic and knowledge, this volume will appeal to those interested in ancient philosophy and in philosophical enquiry more generally.

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Introduction

George Karamanolis and Vasilis Politis

What is an aporetic philosopher? It is hardly a philosopher distinguished by his or her mental condition of perplexity, puzzlement or confusion, much as this is what the term *aporia* signifies in its principal use in philosophy. We are all now and then subject to such a condition, but we do not all make use of it as do aporetic philosophers. *Aporia* signifies above all a certain state of mind, which it is as difficult to describe as it is easy to recognise when one is in it. Being in a state of *aporia* is a characteristic way of being perplexed, which philosophers have, from the beginning, used a variety of metaphors and images to describe. ‘It feels like being tied (intellectually tied, tied in one’s mind)’, is a famous Aristotelian image. ‘It is like being without means and without resource (intellectually, that is)’, is a common metaphor going back to an original everyday use of the term *aporos*, to mean “penurious” and “needy”. ‘It feels like being numb, numb in mind and tongue’, is a memorable Platonic image. ‘It is a state of speechlessness and inarticulateness’, is another Platonic description. ‘It feels like an unstable, vertiginous state in which things won’t stay fixed and are thoroughly shaken’, or ‘like being tempest-tossed’, are yet other Platonic metaphors. To conclude with what is perhaps the first philosophical image of *aporia*, ‘It is like being unable to reach through to a much-desired place’. This image goes back to another original everyday use of the term *aporon*, to mean ‘un-passable’, ‘un-traversable’. This image is immortalised by Heraclitus in a very early philosophical statement regarding *aporia*: ‘Unless one hopes for that which is not to be hoped for (*anelpiston*), one shall not find it (*ouk exeurēsei*). For it is hard to search for (*anexereunēton*) and to reach through to (*aporon*)’ (fragment DK18).

Is it distinctive of being an aporetic philosopher that one should take the generation of this mental condition to be a major part of doing philosophy? This, we believe, may justly be considered a basic mark of an aporetic
philosopher. It means that an aporetic philosopher is a person who self-consciously assigns a certain function and significance to this mental condition, *aporia*, if the condition is generated in a peculiar way and through a peculiar intellectual enquiry – that is, the search for wisdom and, in that sense, philosophy (*philosophia*). However much ancient philosophers may disagree about the character and nature of philosophy, its means and its ends, they are all, even relativists such as Protagoras, agreed that philosophy is an enquiry – and a supremely important enquiry – aspiring, whether confidently or not so confidently, to a supreme intellectual state.

What is it to generate this state of mind, *aporia*, in a peculiarly philosophical way and in general through intellectual enquiry? As the contributors to this volume will demonstrate, about each and all of our candidate aporetic philosophers, it is to think that there is something distinctive which this state of mind, *aporia*, is about and by which it is caused; and this object and cause of the state of *aporia* is a certain form or forms of question: a question that, in one way or another, presents an intellectual problem or difficulty. (We shall presently consider what forms this question may take, according to our candidate aporetic philosophers.) The question which is the object and cause of this mental state, *aporia*, is itself properly called an *aporia*. This, as the contributors show, means that there are two basic, and related, uses of, the term *aporia*: one to mean the state of mind, and another to mean the object and cause of this state of mind. The contributors will commonly distinguish between the two uses by referring to the first as the subjective use and to the second as the objective use. We may observe that to speak of an objective use of the term *aporia* is to mean that the state of mind, *aporia*, is object-directed, its ‘object’ being a certain form or forms of question. This means that the mental state of *aporia*, as understood by our candidate aporetic philosophers, is a cognitive state; cognitive in the sense of object-directed.

Our mark of an aporetic philosopher has the virtue of being flexible and allowing for a variety of ways of being aporetically disposed, depending on a variety of questions. These are questions that the contributors to this volume will take up in various and diverse ways. The following is a selection, without a claim to comprehensiveness or suggestion that each contributor is addressing but a single question: it is important to bear in mind that the volume is structured chronologically, not thematically, with each contributor addressing one or more philosophers and one or more works.
What is considered the proper intellectual means (singular or plural) of generating this mental state of aporia?

What is considered the place and the function of aporia in philosophical enquiry?

Is being in this state of aporia important only for philosophical enquiry, or also for enquiry in natural science?

Cannot the generation of this state of aporia just as much be used simply to trip up and confuse people?

What is considered the ethical benefits, or the ethical harms, of being in a state of aporia?

Is there something especially productive and creative in being in this state?

What is the relation between aporia-involving argument and dialectical, disputative, and in general refutative argument?

Is it necessary to go through being in this state of aporia if one aspires to knowledge?

Is being in this state of aporia reason to question that it is possible to attain knowledge?

Can the fact, or appearance, that the same thing has opposite qualities generate aporia? How?

What is the place of hypotheses in a method of aporia-inducing argument?

Can one be in this state of aporia about things that are familiar to us and that we take for granted in how we speak and think and act?

Is there a preferred means of getting out of the state of aporia?

If aporia is a troubled state to be in, is it necessary to get out of this state to attain intellectual tranquility, or is being in aporia compatible with tranquility?

Is the commitment to aporia, as a method of philosophical enquiry, compatible with a commitment to systematic philosophy and speculative theory?

May this state of aporia indicate that there are limits not only to what we can know but also to what we can think of and speak of?

The aim of the present collection of essays is to trace a continuous aporetic tradition through a millennium of philosophy in antiquity, from Heraclitus and Zeno, through Plato and Aristotle, and up to Plotinus and Damascius, and to examine different and potentially opposed ways of thinking that *aporia* occupies a major place in philosophical enquiry. The volume explores potentially shared commitments – relating especially to the source, the structure, and the aim of philosophical enquiry – of philosophers who may otherwise be wide apart in temper and convictions.

The topic of the present volume – the place of *aporia* in ancient philosophy – is quite novel, or as novel as a topic in ancient philosophy can be. Very useful groundwork has been done on the meaning and the uses of the term
aporia and its cognates, up to Aristotle. And considerable work has been done on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics Beta*, in which Aristotle gives a central place to *aporiai* and *aporia*-based argument. There has not been an attempt to trace the function that ancient philosophers assign to the state of *aporia*, or the proper means of generating this state, in philosophical or in scientific enquiry. Some of the lacunae that mark the scant and uneven attention to the topic to date are surprising, such as the lack of an investigation of the role of *aporia* in Pyrrhonian, or indeed in Academic, scepticism.

Such attention as the topic of the present volume has received is marked by some notable and questionable assumptions. First, there is a tendency to understand *aporia*-involving argument in Plato exclusively in terms of elenctic and refutative argument. But the equation of *aporia*-involving argument with elenctic or refutative argument is questionable—in Plato, in Aristotle, and in general. Secondly, this tendency has, it appears, stood in the way of recognising what it is that the New or Sceptical Academy was picking up on in Plato; namely, that argument based on an *aporia* can take the form of a two-sided question with apparently good reasons on both sides. Thirdly, there is a general and deep-set tendency to assume that an aporetic philosopher cannot at the same time be committed to systematic views and speculative theories: hence that we need to choose between thinking of a philosopher, such as Plato or Aristotle or Plotinus, as aporetic and thinking of them as ‘dogmatic’ (i.e. committed to *dogmata*, positive beliefs). But this assumption is open to question.

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1 See Motte and Rutten 2001; also Erler 1987.
2 See especially Madigan’s 1999 commentary and the *Symposium Aristotelicum* collection (Crubellier and Laks 2009); and, of course, Aubenque’s 1963b paper and in his 1966 classic. See also Politis 2002 and Politis and Su 2017.
3 Gelber’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 8) addresses the role of *aporia* in Aristotle’s biological works.
4 With the possible exception of Matthews 1999a; which, however, is limited in its compass and largely intended for a general audience.
5 The contributions to this volume of Allen (Chapter 9) and of Castagnoli (Chapter 11) redress this omission. Castagnoli (2006) argues that the omission is in large part responsible for the fact that “Since antiquity interpreters have described Pyrrhonism as a philosophical approach somehow ‘alien’, radically different in its motivations, nature, and conception of the philosophical endeavour from all other ancient philosophies, those philosophies that the Pyrrhonists lumped together as “dogmatic”.” By attending to the role that the Pyrrhonists assign to *aporia* in philosophical enquiry, he argues for a very different account, which brings closer to each other the Pyrrhonists and Plato and Aristotle. Opsomer (1998) is a clear exception to our claim of a lack of an investigation of *aporia* in Academic scepticism.
6 Politis’ contribution to this volume (Chapter 3) argues against this tendency (see also Politis 2006, 2008, 2012b and 2015); as does Castagnoli, who argues (especially contra Woodruff 1988 and 2010), against any ‘straightforward equation of “aporetic” and “refutative”’ (214–15). This, of course, is not to deny that elenctic or refutative argument can result in *aporia* and so be aporetic; it is to deny that all *aporia*-involving argument is elenctic or refutative. Szaif’s contribution (Chapter 2) is instructive on this point.
7 See the contributions of Allen, Castagnoli and Politis (Chapters 9, 11 and 3, respectively).
8 For this issue, and different views on it, see the contributions of Allen, Dillon, Karamanolis, Castagnoli and Politis (Chapters 9, 10, 13, 11 and 3, respectively).
On the Mark of Aporetic Philosophy

If this is our basic mark of an aporetic philosopher – one who considers the generation of the state of aporia to be a major part of philosophical activity – then being an aporetic philosopher is compatible not only with being committed to the search for knowledge – this much would hardly exclude any ancient philosopher save for such extreme eristics and contradiction-mongers as those parodied by Plato in the Euthydemus – but also with believing that it is possible to attain knowledge and even that one may have attained knowledge. Does this not render our mark of aporetic philosophy objectionably broad? We need a broad mark, if we are to look for a common dimension, tendency or thrust – something like a single, continuous tradition – among such diverse philosophers as, on the one hand, Aristotle, Plotinus and Plato (supposing that there may be doctrines present in Plato’s dialogues), and, on the other hand, Pyrrhonian sceptics. Is such a broad mark a drawback and a fault? Consider the obvious alternative, which is to propose that an aporetic philosopher is one who considers the generation of aporia to be, not simply a major part of, but the principal and ultimate aim of philosophical activity. This would exclude everyone except sceptics. It is, we think, objectionably narrow. It stands in the way of recognising that whereas Plato, or Aristotle in the Metaphysics, and Pyrrhonian sceptics end up in very different places regarding the attainability and attainment of knowledge and the desirability of speculative theory and systematic philosophy, they share basic commitments regarding the source and the structure, if not the aim, of philosophical enquiry.¹⁰ The point is that sharing in a single method, namely, aporia-based enquiry, and a single aim, namely, the attainment of knowledge through the resolution of aporiai, is compatible with different and even opposite outcomes, depending on whether or not the philosopher in question thinks there is a general reason to doubt that such aporiai are capable of being resolved.

If it did not exclude any philosophers, our mark of aporetic philosophy would be objectionable. How can a philosopher positively deny that the generation of the state of aporia is a major part of philosophical activity? Consider a philosopher who is committed not only to the search for knowledge and the attainability of knowledge but also to the existence of a criterion for knowledge. A criterion of knowledge is a cognitive

⁹ For the distinction between aporetic and eristic philosophy, see Szaif’s contribution (Chapter 2).
¹⁰ For this point, see Castagnoli’s contribution (Chapter 11).
experience and impression that is such as to guarantee its truth and to exclude the possibility of the subject of this experience being mistaken. Such a philosopher can admit that ridding oneself of a state of *aporia*, and, consequently, engaging as far as is necessary with the difficulties and problems that are responsible for such a state, is part of the preparation for the search for knowledge: a search which will be involved, rather, with the exercise of a supposed natural faculty for infallible knowledge. He or she will have to deny that the generation of *aporia* is part of the search for knowledge proper, since, as he or she believes, the search for knowledge does not stand in a substantial relation to the state of *aporia* and indeed has the means of bypassing it. Among the ancients, the Stoics appear to have thought of knowledge along these lines, and they, at any rate, are not on any account justly characterised as aporetic philosophers. Indeed, their stance on this matter may well have been a deliberate reaction against Plato and Aristotle.

**What Is the Proper Intellectual Means of Generating *Aporia***?

Aristotle is perhaps the first to have reflected on the meaning of the term *aporia* as this term is deliberately used by philosophers, when he says that it designates in the first instance a certain mental state but that philosophers— including Aristotle— use it also for that which generates the mental state (see *Topics* VI. 6, 145b16–20; he has just characterised an *aporia* as being ‘an equality [i.e. equality in strength, or apparent strength] of opposite reasonings’, 145b1–2). Aristotle appears to be right in this observation, which, as we have noted, identifies an important feature of the use of the term *aporia*; namely, that the object to which this state of mind, *aporia*, is directed is likewise properly called an *aporia*. This is an *aporia* in the sense of a certain form, or certain forms, of question, and a question that presents an intellectual difficulty or problem. An early instance of this twofold use of the term *aporia* is clearly recognisable in Plato, when, in the *Protagoras* (324d–e), and twice in quick succession, he uses the phrase ἐὰν ἀπορεῖς, in the sense of ‘the problem (or “puzzle”, or “difficulty” or “question”) about which you are in a state of puzzlement’ (or, ‘which you are puzzling over’).

What, according to the philosophers taken up in the present volume, is the proper intellectual means of generating the mental state of *aporia*? And is there in these philosophers, according to the findings of the contributors,
a single means of generating the state of *aporia*? On any account, determining what is the proper means of generating an *aporia* requires establishing what those objects are at which this state of mind, *aporia*, is directed. If we follow Aristotle, we will expect an affirmative answer, for he supposes a single way of generating the state of *aporia*, that is, by means of what he calls ‘an equality of opposite reasonings’. He means the advancing of competing apparently good reasons on both sides of a two-sided, whether-or-not question. (He calls such a question a *problēma.*) Aristotle’s answer is very important, and it contains two related elements, which, we think, deserve to be considered separately. First, there is the reference simply to contradiction, and so the very notion of contradiction plays a role. Secondly, there is the reference to compelling contradiction, that is, a contradiction both sides of which are supported by apparently good reasons.

It is remarkable that, according to the contributors to the present volume, this account is largely correct, though not without exceptions. This means that there is among these philosophers, and spanning a millennium of philosophy in antiquity, very considerable agreement about the proper means of generating *aporia* in philosophy. Generally, though not exclusively, *aporia* is generated either through generating a contradiction or through generating a compelling contradiction. This finding – for it appears to be a major finding of the present project – is as important as it is remarkable. It also allays a worry that one may have as to whether the topic of the present volume – the place of *aporia* in ancient philosophy – may not be too broad and diffuse to sustain investigation. As Harte (72) observes, ‘Were we to identify anything capable of inducing *aporia* in the form of an intellectual condition as an *aporia* in the sense of a puzzle, the term *aporia* understood as puzzle would, I submit, become so broad in its compass as to become uninteresting.’

We should note, finally, a question regarding *aporia* that will emerge as prominent in, and perhaps controversial among, the contributions. It is the question of the association, especially since Aristotle and the method of dialectical argument of the *Topics*, of *aporia*-based argument with dialectical argument. Dialectical argument, as it is understood by Aristotle in the *Topics*, is a method of argument that, by using *endoxa*, that is, opinions that are credible owing to the number or the expertise of those who hold them,

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13 See also Rapp’s contribution, when he urges a need to ‘push back against the tendency to view all instances of questions, queries, enquiries, procedural remarks as somehow qualifying as *aporiai*, leading to an excess of *aporiai* in Aristotle’s work’ (Chapter 6, 112).
aspires to the power of disputing, against an adversary, equally and indifferently on either side of any two-sided question. The critical question is this: How close should we understand this association, of aporia-based argument with dialectical argument, to be? The closer we think it is, the more readily we shall associate aporia-based argument with elenctic and refutative argument; because, clearly, dialectical argument is a form of refutative argument. And we have noted that the association of aporia-based argument with refutative argument is questionable if taken too far. Whereas dialectical argument is adversarial and involves competing persons or parties, aporia-based argument need not be adversarial; it can be cooperative. Aporia-based argument can be conducted by a single person by himself or herself. And, most important, whereas the basic reliance on endoxa may be proper in the case of dialectical and disputative argument, it may be questioned in the case of aporia-based argument, especially if such argument is thought to be an essential part of the search for knowledge.

14 With regard to Plato and the early dialogues, Politis (2015; esp. chs. 5–6) has argued that it is essential to aporia-based argument that the reasons on either side of a two-sided question should appear good not only to different people but also to one and the same person.

15 For helpful comments on this Introduction, we are grateful to Lesley Brown, Kate Kiernan, Peter Larsen, Pauline Sabrier and Jun Su. We are grateful also to the anonymous CUP reader. We are extremely grateful to Peter Larsen for assisting with the manuscript and with the indices. Finally, this volume originates in a conference held in Trinity College Dublin in the autumn of 2014, and in this regard we would like to thank everyone then present and to acknowledge our gratitude to: the Department of Philosophy at Trinity College Dublin, and The Trinity Plato Centre.
An *aporia* is, essentially, a point of impasse where there is puzzlement or perplexity about how to proceed. Aporetic reasoning is reasoning that leads to this sort of impasse, and an *aporia*-based method would be one that centrally employs such reasoning. One might describe *aporia*, more basically, as a point where one does not know how to respond to what is said. In the Platonic dialogues dubbed ‘aporetic’, for instance, Socrates brings his interlocutors to the point where they no longer know what to say. Now, it should be obvious that there was a good deal of aporetic reasoning prior to Socrates. It should also be obvious that the form of such reasoning is immaterial so long as it leads to *aporia*. In particular, the reasoning that leads to an *aporia* need not take the form of a dilemma. Instances of reasoning generating genuine dilemmas – with two equally unpalatable alternatives presented as exhausting the possibilities – are actually rather rare in early Greek philosophy. Moreover, there need not in fact be any reasoning or argumentation as such to lead an auditor to a point where it is unclear how to proceed or what to say. Logical paradoxes such as Eubulides’ liar do not rely on argumentation at all but on the exploitation of certain logical problems to generate an *aporia*. All that is required in this instance is the simple question: ‘Is what a man says true or false when he says he is lying?’ It is hard to know how to answer this question because any simple response snares one in contradiction. Likewise, among the remains of Heraclitus’ book are a number of provocative statements that induce a certain puzzlement without any argument as such. Consider, for example, ‘The path up and down is one and the same’ (Heracl. 22B60 DK). One does not know quite what to say about this, for the description appears to harbour a contradiction: there is a path up and a path down, yet there is also a single path. The apparent contradiction between the multiplicity and unity of the same object calls for some explanation and resolution.
What is perhaps most important to the generation of *aporia* is the production of at least the appearance of contradiction, by one means or another. The appearance of contradiction is intolerable because contradiction is itself impossible: the same thing cannot be at once *F* and not-*F* in the same respect. When led to accept contradictories even though one knows they cannot both be true, there are two main ways to respond. One can, appreciating the difficulty of the issue, say nothing, or one can, appreciating the difficulty of the issue, try to say something. These possibilities correspond to the two broad purposes the fabricator of the apparent contradiction may have: he may want the auditor to realise that the question is so fraught with difficulty that it is best to say nothing, or he may want the auditor to persist in trying to say something useful even while appreciating the difficulty of the question. That one can respond to an *aporia*, and that someone may intend for one to respond, in these distinct ways reflects a basic division in the uses and purposes of aporetic reasoning. In its broadly negative uses, the aim of aporetic reasoning is *aporia*. In its broadly positive uses, the aim of aporetic reasoning is escape from *aporia*. There will be further variations within each category. For instance, the negative ends for which aporetic reasoning may be employed include simple confutation and, more positively, the promotion of a sceptical attitude. Also, significantly, when the appearance of contradiction leaves one puzzled about how to proceed and uncertain as to what to say, one need not respond as the fabricator of the *aporia* intended. In particular, one can be stimulated to make positive progress by a piece of aporetic reasoning developed for basically negative purposes.

I want to focus on the uses of contradiction to generate *aporia* in Heraclitus, the Eleatics Zeno and Melissus, and the sophists Protagoras and Gorgias. Heraclitus merits attention here because he is unique among the early Greek philosophers in inducing *aporia* with the positive aim of provoking his audience to a deeper understanding of the world’s workings. Both Zeno and Melissus, by contrast, reason in ways designed to contradict common sense and ordinary experience. Their essentially negative aporetic reasoning sets the trend for the uses of contradiction among the sophists, though with Protagoras and Gorgias contradiction and aporetic reasoning are employed in novel and sophisticated ways.

**Heraclitus**

Timon of Phlius called Heraclitus *ainiktēs* or ‘riddler’ (D.L. 9.6), and the epithet *skoteinos* or *obscurus* commonly attaches to him in the later
tradition. Heraclitus appears intent on provoking his audience to understanding by making deliberately puzzling or paradoxical statements. Although he describes himself as ‘distinguishing each thing according to its nature and telling how it is’, at the same time he says people generally fail to understand the _logos_, this being both his own discourse and the principle of the natural order it describes (22B1 DK, cf. 22B19, 22B34). So there is some justification for the tradition’s view that Heraclitus was obscure, though he would have said the apparent obscurity of his writings simply mirrors the evident obscurity of things. ‘Nature likes to hide’ (22B123 DK), he says. His attitude towards the general level of human understanding is like Socrates’ without the irony: ‘The multitude do not understand the sort of things they encounter, nor do they know by learning, though they seem to themselves to do so’, he says (22B17 DK, cf. 22B28a, 22B40, 22B57, 22B104). Although Heraclitus differs from Socrates in professing to know the kinds of things most people only think they know (cf. 22B41 DK, 22B50 etc.), they both in a general way seek to dispel their auditors’ false conceit of wisdom. Socrates exposes latent contradictions among his interlocutors’ beliefs so that they might abandon their misplaced confidence regarding their understanding of ethical matters. Heraclitus provokes his audience to deeper understanding of the world’s workings with declarations that induce puzzlement in a variety of ways.

Sometimes, as with the river fragment (22B12 DK), he employs a striking image to serve as one term in an unspecified analogy that leaves one puzzling over what the image is supposed to convey. The road fragment (22B60 DK) bears witness to Heraclitus’ penchant for inducing puzzlement with a statement that appears to harbour a contradiction. Other fragments show this to be one of his preferred devices: ‘They do not understand how drawn apart it is brought together with itself: a back-stretched harmony like a bow’s and a lyre’s’ (22B51 DK). ‘Combinations, wholes and not wholes, brought together drawn apart, concordant discordant, and from all things one and from one thing all’ (22B10 DK). ‘Sea, water most pure and most polluted: for fish, drinkable and sustaining, but for humans, undrinkable and destructive’ (22B61 DK). ‘God, day night, winter summer, war peace, hunger satiety – he undergoes alteration just as fire, when mixed with spices, is called by each one’s aroma’ (22B204 DK). ‘Invisible harmony is stronger than visible’ (22B207). Heraclitus employs

1 See the textual note at Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1983: 192, for a defence of the readings _xumpheretai_ and _palintonos_.

prima facie contradictions, along with other devices, as a way of provoking his audience to question their understanding of the world’s workings. His enigmatic utterances are designed not merely to lead his audience into impasse. He offers an understanding of the ultimate principles governing the world’s workings to those who relinquish the false conceit of their own wisdom. Not all aporiai are meant to be final. Many if not most of the ancient philosophers who employed aporetic arguments did so as a way of framing problems. When contradictions are employed to generate aporiai in this way, the contradictions are supposed to be only apparent — their fabricators intend for them to be resolved. Such seems to be the case with the contradictions employed by Heraclitus. Sometimes he actually indicates himself how the contradiction he has introduced is to be resolved. When he says in 22B88 DK that the same thing is present living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old, he then explains how so: ‘for (gar) these once changed are those and those once changed are these’. The puzzlement does not necessarily cease with Heraclitus’ explanation. Nevertheless, it should be clear that he means for the contradictions his discourse makes manifest to be resolved by the deeper understanding he also aims to provide.\(^2\)

**Zeno and Melissus**

Zeno of Elea deployed his own arsenal of contradictions to provoke his audience to question their understanding of how the world works. The most famous of his ingenious paradoxes purport to show that motion is impossible by showing that common-sense assumptions regarding its occurrence lead to problems. For instance, if a tortoise starts ahead of Achilles in a race, in the time it takes Achilles to get to where the tortoise started, the tortoise will have moved some distance ahead. And in the time it takes Achilles to get there, the tortoise will again have moved some distance ahead. And the tortoise will always have moved some distance ahead during the period of time it takes Achilles to get to where it was at the beginning of that period, so that the tortoise will always be ahead and will never be overtaken by Achilles. One of the remarkable

\(^2\) Aristotle’s association of Heraclitus with violation of the Law of Non-Contradiction on the grounds that some people thought that he simultaneously supposed the same thing to be and not to be (Arist. Metaph. 4.3.1005b17–25) has prompted some modern interpreters to worry about Heraclitus’ toleration for contradiction, but it is clear enough from fragments such as 22B61 and 22B88 that the contradictions he points up are meant to be merely apparent and ultimately explicable. See further Barnes 1982a: 69–75, Barnes 1983, Mackenzie 1988a, and Granger 2004.
features of this argument is the simplicity of its conceptual apparatus, reflected in this reconstruction and evident in Aristotle’s testimony: ‘Second is the [argument] called “Achilles”: this is that the slowest runner never will be overtaken by the fastest; for it is necessary for the one chasing to come first to where the one fleeing started from, so that it is necessary for the slower runner always to be ahead some’ (Ph. 6.9.239b14–18). The argument employs the common-sense assumption that a first runner and a lagging runner both cover some distance while the lagging runner gets to where the first runner started in order to generate a conclusion that flatly contradicts common sense. The result is an impasse or aporia, where one does not know what to say in reply. The aporia is generated by the contradiction between the conclusion of Zeno’s reasoning and the belief grounded in one’s experience of races and moving objects. One wants to say that of course Achilles can overtake the tortoise. There is a striking depiction of this response to Zeno in the interior of a red-figure drinking cup discovered in the Etrurian city of Falerii and dated to the mid-fifth century BC, where we see a heroic figure racing nimbly ahead of a large tortoise. The painter’s response is amusing though not particularly satisfying, for until one identifies where Zeno’s reasoning goes wrong, the contradiction he has generated persists.

Zeno likewise argued in various ways that the common-sense assumption that there are many things leads to contradiction. The arguments against plurality that we know of are more elaborate than the arguments against motion reported by Aristotle. Consider the antinomy of limited and unlimited. We are better informed about this argument than about any other argument by Zeno thanks to Simplicius’ quotation in his commentary on Aristotle’s Physics of what must be the greater portion of the original. Simplicius means to rebut Porphyry’s opinion that the argument from dichotomy Aristotle mentions as motivating the early atomists belongs to Parmenides:

And why speak at length when in fact the argument is given in Zeno’s very treatise? For in showing that if there are many things they are limited and unlimited, Zeno writes word for word as follows: ‘If there are many things, it is necessary that they be just so many as they are and neither greater than themselves nor fewer. But if they are just as many as they are, they will be limited. If there are many things, the things that are are unlimited; for there are always others between these entities, and again others between those. And thus the things that are are unlimited.’ And in this way he demonstrated their

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numerical infinity by means of the dichotomy. (Zeno 29B3 DK ap. Simp. in Ph. 140.27–34 Diels)

All that appears to be lacking is the conclusion that there are not many things because they cannot be both limited and unlimited. This could have come before or after the text quoted by Simplicius, or some more general statement to the effect that saying there are many things commits one to asserting contradictories could have prefaced a series of arguments. This possibility is suggested by the way Simplicius introduces his account of Zeno’s antimony of large and small with the general remark that each of the arguments in his treatise was designed to show that one who says there are many things winds up saying opposites (Simp. in Ph. 139.5–7 Diels).

The following reconstruction aims to adhere closely to Zeno’s words while making their reasoning a bit clearer. The general goal is to show both that if there are many things, then there must be finitely many things, and if there are many things, then there must be infinitely many things. The assumption that there are many things is thus supposed to have been shown to lead to the contradiction that things are both finitely many and infinitely many. The particular argument for the first arm of the antinomy seems to be simply: If there are many things, they must be just so many as they are. If the many things are just so many as they are, they must be finitely many. Therefore, if there are many things, there must be finitely many things. Simplicius somewhat loosely describes the antinomy’s second arm as demonstrating numerical infinity through dichotomy. In fact, the argument depends on a postulate specifying a necessary condition upon two things being distinct, rather than on division per se, and it may be reconstructed as follows: If there are many things, they must be distinct, that is, separate from one another. Postulate: Any two things will be distinct or separate from one another only if there is some other thing between them. Two representative things, $x_1$ and $x_2$, will be distinct only if there is some other thing, $x_3$, between them. In turn, $x_1$ and $x_3$ will be distinct only if there is some other thing, $x_4$, between them. Since the postulate can be repeatedly applied in this manner unlimited times, between any two distinct things there will be limitlessly many other things. Therefore, if there are many things, then there must be limitlessly many things.

Gregory Vlastos describes this argument as ‘beautiful in its simplicity’. Jonathan Barnes regards it as ‘merely simpliste’. Whatever judgement one

passes on its substance, one has to acknowledge that the form of Zeno’s reasoning is audaciously original. There are some intricately structured arguments in Parmenides 28B8 DK, of course, but nothing quite like the pattern of reasoning whereby Zeno argues against his targeted claim by showing how it leads to contradiction. Zeno may therefore fairly be credited with inventing the technique of reductio ad absurdum. His achievement is only augmented by the way he recurs to the same pattern in other arguments for which we still have evidence to the effect that if there are many things, they must be both like and unlike, which is impossible (Pl. Prm. 127e1–4), and that if there are many things, they must be both so large as to be unlimited in magnitude and so small as to have no magnitude at all (Zeno 29B1 and 29B2 DK ap. Simp. in Ph. 139.7–15 and 140.34–1.8). This latter argument is actually a super reduc- tio, in that it purports to show not only that the assumption that there are many things leads to contradiction but also purports to reduce each of the incompatible consequences to absurdity. It is the one true dilemma among Zeno’s arguments. The antinomy of limited and unlimited does not present two equally unpalatable alternatives. What is unacceptable is the contradiction that things, if many, are both finitely and infinitely many. The repetition of the basic pattern of argumentation suggests that Zeno had some grasp of the argument’s form and appreciated its general power. The only qualification necessary if we are to credit him with the invention of the reductio technique is that it is not clear that Zeno meant to establish positively that there are not many things by showing that the claim that there are many things leads to contradiction. The technique of Zenonian reductio is not the technique of indirect proof. It appears, instead, to be a technique for inducing aporia.

It may or may not be a mere coincidence that Zeno’s arguments against plurality all take the form of antinomies while none of his arguments against motion do so. In any case, these arguments generate contradiction and aporia in distinct ways. The arguments against plurality present two lines of argument to generate explicit contradiction: if there are many things, they are both limited and unlimited, both infinitely large and vanishingly small, and both like and unlike. These contradictions are supposed to call into question the assumption that there are many things. The paradoxes of motion, by contrast, generate an implicit contradiction between the ordinary experience of motion’s occurrence and the rational considerations Zeno deploys against it. Of course, there is a similarly implicit contradiction in the arguments against plurality, in that the rational considerations not only
lead to contradictory conclusions but taken together contradict the ordinary experience of there being many things. Both his opposition of *logos* to *logos* in the antinomies and the broader opposition he generates between *logos* and perceptual experience would have a long history. Furthermore, unlike Heraclitus, Zeno at no point suggests how the contradictions he presents might be resolved. Although later philosophers and mathematicians, from antiquity to our own era, have developed responses in the course of their own enquiries into space, time, motion, and infinity, it seems unlikely that Zeno meant his paradoxes to stimulate enquiry by framing a set of problems. Zeno’s purposes appear to have been generally negative rather than positive, and in this respect he set the trend in the use of contradiction in the rest of early Greek philosophy.

It has often been supposed that Zeno’s arguments against plurality and motion were meant to maintain in a different form the position of Parmenides. Socrates says as much in Plato’s *Parmenides* when he accuses Zeno of trying to conceal the fact that, in saying that things are not many, he is really just saying the same thing as Parmenides, who said that things are one (Pl. *Prm*. 128a6–b6). But Plato has Zeno correct Socrates on this point: Zeno says that his book was instead meant to provide indirect support for Parmenides’ teaching against those who supposed its consequences were ridiculous by arguing that their own presumption that there are many things leads to even more absurd results (*Prm*. 128c6–d6). Plato’s Zeno does not countenance Socrates’ view that his arguments against plurality reached the same conclusion as Parmenides by different means. Likewise, the historical Zeno should not be regarded as a defender of a view – namely, that only one thing exists – that should not be ascribed to the historical Parmenides. So Jonathan Barnes states:

> Zeno was not a systematic Eleatic solemnly defending Parmenides against philosophical attack by a profound and interconnected set of reductive argumentations. Many men had mocked Parmenides: Zeno mocked the mockers. His *logoi* were designed to reveal the inanities and ineptitudes inherent in the ordinary belief in a plural world; he wanted to startle, to amaze, to disconcert. He did not have the serious metaphysical purpose of supporting an Eleatic monism.⁵

I would add that Parmenides himself does not belong to the early history of aporetic reasoning because his arguments are not designed to leave us in *aporia*. He aims instead to show that it is possible to achieve an understanding

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that does not wander in the way human understanding typically does when focused on the mutable entities apprehended via the senses. A more stable form of understanding is possible when we try to focus our minds on what is and cannot not be and consider what such an entity must be like just in virtue of its necessary mode of being.\(^6\)

Melissus of Samos, by contrast, certainly does belong to the early history of aporetic reasoning. Like Zeno, he developed arguments contradicting the common-sense presumption of plurality and change rooted in perceptual experience. Unlike Zeno, however, Melissus’ arguments exploit difficulties in the logic of being in a manner not unusual in the wake of Parmenides. Melissus’ treatise contains two major arguments: one in 30B1–7 DK for the thesis that ‘one thing only is’, an argument which he calls his ‘greatest proof’, and a second in 30B8 DK against the view that many things are. In the first, he argues that whatever is, is ungenerated, sempiternal, spatially unlimited, unique, homogeneous; it is subject to neither alteration nor rearrangement, it suffers neither pain nor anguish, and it is full, unmoving, neither dense nor rare, and nowhere divided. He begins his argument as follows: ‘Whatever was always was and always will be. For if it came to be, it is necessary that prior to its coming to be there is nothing; if then nothing there was, in no way could anything come to be from nothing’ (30B1 DK). The first sentence of 30B2 DK, which may have followed directly upon these words, completes the argument: ‘Since then it did not come to be, it is and always was and always will be’. Melissus appears to be referring here to the totality of what was, is, and will be rather than to each individual entity in the set of all entities. In this way he can rely on the principle that there is no \textit{genesis ex nihilo} to generate the conclusion that whatever is always was and will be. (If he meant only each entity in the set of entities, the principle would not secure the conclusion.) By the end of his argument, he has effectively ruled the individual entities belonging to the set of all entities out of existence, for he has argued that there is only a single, limitless, unchanging, and completely undifferentiated entity. He also moves to restrict use of ‘being’ to entities that are not subject to change: if whatever is always was and always will be, then whatever has not always been and will not always be – that is, whatever is subject to change – cannot be something that ‘is’. The restriction of use of ‘being’ to what is always is crucial for Melissus’ arguments in 30B7 that what is cannot suffer diminution, growth,

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\(^6\) Palmer 2009: chs. 2–4, develops this view in detail.
rearrangement, pain, or distress. He stresses that all these varieties of change involve some sort of becoming or perishing of what is.

The notion that whatever is cannot be subject to becoming and whatever becomes cannot properly be said to ‘be’ becomes central to Melissus’ second argument against the common-sense view that many things are. He says:

If many things were, these would have to be just as I say the One is. For if earth is and water and air and fire and iron and gold, and the living and the dead, and black and white and other things such as people say are real, if indeed these things are, and we see and hear correctly, each must be just such as it first seemed to us, and it must not change or become different, but each thing must always be just as it is. (30B8.2)

People are prone to say that all manner of things ‘are’, but since this verb, according to Melissus, properly applies only to things that are (what they are) always and invariably, if we are right to say that the various objects of our experience ‘are’, then they must perpetually be just as we encounter them, and they cannot be subject to change or alteration. The passage is not concerned with the mere existence of earth, water, air, and the rest, but with the question of whether any of these things can properly be said to ‘be’, that is, whether any of these things really are, where this is taken by Melissus to amount to their only, or ever and immutably, being (what they are). In short, Melissus denies that entities subject to change can properly or strictly be said to ‘be’. This is not immediately equivalent, however, to denying that entities subject to change do not exist. He proceeds to draw out the contradiction between our experience of the mutability of things and what would be entailed by saying that such things ‘are’: ‘while we say that many things “are” and so eternal and having their own characters and strength, it seems to us that all things become different and change from how they appear on any particular occasion’ (30B8.4). On the one hand, if the things people speak of as being real are in fact so, then each of them must always be just as it is (≈ 30B8.2), and yet experience shows that even those things that seem strong and permanent do not continue being what they once appeared to be (≈ 30B8.3). Melissus then resolves the contradiction by rejecting the hypothesis that numerous things ‘are’, a hypothesis based on the impressions of stability that lead people to speak of various things as ‘being’ or ‘being real’. ‘Therefore it is clear’, he says, ‘that we have not seen correctly and that those many things do not correctly seem to be: for
they would not change if they were real, but each would be just such as it appeared to be; for nothing is stronger than real being’ (30B8.5).7

Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates in the fourth century all look back upon Zeno and Melissus as forerunners of the ‘antilogic’ and eristic disputation prevalent among the sophists.8 Isocrates does not hesitate to group Zeno and Melissus together with Gorgias and other sophists flourishing in the era of Protagoras as all having produced exasperating treatises that advocate the most outrageous claims imaginable (Isoc. Orat. 10.2–3). Aristotle saw Zeno as a controversialist and paradox-monger whose arguments were nevertheless both sophisticated enough to qualify him as the inventor of dialectic and were important for forcing clarification of concepts fundamental to natural science. Aristotle’s view of Zeno basically accords with Plato’s portrayal of him as a master of the art of contradiction.9 Aristotle’s view of Melissus is more negative, since he sees his main argument as relying upon an obvious equivocation (Arist. Ph. 1.2.185a5–12,1.3.186a10–22). The influence of Zeno and, to a lesser extent, Melissus on the techniques of argumentation promulgated among the sophists seems undeniable. Protagoras’ development of the techniques of antilogic, rooted in his claim that there are two opposed arguments on every matter (D.L. 9.51), seems likely to have been inspired by Zeno’s novel forms of argumentation as well as by his advocacy of the most counterintuitive of theses. The influence of both Zeno and Melissus is especially clear, moreover, in Gorgias’ treatise, ‘On Nature, or On What Is Not’, not only in its penchant for antithetical argument and reductio but also in its use of premises drawn straight from Zeno and Melissus themselves (as at [Arist.] MXG 979a23, b25, b37). More generally, though, Protagoras and Gorgias can both be seen as challenging the opposition between the deliverances of reason and the senses exploited by Zeno and Melissus.

7 See further Palmer 2009: 205–24, for the view of Melissus presented here. For a different view, see Makin 2005.
8 George Kerferd has argued both that the patronage of Pericles and his keen interest in the intellectual developments of his day must have been critically important to the sophistic movement and that Zeno’s paradoxes were a profound influence on the development of the sophistic method of antilogic, which he sees as ‘perhaps the most characteristic feature of the thought of the whole period’ (Kerferd 1981: 18–23, 59ff., 85).
9 Plato consistently associates Zeno with the rise of eristic disputation and especially the specific brand of argument known as antilogic. See Pl. Prm. 128d–e, Phdr. 261d6–8 (cf. Plu. Per. 4.5), Sph. 216a–b. Aristotle by his own criteria would have regarded Zeno’s arguments as more eristic than properly dialectical, for he clearly believes that some of Zeno’s assumptions have only a specious plausibility. See Arist. Top. 1.1.100a29–30, b22–5, 8.8.160b7–9, SE 24.179b17–21, Ph. 6.2.233b21–31, Metaph. B.4.1001b13–16.
Protagoras

Diogenes Laertius reports that Protagoras was the first to claim that on every matter there are two accounts opposed to one another (D.L. 9.51 = 80A1 DK, cf. Clem. Strom. 6.65 = 80A20 DK). Seneca ascribes to Protagoras the richer claim that it is possible to argue on either side of every issue with equal force, even regarding this very issue, whether every issue is arguable on either side (Sen. Ep. 88.43). The claim that there are two opposed and equally forceful or plausible cases on every matter would be essential to rhetorical training – where the goal was to enable a speaker to win his point regardless of its merits. A speaker who could do this was described as able to make the weaker logos the stronger, and this ability was associated particularly with sophistic rhetoric. As an example of the type of argumentation this involved, Aristotle describes how the early rhetorician Corax of Syracuse employed the commonplace that what is improbable is probable given the probability of improbable things happening since they do in fact happen:

It is of this commonplace that Corax’s Art of Rhetoric is composed: ‘If the accused is not open to the charge – for instance if a weakling is tried for violent assault – the defence is that he was not likely to do such a thing. But if he is open to the charge – i.e. if he is a strong man – the defence is still that he was not likely to do such a thing, since he could be sure that people would think he was likely to do it’. (Arist. Rh. 2.24.1402a17–20, Revised Oxford Translation)

Aristotle continues, after his diagnosis of the error here, by saying that this is what is meant by making the weaker argument the stronger and by adding that people were properly contemptuous of Protagoras’ profession of such an ability (1402a24–6). One can easily imagine that the two books of Antilogiai attributed to Protagoras in Diogenes’ catalogue (D.L. 9.55) consisted of techniques such as Corax’s commonplace for responding or ‘speaking against’ the kinds of claims likely to be made by an opponent in public debate. There is in any case no evidence attesting to the specific character and content of the Antilogiai, so one should be wary of supposing that it consisted of fully developed antinomies. The character of the Antilogiai is plausibly indicated by the way Theaetetus in the Sophist understands the Eleatic Visitor’s reference to various publications on individual arts designed to equip speakers with the resources to contradict any particular craftsperson as a reference to Protagoras’ treatises on wrestling and the other arts (Pl. Sph. 232d5–e1).

Protagoras is also committed, after a fashion, to non-contradiction. Plato has Socrates in the Euthydemus attribute to him the view that contradiction is
impossible (Euthyd. 286b8–c3, cf. D.L. 9.53). Unlike Plato and Aristotle, however, Protagoras does not deny the possibility of contradiction because he thinks that only one of a pair of contradictories can be true. On the contrary, Protagoras’ view that contradiction is impossible is part and parcel of the broader relativism encapsulated in his famous measure doctrine: ‘Man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are, and of those that are not that they are not’ (Prot. 80B1 DK ap. D.L. 9.51, cf. Pl. Tht. 152a2–4, S.E. PH 1.216, M. 7.60). Prior to his own quotation of this famous pronouncement Sextus Empiricus notes that some counted Protagoras among the philosophers rejecting the criterion ‘since he says that all impressions and beliefs are true and that truth is a relative matter because whatever appears or seems to someone actually is the case for him’ (S.E. M. 7.60, cf. D.L. 9.51). Plato has Socrates interpret the measure doctrine in much the same way, after quoting it in the Theaetetus: ‘So he is saying, then, that whatever way things appear to me, that’s the way they are for me, and whatever way they appear to you, that’s the way they are for you – as you and I are each a man?’ (Pl. Tht. 152a6–8). Thus Protagoras can plausibly be understood as committed to non-contradiction as a corollary of his measure doctrine. If things seem one way to me and another to you, there is no contradiction here, but things are for you as they seem to you and for me as they seem to me. Likewise, if things seem to me one way at one time and another way at another time, there is no contradiction, but things are for me at each time as they seem to me at each time. Protagoras’ view that on every matter there are two accounts opposed to one another might seem to sit uneasily with his view that antilologia or contradiction is impossible. However, Protagoras can hold both views consistently – and let us not worry just now about whether he would have thought it necessary to be consistent – if the two opposed logoi are not opposed in such a way that one must be true if the other is false. Protagoras is reported to have held that all things are true (D.L. 9.51) or that all appearances and opinions are true (S.E. M. 7.60), and it in fact makes good sense to see a commitment to the truth of all appearances as another corollary of the measure doctrine.

Protagoras might have left it at that and held that in each case things are for each individual as he or she finds them and that if they seem one way to one person and another way to another there is nothing more to be said.

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10 The view that contradiction is impossible is also attributed to Prodicus in the commentary on Ecclesiastes by Didymus the Blind, on the different grounds that if two people (purportedly) contradict one another, both cannot be speaking about the same things but only the person who says what is true and describes things as they are is actually speaking about them. See Binder and Liesenborghs 1976 for the text and discussion.
about the matter. He seems not to have left it at that, however, but to have drawn some more general conclusions. He announces, for instance, in the opening of his treatise On the gods, ‘Regarding the gods I have no way of knowing, neither that they are, nor that they are not, nor what sort of form they have – for numerous are the hindrances to knowing, including the non-evidence and the brevity of human life’ (Eus. PE 14.3.7, cf. D.L. 9.51). In a similar vein, he is quoted in Didymus the Blind’s commentary on the Psalms as saying, ‘I appear to you who are present to be seated, but to one who is absent I do not appear to be seated; it is non-evident whether I am seated or I am not seated’ (Prot. ap. Didymus, in Psalmos Pt. III, p. 380, 222.21–2 Gronewald and Gesché). What is especially interesting here is how Protagoras in each case forces an impasse by generating a higher order appearance. If Protagoras appears to you to be seated, then, according to the measure doctrine, it is true for you that Protagoras is seated, and you might have thought that this would be the end of the matter as far as you are concerned. However, on this as on every issue, there are two opposed logoi, pro and contra. Protagoras balances the case for supposing he is seated with the fact that he does not appear seated to someone not there to observe him, and, again according to the Measure Doctrine, if Protagoras does not appear to someone absent to be seated, then it is not true for someone absent that Protagoras is seated. There is no contradiction here, for contradiction is impossible. Instead, it is true that Protagoras is seated for you, and it is not true that Protagoras is seated for someone absent. When Protagoras asks you to entertain this state of affairs, a change is supposed to come about in how things seem to you, a change which results in its no longer being clear to you that Protagoras is seated. It does not cease to appear to you that Protagoras is seated – if this were supposed to be the case, then the argument would collapse – yet it is non-evident whether Protagoras is seated. The reason, apparently, is that appreciating that to someone else it does not appear that Protagoras is seated leads you to question the privileging of your own experience as a guide to how thing in fact are. If you wonder how it can seem to you simultaneously that Protagoras is seated and that it is unclear whether Protagoras is seated or not, you might come to appreciate that Protagoras is developing an opposition between your perceptual and rational appearances.

11 The text was first published in Gronewald 1968 and subsequently, with slight variations, in Gronewald and Gesché 1969. For discussion and more deflationary interpretations, see Mejer 1972, Mansfeld 1981: 51–2 and Woodruff 1985.
One wants to be cautious about reading into Protagoras the sort of stratagems developed in the later sceptical tradition. A measure of assurance that this unpacking of the little bit of reasoning preserved in Didymus is not anachronistic is provided by Aristotle’s account of some of the considerations that led Democritus to hold that either there is no truth in appearances or it is adélon or non-evident to us:

> And again, many of the other animals receive impressions contrary to ours; and even to the senses of each individual, things do not always seem the same. Which, then, of these impressions are true and which are false is not obvious; for the one set is no truer than the other, but both are alike. And this is why Democritus, at any rate, says that either there is no truth or to us at least it is not evident. (Arist. *Metaph.* 4.5.1009b7–12, Revised Oxford Translation)

Numerous Democritean fragments confirm that his tendency was to deny the truth of appearances because he associated truth with the reality of atoms and void. Most strikingly, he says, ‘in actuality we know nothing – for truth is in the abyss’ (Democr. 68B117 DK). Instead of concluding from the diversity of appearances that none are true, as Democritus did, Protagoras concludes that all are true. He draws the contrary conclusion because he has abandoned the project in which Democritus was engaged of giving an account of how things really are that transcends these contradictory appearances. Democritus distinguishes between the obscure form of judgement afforded by the senses and the genuine form afforded by the intellect (Democr. 68B11 ap. S.E. M. 7.138). The intellect enables us to transcend the conflicting appearances to reach an understanding of the true nature of things. For Protagoras, however, the intellect is only a source of more conflicting appearances.

Later philosophers beginning with Plato and Aristotle would find Protagoras’ position unstable. Part of the problem is that its foundations – the measure doctrine, its two corollaries of non-contradiction and the truth of all appearances, and the related claim that there are two opposed and equally forceful *logoi* on every issue – are all themselves paradoxical. Unlike Zeno, who reasons from common-sense presumptions to paradoxical conclusions, Protagoras argues from principles that are already paradoxical. Unless one is prepared to accept the truth of the measure doctrine, one will hardly be inclined to accept that contradiction is impossible and that all appearances are true. The common-sense opinions that contradiction *is* possible and that *not* all appearances are true are motivation for rejecting the measure doctrine. One way of doing so is suggested by the line