

The genre of a text gives a frame of reference to the audience to make sense of it. The genre of a philosophical text puts it into the frame of a tradition to which rules and expectations are connected.

Parmenides' Poem, written in dactylic hexameters, placed itself into the *epic* genre and tradition. At a certain stage of the reception of Parmenides' Poem, its being in hexameters was no longer regarded as an essential and functional characteristic; rather it was regarded either as presumption on the part of Parmenides who attempted the impossible task of writing philosophy in verse or as lack of poetic gift combined with the need of presenting his philosophical insight in the highest possible poetic form. This attitude induced scholars to neglect the fact that epic poetry, Parmenides' Poem included, was supposed to have an effect on the audience. The scholars who have neglected the genre of Parmenides' Poem have missed the *effect* of Parmenides poetry.

What effect could epic poetry have? Which expectations did dactylic hexameters evoke? I shall argue that, on hearing dactylic hexameters, Parmenides' audience would not only expect 1. something *true* and of great *importance*; but also 2. something that presents them with role models (cf. Homer) or advice and encouragements on how to behave (cf. Hesiod and Xenophanes).

I shall give examples of how both epic poets before Parmenides and Parmenides fulfil these expectations, and often do so by putting the truth claim and the educative value of their epic predecessors under discussion.

Parmenides' conception of *alêtheia* is not only prepared by the connection in an epic context of what is 'true' and what is 'morally appropriate', but also by the indissoluble connection between the truth and the person of the poet himself. The epic poet has heard the truth from the Muses and is the teacher of the Greeks. Poets of hexameters are regarded as masters of truth and wisdom, according to Detienne's definition: *maître de vérité*. Truth is not what one can learn without being a certain kind of man. Truth is the qualification of some special people, it is a way of being.

The 'I' of Parmenides' Poem, who speaks in the first person in hexameters about his journey towards the truth, can be easily recognised by the audience as the epic poet: one of these kinds of person who have a privileged relation with the truth. But Parmenides' I is also the *protagonist* of Parmenides' epic poem and the audience may be encouraged to identify with him and to follow him on his transformative journey.

Parmenides' audience is prepared by the epic expectations about truth and education to listen to an epic poem which will teach them how to behave in order to reach the truth.