1. Analyse, and give a commentary on Parmenides' argument for the proposition, 'It is'.

According to Parmenides, all we can truly say about the world is that 'It is'. It is one, and it is thus finite. There is no thing that it is not. Any attempt by us to describe something in the world 'must' involve an acknowledgement of what it is not. My house is built in the Edwardian style, which 'must' then be viewed in comparison to the Victorian style, or to an Innuit igloo, or even something such as an aardvark. In describing things, we are inevitably describing them as being not like something else. Parmenides argues we can only know It is, and what it is not cannot be what it is unless what it is, is not what it is. You cannot say something is not something. It can only be something of its own, not something else. Or as Parmenides might say: 'For never shall this be forcibly maintained, that things that are not are.' Nothing could be clearer you might say.

A basic notion of philosophy is that we cannot always trust what appears to us and that all things may potentially be in our head as ideas and not real things. And Parmenides must deny the importance of appearances as they are contingent on what they are not which as he posits is an illogical statement. So Parmenides, like many a metaphysician, attempts to discover that which lies behind those appearances. He uses the ultimate Heraclitean dialectic of opposites in this relation, taking negative and positive as the substructure of what reality is made from. The rest of us, who go about our lives swimming in the world of appearances are left to believe that we see things as being and not being; things as the same and not the same; an ever-changing world of appearances; a worldly reality we grasp to understand impossibly.

Parmenides is appealing to logic and reason as our only source of discovering reality since our senses and readings of the world are dependent on what Parmenides views as the negativity built into our estimations of what we are told by those appearances. Such a negative-dependent world can only be imperfect and thus our knowledge of it will be imperfect also. By the simple logic of stating that what is necessarily not, is not possible, Parmenides leaves us astounded by our surroundings.

The logic goes: 1. Everything that is has being. Things that are not do not have being. 2. There are no things that do not exist and so no non-being. 3. For things to come to be they must come from non-being. 4. As in 2. There cannot be non-being so things do not come into existence. Change is not real. 5. Everything that exists must be immutable and unchanging.

Our mortal everyday dilemma of what is and what is not may be 'two-horned' as Parmenides describes, but what if we deny the dilemma as not being so? My house is not an aardvark because I positively know what an aardvark is. Our descriptions are then contingent not necessary. Still, Parmenides' logic asks us to ask ourselves to wonder if we can think of what is not. If we want to use what it's not to define things then Parmenides

asks: does everything have to possess all the qualities of what it is not? That would be illogical. And then he might ask us to wonder how we can say something is not something if being not something is in everything. If we try to say that the not is in us, and not necessarily in things and so in our perception of what it lacks, Parmenides might point out that we must then accept that its positive qualities are in us also - which seems absurd of course.

My task then is to try and find some inconsistencies in the words of Parmenides and I'll take the following quote as the basis of my arguments in order to sustain what I see as my world.

 'Thou canst not recognize not-being (for this is impossible), nor couldst thou speak of it, for thought and being are the same thing.'

I claim that not not recognizing not-being means you do recognize not-being. Here I am simply using a double negative making a positive rule. But then, Parmenides throws in an extra negative by saying this is impossible in brackets. Nevertheless, there is something of the double negative about Parmenides' logic. Not *is* something if it is not not something. If 'thought and being are the same thing' then if not being does not exist, how can we speak of it and think of it? If not-being is not possible how are we able to state its non-existence?

In the same way, Parmenides may be seen to be superseding the Heraclitean dialectic of opposites with one of positive and negative opposites, but in using negativity, he is almost bringing it into being as part of the substructure of reality. I might argue that there is a dialectical logic in accepting that things DO contain all the things they are not by their very being. Existence needs non-existence to be. Where my house is, there is nothing else in its place. Everything else cannot be in the thing that is, it has not to be there. Everything is in a dialectical relationship with everything else, each being defined by what they are not. Things ARE what they are not. By turning Parmenides on his head, am I not using the dialectic to prove he is both right and wrong at the same time? It is and It is not.

Furthermore, when Parmenides states It is, I might ask What is? Surely there is only what appears to us. All that is there, including reason and logic, have been made by us and must therefore be part of our consciousness, or part of what we might know as what appears to us and Parmenides would deny us these things as real. So everything we can speak of, think of, see, touch, experience, by Parmenides' ruling must not be. There is then nothing there, as it is all dependent on perception. If we are not allowed to attain what is there, there can be no It to be.

But it is the greatness of Parmenides that he can get us to think of these things and play with logic to prove that we may well be not experiencing reality as we think we are. Though metaphysics might not be popular today, there remain many questions of reality, consciousness and what is being. He gets us to investigate the meaning of words with logical precision and makes us ask what is true? Moreover, modern physics comes to Parmenides'

aid in terms of the stipulation that matter *is* finite within a closed system. A plant's growth is a process of converting energy and matter and according to the theory of relativity, energy and matter are the same thing; neither can be created or destroyed. And that *is* all that there is.