In possible response to Parmenides’ conclusion about the ungenerated and unchanging nature of that-is, Empedocles and Aristotle offer alternative explanations of change. While both of these philosophers accept selected aspects of Parmenides’ argument, they also both construct unique understandings of change that are distinctly incompatible with his conclusions. Empedocles disagrees with Parmenides on the nature of change with his elements where Aristotle with his qualifications. From Aristotle’s account of change we are then left to decide whether the *aporia* of the Parmenides-style argument for a changeless, indivisible, and complete being has been adequately resolved.

The account of change presented by Parmenides in his poem begins with the principal division between all routes of inquiry: that-is and that-is-not. That-is-not (i.e. that is nothing) is explained as unable to exist on the grounds that it cannot, by definition, be known and thus neither accomplished nor investigated. That-is is said to include what is spoken or thought, because it is impossible for these things not to be known and existent, given that no things can be characterized by that-is-not. In other words, Parmenides sees no distinction between thought and actuality: “for the same thing is for thinking and for being” (Fragment B3, 1). If it is not possible to think and speak of that-is-not, then it follows that all routes of inquiry—that of which we speak and think—must instead only concern that-is. For by removing the possibility to investigate that-is-not, Parmenides explains that “just one story of a route is still left: that it is” (Fragment B8, 1-2).

Now restricted to the domain of that-is, Parmenides’ argues for his conclusion that “what-is is (i) ungenerated and (ii) imperishable, (iii) a whole of a single kind, (iv) unshaken, and complete” (Fragment B8, 3-4). Parmenides presents the proof for the (i) impossibility of generation on the grounds that generation requires at some point in time a change from that-is-not to that-is, which further requires the existence of that-is-not, which contradicts the original fact that that-is-not is unknown and nonexistent. The necessity of that-is-not for generation of that-is is summarized by Parmenides as thus: “For if it came to be, it is not, not even if it is something going to be” (Fragment 8B, 19-20). The proof for the (ii) imperishability of that-is follows the previous, in that it requires the impossible change from that-is to that-is-not. Similarly, the proof that that-is is (iii) indivisible, or a whole of a single kind, comes from a requirement in the existence of that-is-not; for to be divisible requires that-is to be in some part “unalike” or “all more in any way” (or “at all less”) which in turn necessitates in some part that that-is is supplanted by that-is-not, thus ruling out the possibility of a divisible being (Fragment B8, 21-23). The final proof of the (iv) complete and changeless characteristic of that-is follows from the nature of change. For if we say that something is changed, we then also say it is either generated or perished in some fashion. This is impossible given the acceptance of the (i) ungenerated and (ii) imperishable characteristics of that-is and thus we must conclude that existence is changelessness.

Parmenides’ argument appears to rely critically on the inexistence of that-is-not. For if that-is-not can be shown to exist as a line of inquiry, each of his four proofs would no longer hold true. More importantly, Parmenides makes the assumption that change *must* include an absolute transition between that-is and this-is-not. Even if we accept the first statement that that-is-not is an unavailable route of inquiry, it still appears possible for change to occur among existent things. For example, if an object changes its position in three-dimensional space, the object has not moved between the bounds of that-is and that-is-not but instead appears to have simply adjusted its characterization in that-is. While Parmenides might respond to this objection by claiming that the original position of the object perished and the new position generated, this does not seem to necessarily prove that the simpler explanation (a change in the object’s characterization in that-is) is false. For it does not seem apparent that this change necessarily requires a movement between that-is and that-is-not but does so only because of Parmenides’ arbitrary axiom that all change must include absolute generation and perishment of all that is involved.

Hence, the heart of this issue concerns Parmenides’ overgeneralization in his description of change. Like Aristotle, it seems to me that Parmenides has not defined change adequately or with enough qualifications to reach any conclusions on its nature. For Parmenides’ account appears to assume that all change is identical and that it has no respect for what is being changed. A better understanding of change would be one that instead emphasizes from what respect the change is taking place. For example, a physical change in the position of an object in three-dimensional space would be understood as a change in the object with respect to its position in space. An emotional change that makes us happier or less so would be understood as a change in ourselves with respect to our happiness. These changes, if described by Parmenides, would both be in some fashion explained as a transition between that-is and that-is-not, but if given proper consideration to the respect with which they are changing, we would garner a more complete and accurate understanding of these change.

The account of change given by Empedocles begins with the assertion that all that-is is composed in some mixture of the four roots: earth, fire, air, and water. Each of the roots are in turn brought together or pulled apart by the forces of love and strife. Apart from this addition, Empedocles appears in some way to agree with Parmenides: “Fools. For their thoughts are not far-reaching—those who expect that there comes to be what previously was not, or that anything perishes and is completely destroyed” (Fragment B11, 1-4). Empedocles is also known to have used the very word “ungenerated” in his description of the roots (Fragment B7, 1). Hence from these descriptions it is clear that Empedocles accepts both the (i) ungenerated and (ii) imperishable characteristics of that-is presented by Parmenides. On the other hand, it is likewise clear from Empedocles’ assertion of the separation and combination of the roots that he does not accept the (iii) indivisibility or (iv) changeless characteristics that Parmenides credits to that-is. For Parmenides describe the composition of that-is as of “but only mixture, and separation of what is mixed” implying that all that-is must in some way be divisible and capable of change (Fragment B8, 2-3). While Empedocles accepts half of Parmenides conclusion, the impressions that one obtains from their explanations are entirely different. While Parmenides gives the non-intuitive outcome that nothing that-is changes (which appears contrary to our common experiences), Empedocles attempts to work within our perceptions by providing an explanation for the changes that we see in the world around us.

The response found in the first book of Aristotle’s *Physics* to the changeless nature of that-is similarly agrees with only some aspects of Parmenides’ account. Whereas the final conclusion of Aristotle’s account of change differs critically from that of Parmenides’ by allowing for the existence of change, the general principal that (iv) change cannot occur between that-is and that-is-not still holds true but simply lacks qualification, insofar that “we agree with them in saying that nothing comes to be without qualification from what is not, but we say that things come to be in a way—for instance, coincidentally—from what is not” (*Physics* I.8 191b13-15). The same explanation holds true for the (i) ungenerated and (ii) imperishable characteristics of that-is, in that they are only true in a coincidental manner.

The positive account of change given by Aristotle holds that we truly view change in two ways, namely in which something comes to be from that-is (or that-is-not) or in which that-is (or that-is-not) acts upon something or is acted upon. Aristotle uses the example of a doctor, to whom we say both that “a doctor acts on something or is acted on, or is or comes to be something from being a doctor” (*Physics* I.8 191b2-3). It is the lack of this very qualification that causes issues in Parmenides’ argument, for Aristotle shows us that “now a doctor builds a house, not insofar as he is a doctor, but insofar as he is a housebuilder; and he becomes pale, not insofar as he is a doctor, but insofar as he is dark” (*Physics* I.8 191b4-6). Thus Aristotle arrives at the conclusion that “coming to be from what is not signifies this: coming to be from it insofar as it is not” (*Physics* I.8 191b9-10). In other words, that-is does not come to be from that-is-not per se, but instead comes to be from *some* that-is (or that-is-not) that is distinct from *our* that-is. It follows that the (iii) indivisibility of that-is is possible given that it occurs from one that-is to another but separate that-is. Additionally, Aristotle holds that all change also involves some constant which remains in both what was and what now is. This constant is defined as the subject of change, which we say contains the contrary or opposite of what is now formed. Consider the change in which an illiterate man becomes literate. For in this situation we say that the man remains constant and is thus the subject of change and at that the man contains the contrary form of either literate or illiterate. Aristotle concludes that change is the movement between these contrary forms among the combination of the subject of change and its current form.

Through his account, Aristotle proves the Parmenides-style argument ineffective as a means of understanding change. Whereas Parmenides relies on an inaccurately singular meaning of change to reach his conclusion, Aristotle clearly defines change and its ability to transform with respect to its matter. Aristotle rightly acknowledges this issue by highlighting that Parmenides believed “that if a thing is one in number, it is also only one in potentiality—whereas in fact the two are very different” (*Physics* I.9 192a1-2). Aristotle’s idea of the subject of change and his emphasis on the capacity of change to be understood with respect to what is involved in the process further prove that Parmenides’ description of change is inaccurate because it does not account for these components of change. Thus we can conclude that Aristotle has provided sufficient evidence to prove Parmenides wrong in his account of change and has consequently solved the *aporia*.