

# DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

**STEPHEN A. WHITE**



## BIOGRAPHY

Stephen White is Professor of Classics and Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin, where he has taught in the Joint Graduate Program in Ancient Philosophy since 1988. His research centers on Aristotle, especially ethics and moral psychology, but ranges widely across classical philosophy and literature from early Greek science and astronomy to Stoic models of mind and action. He has just finished a translation of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (for CUP), and current projects include work on several of Aristotle's associates and on Parmenides.

## *KNOWLEDGE AND NECESSITY IN PARMENIDES*

### ABSTRACT

Parmenides is one of philosophy's foundational figures, and also the first on record to recognize some key facts of astronomy. Yet on what remains a pervasive assessment of his writings, he advanced a bizarre form of entity monism: there is exactly one being, ungenerated, imperishable, and wholly immobile, undifferentiated, and unchanging, so that everything else we imagine there to be is in some way or other only apparent or illusory. What gives? Building on recent work by John Palmer and Michael Wedin among others, I propose a fundamental reassessment of Parmenides' project that shifts its focus from ontology to epistemology, and from monism to modality. The key to his argument is a revolutionary conception of knowledge, which he first defines by universality, then deploys to articulate a complex notion of necessity. The upshot is an epistemic ideal that has for its content or objects only what is only and entirely so, which he also characterizes as necessary truth.

**Thursday, October 11 • 3:45 PM • YMCA 401**